

FREE BIBLE COMMENTARY

YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!

Luke the Historian: The Gospel of Luke

By Dr. Bob Utley, retired professor of hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation)

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A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS4). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS4 and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

What follows is a brief explanation of Dr. Bob Utley's hermeneutical philosophy and the procedures used in his commentaries.

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my worldview, my integrating center, my reason to live. I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness? This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture and the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems and denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading! Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

1. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
2. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
3. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
4. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 - a. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 - b. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 - c. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 - d. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 - e. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 - f. the words chosen to present the message

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

II. Inappropriate Methods

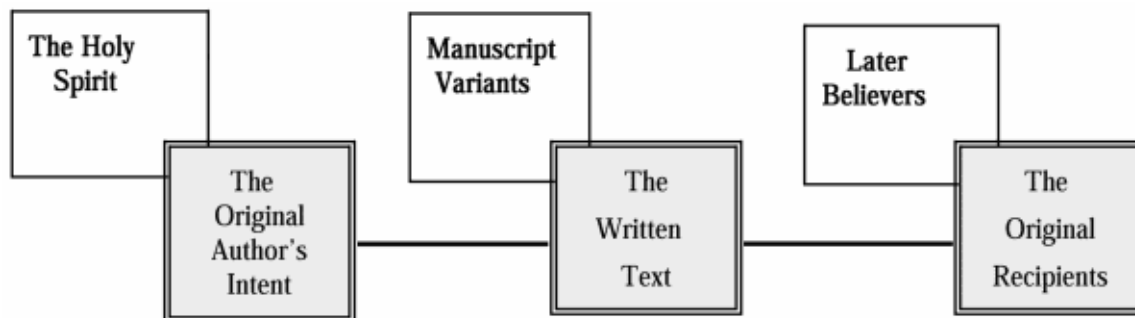
1. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
2. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
3. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
4. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
5. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm

the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. historical setting
2. literary context
3. grammatical structures (syntax)
4. contemporary word usage
5. relevant parallel passages
6. genre

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

1. The first reading cycle
 - a. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)

- b. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 - c. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
 - d. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - (1) Old Testament
 - a) Hebrew narrative
 - b) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - c) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - d) Law codes
 - (2) New Testament
 - a) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - b) Parables (Gospels)
 - c) Letters/epistles
 - d) Apocalyptic literature
2. The second reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 - b. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 - c. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
3. The third reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 - b. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - (1) the author
 - (2) the date
 - (3) the recipients
 - (4) the specific reason for writing
 - (5) aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - (6) references to historical people and events
 - c. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
 - d. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
4. The fourth reading cycle
- a. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 - b. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - (1) repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,14
 - (2) repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - (3) contrasting concepts
 - c. List the following items
 - (1) significant terms
 - (2) unusual terms
 - (3) important grammatical structures
 - (4) particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
 - d. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - (1) look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using a) "systematic theology" books b) reference Bibles c) concordances

- (2) look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
- (3) look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- e. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - (1) study Bibles
 - (2) Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - (3) Bible introductions
 - (4) Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible Interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

1. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
2. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
3. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
4. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
5. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

1. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:
 "The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

2. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:
 According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible as God's word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."

3. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:
 "No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

VI. This Commentary's Method

The Study Guide Commentary is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

1. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
2. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
3. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
 - a. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS4)
 - b. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
 - c. The New King James Version (NKJV)
 - d. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
 - e. Today's English Version (TEV)
 - f. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

4. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 - a. literary context
 - b. historical, cultural insights
 - c. grammatical information
 - d. word studies
 - e. relevant parallel passages
5. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
 - a. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
 - b. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 - c. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 - d. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
6. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
 - a. manuscript variations
 - b. alternate word meanings
 - c. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 - d. ambiguous texts Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
 - e. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Passing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE

I. OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Luke is the longest Gospel. Luke-Acts contain the largest number of verses by any author in the New Testament (if one rejects Hebrews as Pauline). He is a Gentile and a second-generation Christian (someone who did not see or know Jesus during His earthly life).
- B. Luke writes the most grammatically correct and polished *Koine* Greek of all the New Testament writers, with the possible exception of the author of Hebrews. Greek apparently was his mother tongue. He was also highly educated and a physician (cf. Col. 4:14).
- C. Luke's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' love and care for those whom the Jewish leaders never even noticed
 - 1. women (e.g. Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, Mary and Martha, etc.)
 - 2. the poor (cf. Luke's Beatitudes, Luke 6:20-23 and teachings on wealth, cf. Luke 12:13-21; 16:9-13, 19-31)
 - 3. the socially, racially, and religiously ostracized
 - a. immoral women (cf. Luke 7:36-50)
 - b. Samaritans (cf. Luke 9:51-56; 10:29-37; 17:11-16)
 - c. lepers (cf. Luke 17:11-19)
 - d. tax collectors (cf. Luke 3:12-13; 15:1-2; 18:9-14; 19:1-10)
 - e. criminals (cf. Luke 23:35-43)
 - f. rebellious family members (cf. Luke 15:11-32)
 - g. the poor (cf. Luke 6:20; 16:19-31)
 - h. Gentiles (cf. Luke 13:29; 14:23)
- D. Luke records the eyewitness memories of Mary and also possibly her genealogy (i.e., Luke 3:23-38). His Gospel is based on interviews and research (cf. Luke 1:1-4).

II. AUTHOR

- A. Unanimous early church tradition says Luke, Paul's missionary companion
 - 1. Irenaeus (a.d. 175-195, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1; 3.14.10) says specifically that Luke recorded in a book the gospel preached by Paul.
 - 2. Anti-Marcion Prologue to Luke (a.d. 175) says Luke was the author of the Gospel.
 - 3. Tertullian (a.d. 150/160-220/240 in *Against Marcion* 4.2,3; 4. 5,3) says Luke wrote a digest of Paul's gospel
 - 4. Muratorian Fragment (a.d. 180-200) names Luke as the author and calls him a physician companion of Paul. Also it says that he wrote his account by hearsay (meaning he interviewed eyewitnesses).
 - 5. Origen, quoted by Eusebius from his commentary on Matthew (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.25.6), asserts Luke's authorship of the Gospel.
 - 6. Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.4.2,6-7) also affirms Luke's authorship of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts.
- B. Internal evidence for Luke's authorship
 - 1. This Gospel, like so many biblical works, is anonymous.
 - 2. If Luke-Acts is a two volume set, which seems true from the similar introduction, then the "we" sections of Acts (cf. Luke 16:10-17; 20:5-16; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16) imply an eyewitness account of Paul's missionary activity.
 - 3. The introduction to Luke (cf. Luke 1:1-4) states that Luke interviewed and researched eye

witness accounts in order to write a historical approach to Jesus' life, which shows he was a second-generation believer. The Introduction to Luke also covers Acts. Luke and Acts slightly overlap in time (i.e., post-resurrection events).

III. LUKE, THE MAN

- A. Anti-Marcion Prologue to Luke (a.d. 175) says of him that he
 - 1. was a native of Antioch of Syria
 - 2. was a physician
 - 3. was single
 - 4. was a follower of Paul
 - 5. wrote from Achaia
 - 6. died at age 84 in Boeotia
- B. Eusebius of Caesarea (a.d. 275-339) in *Hist. Eccl.* III.4.2 says of him that he
 - 1. was from Antioch
 - 2. was a missionary companion of Paul
 - 3. wrote a Gospel and Acts
- C. Jerome (a.d. 346-420 in *Migna* XXVI. 18) says of him that he
 - 1. wrote from Achaia
 - 2. died in Boeotia
- D. He was a highly educated man who
 - 1. used good *Koine* Greek grammar
 - 2. had a large vocabulary (esp. medical and nautical)
 - 3. knew and applied research methods (cf. Luke 1:1-4)
 - 4. probably was a physician (cf. Col. 4:14). Luke used terms related to medicine, cures, diseases, etc. at least 300 times (cf. W. K. Hobart, *The Medical Language of Luke*, or better, A. Harnack, *Luke the Physician*). Also, Mark's negative comments about physicians in Mark 5:26 are omitted in the parallel in Luke 8:43.
- E. He was a Gentile
 - 1. Paul seems to make a distinction in his list of helpers in Col. 4:10-11 (i.e., "who are from the circumcision") and other helpers (i.e., Epaphras, Luke and Demas).
 - 2. In Acts 1:9 Luke says "in their own language," referring to Aramaic, which implies it was not his language.
 - 3. In his Gospel Luke omits all the controversies with Pharisees concerning the Jewish Oral Law.
- F. Of all people to be the writer of the longest Gospel and Acts and thereby to have written more of the NT than any other author, it is surprising that a little-known, non-eyewitness (i.e., non-Apostle) Gentile would be chosen. Yet, this is the unanimous tradition of the early church.

IV. DATE OF WRITING

- A. One never knows the exact relationship between
 - 1. Luke's original research notes (probably done while Paul was in prison at Caesarea [cf. Acts 23-26 and specifically 24:27])
 - 2. his final draft (i.e., the Gospel of Luke as we know it using Mark and "Q")
 - 3. the circulation of Luke - Acts (to or for Theophilus)
- B. It must be before a.d. 95 if I Clement has quotes or allusions from Acts and Acts is subsequent to the Gospel
 - 1. Acts 13:22 – I Clement, 18:1
 - 2. Acts 20:36 – I Clement, 2:1
- C. Acts must be before the destruction of Jerusalem (a.d. 70) by the Roman general Titus.
 - 1. no mention of the death of Paul the Apostle (a.d. 64-68)
 - 2. Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 does not include the destruction of the Temple, which would

- powerfully illustrate God's judgment on Judaism
- 3. Paul visits Jerusalem in Acts 21 and Luke, if he wrote after a.d. 70, would probably have mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem in his Gospel
- D. If Luke used the Gospel of Mark as an outline and/or Luke wrote close to the time of his research in Palestine, then the book probably dates to the late fifties and early sixties (with Acts written soon after while Paul was still in prison in Rome, a.d. 62-63).

V. RECIPIENTS

- A. It is dedicated to Theophilus (cf. Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1). There are several theories as to his identity:
 1. a Roman governmental official because Luke calls him "most excellent" in Luke 1:3, the same title he uses for Felix (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3) and Festus (cf. Acts 26:25)
 2. a wealthy patron (Theophilus was a common name among Jews and Greeks) who helped pay the expenses of writing, copying, and distributing Luke and Acts.
 3. his name means "God loved," "lover of God," so it is possibly a cryptic reference to some Christian
- B. Luke's Gospel is targeted to Gentiles
 1. It explains Jewish customs.
 2. The gospel is for all people (cf. Luke 2:10).
 3. It quotes prophecies which refer to "all flesh" (cf. Luke 3:5-6 which is a quote from Isaiah 40).
 4. The genealogy goes back to Adam (i.e., all humans, cf. Luke 3:38).
 5. It has many examples of God's love for Gentiles (e.g., Luke extends the boundaries of those welcomed to the Messianic banquet, Luke 13:29).
 6. It uses Old Testament examples that announce God's love for Gentiles (cf. Luke 2:32; 4:25-77).
 7. Luke's Great Commission asserts that forgiveness must be preached to all nations (cf. Luke 24:47).

VI. PURPOSE(S) OF LUKE'S WRITINGS

- A. All of the Gospels were written to target specific groups of people for the purpose of evangelism (cf. John 20:30-31)
 1. Matthew to Jews
 2. Mark to Romans
 3. Luke to Gentiles
 4. John to all peoples

Luke uniquely mentions the mission of the Seventy (cf. Luke 10:1-24). For the rabbis, 70 was the number denoting the languages of the world (cf. Genesis 10). By Jesus sending out 70 preachers of the good news would communicate that the gospel is for all people.
- B. Other possible purposes
 1. to deal with the delayed Second Coming
 - a. Luke 21 is similar to, but slightly different from, Matthew 24 and Mark 13, concerning the imminent return of Christ and the end of the world.
 - b. However, Luke speaks of world evangelization, which takes time for the church to accomplish (cf. Luke 24:47).
 - c. Also Luke (like Paul) emphasizes that the Kingdom of God is here now (cf. Luke 10:9, 11; 11:20; 17:21), as well as a future consummation.
 - d. The parable in Luke 19:11-27 uses a delayed return of a master in an eschatological setting.
 - e. A good summary of the opinions and discussions of biblical scholars can be seen in The Anchor Bible Commentary, vol. 28, pp. 231-235.
 2. to explain that Christianity is not a threat to the Roman government (as does Acts)
 - a. title "most excellent" in introduction

- b. Luke 23 has Pilate saying three times, "I find no fault in this man" (cf. Luke 23:4, 14-15, 22)
 - c. the government officials in Acts are presented in a good light. Paul's addresses to Roman officials show respect to them and they in return respond positively to him (cf. Acts 26:31-32)
 - d. the Roman centurion at the crucifixion also gives a positive witness to Jesus (cf. Luke 23:47)
- C. There are some unique theological themes that play a role in the purposes for Luke's writings
1. Luke shows special care to certain groups of people.
 - a. The poor vs. the rich (e.g., Luke's Beatitudes, Luke 6:20-23)
 - b. The outcasts
 - (1) immoral women (cf. Luke 7:36-50)
 - (2) Samaritans (cf. Luke 9:51-56; 10:29-37)
 - (3) rebellious runaways (cf. Luke 15:11-32)
 - (4) tax collectors (cf. Luke 19:1-10)
 - (5) lepers (cf. Luke 17:11-19)
 - (6) criminals (cf. Luke 23:39-43)
 2. Luke mentions the Temple in Jerusalem. The Gospel begins with the Jews and their Scriptures (i.e., Jesus fulfills OT prophesy) but they reject Him (cf. Luke 11:14-36) and He becomes the Savior of the entire world (cf. Luke 10:1-24) and replaces their temple with Himself (cf. Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19-22).

VII. THE SOURCES FOR LUKE'S GOSPEL

- A. Several theories have been advanced concerning the relationship between Matthew, Mark, and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels).
1. The uniform tradition of the early church is that Luke, a Gentile physician and missionary companion of the Apostle Paul, wrote the Gospel.
 2. Around 1776 A. E. Lessing (and later Gieseler in 1818) theorized an oral stage in the development of the Synoptic ("to see together") Gospels. He asserted that they were all dependent on earlier oral traditions which the writers modified for their own target audiences
 - a. Matthew: Jews
 - b. Mark: Romans
 - c. Luke: Gentiles
 Each was related to a separate geographical center of Christianity
 - a. Matthew: Antioch, Syria or Judea
 - b. Mark: Rome, Italy
 - c. Luke: Caesarea by the Sea, Palestine or Achaia
 - d. John: Ephesus, Asia Minor
 3. In the early nineteenth century J. J. Griesbach theorized that Matthew and Luke wrote separate accounts of Jesus' life, completely independent of each other. Mark wrote a brief Gospel trying to mediate between these other two accounts.
 4. In the early twentieth century H. J. Holtzmann theorized that Mark was the first written Gospel and that both Matthew and Luke used his Gospel structure plus a separate document containing the sayings of Jesus called Q (German *quelle* or "source"). This was labeled the "two source" theory (endorsed by Fredrick Schleiermacher in 1832).

Some speculate that this list of quotes from Jesus, structured like OT wisdom literature, may be what Papias records that Matthew wrote. The problem is that not one copy of this list of sayings survived. If the church cherished the Gospels so much, how could they lose a list of the sayings of the Founder of the Faith used by both Matthew and Luke?
 5. Later, B. H. Streeter offered a modified "two source" theory that he called "the four source" theory which posited a "proto Luke" plus Mark plus Q.

6. The above theories of the formation of the Synoptic Gospels are only speculation. There is no historical or actual manuscript evidence of either a "Q" source or a "proto Luke."

Modern scholarship simply does not know how the Gospels developed or who wrote them (the same is true of the OT Law and former Prophets). However, this lack of information does not affect the Church's view of their inspiration or trustworthiness as historical as well as faith documents.

7. There are obvious similarities in structure and wording between the Synoptics, but there are also many arresting differences. Differences are common in eyewitness accounts. The early church was not bothered by the divergence of these three eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life.

It may be that the target audience, the style of the author and the different languages involved (Aramaic and Greek) account for the seeming discrepancies. It must be stated that these inspired writers, editors, or compilers had the freedom to select, arrange, adapt, and summarize the events and teachings of Jesus' life (*Howto Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart, pp. 113-148).

B. Luke specifically claims that he did research (Luke 1:1-4) into Jesus' life from eye witnesses. Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea by the Sea in Palestine allowed Luke time and access to these people.

Luke 1-2 may reflect Mary's memories (See Sir William Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?*), as may the genealogy of Luke 3.

C. Several of the early church sources mention that Luke was a traveling missionary companion of the Apostle Paul. Some of these early sources also assert that Luke's Gospel was affected by Paul's preaching. It cannot be denied that the worldwide mission of the gospel is clearly identified as fulfilled prophecy in Luke, Acts, and Paul's writings.

VIII. THE UNIQUENESS OF LUKE

A. The first two chapters are unique to Luke and may have come from Mary, as may the genealogy of Luke 3:23-28.

B. Miracles unique to Luke

1. son of the widow of Nain resuscitated, Luke 7:12-17
2. sick woman in synagogue healed on the Sabbath, Luke 13:10-17
3. sick man in synagogue healed on the Sabbath, Luke 14:1-6
4. ten lepers healed; only one, a Samaritan, returns to give thanks, Luke 17:11-18

C. Parables unique to Luke

1. the good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37
2. the persistent friend, Luke 11:5-13
3. the rich fool, Luke 12:13-21
4. the lost coin, Luke 15:8-10
5. the two sons, Luke 15:11-32
6. the unrighteous steward, Luke 16:1-8
7. the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31
8. the unrighteous judge, Luke 18:1-8
9. the Pharisee and Publican, Luke 18:9-14

D. Parables in Luke that are also in Matthew, but in a different form and context

1. Luke 12:39-46 (Matt. 24:43-44)
2. Luke 14:16-24 (Matt. 22:2-14)
3. Luke 19:11-27 (Matt. 25:14-30)

E. Other unique accounts

1. the events of the first two chapters
2. Zaccheus the tax-collector, Luke 19:1-10
3. Jesus sent to Herod by Pilate to be examined, Luke 23:8-12
4. the two on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13-32

F. The most unique elements in Luke are found in Luke 9:51-18:14. Here Luke does not rely on Mark

or "Q" (i.e., sayings of Jesus possibly written by Matthew). Even similar events and teachings are put into a different form. The unifying theme (literary structure) of this section is "on the way to Jerusalem" (cf. Luke 9:51; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11,28), which is really His journey to the cross.

READING CYCLE ONE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

LUKE 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Dedication to Theophilus	Dedication to Theophilus	Introduction	Introduction	Prologue
1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4
		The Births of John and Jesus (1:5-2:40)		
The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold	John's Birth Announced to Zacharias		The Birth of John the Baptist is Announced	The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold
1:5-20	1:5-25	1:5-7	1:5-7	1:5-7
		1:8-20	1:8-17	1:8-10
			1:18	1:11-22
			1:19-20	
1:21-25		1:21-23	1:21-22	
			1:23-25	1:23-25
		1:24-25		
The Birth of Jesus Foretold	Christ's Birth Announced to Mary		The Birth of Jesus is Announced	The Annunciation
1:26-38	1:26-38	1:26-38	1:26-28	1:26-38
			1:29-33	
			1:34	
			1:35-37	
			1:38	
Mary Visits Elizabeth	Mary Visits Elizabeth		Mary Visits Elizabeth	The Visitation
1:39-45	1:39-45	1:39-45	1:39-45	1:29-45
Mary's Song of Praise	The Song of Mary		Mary's Song of Praise	The Magnificat
1:46-55	1:46-55	1:46-55	1:46-55	1:46-55
1:56	1:56	1:56	1:56	1:56
The Birth of John the Baptist	Birth of John the Baptist		The Birth of John the Baptist	The Birth of John the Baptist and Visit of the Neighbors
1:57-66	1:57-58	1:57-58	1:57-58	1:57-58

	Circumcision of John the Baptist			The Circumcision of John the Baptist
	1:59-66	1:59-66	1:59-60 1:61-62 1:63-66	1:59-66
The Prophecy of Zacharias	Zacharias' Prophecy		Zacharias' Prophecy	The Benedictus
1:67-79	1:67-79	1:67-79	1:67-75 1:76-79	1:67-79 The Hidden Life of John the Baptist
1:80	1:80	1:80	1:80	1:80

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Luke the Historian

1. Verses 1-4 have several rare Greek words that relate to Hellenistic historiography. Luke is trying to express his purpose of accurately recording what his research discovered about Jesus' life and ministry. Luke was a well educated citizen of the first century Greco-Roman world.
2. The problem about Luke's Greek orientation has to do with the nature of Greek history. Often it was very selective and written more for entertainment and propaganda than modern history. Luke uses Hellenistic terms to describe his methods, but records Jesus' life in a Hebrew historical fashion. The best historians in the Ancient Near East (i.e., most accurate) were Hittites and Hebrews.

3. The real question is what is history? Modern western history is chronological and cause/effect driven. Yet even modern history is significantly colored by who writes it and why! History, by its very nature, is a biased selection and description of past events.
4. Luke's Gospel is not modern history or biography, but it is good and true history. The four Gospels are, in reality, gospel tracts, written for evangelistic purposes and targeting selected groups. Events and their relationship to each other are not necessarily chronologically arranged and interpreted for maximum impact. This is not to imply they are concoctions or fabrications, but they are eastern, not western; they are theological as well as historical. Different does not mean bad or false!
See Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 127-148.
5. Luke has used the best traditions of his day to present Jesus Christ as God's promised Messiah, sent to redeem all humanity. He is surely influenced by Paul's Gentile mission. Luke is writing to convert Gentiles (as well as encourage believers), not just historically inform them.
6. The four Gospels are different, very different, yet they are true—true eyewitness accounts, true summaries of Jesus' words and activities—but they are not modern histories.
7. Luke clearly wants to put Jesus' life and ministry into a Palestinian and Roman historical framework.
 - a. a vision of Zacharias in reign of Herod, King of Judea (cf. Luke 1:5)
 - b. birth connected to a decree of Caesar Augustus (cf. Luke 2:1)
 - c. birth connected to Quirinius' presence in Syria (cf. Luke 2:2)
 - d. preaching of John (cf. Luke 3:1-2)
 - (1) Tiberius Caesar's (fifteenth year of his reign)
 - (2) Pontius Pilate governor of Judea
 - (3) Herod tetrarch of Galilee
 - (4) Phillip tetrarch of Ituraea
 - (5) Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene
 - (6) Annas and Caiaphas were high priests

B. The Blessings of Chapters One and Two

1. It must be remembered that they are given in a mindset of OT prophecies. Jesus surely fulfilled these OT expectations, but moved beyond them. These blessings must be seen as precursors of the gospel. They are OT pictures which will be universalized (i.e., not Jew vs. Gentile, but believer vs. unbeliever; not Israel, but all the world). The Gospel affects more than Israel and Palestine (cf. Luke 24:47).
2. It needs to be remembered that Luke, in chapter one, is recording the blessing of those who were first informed about and impacted by Jesus' birth. These blessings are in OT poetic form (cf. Luke 1:46-55 and 67-79) and contain OT content. OT poetry is a genre called wisdom literature. It has special interpretive procedures (See Fee and Stuart, *Howto Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 206-230).
 - a. "the Magnificat" (song of Mary), Luke 1:46-55
 - b. "the Benedictus" (song of Zechariah), Luke 1:68-79
 - c. "Gloria in excelsis" (song of the angels), Luke 2:14
 - d. "Nunc dimittis" (song of Simeon), Luke 2:29-32

C. The parallels between John the Baptist and Jesus

1. devout parents
2. birth announced by Gabriel
3. supernatural conceptions
4. mothers both glorify God
5. babies named by an angel
6. both babies fulfill prophecy

- 7. the circumcision of both under Mosaic Law is specifically mentioned
- 8. normal physical and emotional growth, but superior spiritual growth

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:1-4

¹In as much as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; ⁴so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

1:1-4 This is one long involved Greek sentence.

1:1

NASB, NKJV "In as much as"

NRSV "Since"

NJB "Seeing that"

The Greek word *epeidē per* is used only here in the NT. It is not used at all in the Septuagint, but is used in the Koine papyri found in the garbage dumps of Egypt (see James Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*). It basically means "since indeed" or "considering that." Luke is setting out the reason he is writing an account of Jesus' life when there are several already in existence. This probably includes Mark's Gospel (which forms the literary outline of much of Matthew and Luke), as well as "Q" (sayings of Jesus used by both Matthew and Luke). It also implies that by the a.d. 60s there were several written accounts of Jesus' life circulating in the churches.

NASB "an account"

NKJV "a narrative"

NRSV "an orderly account"

TEV "a report"

NJB "accounts"

This is another Greek term (*diē gēsis*) found only here in the NT. It is used twice in the Septuagint in Judges (cf. Judges 5:14; 7:15) for a scribe recording something. In Greek literature it has the connotation of a full and complete narrative. Luke is describing the careful, historical research of Jesus' life that preceded his own writing (cf. Luke 1:3).

NASB "the things accomplished"

NKJV "those things which are most surely believed"

NRSV "the events which have been fulfilled"

TEV "the things that have taken place"

NJB "events that have reached their fulfilment"

This verb is a perfect passive participle, which denotes the abiding results of the fulfilled promises concerning Jesus, His teachings, His actions, and His death and resurrection. The passive voice surely implies that God the Father's eternal purposes were fully accomplished in Christ.

The term *plērophoreō* has a dual connotation.

1. Paul uses it for being fully persuaded in Rom. 4:21; 14:5; Col. 2:2; 4:12 (cf. NKJV).
2. The Papyri uses it of "accomplished" or "fully completed" (cf. NASB, NRSV, NJB).

Theophilus needs to accept both connotations! The OT promises have come to completion in Jesus of Nazareth.

1:2 "they were handed down to us" This is the Greek word *paradidōmi*, often translated "traditions" (cf. Mark 7:3,5,8,9,13; 1 Cor. 11:2,23; 15:3). Luke is asserting that he had received information about the life of Jesus from eyewitnesses. This implies

1. the accuracy of his accounts
2. the admission that he was a second-generation believer

■ **"those who from the beginning"** This refers to a larger number than the Twelve Apostles. Some examples would be

1. the women who followed Jesus and the Apostles (cf. Luke 8:2-3)
2. the one hundred and twenty disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:15)
3. the several men to choose from in replacing Judas (cf. Luke 1:21-22)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ARCHĒ

NASB, NRSV "servants of the word"

NKJV, NJB "ministers of the word"

TEV "who proclaimed the message"

These "from the beginning" eyewitnesses were responsible proclaimers of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1). To know truth is to be a steward of that truth (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1,2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10)!

The term *logos* (word) is used of Jesus Himself in John 1:1, but here (cf. Luke 8:12) and in Acts 6:4; 8:4; 10:36; 11:19; 14:25 it refers to the gospel about Jesus.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW AND GREEK BACKGROUND OF LOGOS

1:3 This verse is the main clause of verses 1-4 and has several key terms that relate to Luke's research method.

1. "having investigated." This is a perfect active participle of a word that means "to follow." The metaphorical usage of this word meant "to make an extensive effort to learn the details and truth about something" (See Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 331 and Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.10).
2. "carefully." This is the Greek term *akribōs*, which is translated "accurately," "diligently," or "precisely" (cf. Josephus *Against Apion* 1.10). Louw and Nida, vol. 1, p. 674, "pertaining to strict conformity to a norm or standard; involving both detail and completeness." It is used several times in the Septuagint (cf. Deut. 19:18; Dan. 7:19). Possibly the most relevant usage is that this term was used by Galen (a physician) for the careful checking of symptoms.
3. "from the beginning." This means from the source. In this case (1) the beginning events of John and Jesus' births or (2) the eyewitnesses from the beginning of Jesus' ministry (i.e., the Apostles, cf. Acts 1:21-22).

4. "in consecutive order." This term means "in a continual order," "successively," or "consecutively." Luke is piling up word after word describing his faithful, accurate, and sequential arrangement of facts about Jesus' life and ministry. His account is not a fabrication or exaggeration.

■ **"most excellent"** This is a first century title of honor and respect. This man may have been Luke's literary patron. The title is used in Acts of Felix (23:26; 24:3) and Festus (26:25), who were Roman regional officials. It is also used in the Septuagint as "best" (cf. 1 Sam. 15:15; Ps. 15:6; 22:5) or "chief" (cf. Amos 6:2), but not of people.

■ **"Theophilus"** This was a common name in the Mediterranean area, used of both Jews and Gentiles. *Theo* means God, plus *philos* which means (1) loved, thus "God lover," "loved by God" or (2) friend, thus,

"friend of God."

■ **"carefully investigated"** This is also a medical term used by Galen to denote the careful checking of symptoms.

1:4 "in order" This is a purpose clause (*hina* with the subjunctive).

■ **"so that you may know"** This is an intensified form (*epiginōskō*) which usually denotes full and complete knowledge by experience. It may well imply that Theophilus already knew something of the gospel.

■ **"the things"** This is the Greek word *logos*, which has a wide semantic range. In Luke 1:2 it refers to (1) the truths about Jesus (cf. Luke 7:17) recorded by Luke or (2) the content of what Theophilus has been taught. This may be an additional evidence he was a new believer (although we must be careful of reading too much into the words of this introduction which only much later take on a technical usage in the church).

■ **"taught"** From this Greek word we get the English "catechism." This may imply that Theophilus was a new convert, but this is uncertain because the word is a general, common term.

NASB	"the exact truth about the things"
NKJV	"the certainty of those things"
NRSV	"the truth concerning the things"
TEV	"the full truth about everything"
NJB	"how well founded the teaching is"

The term *asphaleia* is used in two related senses in the Koine Greek Papyri found in Egypt: (1) safety, security and (2) certainty as to a belief.

Luke is trying to reassure Theophilus, his first century readers, and later readers of his diligence and accuracy as a researcher and Gospel author. Luke's presentation is accurate and trustworthy. Believers can fully rely on God, on Christ, on the Gospels!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:5-7

⁵In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. ⁷But they had no child because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

1:5 "Herod" This refers to Herod the Great (37-4 b.c.), an Idumean (from Edom), who, through political maneuvering and the support of Mark Antony, managed to be appointed ruler of a large part of Palestine (Canaan) by the Roman Senate in 40 b.c. See Special Topic: The Family of Herod at Luke 3:1.

■ **"Zechariah"** His name meant "remembered by YHWH" (BDB 272). This was John the Baptist's father.

■ **"the division of Abijah"** Only four of the twenty-four divisions of Levites returned from the Exile (cf. 1 Chr. 24:7-18; 2 Chr. 23:8). They were then sub-divided (cf. Ezra 2:36-39) so that different ones officiated at the Temple on different weeks. The Abijah division was considered to be the least prestigious of the divisions. For a complete discussion of the priestly divisions see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 12, pp. 89-93.

■ **"he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron"** His wife, Elizabeth, was also from a priestly family. Her Hebrew name could mean (1) "God is swearer" or (2) "God fully satisfies."

1:6 "they were both righteous in the sight of God" "righteous" is used in this context like Matthew's definition (cf. Matt. 6:1), not Paul's (cf. Romans 4). This does not imply sinlessness, but someone who faithfully responds to their understanding of God's will and ways (cf. Deut. 6:25. Old Testament examples are Noah, Gen. 6:9; 7:1 and Job, Job 1:1). This phrase is included to show that this couple was experiencing childlessness because of physical problems, not spiritual ones. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

1:7 Barrenness was considered a divine curse in Jewish culture (cf. Gen. 20:18; 29:31; 30:2; Exod. 23:26; Lev. 20:20-21; Deut. 7:14; 1 Sam. 1:5; Jer. 22:30). There are several barren women mentioned in the Bible:

1. Sarah, Gen. 11:30; 16:1
2. Rebekah, Gen. 25:21
3. Rachel, Gen. 29:31; 30:1
4. Manoah's wife, Jdgs. 13:2,3
5. Hannah, 1 Sam. 1:2,5

Not only was Elizabeth barren, but now she was past the time of conception (like Sarah). This condition is theologically used as a way of asserting God's direct control in the affairs of men. This was not a virgin birth, but a birth with supernatural assistance (like Isaac, cf. Genesis 18; like Joseph, cf. Gen. 30:22-24; like Samson, cf. Judges 13; like Samuel, cf. 1 Samuel 1; like Hezekiah, Isa. 7:14-16). John the Baptist will fulfill Old Testament prophecy about the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:8-17

⁸Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the *appointed* order of his division, ⁹according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. ¹¹And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹²Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. ¹³But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. ¹⁴You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. ¹⁶And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷It is he who will *go as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

1:8 "while he was performing his priestly service before God" The Mishnah (part of the Talmud) says there were so many priests at this time that each offered incense only once in his lifetime; others, not at all.

1:9 "he was chosen by lot" Lots were a mechanical way to determine the will of God (cf Acts 1:21-26). There were several priests on duty at one time. This was the regular way to determine which offered the ritual.

In the OT the "lot" originally referred to the Urim and Thummim (cf. Lev. 16:8), which was carried behind the breastplate of the High Priest. It was a mechanical way of determining the will of God, usually for the King.

It was used as a way to divide the Promised Land among the tribes in Joshua 13-19.

The casting of lots was used by the early church to choose a new apostle to replace Judas in Acts 1.

■ **"to burn the incense"** This procedure is described in Exod. 25:6; 30:7; 31:11. The incense itself is described in Exod. 30:34-38.

1:10 Obviously this was a set time of prayer associated with the sacrifice of the Continual (a twice daily sacrifice and burnt offering of a lamb) at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Jewish sources advocate the offering of incense twice a day in connection to "the Continual" sacrifice (cf. Exod. 30:7-8). Incense was a physical symbol of prayer rising to God.

1:11 "an angel of the Lord" This phrase is used two ways in the OT.

1. an angel (cf. Gen. 24:7,40; Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34; Num. 22:22; Jdgs. 5:23; 1 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chr. 21:15ff; Zech. 1:28)
2. as a way of referring to a physical manifestation of YHWH (cf. Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-24; 13:3-23; Zech. 3:1-2).

Luke uses the phrase often (cf. Luke 1:11,13; 2:9; Acts 5:19; 7:30; 8:26; 12:7,11,23; 10:3; 27:23) in the sense of #1 above. The NT does not use sense #2, "an angel of the Lord," unless Acts 18:26 and 29 is in a reference to the Holy Spirit.

■ **"standing to the right of the altar of incense"** The altar of incense was located in the Holy Place, next to the veil of the Holy of Holies. The description of this golden incense altar is found in Exod. 30:1-10. This would place the angel between the incense altar and the seven pointed candle stand (Menorah).

1:12 Fear is the common human response in the presence of the spiritual realm (cf. Gen. 15:1; 21:17; Exod. 14:13,31; Jos. 8:1; 10:8; Dan. 10:12,19; Rev. 1:17). However, again and again the divine message is a clear "fear not" (cf. Luke 1:13,30; 2:10).

1:13 "Do not be afraid" This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with the Negative particle, which usually means stop an act already in progress. We get the English term "phobia" from this Greek term (*phobos*).

■ **"your petition has been heard"** Zacharias was still praying for a child. The incense he was offering to God was a symbol of prayer. In Zacharias' priestly circle the offering of incense was considered a great honor. It was also considered to be a special time for personal requests.

■ **"John"** In Hebrew it means "one whom God has graciously given" or "YHWH is gracious" (BDB 220).

1:14 John's birth will be a blessing, not only to Zacharias and his family, but to Israel and to all the earth.

1:15 "he will be great in the sight of the Lord" This is an idiom for "he will serve God's plan and kingdom in a special way." He is the promised precursor of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5,6). In Luke 1:32 this same term "great" is used of Jesus.

■ **"he will drink no wine or liquor"** This is a strong double negative with an aorist active subjunctive. He was to be a Nazarite (cf. Numbers 6), which was a special dedicatory life given completely to God's service.

For alcohol (fermentation) and alcoholism (addiction) see Special Topic at Luke 22:18.

■ **"he will be filled with the Holy Spirit"** This was an OT way of affirming God's power and giftedness (cf. Exod. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31,35, where it refers to those who helped build the tabernacle). This special presence and activity of the Spirit had been missing for 400 years. In Jesus the new age of the Spirit had come.

This will become a powerful NT idiom of the power and presence of the Lord with His people (cf. Acts 2:4; 3:10; 4:8,31; 9:17; 13:9; Eph. 5:18). See Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit at Luke 12:12.

■ **"while yet in his mother's womb"** This shows God's initiation and blessing, not only in conception, but

even fetal spiritual development (cf. Luke 1:41). This phrase also parallels God's affirmation to Jeremiah in Jer. 1:4 (cf. Isa. 49:1; Ps. 139:13-16).

1:16 John's primary task was to spiritually prepare Israel for her Messiah (cf. Mark 1:15). His message was repent and be restored. He was the first true prophet (i.e., filled with the Spirit) since Malachi. Huge numbers of spiritually hungry Jews flocked to him.

The Greek verb *epistrepō* is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word for repentance (*shub*, cf. Num. 10:36; Deut. 30:2). It is used in this sense in Luke 1:16,17; 22:32; Acts 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18,20; 28:27. See Special Topic: Repentance at Luke 3:3.

■ **"the Lord their God"** This probably reflects the OT combination of the names for deity, as in Gen. 2:4,5,7,8 and many other verses.

1. Lord – YHWH (redeemer and covenant maker, cf. Gen. 3:14-15)

2. God – *Elohim* (creator, provider, and sustainer of all life, cf. Gen. 1:1)

This seems to reflect Luke's usage in Luke 1:16,32,68. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Luke 1:68.

1:17 "in the spirit and power of Elijah" This verse is an allusion to the prophecies of Mal. 3:1 and 4:5-6. Elijah was to precede the Messiah. However, John fills the role of Elijah (cf. Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13). The fact that John fulfills the Elijah prophecies should warn us about western literalism!

As Elisha received the Spirit of Elijah to become a prophet (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:16), Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit (cf. 2 Kgs. 2:9). In a sense Elisha continued the ministry of Elijah. This is what John does; he extends the eschatological ministry of Elijah foretold in Malachi 3 and 4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:18-20

¹⁸Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." ¹⁹The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

1:18 "How will I know" This sounds very much like Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:8) and Mary (cf. Luke 1:34). However, apparently God knows the heart, he asked in a doubting way to which God reacted (cf. Matt. 12:38; 16:1; Mark 8:11-12; John 2:18; 6:30; 1 Cor. 1:22). Modern interpreters are not able to do psychoanalysis on biblical characters!

1:19 "Gabriel" This Hebrew name means "God's strong man," "man of God," or "God is my warrior" (BDB 150). This is God's messenger angel (cf. Luke 1:26; Dan. 8:16; 9:21). There are only two angels named in the Bible: (1) Gabriel, who is God's messenger angel to Daniel, Zacharias, and Mary, and (2) Michael (BDB 567), who is the national archangel (cf. Dan. 10:13,21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7).

■ **"who stands in the presence of God"** Angeology became a major element of rabbinical theology and speculation following Israel's contact with Zoroastrianism (Persian religion). The Bible is silent and vague about the spiritual realm. What is presented is often in metaphors or symbols. From the OT there are two types of angels surrounding YHWH's throne—*Seraphim* (cf. Isaiah 6) and *Cherubim* (cf. Ezekiel 1,10).

Gabriel's authority rests on his relationship with and proximity to God. This is an important message from God for His purposes (i.e., good news).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHERUBIM

1:20 This verse serves as a powerful warning about rejecting, or at least not fully believing, the message from God. Humans may fear the spiritual realm (angels), but they must respect their message! The consequences of rejection are potent.

NASB, NKJV "behold"

NRSV, TEV "But"

NJB "Look"

This is the Greek term *idou*, which was an imperative of *eidein*, "to see." For Luke it has become a literary technique to draw attention to a statement. It is used many times in the Luke's writings and the Revelation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:21-23

²¹And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²²But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. ²³When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

1:21 "the temple" This is the term *naos*. Literally it is from the term "to dwell." It came to be used of the central shrine made up of the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place.

1:22 "when he came out, he was unable to speak" According to rabbinical tradition it was customary for the priest to bless the people when he came out from burning incense, using the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:24-26.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:24-25

²⁴After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, ²⁵"This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon *me*, to take away my disgrace among men."

1:25 This shows how she felt about being barren. It was viewed as a curse from God (cf. Gen. 30:23). See note at Luke 1:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:26-38

²⁶Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. ³¹"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

1:26 "sixth month" This refers to Elizabeth's pregnancy (cf. Luke 1:36).

■ **"Gabriel"** See note at Luke 1:19.

■ **"a city in Galilee called Nazareth"** Galilee was known as a Gentile area although many Jews lived there (apparently a small, new community from the royal tribe of Judah lived in Nazareth). Nazareth is never mentioned in the OT or Talmud or by Flavius Josephus. The name Nazareth itself may be related to the Messianic title "Branch" (*nezer*, cf. Isa. 11:1; Matt. 2:23). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE](#) at Luke 4:34. People from this area were generally looked down upon by Judean Jews. This is related to the prophecy of Isa. 9:1.

1:27 "a virgin" The Greek word from the Septuagint *pathenon* is not ambiguous as the Hebrew *Almah* (BDB 761 II) is in Isa. 7:4. It specifically means virgin. Matthew and Luke assert that Jesus had no human father (cf. Luke 1:34), that He was the ultimate fulfillment of Isa. 7:14 and Gen. 3:15! This child is of God, not of man (i.e., Immanuel). It is surprising that Luke's source does not mention Isa. 7:14.

Outside of the birth accounts of Matthew and Luke the virgin birth is not specifically mentioned in the NT. It does not appear in any of the sermons of Acts or the later Epistles. This is not because it is not true, but because it might be misunderstood by a polytheistic Greek/Roman culture, which believed that the gods at Olympus regularly took human women and produced offspring. The uniqueness of the biblical account would be lost in this cultural context.

At this point I would like to use my comments from Isa. 7:14 (see www.freebiblecommentary.org).

"virgin" The Hebrew term here is *almah* (BDB 761). This term is used for a young woman of marriageable age (cf. Gen. 43:24; Exod. 2:8; Pro. 30:19). It designates a woman who is sexually mature. There is another Hebrew term for virgin, *bethulah* (BDB 143), which is used by Isaiah in Isa. 23:4, 12; 37:22; 47:1; 62:5. The Septuagint translates this verse with the Greek term "virgin." These terms are semantically overlapping and all of the young girls in Israeli culture were considered to be virgins. However, I do not believe in two virgin births, but one. There was a normal conception in Ahaz's day as a sign and a ("the," MT) virgin conception in Jesus' day (cf. Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-38). This is a multi-fulfillment prophecy!

I think the reason that the NT does not emphasize this more (only appears in the two birth narratives [i.e., Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31,34] and never in a sermon in Acts or an Epistle by any Apostle) is because of the possible misunderstanding of Greco-Roman religion where the cohabitation of gods and humans, resulting in offspring, was common.

To try to base a doctrine of sin as transmitted through male sperm and, therefore, show the reason for a virgin birth is, in my opinion, folly! In reality it is similar to the barren wives of the Patriarchs having children only at God's instigation. God is in control of the Messiah! An even greater truth is revealed in the NT where the Messiah is presented clearly as incarnated Deity (i.e., John 1:1; 5:18; 10:33; 14:9-11; Phil. 2:6)! Thus the need for a virgin birth!

■ **"engaged"** This is a perfect passive participle. In Jewish culture of the first century, this was legally binding. Only divorce or death could break this arrangement. Girls became marriageable at 12 years of age (*bat mitzvah*) with a one year betrothal period (*Ketubot* 4.4-5). For OT background see Deut. 22:23-27.

■ **"Joseph, of the descendants of David"** Whether Joseph (BDB 415, meaning "may YHWH add") and Mary both were of Davidic descent or just Joseph is uncertain (cf. Luke 2:5). The issue is significant because of the promises and prophecies of 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89:19ff). The obvious differences between the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are probably due to different lineages. Many commentators assume that Luke records the royal genealogy of Mary (Jesus' actual lineage), while Matthew records Joseph's royal lineage (Jesus' Jewish legal lineage). However, this is only speculation.

■ **"name was Mary"** In Hebrew this is the name Mara (i.e., "bitter" [BDB 600] of Ruth 1:20). In the Septuagint it is Mariam (BDB 599). Luke (like all the Synoptic Gospels) spells the name Maria (cf. Luke 1:27).

1:28

NASB, REB,

NIV, NET

NRSV, NJB

TEV

"Greetings"

"rejoice"

"peace"

This is a form of the normal term for "greeting" (*chairein*, cf. Acts 15:23; James 1:1) in the Greco-Roman world of the first century. Its grammatical form is present active imperative. Its basic meaning is "be full of joy" or "continue to rejoice." It may reflect the Messianic passage of Zech. 9:9.

There is the added possibility that this phrase was used in the Septuagint in contexts where

1. the phrase "do not be afraid" is used
2. God's people are told to rejoice because God is about to deliver them
 - a. Lamentations 4:21-22
 - b. Zephaniah 3:14-20
 - c. Joel 2:21-27
 - d. Zechariah 9:9

The angel's first words are a sound play on *chaire* and *kecharitōmenē* (a perfect passive participle), which is "be glad, favored one." These words have different etymological roots, but they sound alike.

▣ **"favored one"** The Vulgate has "Hail, Mary, full of grace." This is a good translation if we see that Mary is the recipient of God's grace, not the giver of grace (NJB, "you who enjoy God's favor!"). There is only one mediator, Jesus (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). However, this was a great and unique honor for a young, peasant woman (cf. Luke 1:48). This greeting shocked her (cf. Luke 1:29).

▣ **"you"** There are several ancient Greek uncial manuscripts (MSS A, C, D) which add the phrase "blessed are you among women." This illustrates one of the recurrent tendencies of copyists (i.e., scribes) to harmonize phrasing (see Luke 1:42). The UBS⁴ critical apparatus gives the absence of the phrase (MSS κ , B, L, W) in Luke 1:28 an "A" rating (certain).

1:30 "Do not be afraid" This is a present imperative with the negative particle negated, which usually means to stop an act in process. This is a common angelic message to humans (see note at Luke 1:13).

▣ **"you have found favor with God"** This seems to be an OT idiom for God's special activity in someone's life (cf. Gen. 6:8; 18:3; 19:19; 30:27; Exod. 33:12,17; Acts 7:46). God chooses to use imperfect, but available, humans who choose to trust Him to accomplish His purposes in this world.

1:31 "you will conceive in your womb" Mary could have been stoned for pregnancy outside of marriage (cf. Deut. 22:24-25).

A virgin-born child fulfills the prophecy and promise of Gen. 3:15 (cf. Gal. 4:4). Until this point in progressive relation, neither Isa. 7:14 nor Gen. 3:15 made sense. But now John 1:1-14; Rom. 1:3; 8:3; Phil. 2:6-11 make perfect sense. God became incarnate to deal with human sin.

In Jesus, God's justice, ("the soul that sins it will surely die") and God's grace ("For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son") meet in a redemptive, loving, sacrificial climax (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21)!

▣ **"you shall name Him Jesus"** Jesus is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew "Joshua" (BDB 221). Both are a compound of "YHWH" and "salvation." In the Matthew parallel (Matt. 1:21) the name is explained by the angel.

1:32-33 These two verses describe who this male child is and what he will do.

1. He will be great (cf. Micah 5:4).
2. He will be called the Son of the Most High (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7).

3. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 132:11; Micah 5:2)
4. He will reign over the house of Jacob (cf. Micah 5:3-4)
5. His kingdom will have no end (cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:14,18,27).

These phrases must have shocked Mary because

1. The Jews were not expecting an incarnation, but an empowering (like the Judges).
2. Her child will be the promised Messiah (cf. Isa. 9:7)
3. His kingdom would be universal and eternal (cf. 2 Sam. 7:13,16; Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; 7:14,18,27; Micah 5:4).

1:32 "the Son of the Most High" In the OT the King is called a "son" (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7). For a note on "Most High" see 1:76.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD

▣ **"the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David"** That Jesus is a descendant of David is a major Messianic affirmation (cf. 2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89:3-4; 132:11; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15-18; Micah 5:2); it is a recurrent theme of the Gospels (both Matthew's and Luke's genealogies, cf. Luke 1:32,69; 2:4; 3:31; Acts 2:29-31; 13:23; Matt. 15:22; 20:3; 21:9,15; John 7:42); Paul's Epistles (cf. Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8); and the book of the Revelation (cf. Luke 3:7; 22:16).

1:33 "He will reign. . . forever, and His kingdom will have no end" This obviously is not a reference to a millennial reign (cf. Rev. 20:1-6, as a matter of fact, Jesus never refers or alludes to a limited Messianic reign), but an eternal kingdom (cf. Ps. 45:7; 93:2; Isa. 9:6,7; Dan. 7:14,18; and implied in Mic. 5:2-5a). For "kingdom" see Special Topic at Luke 4:21.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (GREEK IDIOM)

1:34

NASB, NRSV,

TEV "Since I am a virgin"

NKJV "since I do not know a man"

NJB "since I have no knowledge of a man"

The word "know" in Hebrew implies an intimate, personal relationship (cf. Jer. 1:5), even a sexual union (cf. Gen. 4:1; 1 Sam. 1:19). This same idiom is used in the same sense in the Septuagint (cf. Jdgs. 11:39; 21:12).

1:35 "overshadow you" This was not a sexual experience for God or Mary. The Spirit does not have a physical, human body. There is a parallel relationship between "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" and "the power of the Most High will overshadow you." In this context it is not the person of the Spirit that is emphasized, but that OT concept of Him as the power of God that goes forth to do God's bidding (cf. Gen. 1:2). As the power of God came upon Mary (*eperchomai*) to accomplish His purposes, so too did it come upon the early church (cf. Acts 1:8).

We must be careful not to involve Greek polytheistic ideas in these virgin-birth texts. See note at Luke 1:27. This may be the very reason that this truth does not appear in the sermons of Acts or in the NT Epistles.

"Overshadow" (*episkiazō*) seems to be related to the OT *Shekinah* cloud of the Wilderness Wanderings which symbolized God's presence (cf. Septuagint of Exod. 40:35). The same Greek term is used of God's presence overshadowing the inner circle of Apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:5; Mark 7:9; Luke 9:34). It showed His personal presence and power.

NASB, TEV "the holy Child"

NKJV "that Holy One who is to be born"

NRSV "the child to be born will be holy"
NJB "the child will be holy"

It is obvious from these English translations there is a problem in the Greek text. Literally the phrase is "wherefore also the thing being born holy." To the participle "being born" (present passive) some ancient Greek manuscripts add "out of (or "from") you" (i.e., Mary, cf. MS C*). There have been several possible explanations.

1. The two previous clauses have "you."
2. The addition follows the Matthew parallel (cf. Matt. 1:20).
3. This is one of several purposeful theological additions by scribes to deter ancient Christological heresies (cf. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 139).

This is used in the sense of "sinless" (cf. Acts 3:14; 7:12; 22:14), but also "given to accomplish God's tasks" (cf. Acts 4:27).

Holiness is a family characteristic of God ("holy child" is parallel to "Son of God"). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

▣ **"the Son of God"** See Special Topic: The Son of God at Luke 1:32.

1:37 "For nothing will be impossible with God" This statement refers to Luke 1:36, but also to Gabriel's message to Mary (Luke 1:26-35). Elizabeth's pregnancy was a way of confirming God's supernatural actions in human conception (cf. LXX of Gen. 18:14). This phrase is an OT idiom of God's power accomplishing His purposes (cf. Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17; Zech. 8:6). It may be an allusion to Gen. 18:14, which deals specifically with the birth of Isaac (another supernatural, but not virgin, birth). It also occurs in a similar affirmation in Mark 10:27 and Luke 18:27.

1:38 "the bondservant of the Lord" The term "Lord" (*kurios* which reflects *adon*) obviously refers to YHWH here, but in Luke 1:43 Elizabeth uses the term for Jesus. See fuller note at Luke 1:43 and Special Topic at Luke 1:68.

▣ **"may it be done to me according to your word"** This is an aorist middle (deponent) optative, which is a prayer or expressed desire. What great faith this young girl displayed! She is not sinless, but has great faith (cf. Luke 1:45). This verse shows the theological balance between God's sovereignty and His covenant mandate (i.e., "if. . .then") of human response. God planned and initiated; Mary cooperated!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:39-45

³⁹Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed *is* she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

1:39 Zacharias and Elizabeth did not live in Jerusalem, but close by.

1:41 "baby leaped in my womb" This is not unusual for the sixth month of pregnancy, but the timing is miraculous! The eye of faith saw great meaning in a common occurrence. The rabbis asserted that the unborn child could respond to spiritual things (cf. Gen. 25:22). John, who was conceived with God's help,

was in the presence of Jesus (both yet unborn).

▣ **"filled with the Holy Spirit"** Notice that this phrase (so common in Acts) occurs here in a pre-Pentecostal setting. However, Elizabeth's resulting prophetic insight is far-reaching and obviously supernatural.

1:42 "Blessed. . .blessed" These are both exclamatory forms (Hebrew and Aramaic), like Ps. 1:1 (no verbs). These are also both perfect passive participles. Mary is blessed for a divine purpose. The world is blessed because of her child (cf. Gen. 3:15).

1:43 "my Lord" Elizabeth is using the theologically significant term "Lord" (cf. Exod. 3:14; Ps. 110:1) to refer to the unborn Messiah (cf. Luke 2:14). The filling of the Spirit has clearly opened her eyes as He did for Simeon in Luke 2:26; for Anna in Luke 2:36-38; for Nathanael in John 1:49; and for Peter in Matt. 16:16.

Elizabeth uses the same Greek term, "Lord," of YHWH in Luke 1:45 and 46-47 (by means of His messenger angel). In later Jewish worship the Jews were nervous of pronouncing the covenant name for God, YHWH, so they substituted the Hebrew term *Adon* (husband, owner, master, lord) for it in their reading of Scripture. This in turn affected later translations like the English ones, which use Lord for YHWH and Lord for *Adon* (cf. Ps. 110:1). See Special Topic at Luke 1:68.

1:45 "blessed" This is a different Greek word for blessed (*makaria*) than Luke 1:42 (twice), which is *eulogeō*. The term in Luke 1:42 is used only of God (once of Mary in Luke 1:42), while the term in Luke 1:45 is used of humans (cf. Luke 6:20-23; Matt. 5:3-11).

▣ **"is she who believed"** This seems to be a purposeful comparison with Zacharias' expressed doubts and resulting dumbness. However, it could also function as a way to denote the evangelistic purpose of all the Gospels (cf. John 20:30-31). Luke wants his Gentile readers/hearers to also exercise faith in God's word and promises!

SPECIAL TOPIC: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the Old Testament (מִן)

SPECIAL TOPIC: Faith, Believe, or Trust (Pistis [noun], Pisteuō, [verb], Pistos [adjective])

▣ **"that there would be a fulfillment"** This is the Greek term *teleiōsis*, which means "completion" or "accomplishment." Mary believed God's word to her. This is the key to the biblical concept of faith. Throughout the OT God spoke to human beings. Those who would be believers must believe! They must respond to God's word by yielding to His will and purpose. Many surely fit this "faith" category (cf. Hebrews 11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:46-55

⁴⁶And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. ⁴⁹For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. ⁵⁰And His mercy is upon generation after generation Toward those who fear Him. ⁵¹He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart. ⁵²He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. ⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich empty-handed. ⁵⁴He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, ⁵⁵As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever."

1:46-47 "soul. . .spirit" These two terms (*psuchē* and *pneuma*) are in a parallel relationship, therefore, these are synonymous (as are "Lord" and "God my Savior"). Humans are a unity, not a dichotomy or

trichotomy (cf. Gen. 2:7). This is a controversial issue, so I would like to insert the note from my commentary on 1 Thess. 5:23 (www.freebiblecommentary.org):

"This is not an ontological dichotomy in mankind, but a dual relationship to both this planet and to God. The Hebrew word *nephesh* is used of both mankind and the animals in Genesis, while spirit (*ruah*) is used uniquely of mankind. This is not a proof-text on the nature of mankind as a three-part (trichotomous) being. Mankind is primarily represented in the Bible as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). For a good summary of the theories of mankind as trichotomous, dichotomous, or a unity, see Millard J. Erickson's *Christian Theology* (second edition) pp. 538-557; Frank Stagg's *Polarities of Man's Existence in Biblical Perspective* (p. 133) and W. T. Conner, *Revelation and God*, pp. 50-51."

■ **"exalts. . .rejoiced"** The first is present tense. The second is aorist tense. It is possible that the first phrase refers to the unborn Messiah and the second phrase to Mary's faith in YHWH.

1:46 "Mary" There is an interesting discussion about which name—(1) Mary, (2) Elizabeth, or (3) no name at all—appeared in the original autograph. All Greek witnesses have "Mary" (spelled two different ways), but three Latin texts and comments by Irenaeus and Jerome, commenting on Origen's notes, have given rise to speculation. For further information, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 130-131.

1:47 "God my Savior" Mary recognizes her need for a savior!

As there has been an ambiguity in the use of Lord (*kurios*), possibly referring to YHWH or the Messiah, it is interesting to me how this possibly "purposeful" ambiguity continues throughout the NT. The Trinitarian aspect of God's nature unifies the Father and the Son. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at Luke 3:22.

In Paul's letter to Titus he calls the Father "Savior" three times (cf. Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). In every context he also calls Jesus "Savior" (cf. Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6).

1:48 "humble state" God chose a young peasant girl to be the Messiah's mother (cf. Gen. 3:15). Isn't that just like God! He is in control. He will be magnified. He does not need human merit or performance. He will bring redemption!

■ **"will call me blessed"** Elizabeth has already blessed her younger relative twice (cf. Luke 1:42,45). This will be repeated throughout time because of the significance of her Son!

1:49 "the Mighty One" This reflects the Patriarchal name of God, *El Shaddai* (cf. Exod. 6:3). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Luke 1:68.

■ **"holy is His name"** See Special Topic at Luke 1:35.

1:50 "His mercy is upon generation after generation" This is an OT allusion to YHWH's unchanging character of mercy and covenant loyalty toward those who believe (cf. Deut. 5:10; 7:9; Ps. 103:17).

■ **"fear Him"** This means to respect or revere Him, to keep Him in a place of awe (of God in Acts 9:31; of government officials in Rom. 13:7; of slave owners in 1 Pet. 2:18).

1:51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm" This is an anthropomorphic phrase. God does not have a physical body. It is used in the Bible to describe God's power to act (cf. Ps. 98:1; 118:15-16; Isa. 51:9; 52:10). Often Jesus is depicted at the Father's right hand (cf. Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33,34; 5:31; 7:55,56).

[SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS HUMAN \(ANTHROPOMORPHISM\)](#)

■ **"He has scattered *those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart*"** This reflects YHWH's actions in the OT recorded in the Septuagint (cf. Num. 10:35; Deut. 30:1,3; Jer. 51:20-22). God's ways are so different from mankind's ways (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). He exalts those who are weak, powerless, and humble,

like Mary (cf. Luke 10:21).

The Greek term for "proud" (*huperēphanos*) is used often in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 1:25; 2:12; 13:11; 29:20).

For "heart" see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

1:52 This is parallel to Luke 1:51, as is Luke 1:53. This is known as a "reversal" promise. YHWH will bring down the proud and powerful, but will exalt the lowly!

1:53 This is a quote from Ps. 107:9. The same concept is found in Ps. 146:7-9. God's ways are not mankind's ways (cf. Isa. 55:8-11).

1:54 "to Israel His servant" The term "servant" was originally used in the OT as an honorific title for leaders (e.g., Moses, Joshua, David).

It came to be used in a collective sense for Israel, especially in the Servant Songs of Isaiah (cf. Luke 41:8-9; 42:18-19; 43:10). This collective sense is personified in an ideal Israelite (i.e., the Messiah in Isa. 42:1; 52:13-53:12).

▣ **"In remembrance of His mercy"** God is and has been faithful to Israel because of His unchanging character (cf. Mal. 3:6) of mercy and covenant love (Hebrew *hesed*).

1:55 This verse emphasizes the call of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12, 15, 17) and his descendants who will provide a family and a nation for the Messiah. Jesus is the fulfillment of "the seed" of Abraham (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:15-19).

▣ "forever" See Special Topic: Greek Idioms for "Forever" at Luke 1:33.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:56

⁵⁶And Mary stayed with her about three months, and *then* returned to her home.

1:56 "*then* returned to her home" Obviously to face ridicule. Belief always costs!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:57-58

⁵⁷Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.

1:57 For Jews the birth of a child, especially a son, was a blessing from God. Elizabeth had been childless for so long and now had delivered a healthy boy!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:59-66

⁵⁹And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. ⁶⁰But his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John." ⁶¹And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name." ⁶²And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. ⁶³And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished. ⁶⁴And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he *began* to speak in praise of God. ⁶⁵Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child *turn out to be*?" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with

him.

1:59 "on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child" This was practiced by all of Israel's neighbors except the Philistines (Greek Aegean people). For most cultures it was usually a rite of passage into manhood, but not for Israel. It was instead an initiation rite into the covenant People. It was a sign of a special faith relationship with YHWH (Gen. 17:9-14). Each Patriarch circumcised his own sons (i.e., acted as priest for his own family). Robert Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 214, says the rite of circumcision connected the rite of blood-shedding with the act of circumcision. Blood was connected to covenant forming (cf. Gen. 15:17), covenant breaking (cf. Gen. 2:17), and covenant redemption (cf. Isaiah 53).

The eighth day was the set time for male Jews to have the foreskin of their penises removed (cf. Lev. 12:3; Gen. 17:12). It was so important that even if the eighth day occurred on the Sabbath the ritual was still performed.

1:60 "he shall be called John" Naming was usually the choice of the father, but for both Jesus (cf. Matt. 1:21) and John (cf. Luke 1:13) the messenger angel gave their names.

1:63 "they were all astonished" This is the Greek term *thaumazō*, which is used often by Luke (cf. Luke 1:21,63; 2:18,33; 4:22; 7:9; 8:25; 9:43; 11:13,38; 20:26; 24:12,41; Acts 2:7; 3:12; 4:13; 7:31; 13:41). Luke's vocabulary is influenced by the Septuagint. This word is also found in several OT contexts (cf. Gen. 19:21; Lev. 19:25; 26:32; Deut. 10:17; 28:50; Job 41:4; Dan. 8:27). The noun form is used of God's miracles (cf. Exod. 3:20; Deut. 34:12; Jdgs. 6:13; and 1 Chr. 16:9).

▣ **"fear"** These neighbors, family, and friends recognized God's special presence and divine purpose (cf. Luke 1:66) in this conception and birth. This fear (a better word, "awe," cf. NJB) is the common human response to the presence of the supernatural.

1:66 "For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him" Luke adds these personal comments several times (cf. Luke 2:50; 3:15; 7:39; 16:14; 20:20; 23:12).

This was a Semitic idiom for God's presence, power, and plan for individuals who become part of His design for the Kingdom (cf. 1 Chr. 28:19; Ezek. 1:3). By analogy it would apply to the mindset and worldview of all believers. God is with us, for us, and has a plan and purpose for our lives. See Special Topic at Luke 1:51.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:67-79

⁶⁷And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:
⁶⁸"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, ⁶⁹And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant – ⁷⁰As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old – ⁷¹Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷²To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, ⁷³The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, ⁷⁴To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. ⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; ⁷⁷To give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, ⁷⁹To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

1:67 "was filled with the Holy Spirit" This shows the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit who was active in the world before Pentecost. Be careful about making too radical a distinction between the OT

actions of the Spirit and the NT actions of the Spirit. The difference is in the NT personification of the Spirit (see Special Topic at Luke 12:12), not His actions.

▣ **"prophesied"** See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#)

1:68-70 Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, thanks "the Lord God of Israel" for sending His promised Messiah. The context does not mention his own son (i.e., John) until Luke 1:76-77. In this same section, Luke 1:71-75 and 78-79 are also a psalm of thanksgiving to YHWH for the salvation He has brought in His Messiah (cf. Eph. 1:3-12).

1:68 "Blessed" See note at Luke 1:45.

▣ **"the Lord God of Israel"** This phrase contains a Greek translation of the two most common names for deity.

1. "Lord" reflects YHWH of Exod. 3:14, which denotes God as Savior, Redeemer, and Covenant-making God.
2. "God" reflects the general name for God, *Elohim* (cf. Gen. 1:1), which denotes God as creator, provider, and sustainer of all life on this planet.

The creator and redeeming God (cf. Gen. 2:4) reveals Himself to the world through His dealings with Abraham and his descendants (cf. Gen. 12,15,17). Israel will be the source of God's promised Messiah.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#)

▣ **"For He has visited us"** This visit of YHWH was in the person and work of Jesus. Jesus has brought redemption, not only for Israel, but for the world (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6).

▣ **"redemption"** See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM](#)

1:69 "horn of salvation" In the OT an animal's horns were a symbol of that animal's power (cf. Deut. 33:17; Ps. 92:10; Zech. 1:18-21). It was used to describe the power of the wicked (cf. Ps. 75:10) and the righteous (cf. 1 Sam. 2:1; Ps. 75:10; 89:17; 148:14).

This cultural idiom came to be used for the efficacious power of the altar of sacrifice (cf. Exod. 27:2; 30:10; 1 Kgs. 1:50; 2:28). From this developed the concept of God as the efficacious protector of one's salvation (cf. 2 Sam. 22:2; Ps. 18:2).

▣ **"in the house of David His servant"** This phrase brings several OT connotations.

1. The key term is "house" and the key context is 2 Samuel 7. From this Messianic promise comes Ps. 132:17 and Isa. 11:1. The Messiah will be from the tribe of Judah (cf. Genesis 49) and the family of Jesse (cf. Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:32; John 7:42; Acts 13:23; Rom. 1:3; Rev. 22:16).
2. "Servant" was an OT title of honor and of Moses and Joshua.

1:70 The "He" of this verse refers to the "Spirit" of Luke 1:67. This is the NT affirmation of the inspiration and relevance of OT prophecy (cf. Rom. 1:2; 3:21; 16:26). It is also an affirmation of the personality of the Spirit. See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd Ed., pp 875-878. See Special Topic at Luke 12:12.

NASB, NRSV "from of old"

NKJV "who *have been* since the world began"

TEV "long ago"

NJB "from ancient times"

This phrase relates to the OT prophets. It was inserted between "holy" and "prophets" (cf. Acts 3:21). The theological thrust is that the Messiahship of Jesus was not a recent invention, but ancient, inspired prophecy. He would bring physical (OT) and spiritual (NT) salvation to Israel and beyond (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

1:71 "Salvation" In the OT the word "salvation" has a primary meaning of physical deliverance (cf. Luke 1:74). This introduces a quote from Ps. 106:10.

1:72

NASB "to show mercy toward our fathers"

NKJV "to perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers"

NRSV "thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors"

TEV "He said He would show mercy to our ancestors"

NJB "and show faithful love to our ancestors"

The two lines of Luke 1:72 are parallel. The covenant to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12,15,17) is specifically mentioned in Luke 1:73-75. This was a conditional covenant based on God's promise in Luke 1:73-74a and the appropriate faith response in Luke 1:74b-75.

■ **"holy covenant"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

1:73 "The oath which He swore to Abraham our father" God's covenant with Abraham is recorded in Lukes 12 and 15, but this specific oath is recorded in Gen. 22:16-18. Paul mentions this oath/promise several times in Romans 4, where he documents that God's salvation has always been based on (1) God's mercy and covenant initiation and (2) mankind's faith response.

1:74 The infinitive that begins this verse in NASB, NKJV, and NJB is found in Luke 1:73 in UBS⁴ and NRSV.

The purpose of human redemption is human service to God. This is Paul's very point in Romans 6!

Fear of God is caused by sin. The Messiah removes the penalty of sin and restores the "image of God" (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in fallen mankind, so fellowship without fear is possible again, as it was in the Garden of Eden.

1:75 "holiness" See Special Topic: Holy at Luke 1:35.

■ **"righteousness"** See Special Topic at Luke 1:6.

1:76 "you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High" This was a startling statement since there had been no prophet in Israel since Malachi, over 400 years earlier.

The title "Most High" (*hypsistos*) comes from the Septuagint's translation of the Hebrew *Elion*. It is first applied to God in Gen. 14:18,19,20,22 in connection with Melchizedek (cf. Heb. 7:1) and again in Num. 24:16 in connection with Balaam.

Moses uses it of God in Deut. 32:8 (cf. Acts 17:26). It is used several times in the Psalms (cf. Luke 18:13; 78:35; 89:27).

The Gospel writers use it several times in connection to Jesus being called the Son of the Most High (cf. Luke 1:32; Mark 5:7; and parallel Luke 8:28) and here in this text, John the Baptist as prophet of the Most High. See Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 35.

■ **"you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways"** The Jews were expecting a forerunner to the Messiah and because of Mal. 4:5, they were expecting Elijah to be reincarnated. John the Baptist dressed and lived much like Elijah.

John did not see himself in this role (cf. John 1:21), but Jesus says he fulfilled this prophecy (cf. Matt. 11:14). John describes himself (cf. Luke 3:2-6) by this very quote from Mal. 3:1 (cf. Isa. 40:3-4).

The word "Lord" is a way to translate YHWH. It refers to the Covenant God of Israel (cf. Luke 1:16-17; Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3-4). John prepares for the coming of YHWH in His Messiah.

1:77 John's ministry of preparation had a threefold purpose.

1. to accentuate a spiritual sense of need (i.e., baptism of repentance)
2. to bring knowledge of salvation (i.e., repent and believe) in God's mercy, God's Messiah, God's soon-coming provision (cf. Luke 1:15)
3. to point toward Jesus (cf. John 1:29-34, 35-37)

John cannot bring salvation by the forgiveness of sins, but he points toward One who can and will—Jesus of Nazareth.

1:78 "Because of the tender mercy of our God" It was the unchanging character of God the Father (cf. Mal. 3:6, although it could reflect Isa. 9:2 or 60:1), which sent the Messiah (cf. John 3:16). Mercy is the key to "predestination" (cf. Rom. 9:15,16,18; 11:30,31,32).

The Greek term translated "tender" is literally *splagchnon*, which denoted "the inward parts" of a sacrifice, which the Canaanites ate but the Jews offered to YHWH on the altar of sacrifice at the Tabernacle (cf. Exod. 29:13; Lev. 3:3-4, 10, 15; 4:8-9; 7:3-4; 8:16,25; 9:10,16).

The Ancients located the feelings in these "lower organs" (liver, kidneys, intestines, cf. Isa. 63:15; Jer. 4:19; and the metaphor is continued in the NT, cf. 2 Cor. 6:12; 7:15; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Col. 3:12; Philemon 7,12,20).

NASB	"With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us"
NKJV	"With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us"
NRSV	"The dawn from on high will break upon us"
TEV	"He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us"
NJB	"In which the rising Sun has come from on high to visit us"

Because there have been several allusions to Malachi in this praise of Zacharias, this is probably an allusion to Mal. 4:2a. "But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings."

The word "sun" does not appear in the Greek text, but only the term "rising" (as it does in the LXX of Mal. 4:2). The term "sun" has two possible origins.

1. The Zoroastrians' (i.e., Persian religion during the captivity of Israel) symbol of their high, good god (*Ahura Masda*) was the sun disk with wings.
2. The title for God, "Most High" (cf. Luke 1:32,76) is a way of referring to God's gift of light/sun (cf. Ps. 19:1-6).

Malachi 4 speaks of a day of salvation coming symbolized by light/healing.

There are Greek manuscript variations as to the verb tense (present/future). The Malachi prophecy is future, but the Christ-event for John the Baptist was present.

1:79 This is a quote from Isa. 9:1-2 (which means Luke 1:78 could also refer to Isa. 9:2). There have been several quotes from Malachi that have had parallels in Isaiah (i.e., prepare the way of the Lord). This seems to be another (i.e., a rabbinical wordplay on "sun rise" and "shine").

Originally the Isaiah prophecy referred to the first defeated tribes in the north of Israel who were taken captive first by the northern invasion of Assyria in the eighth century b.c. Isaiah asserts they will be the first to have good news presented to them. Jesus' first area of ministry was Galilee!

■ **"to guide our feet into the way of peace"** This is an aorist active infinitive of the Greek term "to direct." It is used only three times in the NT: here and twice by Paul in his letters to Thessalonica (cf. 1 Thess. 3:11; 2 Thess. 3:5). In all three occurrences it emphasizes God's guidance. In the Septuagint it is linked to "keep one straight" (i.e., on God's path).

OT faith is characterized as a clear path. God's people are to follow the path, stay on the straight path. It

is not by accident the early church in Acts is called "the Way."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 1:80

⁸⁰And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

1:80 "the child continued to grow and to become strong" This is very similar to the description of Jesus' development, both physically and spiritually (cf. Luke 2:40).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BE MADE STRONG

▣ **"in spirit"** As is often the case, the interpretive issue is, does this refer to the Holy Spirit or to John's human spirit? Possibly to both, based on an allusion to Isa. 11:1-2.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (PNEUMA) IN THE NT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the virgin birth an important biblical concept?
2. How did the Spirit accomplish this task?
3. How do we balance the greatness of Mary's faith with the normalcy of her humanity?
4. What is the important truth revealed in Luke 1:51-53?
5. Why are the titles of the godly king listed in Luke 1:6 so significant in our understanding of Jesus of Nazareth?
6. Why can Zacharias be filled with the Holy Spirit before Pentecost?
7. Why is the Davidic origin of the Messiah so important?
8. Why were the Jews expecting Elijah to be reincarnated?

LUKE 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Birth of Jesus	Christ Born of Mary	The Birth of Jesus	The Birth of Jesus	The Birth of Jesus and Visit of the Shepherds
2:1-7	2:1-7	2:1-7	2:1-3 2:4-7	2:1-14
The Shepherds and the Angels	Glory in the Highest		The Shepherds and the Angels	
2:8-14a	2:8-13 2:14-20	2:8-14	2:8-12 2:13 2:14	
2:14b-20		2:15-20	2:15 2:16-20	2:15-20
	Circumcision of Jesus		Jesus Is Named	The Circumcision of Jesus
2:21	2:21	2:21	2:21	2:21
The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple	Jesus Presented in the Temple		Jesus is Presented in the Temple	Jesus is Presented in the Temple
2:22-24	2:22-24	2:22-24	2:22-24	2:22-28
	Simeon Sees God's Salvation			
2:25-35	2:25-35	2:25-32	2:25-32	The Nunc Dimittis 2:29-32
		2:33-35	2:33-35	The Prophecy of Simeon 2:33-35
	Anna Bears Witness to the Redeemer			The Prophecy of Anna
2:36-38	2:36-38	2:36-38	2:36-38	2:36-38
Return to Nazareth	The Family Returns to Nazareth		The Return to Nazareth	The Hidden Life of Jesus at Nazareth
2:39-40	2:39-40	2:39-40	2:39-40	2:39-40
The Boy Jesus in the Temple	The Boy Jesus Amazes the Scholars	The Boy Jesus at Jerusalem	The Boy Jesus in the Temple	Jesus Among the Doctors of the Law
2:41-52	2:41-50	2:41-51	2:41-48	2:41-45

			2:46-50
Jesus Advances in Wisdom and Favor		2:49-50	The Hidden Life at Nazareth Resumed
2:51-52	2:52	2:51-52	2:51-52

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:1-7

¹Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ²This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

2:1 "decree" These Roman enrollments ran in fourteen-year cycles which began under Caesar Augustus (30 b.c. to a.d. 14, cf. Luke 3:1; Matt. 22:17). We learn of these cycles from Egyptian papyri. They took years to finish. A second census is mentioned in Acts 5:37 and in the writings of Josephus, which says that it was done in a.d. 6; therefore, the first was begun about 8 b.c. (cf. Acts 5:37).

▣ **"census"** This registration was for the purpose of taxation and military conscription. Jews, however, were exempt from military service. It also included, possibly, an oath of loyalty to Caesar.

▣ **"the inhabited earth"** This refers to the Roman Empire or the known civilized world (cf. Luke 4:5; 21:26; Acts 11:28; 17:6,31; 19:27; 24:5; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 3:10). It is surely possible that some of these texts reflect a world-wide emphasis, like Matt. 24:14; Acts 17:31; and Heb. 1:6; 2:5).

2:2 "This was the first census" A second census is mentioned in Acts 5:37. These Roman censuses took many years to complete, possibly up to fourteen years (i.e., evidence from Egypt).

▣ **"Quirinius"** There is a problem with this statement and secular history. Quirinius was the civil governor of Syria in a.d. 6. He was the military leader in Syria, of which Judea was a part, from 10-7 b.c., however,

he did not become the political leader until a.d. 6. He came to Judea in a.d. 6/7 for the explicit purpose of registration for taxation (Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.1-2,26). The footnote in the NRSV gives the information that Quirinius was a special legate of Augustus to deal with a rebellious tribe (Homonadenses, cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.48) and, therefore, was the military governor of Syria while Varas was the civil governor (Oxford, 1991, edited by Bruce M. Metzger and Roland Murphy, pp. NT 79-80).

A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Luke, p. 105, asserts that Quirinius acted as a special representative of the Emperor from 12 b.c. to a.d. 16, which included an administrative charge related to the census. It also asserts that he was twice governor of Syria, from 3-2 b.c. and again in a.d. 6-16. The authors of the UBS Handbook, Reiling and Swellengsegl, cite *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, pp. 975-977, as their source.

2:3 The "everyone" refers to males, possibly males with taxable property (land, businesses, etc.).

▣ **"each to his own city"** This was the unique aspect related to Jewish culture. Nazareth had a clan from the tribe of Judah (family of Jesse) living there, but for several families Bethlehem was their ancestral city.

2:4 "Bethlehem" This was a small Judean village about six miles southwest of Jerusalem and, therefore, about seventy miles south of Nazareth. It was known in the OT as Ephrath (cf. Gen. 35:19), which became Bethlehem Ephrathah of Micah 5:2. This was a way to distinguish it from a Bethlehem in the north of Israel.

This city is known as the city where Boaz and Ruth, who were ancestors of King David, lived (cf. Ruth 4:11). David's father, Jesse, lived here also (cf. 1 Sam. 17:12). Because it was the ancestral home of David, it was the prophesied but unexpected site of Jesus' birth (cf. Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:5,6; John 7:42).

▣ **"because he was of the house and family of David"** One wonders how much of the prophecy of 2 Sam. 7:12-17 Luke had in mind (cf. Luke 1:32) when he recorded this phrase about the lineage of Jesus. This phrase may have been a direct allusion to these OT Messianic promises.

2:5 "to register along with Mary" One wonders why Mary traveled so late in her pregnancy when only males were required to return to their ancestral home.

1. Joseph did not want to leave her in Nazareth where she would be verbally ridiculed
2. Joseph or Mary knew the prophecy of Micah 5 and wanted to fulfill it
3. God was working in the situation, unbeknown to either Joseph or Mary

▣ **"engaged"** Matthew 1:24-25 implies that they were married, but the marriage had not been consummated. In Jewish culture engagement was legally binding. Marriages were arranged by families and this engagement period usually lasted up to a year.

2:6 "While they were there" This may imply an extended period in Bethlehem, possibly to keep Mary from the derision in Nazareth.

2:7 "firstborn" This is used in the OT sense of "heir." It also suggests that Mary had other children (cf. Matt. 13:55-56; John 7:35).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRSTBORN

▣ **"wrapped Him in cloths"** This term (BDB 367) meant to wrap up with cloth, like a broken arm (cf. Ezek. 30:21). It is used of wrapping a newborn in Ezek. 16:4 (cf. Wis. 7:4). It is used metaphorically in Job 38:9.

Apparently the entire body of a newborn was wrapped (similar to American Indians) for its warmth and protection. This would have been the common procedure for every child.

▣ **"manger"** This was a feeding trough (cf. LX, Isa. 1:3; Pro. 14:4) for domestic animals. These were very crude, non-hygenic conditions, but so was all of the ancient, peasant world.

- **"inn"** The term *kataluma* is indefinite and could refer to
 1. A guest room (animals often lived in close proximity to their owners, cf. Mark 14:14; Luke 22:11; see Kenneth Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, p. xv).
 2. Justin Martyr (a.d. 110-162/168) says that Jesus was born in a cave used as an animal corral (common in this area).
 3. Others say it was in an open-air courtyard of the Inn.
 4. The more traditional interpretation is in a room on the lowest level shared with animals of the home owner (i.e., not an inn).

Bethlehem was a very small village. I am not sure there would be enough travelers to warrant an inn (normal word, *pandocheion*, cf. Luke 10:34). Jewish culture stressed the cultural obligation of hosting relatives. There were so many relatives in town for the enrollment that no guest room was available. Luke uses this same word in Luke 22:11 for a "guest room" (cf. Mark 14:14).

The term is used in a wide variety of meanings in the Septuagint, but one of them is a room in one's house, usually on the roof (cf. 1 Sam. 1:18; 2 Sam. 7:6; 1 Chr. 17:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:8-14

⁸In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

2:8 "In the same region" This refers to Bethlehem.

- **"shepherds"** The rabbis considered them to be religious outcasts and their testimony was not admissible in court (i.e., later Jewish tradition). This was because they lived with the sheep and could not keep all the rules and regulations of the rabbis (i.e., Talmud). There may be some symbolic connection with David's being a shepherd in this same area. The Messiah's birth was announced first to Jewish shepherds! This is surprising, recorded by a Gentile, writing for Gentiles, while Matthew, writing to Jews, mentions the wise men (possibly Gentiles) from the east.

- **"their flock"** There is no way to fix the time of the year of Jesus' birth because the Temple flocks were kept in that area all year. God's Lamb (cf. John 1:29) was born in the same area that the sacrificial lambs used year round in the daily temple sacrifice. If so, these shepherds may have been Levites.

The traditional date of December 25 to celebrate Jesus' birth developed hundreds of years later (i.e., fourth century, *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, Luke 2:3.13), apparently chosen to coincide with a pagan, astral festival (winter solstice). Some of the elements of modern Christmas were a part of the Roman holiday known as "the Feast of Saturnalia."

Clement of Alexandria, at the end of the second century, noted the lack of agreement on the exact birth date of Jesus (*Stromata*, 1.21). Even today some believers celebrate January 6, not December 25 (i.e., Eastern Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox).

2:9 "an angel of the Lord" This angel seems to be separate from the heavenly hosts who later speak or sing. The KJV has the definite article, but it is not in the Greek text. This exact Greek phrase is used of the angel who appeared to Zacharias in the Holy Place (see note at Luke 1:11).

- **"the glory of the Lord"** This phrase is often used in the Septuagint to denote the glorious personal

presence of YHWH (cf. Exod. 16:7,10; 24:16; 40:34-38; Num. 16:19).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (DOXA)

- ▣ **"stood before them"** This same verb is used of the two angels at the Ascension (cf. Luke 24:4).
- ▣ **"shone around them"** This same word is used by Paul of his Damascus road experience in Acts 26:13. These are the only two occurrences of the term in the NT; it does not appear at all in the Septuagint. I wonder if Luke got the term, which describes God's glorious presence, from hearing Paul's testimony so many times?

NASB "they were terribly frightened"

NKJV "they were greatly afraid"

NRSV, NJB "they were terrified"

NJB "they were terribly afraid"

The Greek phrase is literally "they feared a great fear." The verb and the object are the same term. This is called a "cognate accusative." The sight of the spiritual realm always frightens fallen humanity.

2:10 "Do not be afraid" This is a present imperative with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act already in process. This is a very common angelic greeting to frightened humanity (cf. Luke 1:13,30).

- ▣ **"good news of great joy"** Their "great fear" is now balanced with "great joy."

The word translated "good news" (*euangelizō*, cf. Luke 1:19) is a combination of the words "good" and "message." It is used often in the Septuagint for preaching a glad message (cf. 1 Sam. 31:9; 2 Sam. 1:20; 4:10; 18:19-20,31; 1 Kgs. 1:42; Ps. 39:10). It came to be used in a technical sense for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 3:18; 4:18,43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1; Acts 5:42; 8:4,12,25,35,40; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32; 14:2,15,21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18).

- ▣ **"for all the people"** This was the promise of Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; and of the eighth century prophets. This is the mystery hidden in ages past, but now fully revealed in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). This good news even reaches to outcast shepherds (and by implication to Luke's Gentile readers)! This same universal emphasis is repeated and defined in Luke 2:32.

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH's ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

2:11 "for today" The NET Bible has a good comment about Luke's use of "today" (cf. p. 1796, #9). Luke often uses it to denote the presence of the new age.

1. Luke 2:11 – Christ's birth
2. Luke 4:21 – OT quotes from Isa. 61:1-2 (at Luke 2:18-19)
3. Luke 5:26 – Jesus' healing of the leper (sign of the new age)
4. Luke 13:32-33 – healings (sign of the new age)
5. Luke 19:9 – salvation comes to Zaccheus' house
6. Luke 23:43 – with Jesus in Paradise
7. Acts 4:9 – healings of Peter denote the new age
8. Acts 13:33 – Jesus' resurrection (sign of the new age, quote from Ps. 2:7)

The new Messianic age, the age of the Spirit, has now broken into time!

- ▣ **"the city of David"** This refers to Bethlehem. See note at Luke 2:4.

- ▣ **"Savior"** This title was used of YHWH in the OT (cf. Luke 1:47; Isa. 43:3,11; 45:15,21; 49:26; 60:16). In the Roman Empire it was used of Caesar. The word in Hebrew means "deliverer" (BDB 446) and is part of the name of Jesus (i.e., Hosea, BDB 448). This and 1:47 are surprisingly the only use of this term in the

Synoptic Gospels.

The fact that Jesus the carpenter from Nazareth is called by two major OT titles of YHWH (Savior and Lord) is striking. When you add the title Messiah (Christ), it is obvious that Luke is piling affirmation on affirmation of the deity of Jesus. The Synoptics, especially Mark, tend to hide Jesus' deity until the end. John clearly and forcefully asserts Jesus' pre-existence and deity in John 1:1-18. Luke, by using these titles, sets the theological stage for Gentiles (the audience for both John's and Luke's Gospels) to comprehend who Jesus was/is.

■ **"Christ"** The literal meaning is "Anointed One" from the verb *chriō*. It refers to the Coming King (*Mashiach*, Ps. 2:2; 18:50; 84:9; 89:49-51; 132:10,17) who will be called and equipped to do God's will in initiating the restoration and the New Age. The Hebrew term is translated in Greek as "Christ."

[SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE \(BDB 603\)](#)

[SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH](#)

■ **"Lord"** The Greek term "Lord" (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a developed theological sense. It can mean "mister," "sir," "master," "owner," "husband" or "the full God-man" (cf. John 9:36, 38). The OT (Hebrew, *adon*) usage of this term came from the Jews' reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, which was from the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking the Commandment which said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). They thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew word *adon*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word *kurios* (Lord). The NT authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ (e.g., Luke 2:11; John 20:28; Acts 10:36; 1 Cor. 2:8; Phil. 2:11; James 2:1; Rev. 19:16). The phrase "Jesus is Lord" was the public confession of faith and a baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). In Acts 2:36 both Christ and Lord are used of Jesus.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Luke 1:68.

2:12 "This will be a sign for you" One wonders if this was an intentional allusion to Isaiah 7. Zacharias and Mary had to believe without immediate confirmation, but these shepherds are given immediate confirmation. I wonder if they followed Jesus' life and ministry, if they were in the crowds that followed Him. I am surprised we do not hear more about their eyewitness testimony.

■ **"in a manger"** There was nothing unusual about His clothing, but there was something unusual about the Messiah lying in an animal feeding trough!

2:13 "heavenly host" This is literally "army of heaven." It reflects the Hebrew "sabbaoth," which also has a military connotation (cf. Jos. 5:14). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Luke 1:68.

2:14 "Glory to God in the highest" God is given glory for

1. His person ("in the highest")
2. His good news ("peace among men")
3. the sending of His Son
4. the good news of His finished work of redemption of fallen mankind)

God deserves glory (see Special Topic at Luke 2:9) and praise from creation and from His redeemed children!

There is some confusion as to the physical location of these angels. The first angel seems to have appeared on the earth next to the shepherds, but the large number of angels may have appeared in the sky. The text is ambiguous. The phrase "in the highest" refers to God, not the angels.

NASB	"on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased"
NKJV	"on earth peace, good will toward men"
NRSV	"on earth peace among those whom he favors"

TEV "peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased"
NJB "on earth peace for those he favors"

There is a manuscript variant connected to the last word in Greek. The genitive form (cf. NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB) is found in MSS κ^* , A, B^{*}, D and in the Greek text used by Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, and Augustine. The UBS⁴ gives this form an A (certain) rating. This grammatical construction is unusual for Koine Greek, but is a Semitic construction found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The opening chapters of Luke have many of these Semitic constructions (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 133), which may reflect Aramaic-written documents.

The familiar King James rendering gives the wrong theological impression. This is not a text on God's love for all humanity like 2:10; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; or 2 Pet. 3:9, but of God's offer of peace to those who know Him and are involved in His kingdom. The gospel was not good news to many Jews of Jesus' day, so it cannot refer to Israel alone. It is surely true that the mystery of God's election and human free will is difficult to harmonize, but both are biblically true. We must not proof-text part of the NT tension, but fully embrace the tension—preach God's sovereignty to whosoever will receive! There is a tension between Luke 2:10 (whether Israel or humanity) and Luke 2:14!

SPECIAL TOPIC: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:15-20

15When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." **16**So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. **17**When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. **18**And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. **19**But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. **20**The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

2:15 These shepherds recognized the prophetic aspect of the angels' message and wanted (both verbs are subjunctive) to go and confirm this great revelation in the nearby village.

I would have hated to be the one shepherd who had to stay and watch the sheep!

This verse uses *rēma* as "thing" (cf. Luke 2:19) instead of "word" or "statement" (cf. Luke 2:17).

2:16 It was not hard to find Mary, Joseph, and the baby in the small village of Bethlehem. The scene was exactly as the angels had said.

2:17-18 To whom does the "all" refer? It could be the people and visitors in Bethlehem or, because of the proximity of Jerusalem and the importance and source of the message, it may refer to the religious leaders in Jerusalem. However, notice that we do not hear of the message again anywhere else in the NT. Possibly the bias of the Jewish leadership against shepherds caused them to discredit the whole account.

2:19 "But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart" Mary thought about these events again and again (cf. Luke 2:51). Luke's source for these early years seems to have been Mary. He possibly visited her while Paul was in prison at Caesarea for two years.

2:20 It must have been hard to return to life as usual. I wonder how many of these shepherds were still alive when Jesus began His public ministry some thirty years later.

■ **"glorifying and praising God"** This involves two present participles.

1. glorifying God – Luke 2:20; 5:25,26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47; Acts 4:21; 11:18; 21:20;

23:47

2. praising God – Luke 2:13,20; 19:37; Acts 2:47; 3:8,9

Other parallel expressions are

1. blessed by God – Luke 1:64,68; 2:28; 24:53

2. gave thanks to God – Luke 2:38

3. give glory to God – Luke 2:14; 17:18; 19:38; 12:23 (negated)

It is obvious this is a recurrent theme in Luke's writings. God deserves glory, praise, and blessing!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was the Roman world enrolled?
2. Is there a problem with Luke's chronology?
3. Why is Jesus' birth in Bethlehem so important? What does this say about God's control of history?
4. Why was Jesus born in a stable?
5. What is the significance of God's angel announcing Christ's birth to shepherds?
6. Why are the titles "Savior," "Messiah," and "Lord" so important?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO LUKE 2:21-52

There are several Jewish rituals referred to in this passage.

A. The Ritual of Circumcision

1. The sign of YHWH's covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 17:1-14)
 - a. every male
 - b. eight days old (cf. Lev. 12:3)
 - c. for all generations
 - d. for domestic servants (cf. Exod. 12:44)
 - e. the uncircumcised male is to be cut off from the faith community
2. flint knives used
 - a. Exodus 4:25
 - b. Joshua 5:2-3
3. no special place, but done by the father (cf. Gen. 17:23-27), usually locally (not in the Tabernacle)
4. done by Patriarchs (cf. Gen. 34:13-24), but neglected in captivity (cf. Exod. 4:24-26) and restarted in conquest (cf. Jos. 5:4-9)

B. The Ritual of Childbirth Purification

1. period of uncleanness
 - a. any fluid that leaked from the body caused one to be ceremonially unclean
 - b. the mother was unclean for seven days after the birth of a son (cf. Lev. 12:2)
 - c. the mother was unclean for fourteen days after the birth of a daughter (cf. Lev. 12:5)
 - d. she remains unclean for forty days for a son (cf. Lev. 12:3-4 and eighty for a daughter (cf. Lev. 12:6)
 - e. this ceremonial uncleanness is compared to the monthly menstrual cycle
2. rite of purification
 - a. after a waiting period the mother comes to the tabernacle and brings an offering of
 - (1) a one year old lamb for a burnt offering (cf. Lev. 12:6)

- (2) a young pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering (cf. Lev. 12:6)
- (3) if the person is poor, then two pigeons or turtle doves are acceptable (cf. Lev. 12:8)
- b. these procedures result in a ceremonial cleansing

C. The Rite of Redemption of the Firstborn

1. Because of the death of the firstborn of Egypt, the firstborn of non-priestly families was given to serve YHWH (cf. Exodus 13).
2. The Levites and Priests as a tribe took the place of the firstborn males in serving YHWH (cf. Num. 3:12,45; 8:14).
3. The priest (any priest) had to be paid a set price by the parents to buy back their firstborn male child (cf. Exod. 34:20).
4. This seems to be reflected in Luke 2:23 and 27b, while the mother's rite of purification is in Luke 2:22,24.
5. The rabbis say that this redemption can be done with any priest on the thirty-first day. This does not fit the timing of Mary's forty-day uncleanness. Some scholars would see only two rituals in this context.

D. The command that all males (and by implication, their families) come to the tabernacle/Temple at least on the three annual feast days (cf. Exod. 23:14,17; Lev. 23)

1. The three main feasts
 - a. Passover/Unleavened Bread (cf. Exod. 23:14-15; Lev. 23:4-8; Num. 28:16-25)
 - b. Feast of Harvest/Pentecost (cf. Exod. 23:16; 34:22-34; Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31)
 - c. Feast of Ingathering/Booths (cf. Exod. 23:16; Lev. 23:34-36; Deut. 16:13-17)
2. Jesus' parents brought Him to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover when He was twelve (cf. Luke 2:41-43) just before His *bar mitzvah* at thirteen
3. Jesus fulfilled all aspects of the Mosaic Law (cf. Luke 2:39)

E. It is surprising how few OT quotes are in Luke's Gospel (Luke 2:23,24; 3:4-6). This is also true of Mark (who wrote for Romans). These three occur in Luke's first three chapters, which are possibly from his interviews with (or documents from) Mary. Luke, writing for Gentiles, does not feel the need to document OT prophecies as does Matthew (cf. Matt. 1:23; 2:15,18,23; 3:3; 4:15; 8:17; 12:18-21; 13:25; 21:5; 27:9), who writes for Jews.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:21

²¹And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was *then* called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

2:21 "eight days old" This was the Jewish time for circumcision (cf. Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3). It was considered so important that it was even performed on the Sabbath. All of the people in the Mediterranean area were circumcised (except the Philistines). The Romans performed this rite on the ninth day, the Greeks on the seventh or tenth day, and the Arabs on the thirteenth birthday (cf. Gen. 17:23-26). For the Jews it was a sign of YHWH's Covenant with Abraham. Jesus was born under the Law. See Contextual Insights, A.

■ **"His name was *then* called Jesus"** The parents usually named their children, but this child's name had been revealed by Gabriel (cf. Luke 1:31; Matt. 1:21).

Jesus (Greek) and Joshua or Yeshua (Hebrew) are the same Hebrew names. They are a combination of the covenant name for God, YHWH, and the noun "help" or "deliver." The exact way to combine these two nouns is uncertain, a verb must be supplied. Here are some options.

1. "YHWH saves"
2. "salvation is of YHWH"
3. "YHWH delivers"
4. "YHWH is the deliverer"

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:22-24

²²And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every *firstborn* male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

2:22 "the days for their purification" The pronoun "their" has bothered Bible students because it involves a sin offering for both the mother and the child. Jesus was born under the law (cf. Luke 2:21-22,27; Gal. 4:4-5) and He was to fulfill all things (cf. Matt. 3:15). He completely identified with the Jewish customs of His day. The period of purification was forty days after birth for a son and eighty days for a daughter (cf. Lev. 12:1-5). See Contextual Insights, B.

▣ **"up to Jerusalem"** Bethlehem is higher than Jerusalem physically, but to the Jews, no place on earth was spiritually higher than Jerusalem. In the Bible one must always go "up to Jerusalem." There are two or three Jewish rituals mentioned in Luke 2:22-44. The first was performed locally (circumcision), the others at the Temple at a later time. Mary's purification after forty days and buying back the firstborn male child was done according to later rabbinical traditions on the thirty-first day.

2:23 "Every *firstborn* male" This Jewish rite (cf. Exod. 13:2,12,13,15) was instituted at Passover (cf. Exodus 12). The Levites as a group took the place of the firstborn as God's special servants. The price of redemption in Jesus' day was five shekels, which was given to any priest (cf. Numbers 18:16). This was the normal price of a sacrificial lamb. See Contextual Insights, C.

2:24 "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons" This was the cheapest purification offering one could make. One bird was for a sin offering and the other was for a burnt offering (cf. Lev. 12:6-8). This rite is in reference to the purification of Luke 2:22. Any bodily emission made a Jewish person ceremonially unclean, therefore, birth was something that had to be dealt with by sacrifice. The women could watch the ritual by looking from the Nicor gate, but they could not enter into the inner court of the Temple because (1) they were considered ceremonially unclean and (2) they were women.

This offering shows that the wise men from the East had not yet brought their gifts.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:25-32

²⁵And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹"Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; ³⁰For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²A Light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

2:25 "Simeon" This is a very common name (BDB 1035, meaning "hearing" from Gen. 29:33). Some ancient sources suppose that he might have been the son of Rabbi Hillel and the father of Gamaliel, but

this is very doubtful. Others suppose that he was the president of the Sanhedrin. These suggestions are proposed so that Simeon would be a priest and this would be the rite of the buying back of the firstborn male child, but this is not in the text! Tradition says that he was old, but the text is silent.

■ **"righteous"** See full note and Special Topic at Luke 1:6.

■ **"devout"** This term literally means "taking hold well." It refers to one who is careful about religious matters, therefore, a pious person. It was used in the Septuagint in Lev. 15:31 and Micah 7:2. It is found only in Luke's writings in the NT (cf. Luke 2:25; Acts 2:5; 8:2; 22:12).

■ **"consolation of Israel"** This term is used several times in Luke's writings (cf. Luke 2:25; 6:24; Acts 4:36; 9:31; 13:15; 15:31), but it is not used in the other Gospels. It seems to be parallel to "the redemption of Jerusalem" in Luke 2:38 (cf. Luke 24:21) and possibly "the kingdom of God" in Luke 23:51 (cf. Mark 15:43). Therefore, it has an eschatological orientation (cf. Isa. 40:1-2). It is also a favorite phrase of Paul. In one paragraph in 2 Corinthians 1 he used it six times.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COMFORT

■ **"the Holy Spirit was upon him"** The gospel is not the result of human research or discovery. It is the supernatural revelation of the Spirit of God (cf. Luke 2:26-27).

The Spirit is the source of the revelations of the working out of the redemptive plan of God in these opening chapters of Luke:

1. Elizabeth, Luke 1:41
2. Zacharias, Luke 1:67
3. Simeon, Luke 2:25,26

Notice the imperfect tense. The Spirit did not come and go, but remained upon him.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION

2:26 "Lord's Christ" The Spirit had promised Simeon that he would not experience physical death until he saw God's Redeemer, the Anointed One, the Messiah (see Special Topic at Luke 2:11) with his own eyes (sounds like Job 19:25-27).

The term "revealed" is a periphrastic perfect passive indicative. God did it and the revelation remains. The verb is used in the Septuagint of God's revealing Himself (cf. Jer. 32:30; 33:2; 36:23).

The term "Lord" obviously refers to YHWH and "Christ" to baby Jesus. Jesus did not earn His Messiahship; He was born the Christ (no Adoptionism, no Gnosticism, see Appendix: Glossary of Terms).

2:27 "the parents" This is simply the language of description. This says nothing about the doctrine of the virgin birth (cf. Luke 1:34; Matt. 1:18-25).

■ **"to carry out for Him the custom of the Law"** This seems to refer to the Jewish rite of the redemption of the firstborn (cf. Exodus 13). See Contextual Insights, C.

2:28 "and blessed God" Simeon's blessing is directed toward YHWH for sending His promised redeemer (for all people, cf. Luke 2:29-32).

2:29

NASB, NKJV, "Lord"

TEV

NRSV, NJB "Master"

The term *despotēs* is used often in the Septuagint for YHWH (cf. Gen. 15:2,8; Jos. 5:14; Isa. 1:24; 3:1). In English we get the word "despot" from this Greek word. It is used of one who has supreme authority and power. It is used of YHWH in Acts 4:24 and Rev. 6:10 and of Jesus in 2 Pet. 2:1 and Jude 4.

■ **"to depart in peace"** This is an OT idiom of physical death after a long, happy life (cf. Gen. 15:15; Jer. 34:5). Death is not an enemy to those who know God!

■ **"according to Your word"** This refers in context to Luke 2:26. The Greek term "revealed" (perfect passive participle) is regularly used in the passive voice of divine revelations (cf. Matt. 2:12,22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Heb. 8:5; 11:7).

2:30 This emphasis on seeing God's salvation may come from OT prophecy (cf. Isa. 52:10) or reflect the same message.

In these opening chapters of Luke the term "salvation" has two connotations:

1. In the OT texts quoted it refers to the physical deliverance of Israel.
2. In light of the gospel it refers to spiritual salvation, which is brought through faith in Jesus' person and work.

In the OT, Israel is saved from the nations, but now Israel's Messiah will save the nations!

2:31-32 "all peoples. . .light. . .Gentiles" This is the universal gospel, which must have been very shocking to the Jews (I wonder if Simeon fully understood these prophecies in light of Christ), but was thrilling to be heard by Luke's Gentile readers (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1-3). This phrase could mean "in the presence of the Gentiles" (cf. Ps. 98:1-3; Isa. 52:1-10), however, this does not fit the context. It is amazing how many allusions there are to Isaiah's prophecies in the first two chapters of Luke. Isaiah, of all the prophets, saw this universal salvation (which becomes the theme of the NT (i.e., 24:47; John 1:12; 3:16; 4:10; Acts 10:34-35,43; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:14; 2 Pet. 3:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:33-35

³³And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—³⁵and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

2:33 "were amazed" This is a periphrastic imperfect. They marveled again and again. This possibly refers to the Gentiles being included in God's salvation! Mary already had the testimony of Gabriel and Elizabeth. Both Mary and Joseph had the shepherd's message.

2:34

NASB "is appointed"

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB "is destined"

TEV "is chosen"

This term is literally "to lie upon" or "be placed upon," but it came to have a metaphorical extension of "an appointed sign" in the Septuagint of Jos. 4:6. It is used in this sense several times in the NT (cf. 1 Thess. 3:3, which is also a present passive [deponent] indicative).

■ **"the fall"** God's universal redemptive plan (see Special Topic at Luke 2:11), which will be manifested by a suffering Messiah, will not be easy to believe for many people. But, how they respond will determine their spiritual destiny and eternity (cf. John 1:12; 3:16-19; 9:39).

It is possible that "fall" refers to unbelieving Jews tripping over Jesus (cf. Luke 20:17-18; 1 Cor. 1:23; 1 Pet. 2:6-8). He is the stone which the builders rejected (cf. Isa 8:14; 28:16; Matt. 21:42,44; Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 1:23; 1 Pet. 2:8). Hearers of the gospel must make a choice about Jesus. There is no neutral ground about Him (cf. Matt. 10:34-39). He is the Christ or He is a false Messiah (cf. John 10:1-18; 14:6).

■ **"and rise"** This same Greek term is translated "resurrection" in other texts. This special Child, the

Messiah, will be the only way to be right with God. Trusting Him will determine one's eternal state. The mystery of evil is that even with the Holy Spirit and the good news of Christ, many will reject Him (cf. Luke 8:11-12; 2 Cor. 4:4).

NASB	"for a sign to be opposed"
NKJV	"for a sign which will be spoken against"
NRSV	"to be a sign that will be opposed"
TEV	"He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against"
NJB	"destined to be a sign that is opposed"

One of the evidences which affirms Jesus' Messiahship is His rejection. This may be an allusion to OT texts like Isa. 6:9-10, of which Jesus says is the purpose of parables (i.e., to hide meaning, cf. Luke 8:10; Matt. 13:13; Mark 4:12; John 12:36b-43). The OT predicts again and again that only a faith remnant will be saved (delivered).

2:35 "a sword" This refers to the large sword which was carried by the Romans. This is a metaphorical reference to Jesus' rejection and crucifixion. Mary was present at Jesus' crucifixion (cf. John 19:26-27). This phrase seems to be addressed to Mary specifically. Notice the dashes in NASB.

▣ **"thoughts from many hearts may be revealed"** There is no middle ground with Jesus. He polarizes every group and by each one's response, his/her heart is revealed (cf. Luke 8:17-18). Being Jewish never did make one automatically right with God (neither does church membership or religious activity).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:36-38

³⁶And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. ³⁸At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

2:36 "prophetess" There had not been any truly inspired spokesperson for God since Malachi (or the writer of Chronicles). Women in places of leadership were not a new or unusual thing in the OT. Miriam, Hannah, Deborah, Ruth, Huldah, and Esther are examples (cf. Acts 2:17; 21:9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

▣ **"the tribe of Asher"** This shows the presence of a tribe out of the northern ten tribes who were exiled by Assyria in 722 b.c. in Jesus' day; some of the northern tribes did return.

2:37 "widow to the age of eighty-four" This woman had dedicated her life to God after the early death of her husband.

▣ **"she never left the temple"** This is the kind of phrase that becomes a point of contention among commentators. Some modern believers assert that it must be literal (i.e., she lived there) or the Bible is not true. For me this is obviously hyperbole. She was there during the day and at all special events. Worshiping God was her life. The same issue of literal vs. metaphorical relates to Ezekiel's lying in front of his house in Babylon for days on end (cf. Ezek. 4:4-8).

2:38 "to speak of Him" We are not told what she said, therefore, why would Luke mention her at all? It was to give the evidence of two witnesses required by Mosaic Law (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

Both the young (unborn John) and the old (Simeon and Anna) as well as male and female recognized who He was.

▣ **"looking for the redemption of Jerusalem"** See note at "consolation of Israel" at Luke 2:25. Zacharias also speaks of this in Luke 1:68-74. For "redemption," see Special Topic at Luke 1:68.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:39-40

³⁹When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

2:39 "When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord" Jesus and His parents were orthodox Jews in every sense. They completely fulfilled the Mosaic requirements due at the temple for themselves and their child.

▣ **"returned to Galilee"** This was Jesus' initial area of ministry, which was predicted in the OT (cf. Isa. 11:1). This would have been the first part of the Promised Land, which was invaded and defeated by Syria, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia.

▣ **"Nazareth"** The village where Jesus grew up was called Nazareth. It is not mentioned in the OT, the Talmud, or in Josephus. It apparently was not settled until the time of John Hyrcanus (i.e., Hasmonaen), who ruled from 134-104 b.c. The presence of Joseph and Mary from this village implies that a clan of David's line settled here.

There may be an etymological connection between the names Nazareth and the Messianic title Branch (cf. Matt. 2:23, "called a Nazarene"), which is *netser* in Hebrew (cf. Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Rev. 5:5; 22:16). See Special Topic at Luke 4:34.

It was apparently a term of reproach because of its location far from Jerusalem in a Gentile area (cf. John 1:46 and Acts 24:5, even though this, too, was prophecy [cf. Isa. 9:1]). This may be why "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" was inscribed on the placard which was placed on the cross above Jesus' head.

2:40 "The Child continued to grow" Jesus developed normally as a human child (as did John, cf. Luke 1:80) physically, emotionally, and spiritually (cf. Luke 2:52, see Special Topic at Luke 1:80). This may be an anti-Gnostic statement. He obviously attended synagogue school with the other children.

See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM](#)

▣ **"the grace of God was upon Him"** The Greek term *charis* has a wide semantic range. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, p. 262, list "kindness, gift, thanks, and good will" as possible translations. The sense in which it is used in this verse is unique to the Synoptic Gospels. The term is used several times in Luke's Gospel, but only here in the sense of "grace."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:41-51

⁴¹Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴²And when He became twelve, they went up *there* according to the custom of the Feast; ⁴³and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, ⁴⁴but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they *began* looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. ⁴⁶Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both

listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. ⁴⁸When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." ⁴⁹And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. ⁵¹And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these things* in her heart.

2:41 "went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover" Jewish males over 21 years of age were required to attend all three major annual feasts (cf. Ex. 23:14-17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16). In the first century this was reduced to one feast because of the number of Jews living outside of Palestine. This is another evidence of Jesus' parents' dedication to the law of Moses. Mary was not required by law to attend, but she wanted to.

2:42 "when He became twelve" Jesus was coming very close to His Bar Mitzvah, which made a Jewish boy a "son of the Law." This occurred at age thirteen. It is possible that Luke recorded His age as twelve to show how fully developed He was in the Scriptures even at this age. Jesus obviously, by this time, recognized who He was (cf. Luke 2:49).

2:43 "spending the full number of days" These bands of pilgrims came in groups for safety reasons and usually stayed either two or seven days (cf. Exod. 12:15-16; Lev. 23:6-8; Deut. 16:3).

▣ **"Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it"** Usually in these caravans of pilgrims the men and women traveled separately and often times the children would play together. Probably each parent thought that Jesus was in the care of the other.

2:44 "went a day's journey, and they began looking for Him" Usually these caravans left Jerusalem and stopped at Beereoth, about eight to ten miles from Jerusalem, for the night. The normal distance of a day's journey was over twenty miles.

2:46 "after three days" This includes their one day travel away from Jerusalem, the one-day journey back, and one day to search for Jesus.

▣ **"in the temple"** On the Sabbath and on feast days the rabbis lectured in the covered porches of the Court of the Women (outermost courtyard of the shrine).

▣ **"both listening to them and asking them questions"** This is a helpful model for all of us. We all have teachers who have influenced us and we thank God for them. It is good to have a receptive spirit. However, there must come a time of mature reflective thought when we ask questions about what we have been told, even of those we trust. Maturity both listens and questions. The truth that was shared by others must become our truth.

2:47 "And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers" This is an imperfect middle indicative, which suggests a repeated experience. This was Jesus' only known chance to hear the great rabbis in Jerusalem and discuss the Law with them. These would be the same type of leadership that would not listen to Him as an adult.

This verse addresses the exceptional nature of Jesus, while Luke 2:52 stresses the normalcy of Jesus. Both are true. Jesus knew very early who He was and why He came! Yet, He was truly human!

2:48 "were astonished" This literally is "struck with a blow" (cf. Luke 2:48; 4:32; 9:43; Acts 13:12).

▣ **"Your father and I"** Notice the contrast between Mary's use of the pronoun "your father" and Jesus' use

of the pronoun "My Father" in Luke 2:49. Verse 50 clearly states that Mary and Joseph did not clearly make the distinction, but young Jesus did!

▣ **"have been anxiously looking for You"** This is an imperfect. They had been looking for three days (cf. Luke 2:46) and were extremely anxious about Jesus' welfare.

2:49 "Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house" These are the first recorded words of Jesus. This shows that Jesus knew something of His origin and purpose, even at this early age. This also may be Luke's attempt to refute the heresy of "Adoptionism."

For an interesting discussion of "adoptionism" and how early scribes modified their texts so as to reject this heretical Christology, see Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 47-118. For a brief definition see my glossary in the appendices.

2:50 There are three places in Luke's Gospel where it is specifically stated that Jesus hearers did not understand.

1. his parents – 2:50
2. the crowd – 9:45
3. the Twelve – 18:34 (about Jesus' death)

The Twelve were privileged to much of Jesus' private instruction (cf. Luke 10:21-24), but still they were unable to receive the information about His suffering and death in Jerusalem (cf. Mark 9:32; John 2:22; 12:16; 14:26) until after the resurrection (cf. Luke 24:45).

In John's Gospel this disconnect is part of the vertical dualism (i.e., Jesus is from above but humans are from below).

2:51 "He went down with them and came to Nazareth" This is the last mention of Joseph. Apparently he died at an early age, but the couple had several other children first (cf. Matt. 12:46; 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19).

▣ **"continued in subjection to them"** This is a periphrastic imperfect passive, "He was continually subject to them." The law was very strict on this (cf. Deut. 21:18-21). Jesus grew up in a normal Jewish household, obeying and following the normal Jewish rules for children.

▣ **"and His mother treasured all these things in her heart"** Mary remembered these early events (cf. Luke 2:19), but did not understand them (cf. v 50) until after the resurrection. Luke apparently interviewed Mary and she is one of the sources of his Gospel. Possibly this interview took place during Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea by the Sea.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 2:52

⁵²And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

2:52 Jesus had a normal childhood. He is truly human (contra the Gnostics); that is how He understands us completely (cf. Heb. 2:18; 4:15)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus need a sin offering to be offered for Him and Mary?
2. What is so unusual about Simeon's message?

3. Why is Hannah mentioned if her words about Jesus are not recorded?
4. Did Jesus have a "normal" childhood?
5. List the three Jewish rites which are discussed in Luke 2:21-41.
6. Why did Luke omit the account of the wise men and the flight to Egypt?
7. What was orthodox Judaism's attitude toward Jesus?
8. What do Luke 2:40 and 52 imply?
9. Was the occurrence in Luke 2:40 Jesus' Bar Mitzvah?
10. Describe what a pilgrim caravan was like. Does this explain how Jesus' parents could have missed Him for a whole day?
11. Why were Jesus' parents astonished? Why was Jesus astonished at their reaction?

LUKE 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Preaching of John the Baptist	John the Baptist Prepares the Way	Activity of John the Baptist	The Preaching of John the Baptist	The Proclamation of John the Baptist
3:1-6	3:1-6	3:1-6	3:1-6	3:1-6
	John Preaches to the People			
3:7-14	3:7-20	3:7-9	3:7-9	3:7-9
		3:10-14	3:10	3:10-14
			3:11	
			3:12	
			3:13	
			3:14a	
			3:14b	
3:15-20		3:15-20	3:15-17	3:15-18
			3:18-20	John the Baptist Imprisoned
				3:19-20
The Baptism of Jesus	John Baptizes Jesus	Jesus' Baptism	The Baptism of Jesus	Jesus is Baptized
3:21-22	3:21-22	3:21-22	3:21-22	3:21-22
The Genealogy of Jesus	The Genealogy of Jesus Christ	The Genealogy of Jesus	The Ancestors of Jesus	The Ancestry of Jesus
3:23-38	3:23-38	3:23-38	3:23-38	3:23-38

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 3:1-6

¹Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, ²in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. ³And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; ⁴as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight. ⁵Every ravine will be filled, And every mountain and hill will be brought low; The crooked will become straight, And the rough roads smooth; ⁶And all flesh will see the salvation of God.'"

3:1 "fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" The exact date is unsure, but a date between a.d. 27 to a.d. 29 is possible.

Tiberius controlled the provinces two years before Augustus' death, however, he reigned from a.d. 14-37.

It is obvious that Luke 3:1-2 are Luke's way of precisely dating this event. Luke is far more concerned with corroborating the gospel events with secular history than any other NT author. Christianity is a historically based religion. It stands or falls on the "eventness" which the Bible records.

▣ **"Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea"** See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: PONTIUS PILATE](#)

▣ **"Herod was tetrarch of Galilee"** Herod Antipas, 4 b.c. - a.d. 39, was called governor or tetrarch. He was removed by Caligula for changing his title to "King." See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FAMILY OF HEROD THE GREAT](#)

▣ **"Philip was tetrarch of the region"** Of Herod's children, Philip, 4 b.c. - a.d. 34, was the best ruler.

▣ **"Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene"** This person is mentioned only here in the NT. Josephus mentions an earlier son of Ptolemy, who ruled Chalcis, which included Abila (but not Abilene), beginning in 40 b.c. (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 15.4.1 and 14.13.3).

However, an inscription from Abilene specifically mentions a tetrarch named Lysanias. This inscription is from a.d. 11 or a.d. 14-29. Josephus also mentions a Lysanias connected to Abila (cf. *Antiq.* 19.5.1; 20.7.1; and *Jewish Wars* 2.11.5; 2.12.8). Again Luke's historicity is confirmed.

Abilene is north of Galilee and was originally part of Herod the Great's territory.

3:2 "high priesthood of Annas" His name in Greek is Hannas; Josephus calls him Hannanos. The name seems to come from the Hebrew "merciful" or "gracious" (*hānān*).

In the OT the high priest served for life and had to come from the lineage of Aaron. However, the Romans had turned this office into a political plum, purchased by a Levitical family. The high priest controlled and operated the merchandising in the Court of the Women. Jesus' cleansing of the Temple angered this family.

According to Flavius Josephus, Annas was the High Priest from a.d. 6-14. He was appointed by Quirinius, governor of Syria and removed by Valerius Gratus. His relatives (5 sons and 1 grandson) succeeded him. Caiaphas (a.d. 18-36), his son-in-law (cf. John 18:13), was his immediate successor. Annas was the real power behind the office. John depicts him as the first person to whom Jesus is taken

(cf. John 18:13,19-22).

■ **"Caiaphas"** Caiaphas was the High Priest, appointed by Rome in exchange for a price, from a.d. 18-36. He was the son-in-law of Annas, High Priest from a.d. 6-15. This powerful family was motivated more by politics and wealth than by spirituality. It is unfair to judge all Sadducees or, for that matter, the Sanhedrin, by them.

■ **"the word of God"** This is an OT formula for God speaking to the prophets (e.g., Jer. 1:2). Here it is used for God's message through the last OT prophet, John the Baptist.

■ **"in the wilderness"** He was possibly a member of or a visitor to the Essene community (cf. Mark 1:4; Matt. 3:1). The wilderness was also the regular habitation of Elijah. John looked, acted, and lived like Elijah. Jesus will say he fulfills the prophecies recorded in Mal. 3-4 about the coming of Elijah before the Messiah (cf. Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13).

3:3 "baptism" The first century Palestinian background to water baptism was possibly

1. the Essene community (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls)
2. proselyte baptism for Gentiles converts
3. a symbol of cleansing in Judaism (cf. Isa. 1:16)

■ **"repentance"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

■ **"forgiveness"** This is a form of the common Greek term *aphiēm*, often used of forgiving sin (cf. Luke 5:20,21,23,24; 7:47,48). This was also a medical term (*aphesis*) for the relaxing of disease (cf. Luke 4:39). Luke uses *aphesis* often in his writings but it appears only once in Matthew, twice in Mark, not in John at all, and only twice in Paul's writings.

John's task was to call Israel back from sin and faithless ritual to personal faith. His message was targeted to the covenant people who had repeatedly broken and misunderstood YHWH's covenant mercy and love. John accentuated the spiritual need that only Jesus could meet!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WORDS FOR FORGIVENESS

3:4-6 This is a quote from Isa. 40:3-5. Only Luke gives the full quote of Luke 3:4 and 5; the other Gospels quote only Luke 3:3. This shows Luke's consistent universalism of the gospel for all people.

Notice the relevant aspects of the OT quote:

1. John was from the "wilderness."
2. John was to prepare the people for the message and ministry of Jesus the Messiah.
3. All obstacles to God, here symbolized by physical barriers, are to be removed.
4. "All flesh" will see and have available God's salvation.

3:4 "it is written" this perfect passive indicative of *graphō* was a Hebrew idiom used to introduce a quote from the OT. The Greek *graphē* was often used to describe Scripture in the NT (cf. Luke 4:21; 24:27,32).

■ **"in the book"** This is the Greek word *biblos* (cf. Luke 20:42), from which we get the English word "book," and later "Bible," but here it refers to a parchment scroll (cf. Luke 4:20; Rev. 5:1-5).

■ **"Make ready the way"** This is an aorist active imperative, which denotes urgency. In the Masoretic Hebrew text, Lord (i.e., *adon*) is read, but YHWH is in the text. The phrase originally referred to physical preparation for a royal visit (cf. Isa. 57:14; 62:10). It came to refer metaphorically to the ministry of John the Baptist spiritually preparing the way for Jesus the Messiah, who is also called "Lord" (i.e., *kurios*).

■ **"of the Lord"** New Testament writers regularly attribute OT writings about YHWH to Jesus.

■ **"Make His paths straight"** The Masoretic Text and Septuagint have "make straight the paths of our God." Mark (or Peter) modified the text (or quotes an unknown textual form) to make it specifically relate to Jesus, not YHWH (Luke uses Mark's Gospel here).

3:5 The imagery of this verse can be understood in two ways:

1. Historically it is used of preparing a road for a royal visit.
2. Eschatologically it is used of all physical barriers being removed for God's people to be gathered to Himself.

3:6 "all flesh will see the salvation of God" "Salvation" is from the Septuagint; Matthew has "glory" (cf. Luke 3:30-32). Universal salvation (i.e., for all who repent and believe) is being emphasized by Luke, who is writing for a Gentile audience.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 3:7-9

⁷So he *began* saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

3:7 "saying" This imperfect tense shows John the Baptist's repeated message.

■ **"the crowds who were going out"** This is a present middle (deponent) participle emphasizing that the crowds continued to come. There was a spiritual hunger in Israel.

■ **"You brood of vipers"** There was also the presence of the Jewish establishment (cf. Matt. 12:34; 23:23). This is used in Matt. 3:7 of self-righteous Sadducees. We must remember that the people looked up to and admired these religious leaders (i.e., Sadducees and Pharisees). John did not admire them at all, but called them to personal repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15).

■ **"the coming wrath"** Eschatological fulfillment calls for a new day of the Spirit, but also a day of judgment (cf. Matt. 24-25). To those who have much, much will be required (cf. Luke 12:48).

3:8 "bear fruits" This is an Aorist active imperative. John demanded a lifestyle change to give evidence of a true change of heart (repentance). This concept of spiritual fruit can be seen in Matt. 7:15-23; 12:33; Luke 6:39-45; Gal. 5:22-23. Eternal life has observable characteristics.

■ **"We have Abraham for our father"** These Jewish leaders were trusting in their racial lineage (cf. John 8:37-59; Gal. 3:29). The rabbis believed that God's promises to Abraham and his descendants (cf. Gen. 12,15,17) were unconditional promises, but the OT prophets clearly declare they are conditioned on a faith response (cf. Rom. 9:4-5 vs. 10:1-4). Neither the merit of the Patriarchs nor the covenants of the OT can replace repentance, personal faith, obedience, and perseverance. The gospel does not focus on genealogy, but on faith (cf. Rom. 2:17-29).

■ **"descendants. . .stones"** These two words have very similar sounds in Aramaic (sons – *banayyā* and stone – *ʿabnayyā*). Jesus regularly spoke Aramaic, not Koine Greek. This may be an intentional word play. It could possibly allude to the New Age prophecy of Isa. 56:1-2.

3:9 This same metaphor of fruitlessness and the destruction of the tree is found in Matt. 7:19. This surely has an eschatological flavor. Although the Kingdom came in Jesus, it is not yet fully consummated. At the

consummation a separation of judgment will occur (cf. Matt. 25:31-46 and Rev. 20:11-15). There is a spiritual principle, OT and NT—we reap what we sow (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

Fire in the OT prophets is a metaphor of judgment (eighth century examples, Isa. 5:24; 9:18-19; 10:16-17; 26:11; 33:11, 12, 14; 47:14; 64:2, 11; 66:15-16, 24; and seventh century examples, Jer. 4:4; 5:14; 6:29; 11:16; 15:14; 17:4, 27; 21:12, 14; 22:7; 23:29; 43:12-13). See Special Topic at Luke 3:17.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 3:10-14

¹⁰And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" ¹¹And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." ¹²And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." ¹⁴Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."

3:10 "Then what shall we do" Obviously the rules, rites, and liturgies of rabbinical Judaism were not enough. The personal application of truth is crucial in biblical faith (i.e., a heart circumcision, cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Rom. 2:28-29). We must live what we believe (cf. James 2:14-26). The gospel is a person to welcome (Jesus), truths about that person to be believed (the NT), and a life like that person to be lived (daily Christlikeness).

3:11 "tunics" This Greek word (*chitōn*) is thought to be a loan word from Hebrew. It is used in the Septuagint for:

1. a woman's undergarment, Gen. 3:21
2. a man's undergarment, Jdgs. 14:19
3. a priest's undergarment, Lev. 6:3

Moulton and Milligan, in their study of Koine Greek writings from the Egyptian papyri, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 688, believe it is a term native to Asia Minor. It had two related meanings:

1. inner garment worn next to the skin by men and women (cf. LXX, Matt. 5:40; 10:10; Mark 6:9)
2. used generically for clothing (cf. Mark 14:63)

In this context the idea is that if people have more than they need, let them share it with others who have need (no clothes, no food).

3:12-14 "tax collectors. . . soldiers" Here are just two examples of John's ethical imperatives. Notice they (people in occupations considered unclean or evil) are not encouraged to change jobs, but to be fair and content. John is following in the OT ethical tradition of the prophets.

The verbs directed to the soldiers in Luke 3:14b are imperatives.

1. no one intimidates (aorist active imperative)
2. no one accuse falsely (aorist active imperative)
3. be satisfied with your pay (present passive imperative)

Were these Jewish soldiers? Jews often served as mercenaries (Elephantine Papyri), but most Jews under Roman occupation would not serve. The verbs used imply a heavy-handed treatment of the populace. Would Jews living in the same community treat fellow Jews this way? Rome gave Jews an exemption from serving in the military. It is possible that these were Jews who served in Herod's service and collected his taxes.

Could these be Roman soldiers or conscripts who worked with the tax collectors? The presence of *kai* in Luke 3:14 came to be interpreted as "even." If so, this shows Luke's interests in Gentiles hearing the good news very early, even in John's ministry. This may be another aspect of Luke's universal gospel.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 3:15-17

¹⁵Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, ¹⁶John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

3:15 "in a state of expectation" The Greek term *prosdokaō* is used several times in Luke's writings (Gospel, six times; Acts, four times), mostly for "waiting" (as in the LXX), but also for eschatological expectations (cf. Luke 3:15; 7:19-20; 12:46).

- **"as to whether he was the Christ"** This is a present active optative. Messianic expectations were kindled by John's ministry. These disclaimers serve two theological purposes:
 1. to lift up and exalt Jesus
 2. to help quell the early church's heresies connected to John the Baptist (cf. Acts 19:1-7 and similar emphatic disclaimers in John's Gospel, 1:6-8, 19-42).

3:16 "One is coming who is mightier than I" This message is repeated in all three Synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7-8). John knew who he was and what his message was to be (cf. Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). He was the forerunner (cf. Isa. 40:4-5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT TITLES OF THE SPECIAL COMING ONE

■ **"I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals"** The rabbis said that their disciples should do for them what slaves do for their masters, except untie their shoes. John uses this cultural detail to show his humility and the greatness of the Messiah.

■ **"with the Holy Spirit and fire"** This phrase is used in the NT only in contexts which contrast John's water baptism with Jesus' spirit baptism (cf. Luke 3:16; Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). Therefore it is a way to show and magnify the spiritual effectiveness of Jesus' ministry. The Spirit and fire are synonymous. This phrase should not be proof texted to denote a separate work of the Spirit. It refers to initial salvation through the gospel. Fire is probably a metaphor of cleansing (cf. Lev. 13:52,55,57), which is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Luke 3:3). John was sent to prepare, but Jesus to accomplish.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

3:17 "winnowing fork" This is an OT metaphor of judgment, where one separates the grain from the husk (which is burned, cf. Job 21:17-18; Ps. 1:4; 35:5; 83:13; Isa. 17:13; 29:5; 41:15-16; Jer. 15:7; Hos. 13:3; Zeph. 2:2).

■ **"gather the wheat into His barn"** This is an eschatological metaphor of the righteous being gathered from an evil world to be at home with God. Notice only two possible outcomes—God's barn or the fire! Many of Jesus' parables play on these agricultural themes.

■ **"unquenchable fire"** This is the Greek word for extinguish or quench with the alpha privative, which negates it. This theme is repeated several times in the Gospels (cf. Matt. 3:12; 25:41; Mark 9:43-48). It may be an allusion to Isa. 66:24.

The theological question which this raises is not the eternal consequences of rejecting Christ, but the presence of pain and torment without a redemptive hope (i.e., hell). An interesting book by Edward Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, deals with the option of permanent annihilation for the lost after a period of judgment. I do not want to compromise or diminish in any way the eternal consequences of unbelief. It is

hard to know for sure how much of the Bible which deals with the afterlife (good and bad) is metaphorical and how much is literal. Jesus is the person who emphasizes the consequences of hell. Most of Jesus' metaphors of *Gehenna* come from the garbage dump in the valley and the sons of Hinnom, just south of Jerusalem where the fire god, *Molech*, was worshiped by the sacrifice of children. Hell is a serious reality, far worse than human languages' ability to communicate. Hell is the isolating and permanent purging of evil from God's creation!

[SPECIAL TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?](#)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 3:18-20

¹⁸So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. ¹⁹But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, ²⁰Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

3:18 "the gospel" It must be remembered that John the Baptist was the last OT prophet, not a NT gospel preacher. He did not know the full gospel. Here the sense of the term is the "good news" (i.e., gospel) of God's willingness to judge sin and God's coming full provision for sin through repentance and faith in the work of the Messiah (cf. Mark 1:15).

3:19 "Herodias" This text tells us that Herod had John killed at the instigation of Herodias. Josephus tells us he had him killed because he feared a riot (cf. *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2). She had been the wife of Philip, the brother of Herod Antipas (cf. Matt. 14:3). They had lived in Rome. She was also Antipas' niece through Aristobulus. Antipas had wooed her away from Philip and married her.

According to Josephus (i.e., *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.4), Herodias was married to Herod the Great's son, Herod (whose mother was Marianne, the high priest's daughter). He also says Herodias' daughter, Salome, later married Philip. It is possible that Herod was known as Herod Philip.

3:20 "locked John up in prison" Josephus tells us it was at the fortress Machaerus (cf. *Antiq.* 18.5.2,4). This was one of nine fortresses Herod the Great built throughout his kingdom which he used as dungeons for his enemies. Three of these nine were also palaces (Machaerus, Masada, and Herodium). Machaerus was located in the mountain on the eastern side of the Dead Sea (cf. *Jewish Wars* 7.6.2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 3:21-22

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

3:21 "Now when all the people were baptized" This implies either

1. how successfully John's preaching affected the lives of his hearers
2. that out of a larger crowd all those who responded stayed to be baptized.

▣ **"Jesus was also baptized"** Why Jesus was baptized has always been a concern for believers because John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. Jesus did not need forgiveness for He was sinless (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5). The theories have been:

1. it was an example for believers to follow
2. it was His identification with believers' need
3. it was His ordination and equipping for ministry
4. it was a symbol of His redemptive task
5. it was His approval of the ministry and message of John the Baptist

6. it was a prophetic foreshadowing of His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12) Whatever the reason, this was a defining moment in Jesus' life. Although it does not imply that Jesus became the Messiah at this point, which is the early heresy of adoptionism (cf. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* by Bart D. Ehrman, pp. 47-118), it held great significance for Him.

■ **"while He was praying"** Luke's Gospel, more than the others, emphasizes Jesus' prayer life (cf. Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18,28-29; 11:1; 22:41). If Jesus, the sinless Son of God, sensed the need to pray often, how much more should we!

3:22 "Holy Spirit. . . Him. . . a voice out of heaven" This is one of several passages in the NT where all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

■ **"dove"** This is an unusual symbol for the Spirit. God wanted all to see a physical manifestation of His Spirit on His Messiah. Some think it is related to

1. the Spirit brooding over the waters in Gen. 1:2
2. Noah's sending out a dove in Gen. 8:8-10
3. the rabbis' using it as a symbol for Israel (cf. Hos. 11:11)

John is surely mixing his metaphors to describe the Spirit's work from cleansing fire to the peace and innocence of a dove.

Luke is the only Gospel that has "in bodily form." Apparently Luke is trying to emphasize the physical manifestation of the unseen Spirit. This visible descent was not only an affirmation to Jesus, but a witness to the crowd of just-baptized hearers.

■ **"a voice came out of heaven"** This is called a *bath kol*. It was an interbiblical rabbinical method to communicate that a message was from God (cf. Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1). God used a mechanism to which these Jewish hearers were accustomed to reveal His presence and power in Jesus.

■ **"You are My beloved Son"** This shows (1) the Father's affirmation to the Son and (2) a witness to the crowd. This is an allusion to Psalm 2, which is a royal Psalm of God's victory on behalf of the Davidic king (i.e., Son, cf. Luke 2:7). This title (Son) is repeated at Jesus' transfiguration (cf. Luke 9:35).

George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 164, has an interesting comment about "Beloved" (*agapētos*), where he asserts that it appears in the Septuagint as the translation of the Hebrew *yachid*, "only" (i.e., only Son, cf. Gen. 22:2; Jer. 6:26). Based on this he further asserts that it is synonymous with *monogenēs* (cf. John 3:16), thus making this quote refer to Jesus as God's only, unique, one-of-a-kind Son (i.e., Messiah).

■ **"in You I am well-pleased"** This is an allusion to Isa. 42:1 (LXX), which is one of the Servant Songs of Isaiah. In this verbal affirmation to Jesus and before the believing crowd God unites the OT concepts of royal king and suffering servant (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12). These are the very words of Mark 1:11.

An interesting discussion of the several variants related to this verse is found in Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 62-67. He asserts that the reading of MS D (which quotes Ps. 2:7) is original, but that since it gave theological support for the heresy of "adoptionism," scribes altered it.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 3:23-38

²³When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, ²⁴the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, ²⁷the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the

son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,²⁹ the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,³⁰ the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,³¹ the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah,³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan,³⁸ the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

3:23 "about thirty years of age" The exact dating of NT events is uncertain, but by comparing other NT texts, other secular histories, and modern archaeology, these dates are moving more and more in a narrow range. This text is not asserting thirty years old exactly, but in His thirties.

▣ **"being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph"** Joseph is mentioned to fulfill Jewish legal requirements. The term "supposed" validates Luke's understanding and affirmation of the virgin birth (as does 1:34-35).

NASB "the son of Eli"
NKJV, NRSV,
TEV, NJB "the son of Heli"

The only difference in spelling is the rough breathing mark. The real question is, who was Joseph's father? Luke's genealogy has Eli/Heli and Matthew's genealogy has Jacob.

There are several differences in the list of ancestors between Matthew and Luke. The best guess is that Luke records Mary's lineage. And Matthew records Joseph's lineage.

One of my favorite commentators, F. F. Bruce in *Questions and Answers* (p. 41) mentions another possibility for the differences between Matthew and Luke's genealogies, Matthew records the royal lineage (i.e., the line of succession to the throne of Judah), while Luke records Joseph's actual blood line (a part of the Davidic line, but not the family of royalty).

I guess my problem is that Luke's comments about Joseph being the "supposed" father of Jesus (Luke 3:23) seem to demand that Mary must be of Davidic descent also for the prophecy of 2 Sam. 7:12-16 to be fulfilled.

3:32
NASB, NKJV,
TEV "Salmon"
NRSV, NJB "Sala"

There are several variants related to the name.

1. Sala – MSS P⁴, κ^* , (UBS⁴ gives it a B rating)
2. Salmōn – MSS κ^2 , A, D, L (from Matt. 1:4,5)
3. Salman – some minuscules (from Ruth 4:20)
4. Salma – not in Greek MSS, but in 1 Chr. 2:11

3:33 This verse has many variants. For details see Bruce Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 207-208.

3:38 "the son of Adam" Matthew, written for Jews, takes the lineage back to Abraham. Luke, written for

Gentiles, takes it back to Adam for the beginning of the human race. Luke even alludes to the special creation of humans (cf. Gen. 2:7) made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Luke make such an effort to date John the Baptist's ministry?
2. Why was John's message so radical in its day?
3. Why were Luke 3:7-9 so striking to the Jews of John's day?
4. Why did Herod have John killed?
5. Why was Jesus baptized?
6. Why is the genealogy in Luke different from Matthew's?

LUKE 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Temptation of Jesus 4:1-13	Satan Tempts Jesus 4:1-13	Jesus' Temptation 4:1-4 4:5-8 4:9-13 Events and Teachings in Galilee (4:14-9:50)	The Temptation of Jesus 4:1-2 4:3 4:4 4:5-7 4:6 4:9-11 4:12 4:13	Testing in the Desert 4:1-4 4:5-8 4:9-13
The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry 4:14-15	Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry 4:14-15	Jesus Returns to Galilee 4:14-15	Jesus Begins His Work in Galilee 4:14-15	Jesus Begins to Preach 4:14-15
The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth 4:16-30	Jesus Rejected at Nazareth 4:16-30	In the Synagogue at Nazareth 4:16-30	Jesus is Rejected at Nazareth 4:16-19 4:20-21 4:22 4:23-27 4:28-30	Jesus at Nazareth 4:16-22a 4:22b-24 4:25-27 4:28-30
The Man with an Unclean Spirit 4:31-37	Jesus Casts Out an Unclean Spirit 4:31-37	The Synagogue at Capernaum 4:31-37	A Man with an Evil Spirit 4:31-34 4:35 4:36-37	Jesus Teaches in Capernaum and Cures a Demoniac 4:31-32 4:33-35 4:36-37
The Healing of Many People	Peter's Mother-in-law Healed	Healing and Preaching	Jesus Heals Many People	Cure of Simon's Mother-in-law

4:38-41	4:38-39	4:38-39	4:38-39	4:38-39
	Many Healed After Sabbath Sunset			A Number of Cures
	4:40-41	4:40-41	4:40-41a	4:40-41
			4:41b	
A Preaching Tour	Jesus Preaches in Galilee		Jesus Preaches in the Synagogue	Dawn Departure from Capernaum and Travels Through Judea
4:42-44	4:42-44	4:42-44	4:42-43	4:42-44
			4:44	

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 4:1-13

- A. It is extremely significant that immediately following God's affirmation of the Messianic Sonship of Jesus (cf. Luke 3:22) the Spirit "drives" Jesus into the desert to be tempted (cf. Mark 1:12). Temptation was in the will of the Father for the Son. Temptation can be defined as the enticement of a God-given desire beyond God-given bounds. Temptation is not a sin. This temptation was initiated by God. The agent was Satan (cf. 2 Kgs. 22:13-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3).
- B. Could Christ really have sinned? This is really the mystery of the two natures of Christ. The temptation was real. Jesus, in His human nature, could have violated the will of God. This was not a puppet show. Jesus is truly human though without a fallen nature (cf. Phil. 2:7-8; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). In this respect He was like Adam. We see this same true, but weak, human nature in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed three times for another way of redemption other than the cross (cf. Luke 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42). This tendency is the essence of each one of Satan's temptations in Matthew 4, cf. James S. Stewart, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ*). How will Jesus use His Messianic gifts to redeem mankind? Any way other than substitutionary atonement was the temptation!
- C. Jesus must have told this experience to His disciples later because He was alone in the desert. This implies that this account not only teaches us about Christ's temptation, but also helps us in our temptations (cf. Heb. 2:18; 4:15).
- D. The Synoptic parallels of Luke 4 are found in Mark 1:12-13 and Matt. 4:1-11. Since only Matthew and Luke record this full event, and it does not occur except briefly in Mark (1:12-13), scholars say this comes from a list of Jesus' sayings (possibly written by Matthew in Aramaic), which they call *Quelle*, the German for "source." The account of the temptations is similar (order of temptations vary, but same three temptations and dialogue) that there "must" have been a common source. The problem is that "Q" has never been found, not even a part of it. It is assumed because of logic and church tradition.

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:1-4

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. ³And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." ⁴And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

4:1 "full of the Holy Spirit" This refers to Jesus' baptism in Luke 3:22. Luke's emphasis on the Spirit can be seen by the Spirit being mentioned twice in the opening clauses as well as verses 14 and 18. Notice that the temptations occurred while Jesus was filled with the Spirit, even led by the Spirit (cf. Mark 1:12) into this time of testing (as well as spiritual preparation and mental clarification).

Luke is often called the Gospel of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is revealed as the empowering source of Jesus.

1. conceived by the Spirit – Luke 1:35
2. came in the Spirit to the temple – Luke 2:27
3. will baptize with the Spirit – Luke 3:16
4. Spirit descended upon Him – Luke 3:22
5. full of the Spirit – Luke 4:1
6. led by the Spirit – Luke 4:1
7. in the power of the Spirit – Luke 4:14
8. anointed by the Spirit – Luke 4:18

Some theologians try to contrast "full of the Spirit" with "filling of the Spirit" as if the first were permanent (which is surely true of Jesus, cf. Luke 4:14; 4:18). However, the "filling" is used of several in Luke's writings:

1. Luke
 - (a) Elizabeth in Luke 1:41
 - (b) Zacharias in Luke 1:67
2. Acts
 - (a) the Seven in Acts 6:3
 - (b) Stephen, one of the Seven in Acts 7:55
 - (c) Barnabas in Acts 11:24

Several times in Acts the disciples are said to "be filled":

1. all those in the upper room, Luke 2:4
2. Peter, Luke 4:8
3. the group, Luke 4:31
4. Paul, Luke 9:17; 13:9

Even Jesus has a previous experience of the Spirit in Luke 3:22.

I have included several Special Topics related to the Spirit

1. Spirit (*pneuma*) in the NT at Luke 1:80
2. The Trinity at Luke 3:22

3. The Personhood of the Spirit at Luke 12:12
4. Spirit in the Bible (see below)

[SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE](#)

■ **"forty days"** Mark (Peter) chose a motif from the OT of (1) Moses' forty days and forty nights on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9; 10:10) and (2) Israel wandering in the wilderness for forty years (cf. Num. 14:26-35). Matthew saw Jesus as the New Law giver and deliverer.

The term "forty" was used often in the Bible, implying that it could function both literally (forty years from Egypt to Canaan) and figuratively (the flood). The Hebrews used a lunar calendar. "Forty" implied a long, indefinite period of time longer than a lunar cycle, not exactly forty twenty-four hour periods.

■ **"was led by the Spirit"** This phrase is different in each of the Synoptics.

A. Mark (1:12) has *ekballō* ("to throw out") in its present active indicative form, which would denote an ongoing experience. This was a strong term, used of exorcism (cf. Mark 1:34,39; 3:15,22,23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18,28,38).

B. Matthew (4:1) has *anagō*, a compound from *ana* – "up" and *agō* – "to go" or "to lead." In its aorist passive indicative form, which denotes a finished, one-time event. This term is also used of offering sacrifices (cf. Acts 7:41).

C. Luke (4:1) has *agō* in its imperfect passive indicative form, which emphasizes the beginning of an action.

All three assert the action of the Spirit (see Special Topic at Luke 12:12) in this inaugural preparation experience for public ministry.

■ **"the wilderness"** This refers, not to the desert, but to the uninhabited pastureland south and east of Jerusalem. It was during the wilderness wandering of Israel (i.e., the Exodus) that YHWH was uniquely present, powerful, and constantly providing for Israel's needs. The rabbis later called this forty-year (actually thirty-eight years) wandering the honeymoon between YHWH and Israel. This was the very region where John had spent his time of preparation.

It is also possible that "the wilderness" symbolizes the dwelling place of evil spirits (*azazel*, cf. Lev. 16:8,10). These spirits were denoted by certain animals (cf. Isa. 13:21; 34:14-15). There is an allusion to this in Matt. 12:43.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#)

4:2 "forty" There seems to be some literary attempt by the Gospel writers to connect Jesus' experience in the wilderness with Moses in the wilderness (cf. Exod. 16:35; Num. 14:33-34; Deut. 8:2) or Moses on the mountain of God (cf. Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:18; 10:10). This play on Moses is much more obvious in the Matthean parallel (cf. Matthew 4).

■ **"tempted"** See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS](#)

■ **"by the devil"** This is the Greek term *diabolos*, for the OT Satan. See Special Topic following.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN](#)

■ **"He ate nothing"** Fasting for spiritual sensitivity was practiced regularly in Judaism of the first century. Although Jesus ate nothing (double negative) this does not mean He did not drink fluids. Physically life cannot be sustained after the third or fourth day without fluids. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: FASTING](#) at Luke 5:33.

■ **"He became hungry"** Jesus was a normal man with bodily needs. Scholars still debate whether Luke's

emphasis on Jesus' humanity was in any way connected to the early church heresy of Gnosticism, which denied His true humanity. (See Special Topic at Luke 2:40).

It is possible that Satan/Devil waited until the end of the fast, when Jesus was weak and hungry, to start the temptations, the first of which deals with bread.

4:3, 9 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence and may have several meanings: (1) the statement is assumed true so that the author can make his point or (2) the author is assenting the truthfulness of the statement. In this context I am assuming #2. The Devil was not doubting who He was (i.e., "the Son of God," 3:22, also mentioned in Luke 1:32,35), but how He would accomplish His God-given Messianic task (cf. James S. Stewart, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ*).

4:3 "stone. . .bread" Apparently these rocks in the Judean desert were shaped like loaves of baked bread used in first century Palestine. Satan was tempting Jesus to use His Messianic powers both to meet His personal needs and to win human followers by feeding them. In the OT the Messiah was described as feeding the poor (cf. Isa. 58:6-7,10). These temptation experiences, to some extent, continued to occur during Jesus' ministry. The feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14:13-21) and of the four thousand (Matt. 15:29-33) showed how humans would, and did, abuse God's provision of physical food. This again was similar to the problems of Israel's wilderness experience (i.e., God providing food). Matthew saw a parallel between Moses and Jesus. The Jews were expecting the Messiah to perform many of the functions of Moses (cf. John 6).

4:4 "it is written" This is a perfect passive indicative. This was the standard way of introducing an inspired quotation from the OT (cf. Luke 4:4,7,10), in this case, from Deut. 8:3 from the Septuagint (LXX). This particular quote relates to God providing manna to the children of Israel during the wilderness period.

All of Jesus' responses to Satan's temptations were quotes from Deuteronomy (i.e., Deut. 6:13,16; 8:3). This must have been one of His favorite books.

1. He quoted repeatedly from it during His temptation by Satan in the wilderness, Matt. 4:1-16; Luke 4:1-13.
2. It is possibly the outline behind the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7.
3. Jesus quoted Deut. 6:5 as the greatest commandment, Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28.
4. Jesus quoted this section of the OT (Genesis - Deuteronomy) most often because the Jews of His day considered it the most authoritative section of the canon.

Jesus memorized God's word and hid it in His heart that He might not sin against God (cf. Ps. 119:11). If Jesus needed God's word in His mind and heart to face temptation, how much more do we?

■ **"man shall not live on bread alone"** This quote is from Deut. 8:3. There is a Greek manuscript variant involving this quote.

1. NASB, NRSV, TEV, and NJB follow the Greek uncial manuscripts α , B, L, and W (UBS⁴ gives it a B rating).
2. NKJV follows MSS A and D, which come from the Septuagint translation of Deut. 8:3 and the Matt. 4:4 parallel.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:5-8

⁵And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

⁶And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." ⁸Jesus answered him, "it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"

4:5 "he led Him up" This is the term *anagō*, which was used in Matt. 4:1, where Luke has *agō*. The

preposition *ana* means up. The Matthew parallel has the temptations in a different order, but the parallel adds "to a very high mountain" (cf. Matt. 4:8).

▣ **"show Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time"** This phrase makes me think that these temptations, real though they were, were in Jesus' mind (cf. George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 49). There was no mountain from which one could see all the kingdoms, even in this one part of the world. The instantaneous time factor further confirms this. This same issue of physical vs. mental can be seen in Ezekiel 8 and John's visions in Revelation.

4:6 "this domain" See Special Topic at Luke 20:2.

▣ **"it has been handed over to me"** The Bible presents Satan as the ruler (god) of this world (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19). However, he is not the owner.

This is a perfect passive indicative, which denotes something that has become a settled position and was given by an unnamed agent. The crux of the interpretation is "is this statement true" or "is it a lie by the great liar?"

If true, it is a result of Genesis 3. If true, this time of sin and rebellion may have been allowed by God to test His human creation. There is surely mystery here! If false, it just fits into so many other lies of Satan, the accuser and father of lies.

Theologically they may be parallel. Satan successfully tricked Adam and Eve, but he will not be able to trick Jesus, the second Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 2 Cor. 15:45-49; Phil. 2:6-11). Satan "claims" all authority here, but Jesus has all authority (cf. Matt. 28:18, as well as Matt. 11:27; John 3:35; 13:3; 17:2).

▣ **"I give it to whomever I wish"** This was a lie. Satan can do only what God allows (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-23; Job 1-2; Zechariah 3).

4:7 "if" This is a third class conditional sentence, which denotes potential action but with an element of contingency.

NASB, NKJV "worship before me"

NRSV, TEV "worship me"

NJB "do homage to me"

Theologians have assumed that Satan wants to replace God. This is often based on (1) Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 or (2) Dan. 11:36-39 and (3) Revelation 13. The rabbis say Satan, a created angel, rebelled when he was told he must serve fallen humanity. Now he wants to supplant God.

In the OT Satan is a servant of god, but an enemy of humanity. There is a progressive development of evil in the Bible (see A. B. Davidson, *An Old Testament Theology*, pp. 300-306).

4:8 This is a quote from Duet. 6:13. Jesus answers the devil's temptations with another quote from Deuteronomy. This was a significant book for Him. He must have memorized it. He quoted it three times to Satan in this context.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:9-12

⁹And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; ¹⁰for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You to guard You,' ¹¹and, 'On *their* hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'" ¹²And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

4:9 "pinnacle of the temple" This was the corner that overlooked the Kidron Valley where the priest announced the morning and evening sacrifices. The temptation here was to win the world by the

miraculous and spectacular. Many Jews expected the Messiah to appear suddenly in the Temple (cf. Mal. 3:1).

4:10 Satan quotes from Ps. 91:11-12. He misquotes it slightly but still in context. This is a good example of how proof-texting is a poor method of biblical interpretation (even Satan can make the Bible say what he wants it to using this method).

4:12 This is a quote from Deut. 6:16. Every response of Jesus to Satan in this context is from Deuteronomy, and all from the sections where Israel was in the wilderness. Jesus refused to force God to act (cf. Dan. 3:16-18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:13

¹³When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

4:13 "When the devil had finished every temptation" Matthew and Luke record these same temptations in a different order. This phrase may imply there were others. However, this may be a summary statement so common in Luke's writings. Jesus knows our temptations and loves us anyway (cf. Heb. 2:18; 4:15-16) because He's been there!

- ▣ **"he left Him until an opportune time"** This phrase has implications.
 1. temptation is not a once-and-for-all event
 2. Satan looks for times of vulnerability (cf. Matt. 16:22-33)

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS, LUKE'S GALILEAN MINISTRY OF JESUS (4:14-9:50)

A. This begins Luke's Galilean ministry of Jesus. The Gospel of John's recording of an early Judean ministry (cf. John 1:19-4:42) does not fit Luke's theological pattern. Luke wants Jesus' visit to Jerusalem to climax His ministry. The majority of Luke's presentation of Jesus is "on the way/road to Jerusalem," which characterizes 9:51 (i.e., "He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem," cf. Luke 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11,28).

This focus on Jerusalem may also be why Luke rearranges the order of Satan's temptations so that Jerusalem is last.

B. Luke takes a day in the life of Jesus (both in Nazareth and Capernaum) and uses it to reveal His whole life and ministry. The themes of "gladly welcomed" and "rejection, even murder" are repeated. Readers see the whole reflected in a part.

C. Remember, as Jesus used typological Christology to reveal Himself from the OT (cf. Luke 24:13-35, esp. 25-27), so too, Luke, writing long after Jesus' death, resurrection, and the spread of the gospel, gives us hints of the main points of Jesus' life and message very early in his account. Only a backwards view fully reveals Luke's perspective. Luke's Gospel is as much theology as chronological, sequential history. True historical events are selected, adapted, and arranged for theological impact (see Fee, Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 127-148)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:14-15

¹⁴And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵And He *began* teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

4:14 "returned to Galilee" Both Matthew and Luke move directly from the temptation experience in Judea into the Galilean ministry which runs from 4:14 to 9:50. Only John 1:35-4:44 describes the

intervening ministry in Judea. Galilee, which in Hebrew means "circle" (BDB 165 II), was interpreted by the rabbis as meaning encircled by the Gentiles. This area was despised by the Orthodox Jews from Judea, however, Jesus' ministry here was a fulfillment of predictive prophecy (cf. Isa. 9:1). Josephus describes this region in *Jewish Wars* 3.3.1-2.

Mark (1:14) and Matthew (4:12) mention that Jesus' return to Galilee coincided with John the Baptist's arrest by Herod.

■ **"in the power of the Spirit"** Temptation does not cause the loss of the Spirit. Jesus spoke the Father's words and acted in the Spirit's power. The fluidity between the ministries of the three persons of the Trinity is evident throughout the NT (cf. Luke 4:18-19). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at Luke 3:22.

■ **"news about Him spread through all the surrounding district"** This is one of Luke's characteristic statements (cf. Luke 4:37; 5:15; 7:17). He tended to add brief summaries both in his Gospel and Acts.

4:15 "synagogues" This local Jewish institution developed during the Babylonian Exile to offer the Jews who were estranged from their Temple a place of prayer, worship, study, and ministry. It was probably the single most significant means of the Jews retaining their culture. Even after they returned to Palestine they continued this local institution.

■ **"was praised by all"** The Gospels record Jesus' popularity with the common people in the local Galilean synagogues. But they also record a growing opposition from the religious leaders.

Luke often adds a comment about how people preserved Jesus' words (cf. Luke 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:27; 13:17; 19:48).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:16-30

¹⁶And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." ²⁰And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²²And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" ²³And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" ²⁴And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. ²⁵But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; ²⁶and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, *in the land of Sidon*, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸And all *the people* in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; ²⁹and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. ³⁰But passing through their midst, He went His way.

4:16-30 The footnote in the New Jerusalem Bible translation (1966) on p. 99 #g makes the interesting assertion that Luke combines three separate visits to Nazareth.

1. w. 16-22, where Jesus is honored (cf. Matt. 4:13)

2. vv. 23-24, where Jesus amazes the townspeople (cf. Matt. 13:54-58)

3. vv. 25-30, where Jesus is attacked, which is not mentioned by Matthew or Mark

The NJB (*Jerome Biblical Commentary*, pp. 131-132) says this account functions as a theological summary of how Jesus will be initially received and then rejected by Palestinian Jews.

4:16 "Nazareth" The spelling of "Nazareth" (Nazara) is unusual and is found only here and Matt. 4:13, which is also the temptation of Jesus. This seems to give evidence that both Matthew and Luke used a common source for their Gospel accounts.

This was Jesus' hometown (cf. Luke 2:39,51, see Special Topic at Luke 4:34). There is some question as to whether Mark 6:1-6 and Matt. 13:53-58 are parallel or this is a second trip to Nazareth. For me, the similarities are too overwhelming to be a second visit. Luke purposefully places this event first as a summary of Jesus' whole life-ministry.

It must be remembered that the Bible is not a western history. Near Eastern history is selective, but not inaccurate. The Gospels are not biographies, but gospel tracts written to different groups of people for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship, not just history. Often Gospel writers selected, adapted, and arranged the material for their own theological and literary purposes (cf. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 94-112, 113-134). This does not mean to imply they falsify or make up events or words. The differences in the Gospels do not deny inspiration. They affirm eyewitness accounts and the unique evangelistic purpose of each author.

■ **"as was His custom, He entered the synagogue"** Jesus grew up participating in public worship. I'm sure he learned the OT in synagogue school (starting at age 5). Habits are a vital, healthy part of our religious life.

■ **"Sabbath"** This is from the Hebrew word meaning "rest" or "cessation" (BDB 992). It is connected to the seventh day of creation where God ceased His labor after finishing initial creation (cf. Gen. 2:1-3). God did not rest because He was tired, but because

1. creation was complete and good (cf. Gen. 1:31)

2. to give mankind a regular pattern for worship and rest

The Sabbath begins like all the days of Genesis 1, at twilight, therefore, twilight on Friday to twilight on Saturday was the official time period. All the details of its observance are given in Exodus (especially chapters 16, 20, 31, and 35) and Leviticus (especially chapters 23-26). The Pharisees had taken these regulations and, by means of their oral discussions, interpreted them to include many rules (the Oral Traditions, later the written Talmud). Jesus often performed miracles, knowingly violating their picky rules so as to enter into a dialogue with them. It was not Sabbath that Jesus rejected or belittled, but the self-righteous legalism and lack of love exhibited by the religious elite.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYNAGOGUE SERVICE

■ **"stood up to read"** The general order of worship in the synagogue service is as follows:

1. prayer

2. a reading from the Pentateuch

3. a reading from the Prophets

4. exposition of the texts (this order was followed by the early church, but they added the reading of the NT)

As was the custom of the Jews, Jesus stood up to read the Scripture, but sat down to teach (cf. Luke 4:20). See Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, chapter 10, pp. 430-450.

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy several times during His temptation experience. All were quotes from the Greek translation of the OT, called the Septuagint. Here in the synagogue of Nazareth His reading seems to also come from the Septuagint. Most Jews of Jesus' day had lost the ability to read Hebrew. They spoke Aramaic, but most could also use Koine Greek as a second language.

I would assume, along with F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 175, that Jesus could read and speak (everyone read aloud) Hebrew. If so, Jesus was trilingual. The real question is what text of the Scriptures

was used in the synagogues of Galilee? Most Jewish sources would assert that the reading of the Scriptures would have been in Hebrew, then an Aramaic translation would be provided.

4:17 "the book of the prophet Isaiah" The Hebrew Scriptures are written on long parchment scrolls that had to be turned to find the right place. A good resource book on this type of background information is F. Bruce's *The Books and the Parchments*.

4:18 "This is a partial quote of Isa. 61:1-2 from the Septuagint with the omission of verses 61c and 62b, but with an insertion of a verse from Isa. 58:6d. The combining and editing of OT texts was common in rabbinical Judaism.

There is a variant in the Greek MSS concerning the quote of Isa. 61:1-2.

1. some MSS stop at "He has sent me" – κ, B, D, L, W
2. others add the full sentence from Isa. 61:1 – A, Delta, Epsilon

The UBS⁴ gives option #1, the short text, and A rating (certain).

One wonders if Jesus intentionally omitted the line from Isaiah 61 because He chose not to do any miracles in Nazareth. This may explain why He added another line from Isa. 58:6.

▣ **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me"** Notice the different divine Persons. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at Luke 3:22. The new age of righteousness is the Age of the Spirit.

▣ **"He anointed Me"** This Hebrew word is the same root as "Messiah" (see Special Topic at Luke 2:11). In Greek the term "Messiah" is translated "Christ." This was a way of denoting God's calling and equipping of leaders. In the OT prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE \(BDB 603\)](#) in the Bible also at Luke 2:11.

▣ **"preach the gospel"** At this point the full gospel (lit. "good news") is not yet available. Only after Jesus' death and resurrection did His actions and teachings come into perfect focus.

▣ **"poor. . . captives. . . blind. . . downtrodden"** Notice the types of people that Jesus came to help. His care for these fulfilled many prophetic texts.

4:19 "To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" This originally referred to the year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:8-17), but in this context (Isa. 61:2), it applies to the eschatological fulfillment of Jesus' ministry. Clement and Origen of Alexandria said that this means that Jesus ministered only one year, but this is far too literal in understanding how this OT passage is fulfilled in Christ.

4:20 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, in his commentary on Luke 1-9 in the Anchor Bible, has an interesting comment on the VERB *atenizō* (fixed intently). He notes that it is a term used often by Luke, especially in Acts.

"In most instances it expresses a steadfast gaze of esteem and trust—the nuance intended here. It is part of the assembly's initial reaction of admiration or pleasant surprise" (p. 533).

4:21 "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" This is a perfect passive indicative. It speaks of the eschatological fulfillment of the promise of the coming of the Kingdom of God, which was now present in Jesus. What a shocking statement!

The Kingdom of God is the focus of Jesus' preaching. It is the reign of God in human hearts now that will one day be consummated over all the earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). It is both here and now and yet future!

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#)

4:22 "all were speaking well of Him" Jesus' initial popularity continued (cf. Luke 4:15), but it will be short-lived at Nazareth!

▣ **"Is this not Joseph's son"** This question in Greek expects a "yes" answer. This shows the normalcy of Jesus' childhood in Nazareth (i.e., 2:40,52). It was a statement of pride in a hometown boy.

4:23 "proverb" This is literally "parable," which means "to throw alongside of." It was a method of teaching which used a common occurrence of life to illustrate or highlight a spiritual truth.

■ **"Physician, heal yourself"** The point Jesus is making is obvious: to these townspeople of Nazareth, Jesus held no special place in their minds. They wanted Jesus to do the miracles that He had done in Capernaum in His hometown also. We learn from Mark 6:1-6 that because of their unbelief, He did not do many mighty miracles here (cf. Luke 4:24).

■ **"we heard what was done at Capernaum"** This is a good place to see how Luke uses Mark's Gospel. Mark 1:21ff records Jesus' ministry in Capernaum. In Mark, the healing at Capernaum found in Luke 4:31-37 is placed in chapter 1.

The difficulty modern western readers and commentators face in trying to understand the Gospels is that we assume they are chronological, detailed, sequential, cause-and-effect, modern histories, which they are not. For a good discussion on interpreting the Gospels, see Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 113-134.

4:24 "Truly I say to you" This is literally "amen." Only Jesus uses this as a literary technique to introduce a significant statement.

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

■ **"no prophet is welcome in his hometown"** This statement is similar to our English statement "familiarity breeds contempt." It must have been so hard for Jesus' family and neighbors to accept His Messiahship (cf. Mark 6:4; Matt. 13:57).

4:25-27 Jesus mentions two OT examples where God acted in miraculous ways for non-Jews and no miracles for covenant people are recorded (Stephen will pick up on these examples in Acts 7). This fits Luke's universal emphasis of the gospel's availability to all humans who repent and believe. The majority of Jews, however, will not believe, as in the days of Elijah and Elisha.

Notice that the two prophets mentioned were northern prophets from the area Jesus was addressing (i.e., tenth century b.c. Israel).

4:25 "when the sky was shut for three years and six months" This same time element is mentioned in James. 5:17, however, 1 Kgs. 18:1 mentions only three years. Apparently, this was a rabbinical tradition. It was also an apocalyptic idiom for "a set time of persecution" (cf. Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2; 12:6,14).

4:26 "Elijah. . .sent to Zarephath. . .to a woman who was a widow" God sent His prophet to minister to a needy Phoenician foreigner (and a woman at that), instead of the contemporary Israelis, who were also in need. Luke records Jesus' sayings and teachings which emphasize His love and care for outcasts!

4:27 "Elisha. . .Naaman the Syrian" God sent His prophet (Elisha) to heal a foreign military leader (an enemy at that) instead of the many sick among God's Covenant people, Israel (cf. 2 Kings 5).

4:28 "And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things" God's universal love toward the Gentiles was the source of these nationalistic Jews' rage (the same is true of Stephen's sermon in Acts 7). They did not think well of Him now (cf. Luke 4:22a and 29). They did not want to hear God's truth, but only wanted affirmation of their own biases and nationalistic traditions (not much has changed with humans of every age). These religious worshipers are "filled with rage" against Him who is full of the Spirit. What irony!

4:29 "they got up and drove Him out of the city. . .to throw Him down the cliff" It is amazing how quickly the attitude of this crowd moved from wonder and awe to rage and murder.

4:30 "But passing through their midst, He went His way" This is a remarkable miracle, the exact nature of which is not explained (cf. John 8:59; 10:39). It was simply not His hour (cf. John 7:30). It, at least, shows us that Jesus was an ordinary-looking man of His day.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:31-37

³¹And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; ³²and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority. ³³In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴"Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" ³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm. ³⁶And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out." ³⁷And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.

4:31 "He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee" Capernaum became Jesus' headquarters and He probably moved His family to this locale.

▣ **"and He was teaching them on the Sabbath"** In these early days of ministry, Jesus spoke in the local synagogues as much as possible (as did Paul, cf. Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:16). There would quickly come a time when He was forced to speak to the large crowds in the open air of the countryside.

4:32 "and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority" The Greek term translated "amazed" literally meant "struck by a blow" or "knocked beside themselves." Jesus' message was different (both in content and form) because He did not speak as the scribes who quoted the famous pair of rabbinical teachers like Shammai (the conservative rabbinical school) and Hillel (the liberal rabbinical school). He spoke as one who had authority in Himself (cf. Matt. 7:28-29; John 7:46).

▣ **"authority"** See Special Topic: Luke's Use of *Exousia* at Luke 20:2.

4:33 "a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon" See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC \(UNCLEAN SPIRITS\)](#)

▣ **"cried out"** This implies at the top of his voice.

4:34

NASB, NRSV	"Let us alone"
NKJV	"Let <i>us</i> alone"
TEV	"Ah"
NJB	"Ha"

The Greek particle *ea* is used in the Septuagint of Job where it is translated "alas" in Luke 19:5 and "let alone" in Luke 15:16. It is used in Hellenistic poetry to express displeasure or surprise.

NASB	"What business do we have with each other"
NKJV	"What have we to do with You"
NRSV	"What have you to do with us"
TEV, NJB	"What do you want with us"

This expression is used in the Septuagint with a hostile connotation (cf. Jgds. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10; 19:22; 1 Kgs. 17:18; 2 Chr. 35:21).

▣ **"Jesus of Nazareth"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE

▣ **"us"** Notice the plural. In the NT possession often involves numbers of demons (cf. Luke 8:2,27,30).

▣ **"I know who You are—the Holy One of God"** The demon's recognition and testimony was not meant to help Jesus, but to add to the Pharisee's charge that His power was from Satan (cf. Luke 4:41; 11:15; Matt. 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22).

The phrase "Holy One of God" is an OT Messianic title. It is alluded to in Luke 1:35 and Acts 3:14. It is the title by which the demonic addressed Jesus in Mark 1:24 and Luke 4:34.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOLY ONE

4:35 "Be quiet" This is an aorist passive imperative singular meaning "be muzzled." Notice the switch from "us" (Luke 4:34) to the singular here. Possibly only one demon spoke on behalf of them all.

▣ **"come out"** This is an aorist active imperative. Exorcisms were common in Jesus' day, but Jesus' methods were radically different. His exorcisms were a sign of the New Age. The rabbis used magic formulas, but Jesus used His own authority. There is so much confusion and bad information circulating today about exorcism and the demonic. Part of this problem is that the NT does not discuss these issues. As a pastor I wish I had more information on this subject. Here are some books I trust:

1. *Christian Counseling and the Occult*, Kurt E. Koch
2. *Demons in the World Today*, Merrill F. Unger
3. *Biblical Demonology*, Merrill F. Unger
4. *Principalities and Powers*, Hendrik Berkhof
5. *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* by Clinton Anthony

It surprises me that exorcism is not listed as one of the spiritual gifts and that the subject is not addressed in the Apostolic letters. I believe in a biblical world view which includes the spiritual realm (i.e., good and evil), present and active in the physical realm (i.e., Job 1-2; Daniel 10; Eph. 2:2; 4:14; 6:10-18). However, God has chosen not to reveal the specifics. As believers we have all the information we need to live godly, productive lives for Him! Some subjects are not revealed or developed.

▣ Several physical manifestations of an unclean spirit leaving a person are recorded (cf. Mark 1:26; 9:26; Luke 9:39). This may have been a way of confirming that the spirit had truly left.

This first sign of power clearly shows the Messianic implications of Jesus. The OT title (cf. Ps. 16:10) by which the demons acknowledge Him and His power to control and judge them clearly reflects the spiritual authority of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Luke 4:27c).

4:36 "amazement" This is a different Greek term from Luke 4:32, but a synonym (cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, pp. 311-312). Luke uses it in Luke 4:36; 5:9 and Acts 3:10.

▣ **"authority"** See Special Topic at Luke 20:2. Jesus' message about Himself was radical and unexpected. He verified His claims with His actions!

4:37 "spreading" We get the English term "echo" from this Greek term. The message of Jesus' power over unclean spirits, as well as His physical healings, caused great excitement and the gathering of large crowds.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:38-39

³⁸Then He got up and *left* the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's

mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. ³⁹And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them.

4:38 "Simon's mother-in-law" Peter was obviously married (cf. Matt. 8:14; Mark 1:29-34; 1 Cor. 9:5). Celibacy is a gift, not a forced norm for clergy. Marriage is the biblical norm (cf. Gen. 1:28; 2:18; 9:1,7).

▣ **"was suffering from"** This is a periphrastic imperfect passive. This fever was a pre-existent, recurrent problem.

▣ **"a high fever"** This is a medical term used by Galen for a "category of fever." The Gospels make a distinction between Jesus exorcizing demons and healing sickness.

▣ **"He rebuked the fever"** In Luke Jesus rebukes

1. demons (Luke 4:35,41; 9:42)
2. fever (Luke 4:39)
3. the wind and waves (Luke 8:24)
4. the disciples (Luke 9:21,55)

This showed His authority and power. Jesus was truly human, but He was also God incarnate. It is hard to hold these two in balance. Luke's Gospel emphasizes both aspects!

Just a word about Jesus rebuking a fever. This literary personification of a physical problem does not make this an exorcism. Demons can cause physical problems, but not all physical problems are demonic. Be careful of the extremes (no demons; demons cause everything)! See note at Luke 4:35 on exorcisms.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:40- 41

⁴⁰While the sun was setting, all those who had any *who were* sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them.

⁴¹Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

4:40 "While the sun was setting" This meant it was the end of the Sabbath. The Jews count the day from twilight in the evening to the next twilight following (cf. Gen. 1:5). Many Jews felt even healing on the Sabbath was inappropriate.

▣ **"brought them to Him"** The people had seen Jesus' power in the synagogue (Luke 4:31-37) and had heard His words of compassion and prophecy. Jesus now shows by His actions that He has both the power and the compassion of YHWH!

▣ **"laying His hands on each one of them"** Note the laying on of hands was for the sick, never the demon possessed (cf. Luke 4:41).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE BIBLE

▣ **"healing them"** Notice that Jesus cured all who came! Also notice the distinction between the medical problems of Luke 4:40 and the demon possession of Luke 4:41. These actions reveal the gracious, loving, kind heart of God for humanity and the compassion and power of God's Messiah.

4:41 "many" From the English text it seems that Jesus healed all of those with physical ailments, but only some of those with demons. There are two possible solutions:

1. There is a volitional aspect to deliverance/exorcism.
2. The Bible uses "all" and "many" interchangeably (cf. Isa. 53:6, "all" vs. 53:11,12, "many" or the parallelism of Rom. 5:18, "all" and Rom. 5:19, "many").

■ **"the Son of God"** See Special Topic at Luke 1:35.

■ **"not allow them to speak"** This is another reason that Jesus did not allow their testimony. The people had a false view of His Messianic task (nationalism). These demons were not witnessing to support Jesus, but allowing the religious leaders to claim that His power came from Satan, not God.

■ **"they knew Him to be the Christ"** Demons have theological knowledge (cf. James 2:19), but they do not have a personal faith relationship with the Father or the Son. Here is a good example of knowledge without faith being futile (cf Matt. 7:21-23). See Special Topic: Messiah at Luke 2:11.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:42-43

⁴²When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. ⁴³But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."

4:42 This verse is one of Luke's ways of showing

1. the humanity of Jesus and His need to get away and relax
2. the crowds seeking Jesus, not for His teachings, but for His physical healings and exorcisms. He did not want to be known for these things, but they did give Him access to large numbers of people.

4:43 "the kingdom of God" The Kingdom of God is a central concept of Jesus' preaching. It involves the reign of God in human hearts now which will one day be consummated over all the earth. The kingdom is placed in the past in Luke 13:28, in the present in Luke 17:21, and in the future in Matt. 6:10-11. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#) at Luke 4:21.

■ **"I was sent for this purpose"** Jesus knew something of His special calling and purpose by age twelve (cf. Luke 2:49). Mark 10:45 reveals Jesus' mature self-understanding. Jesus is the Father's special agent, His sent One, His anointed One (cf. John 17:3). The verb here is *apostellō* (cf. Luke 4:18), which came to be used of those special disciples Jesus commissioned and sent (Apostles of John 17:18; 20:21). This term takes on special meaning in John's Gospel, but in the Synoptic Gospel it is just one of several Greek words used for sending.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 4:44

⁴⁴So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

4:44 "Judea" This geographical location is very unusual because of Luke 4:14, 31, and 37. Jesus is supposed to be in Galilee (cf. Matt. 4:23).

Because of the confusion caused by "Judea" (found in MSS P⁷⁵, κ , B, C, L) several early Greek manuscripts have "Galilee" (cf. MSS A and D and the Vulgate and Peshitta), which follows Mark 1:39 and Matt. 4:23.

The editorial committee of the UBS⁴ gives "Judea" a B rating (almost certain). This may be (1) the use of Judea referring to all of Israel (i.e., the Prophets) or (2) the Gospels are not western histories, but eastern gospel tracts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Could Jesus have been tempted to sin?
2. Is temptation a sin?
3. Does God ever cause temptation?
4. How is Jesus' Messianic task related to these temptations?
5. Why are the temptations listed in different order (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-12)?
6. Why did the Gospels leave out such large sections of Jesus' ministry?
7. Why did Jesus regularly teach in the synagogue?
8. Why were the people in Nazareth so angry?
9. Explain why Jesus' message was so different from the rabbinical teachers of His day.
10. Why were the people astounded at Jesus' teachings?
11. What about demons? Who are they? What is their purpose?
12. What does Peter's having a mother-in-law imply about celibacy?
13. What is the significance concerning Jesus' healing everyone who was brought to Him?
14. What is the Kingdom of God? Define it in your own words.
15. What is the problem with the word "Judea" in Luke 4:44?

LUKE 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Calling of the First Disciples	Four Fishermen Called as Disciples	The Unexpected Catch	Jesus Calls the First Disciples	The First Four Disciples are Called
5:1-11	5:1-11	5:1-11	5:1-3 5:4 5:5-8 5:9-10 5:11	5:1-3 5:4-7 5:8-11
The Cleansing of a Leper	Jesus Cleanses a Leper	A Leper Healed	Jesus Heals a Man	Cure of a Man Suffering from a Virulent Skin Disease
5:12-16	5:12-16	5:12-16	5:12 5:13-14 5:15-16	5:12-14 5:15-16
The Healing of a Paralytic	Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralytic	Forgiveness of Sins	Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man	Cure of a Paralytic
5:17-26	5:17-26	5:17-26	5:17-20 5:21 5:22-24 5:25-26	5:17-25 5:26
The Calling of Levi	Matthew the Tax Collector	Call of Levi	Jesus Calls Levi	The Call of Levi
5:27-32	5:27-32	5:27-28 5:29-32	5:27-28 5:29-30 5:31-32	5:27-28 Eating With Sinners in Levi's House 5:29-32
The Question About Fasting	Jesus is Questioned About Fasting	On Fasting	The Question About Fasting	Discussion on Fasting
5:33-39	5:33-39	5:33-39	5:33 5:34-35	5:33-35

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-11

- A. There are three separate and unique accounts of Jesus' calling fishermen as disciples.
 1. Mark 1:16-20 and Matt. 4:18-22
 2. John 1:40-42
 3. Luke 5:1-11

- B. Whether these accounts are parallel eyewitness accounts or subsequent accounts of different callings is uncertain.

- C. Luke 5 shows Jesus' power
 1. over nature (cf. Luke 5:1-11)
 2. over disease (cf. Luke 5:12-26)
 3. over sin (cf. Luke 5:27-32)

- D. John 21:1-14 describes a time when Jesus helped these fishermen catch fish. It is very similar to this account, however, there are differences. I believe they are two separate occurrences (possibly like the cleansing of the Temple in John), one at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and one after His resurrection.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 5:1-11

¹Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; ²and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. ³And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and *began* teaching the people from the boat. ⁴When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." ⁶When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of

fish, and their nets *began to break*; ⁷so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw *that*, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" ⁹For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰and so also *were* James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." ¹¹When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

5:1 "the crowd was pressing around Him" Jesus' preaching/teaching/healing ministry caused large crowds to follow Him; most of them tried to touch Him.

■ **"listening to the word of God"** This is a Lukan phrase (cf. Luke 5:1; 8:11,21; 11:28; and Acts 4:31; 6:2,7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 13:5,7,44,46,48; 16:32; 17:13). It is used only once in each of the other Gospels. It reflects a Septuagint idiom.

Sometimes we modern believers think the "word of God" is only the Bible, but in reality, the phrase has a much wider meaning. It refers to all that God has communicated to us. Some of it is recorded in the Bible. Psalm 19:7-11 and 119 are OT examples of how the Jews understood this phrase. The NT understanding can be seen in Luke 1:2; 8:11-15,21; 11:28; 24:44. Thank God for the words we do have! We must act on them and not worry about what we do not have. We have all we need for salvation and the Christian life. We must resist our curiosity.

■ **"by the lake of Gennesaret"** This body of water goes by several other names.

1. "Chinneroth"
2. the Sea of Galilee
3. the Sea of Tiberias

4. sometimes just "the sea" (cf. Matt. 13:1; Mark 4:1, from the Septuagint of Num. 34:11; Jos. 12:3) It is a body of water about twelve miles by eight miles and is 680 feet below sea level, surrounded by low rolling hills. The etymology of the term Gennesaret is uncertain. Because it is the name of a land area west of the lake that was very fertile, some suppose it means "princely garden."

5:2 "He saw two boats" This Greek term can be used of any size boat. The fact that this boat was manned by several men in Luke 5:2, 4, and 5 implies that at least one was a large fishing boat.

■ **"were washing their nets"** Fishing normally was done on the Sea of Galilee at night. Apparently these men had been fishing all night and simply were washing and repairing their nets (cf. Mark 1:19) for the next night.

5:3 "He got into one of the boats" The press of the crowd was so great that Jesus got into the boat as a means of protecting Himself (cf. Mark 3:9; 4:1) and possibly as a way of amplifying His voice to the large crowd.

■ **"Simon's"** He will be the leader of the Apostolic group. Jesus changes his name to Peter (Cephas) in Matt. 16:16-18. He is first called Peter in Luke's Gospel in Luke 6:14.

■ **"He sat down and *began teaching*"** This is the normal position for rabbis when teaching (cf. Luke 4:20; Matt. 26:55), but in this context it would have been safer to sit than stand in a boat.

5:4 "Put out into the deep water" These are both aorist active imperatives. It was the wrong time of day, the wrong place, and the wrong depth to catch fish, yet Peter obeyed (after arguing briefly, cf. Luke 5:5)!

5:5 "Master" The Greek term *epistatēs* literally means "one placed over." The term was used of one in

charge. This term is also used by Luke in Luke 8:24,45. Luke never uses the term rabbi because he is writing to Gentiles (cf. Luke 5:5; 8:24,45; 9:33,49; 17:13).

▣ **"we worked hard all night and caught nothing"** Why did Luke record this incident out of all the things Jesus said and did? One reason is that this chapter has a series of incidents that show Jesus' power over (1) nature; (2) disease; (3) sin. This would have confirmed His new teachings about Himself and the present Kingdom of God. He not only spoke with authority, He acted with authority (cf. Luke 4:32,36).

Still (noting this is still Luke, not John) one wonders whether this is not a slap at human effort, energy, merit, and knowledge. These professional fishermen tried their best with no results, but Jesus' word was overwhelmingly productive.

5:6 "they enclosed a great quantity of fish" Jesus, being Lord of all creation, understood well the habits of fish and could control them (cf. Matt. 17:27). This is not an example of a great fisherman, but Jesus, God's agent of creation and Spirit-filled Messiah!

5:8 "when Simon Peter saw *that*, he fell down at Jesus' feet" The phrase is literally "fell at the knees of Jesus." He fell down in the middle of the fish! Peter, who knew fishing, recognized the miraculous nature of this event and the power of the person!

▣ **"Lord"** When we interpret the Gospels we must remember they were written well after the events. Those who wrote knew the full story. It is difficult to know how much of their full gospel knowledge is read back into their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. The term "Lord" is a good example. It is obvious that this term takes on divine attributes after the resurrection (cf. Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9-13; Phil. 2:9-11), but also culturally it could simply be a polite address comparable to our "mister" or "sir" (cf. Matt. 18:26; Luke 7:6; 9:57; John 4:11). It is possible that Luke intentionally plays on this ambiguity (cf. Vincent Taylor, *The Names of Jesus*, p. 42, examples Luke 7:13,19; 10:1,39,41). This account here is a good illustration. What did Peter mean by kneeling before Jesus and calling Him Lord? It is obvious adoration, but was it worship to Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, the Messiah (cf. Luke 9:20)?

▣ **"I am a sinful man"** The closer we get to God, the more we recognize our own sinfulness (cf. Job 42:5-6; Isa. 6:5). There is also the reassurance that God loves and works with sinful, fallen, marred people (e.g. Moses, David, Apostles). Fallen mankind's only hope is the gracious character of God and the self-giving work of Christ.

5:9 "For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish" The miracle astonished the helpers also.

5:10 "James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon" These would become the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. All of them were middle-class businessmen from Galilee.

▣ **"Do not fear"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with the negative particle, which usually means stop an act already in process. This is a characteristic Lukan phrase (cf. Luke 1:13,30; 5:10; 8:50; 12:32; Acts 18:9; 27:24).

▣ **"you will be catching men"** This Greek phrase implies "catching them alive." This may be an allusion to Jer. 16:16 about YHWH sending fishermen and hunters into the world to find and restore His people. It is possible that the early church's symbol of a fish for Christianity is related to

1. the acrostic, "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior"
2. catching fish, used as an evangelistic metaphor

5:11 "they left everything" After a tremendous catch of fish like this, which was worth so much, they left them. The question has been raised, did they leave them to rot? Obviously not. There were other workers

of Zebedee, or possibly they were used to feed the crowd.

Here again, one wonders how much this phrase is meant to symbolically characterize true faith (cf. Luke 5:28; 14:33).

■ **"followed Him"** This is probably not the first time they had heard, seen, and talked with Jesus. We learn from John's Gospel that Andrew had introduced them earlier (cf. John 1:29-42). I am sure they had heard Him preach and teach. Possibly they had seen Him perform miracles. It is significant to realize they left everything and immediately followed Him! This was a rabbinical way of acknowledging their officially becoming disciples of Jesus (cf. Luke 5:27-28; 9:23,49,57,59,61; 18:22,28).

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 12-32

- A. These accounts are paralleled in Mark 1:40-45; Matt. 8:1-4; and Mark 2:14-17; and Matt. 9:9-13.
- B. These incidents show Jesus' revolutionary attitudes and actions toward lepers and publicans so different from the rabbis of His day.
- C. Luke purposefully chose incidents which showed Jesus' power
 - 1. over nature (Luke 5:1-11)
 - 2. over disease (Luke 5:12-26)
 - 3. and over prejudice and human sin (Luke 5:27-32)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 5:12-16

¹²While He was in one of the cities, behold, *there was* a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." ¹³And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." ¹⁵But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear *Him* and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.

5:12 "He was in one of the cities" Leviticus 13:46 and Num. 5:2-4 forbade lepers from involvement in normal Israeli society.

- **"a man covered with leprosy"** Luke, the medical doctor, uses several medical terms in this passage.
 - 1. in Luke 5:12 he denotes the severity of the illness by use of a technical term
 - 2. in Luke 5:18 he uses the technical term for "paralyze"—different from Matthew and Mark who used the more popular term
 - 3. in Luke 5:31 Luke uses the medical term for "well"
- **"leprosy"** There were many illnesses covered by this term. Whether it is modern leprosy is uncertain. Leprosy (or whichever skin disease was meant) was seen in Judaism as an illness given by God as punishment (possibly because of Uzziah, cf. 2 Chr. 26:16-23).
- **"Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean"** This man obviously had heard of Jesus' power, but was uncertain of His willingness. This is an example of a third class conditional sentence which means potential action, contingent on other actions.

5:13 "He. . . touched him" Technically this would have made Jesus ceremonially unclean. Jesus' life showed the priority of people over Jewish rules and ceremonial cleanliness.

5:14 "He ordered him to tell no one" Jesus veils His deity in the Synoptic Gospels until the great redemptive events are complete. See full list in the texts at Luke 8:56. Jesus did not want to be known as a healer only. The gospel was not yet complete. Jesus was offering more, far more, than physical healing. From Mark 1:45 we learn this man disobeyed.

▣ **"go and show yourself to the priest"** This refers to regulations found in Lev. 14:1-32. Jesus wanted

1. to witness to the priest
2. to show that He did recognize and fulfill the Mosaic law

Luke records another leper who was told to do the same thing in Luke 17:14.

5:15 "the news about Him was spreading even farther" Fallen, sick, lonely humanity will go anywhere for help and hope.

5:16 "But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" Jesus, God's Son Incarnate, set the example for believers' prayer lives (cf. Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18,28). If Jesus needed to get away and pray to face life, how much more do we!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 5:17-26

¹⁷One day He was teaching; and there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there*, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was *present* for Him to perform healing. ¹⁸And *some* men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. ¹⁹But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of *the crowd*, in front of Jesus. ²⁰Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." ²¹The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" ²²But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ²³"Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," — He said to the paralytic — "I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home." ²⁵Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. ²⁶They were all struck with astonishment and *began* glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

5:17 "One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law" See parallels in Mark 2:3-12 and Matt. 9:1.

▣ **"Pharisees"** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES

▣ **"teachers of the law"** This seems to be parallel with "the scribes" of Luke 5:21 (see Special Topic at Luke 5:21). Most of them were Pharisees, but not all. They were the experts in applying the oral and written law to the practical matters of everyday life. In a sense they took over the role of the OT local Levites. These "biblical lawyers" became the rabbis of today's Judaism.

▣ **"from Jerusalem"** We learn from rabbinical literature that Jerusalem was considered a separate district of Judah. These were Jewish representatives from "headquarters"! In essence these biblical experts convened to examine Jesus.

▣ **"and the power of the Lord was *present* for Him"** Notice in Luke 4:14 it says "power of the Spirit." We must remember the close interpersonal relationship between the persons and work of the Triune God (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at Luke 3:22). Notice also the term "Lord" in this text refers to YHWH. Jesus was YHWH's agent in creation, redemption, and judgment.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

▣ There are several related Greek manuscript variants in Luke 5:17. These are attempts by scribes to clarify the sentence.

1. It seems a staggering statement to say Pharisees and scribes from every village of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem came to hear Jesus (cf. MSS κ^1 , A^c, B, C, L, W and the Vulgate and Syriac translations), so scribes changed the sentence to refer to those who were being healed (cf. MS κ^* and some Coptic and the Armenian translations).

This shows that the later scribes, as well as modern westerners, do not understand Eastern literature (hyperbole).

2. The "him" is singular and refers to Jesus (cf. MSS κ , B, L, W), but some scribes thought it referred to those being healed and made it plural (cf. MSS A, C, D, and the Vulgate, Peshitta and Armenian translations). UBS⁴ gives "him" an "A" rating, which means "certain."

5:18 "paralyzed" Luke, the Gentile physician, uses the technical, medical term (Hippocrates, Galen), while Matthew and Mark use the common vernacular.

5:19 "they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles" Most homes had outside stairs where the roof was accessible. The roof was a place of socializing and even sleeping in the hot season of the year. Can you imagine what it must have been like for those people sitting in the crowded home when the roof started falling in on them?

5:20 "Seeing their faith" "Their" refers to the friends as well as the paralytic man.

The term "faith" is a major NT term (cf. Luke 5:20; 7:9,50; 8:25,48; 17:5,6,19; 18:8,42; 22:32). The Greek noun is *pistis* and the verb is *pisteuō*. This term is translated into English by three words—faith, believe, trust (see Special Topics at Luke 1:45). The concept is crucial for an understanding of salvation (cf. John 1:12; 3:16) and the Christian life (cf. Heb. 11:1,3,6).

The Hebrew equivalent is *emeth*, which originally referred to someone in a stable stance, but it developed the metaphorical extension of someone who is dependable, loyal, trustworthy, and faithful.

Faith is not something we do, but it is the hand that receives the gifts of God (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). It is not a work, but a receptive attitude of need and thanksgiving. We are not dependable, loyal, trustworthy, or faithful, but God is! We trust His trustworthiness; we faith His faithfulness. The hope of all fallen humanity is the unchanging character of God, His mercy and grace towards His rebellious human creation.

These friends believed Jesus, as God's representative, would act graciously toward their friend and they would do anything to get their friend to Jesus (cf. Luke 7:9,50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42). Oh, that friends had that kind of love and concern today!

▣ **"your sins are forgiven"** The grammatical form is a Perfect passive indicative. This was an astonishing statement. It was meant to provoke a dialogue with the religious leaders who were present. In rabbinical Judaism, sin and sickness were related (cf. John 5:14 and James. 5:13-15, however, not all sin is related to sickness, cf. John 9:3). Human guilt causes many physical ailments.

5:21 "scribes" See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SCRIBES

■ **"Who can forgive sins, but God alone"** This was exactly Jesus' point! Jesus was clearly, unambiguously giving them the sign they asked for. He is clearly proclaiming His Messiahship.

5:22 "But Jesus, aware of their reasonings" Does this imply that

1. Jesus overheard them
2. Jesus knew their theology
3. Jesus read their minds

The end of Luke 5:22 implies #3.

5:23-24 The man's healing was an outward sign for these religious leaders of the purpose, power, and person of the Messiah (cf. Luke 4:18-19). Instead of praise and adoration (which they initially gave, cf. Luke 5:25-26), their hearts will turn to self-interest, even murder (cf. Luke 22:2; Matt. 12:14; 26:1; Mark 14:1; John 5:18; 7:1,19; 8:37,40; 11:53).

Healing can occur without faith. Jesus healed people as a means of

1. getting the attention of His hearers
2. demonstrating the power and compassion of God and His Messiah
3. training the disciples

Forgiveness of sin, however, is never possible without personal faith.

SPECIAL TOPIC: IS HEALING GOD'S PLAN FOR EVERY AGE?

5:24 "Son of Man" This term is Jesus' chosen self-designation. In the book of Ezekiel (example 2:1; Ps. 8:4) it means simply "human being," but in Dan. 7:13-14 it derives an added connotation of deity (cf. 1 John 4:1-3). This term was not used by rabbinical Judaism and, therefore, it did not have militaristic, nationalistic, exclusivistic connotations. See fuller note at Luke 6:5.

The parallel in Matt. 9:8 has the phrase "glorified God, who had given such authority to men." The comment accentuates the human aspect of "Son of Man." One wonders how much the more developed Gnosticism of Luke's day is reflected in Luke choosing those aspects of Jesus' life and teachings which reflect His humanity.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF MAN

■ **"has authority on earth to forgive sins"** This was the central question of the Jewish leaders. Where did Jesus get His power and authority (see Special Topic: Authority at Luke 20:2)? They could not deny His miracles or the power of His teaching, so they tried to attribute His authority to the Evil One.

5:26 "they were filled with fear" Jesus was filled with the Spirit before birth (cf. Luke 1:15). Elizabeth and Zacharias were filled with the Spirit so they could better understand His person and birth (cf. Luke 1:41,67), but the Jews (i.e., Nazarites) are filled with anger (cf. Luke 4:25) and their leaders are filled with fear (cf. Luke 5:26) and rage (cf. Luke 6:11).

Luke continues this theme in Acts.

1. The disciples are filled with the Spirit (cf. Luke 2:4; 4:8,31; 9:17; 13:9).
2. The Jewish leaders (Sadducees) were filled with jealousy (cf. Luke 5:17).
3. The Jewish crowd at Pisidian Antioch was filled with jealousy (cf. Luke 13:45).

One's reaction to the gospel determines what one is filled with.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 5:27

²⁷After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." ²⁸And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.

5:27 "a tax collector named Levi" We know from Mark 9:9 that he was also called "Matthew" (gift of YHWH). We also know from Mark 2:13 that he was "son of Alphaeus." Apparently Jesus did not change his name, but he had one Jewish name and one Galilean name.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHART OF APOSTLES' NAMES

■ **"tax booth"** This occupation was a position purchased from both the Romans and the Herods and was open to great abuse. Obviously Levi collected Herodian and Roman taxes on the major road known as the *Via Maris*. He was completely ostracized by the local Jews from all religious and social events because of this. Luke chooses to record several events involving these social pariahs (cf. Luke 3:12-13; 5:27-28,29-32; 7:34; 15:1-2; 18:9-14; 19:1-10). This was Luke's way of assuring his Gentile readers that YHWH and His Christ would include them by faith also.

■ **"Follow Me"** This is a present active imperative. The fact that Jesus would call a tax collector to follow Him was absolutely amazing to the people of Capernaum and even to the disciples. It was surely a symbol that the gospel was open to all people.

5:28 "And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him" Apparently he had heard Jesus preach. He acted in the same way as James, John, and Peter (cf. Luke 5:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 5:29-32

²⁹And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. ³⁰The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

5:29 "Levi gave a big reception. . . a great crowd of tax collectors" Luke records many dinners which Jesus attended, always for the purpose of teaching and revealing Himself (cf. Luke 7:36; 9:12; 10:38; 11:37; 14:1; 19:7; 22:14; 24:30; 24:41). Because Capernaum was on a major road, there was a large number of tax collectors.

Everyone else in town would be shocked that Jesus would associate with, even eat with, this group and their outcast friends (another insight into the gospel, cf. Luke 7:34; 15:1-2).

Jesus ate with the socially and religiously outcast as a way of initiating a religious dialogue with them. They flocked to Him because He acted so different from the self-righteous rabbis and scribes. Eating was a special event in the Ancient Near East which expressed friendship and acceptance. They would have reclined on their left elbow around a low horseshoe-shaped table with their feet behind them (this has been challenged by J. Jeremias in his book *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, pp. 20-21. He asserts the Jews did not regularly follow the Mediterranean custom of reclining, except during feast days). In the Near East others who were not invited to the meal could come in to the dining area and stand around the walls or at the door or windows and listen to the conversation.

One wonders how much eschatological symbolism should be read into this context. Is this feast a foreshadowing of the Messianic banquet which will include outcasts (cf. Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29, possibly reflecting Isa. 59:15b-21)? If so, then there is the theological insight that temporal fellowship with Jesus mirrors eschatological kingdom fellowship. Sinners are reconciled now and in eternity! All sinners are welcome (and all are sinners, even the OT covenant people, cf. Rom. 3:9-18).

5:30 "Pharisees" These Pharisees were present at the dinner, but were not a part of the dinner. It seems unusual, but in the ancient world anyone could come and stand around the walls or look in the windows and participate in the conversation without being an official guest at the dinner. Apparently "the Pharisees" was

another name for "the scribes," who were mentioned earlier in this context. They were a group of committed Jews who followed a particular tradition affirming the Oral Tradition of the Jews (the Talmud). Notice that they confronted the disciples and not Jesus Himself. Jesus, by eating with these notorious sinners, was expressing fellowship and friendship. John the Baptist had come earlier as an ascetic and the Jewish leaders had rejected him; now they rejected Jesus, who came as a more social person (cf. Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). They even accused Jesus of being a "wine-bibber," which meant a "glutton" or "one who over-drinks." Quite often religious conservatism has an ugly and self-righteous side.

For a discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees, see Special Topics: Pharisees at Luke 5:17 and Scribes at Luke 5:21.

■ **"Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners"** The verbs are both present active indicatives, which implies a regular activity. I think many "church people" would ask this same question today, which shows how easy it is to forget the purpose of Jesus' coming.

5:31 "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick" The parallel in Mark 2:15-17 is helpful. I would like to insert a note from my commentary on Mark 2 (see www.freebiblecommentary.org).

"2:17 "those who are sick" They had a sense of need that was essential for faith (cf. Matt. 5:3-4) and Jesus was their healer and friend (cf. Luke 7:34; 19:10).

■ **"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners"** This is an ironic, possibly sarcastic, statement like Mark 7:19. This statement was not meant to imply that the religious leaders were righteous (cf. Matt. 5:20) and, therefore, did not need to repent, but rather that Jesus' message (cf. Mark 1:14-15) was more appealing to those who sensed their own spiritual need. Jesus uses proverbial statements often in His teaching (cf. Mark 2:17,21,22,27; 3:27; 4:21,22,25; 7:15; 8:35,36,37; 9:40,50; 10:25,27,31,43-44). No one is more blind than those who think they see!

In his book, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings*, Robert H. Stein makes a good point about this statement:

'Although the term "totalitarian" has many negative connotations, Archibald M. Hunter's use of this term is an accurate one and describes well the total commitment that Jesus demanded of his followers. On the lips of anyone else the claims of Jesus would appear to be evidence of gross egomania, for Jesus clearly implies that the entire world revolves around himself and that the fate of all men is dependent on their acceptance or rejection of him. . . according to Jesus, the fate of man centers around him. Rejection of him means eternal judgment; acceptance of him means acceptance by God. The pivotal point of history and salvation, Jesus claims, is himself. To obey him is to be wise and escape judgment, but to reject his words is to be foolish and perish, for his words are the only sure foundation upon which to build (Matt. 7:24-27).' (p. 118)."

■ **"well"** This was used as a technical medical term for "wholeness."

5:32 "repentance" The Greek term "repentance" means a change of mind. The Hebrew term for "repentance" means a change of action. Both are required for true biblical repentance. It is turning from (repentance), as well as a turning to (faith). We can see this so well in Mark 1:15, where it says "repent and believe" (cf. Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). This shows the positive aspect of faith and the negative aspect of repentance. Jesus said it so well when He said "unless you repent you shall all likewise perish" (cf. Luke 13:3). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#) at Luke 3:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 5:33-39

³³And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the *disciples* of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink." ³⁴And Jesus said to them, "You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can

you? ³⁵But *the days will come*; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days." ³⁶And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. ³⁸But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹And no one, after drinking old *wine* wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good *enough*.'"

5:33 In the parallel (and probably the original account) Mark 2:18 has the Jewish leaders asking Jesus' disciples a question (cf. MSS κ^* ,², A, C, D, and the Vulgate and Syriac translations), but in Luke it is a statement (cf. MSS P⁴, κ^1 , B, L, W, and several Coptic translations). The UBS⁴ translation committee said Luke's statement was "almost certain" (B rating) to be the original. Later, scribes changed the form to make it conform to Mark's account.

■ **"fast"** The Pharisees and John's disciples were culturally conditioned to fast twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays (cf. Luke 18:12). The Mosaic Law had only one fasting day a year, the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). These twice-a-week fasts are a good example of developed traditionalism (cf. Zechariah 7-8). Fasting loses its spiritual value when it becomes mandatory and draws attention to itself (cf. Matt. 6:16-18). See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FASTING

5:34-35 "the bridegroom" The question of Luke 5:34 expects a "no" answer. There is so much OT imagery involved in the concept of "bridegroom." In the OT YHWH is the bridegroom or husband of Israel. However, it is never a Messianic title. In this context Jesus is the bridegroom and the church is the bride (cf. Eph. 5:23-32). In Luke 5:35 "the bridegroom is taken away" refers to a time when a separation will occur.

Now, as interpreters, we have two choices. First, we can see this as a cultural metaphor about a time of joy connected to a wedding. No one fasts during a wedding! Second, we can see it as parabolic of Jesus' time on earth and His coming crucifixion. Mark (who recorded Peter's sermons in Rome and developed them into the first Gospel) would have known the full implication of these metaphorically-laden terms (in Judaism the bridegroom was a metaphor, not of the Messiah, but of the coming Kingdom of God). Is this a prediction of Jesus' death? He has clearly revealed His Messiahship and deity through His words and deeds (i.e., exorcism, healings, forgiving of sins). His followers will fast in an appropriate way and at an appropriate time.

5:36 The Markan (2:21) and Matthean (9:16) parallels help us understand this parable by noting that the patch is from an unshrunk piece of cloth (it will shrink). The new patch (Jesus and the gospel) will destroy the old clothing (Judaism).

There has been much discussion about how to apply this truth. It seems to emphasize the need to be flexible in one's faith. However, one must be careful as to the nature and extent of this flexibility. It is a condemnation of rabbinical Judaism's literalistic interpretation of the Oral Tradition. God help us! Sometimes we are more committed to our traditions and legalisms than we are to God (cf. Isa. 29:13). This parable is paralleled in Mark 2:19-20 and Matt. 9:16-17.

5:37 "wineskins" This referred to goats being skinned in such a way as to allow the skins to be used as a container for liquids (i.e., water, Gen. 21:15; milk, Jdgs. 4:19; and wine, Jos. 9:4,13). These newly-tanned skins would have elastic qualities. When these skins became old, the fermentation process and expansion of the new wine would cause them to split. Judaism was unable to receive Jesus' insights and corrections and, therefore, was about to be made null and void. The new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) has come in Jesus! Nothing can remain the same.

5:39 The fifth century a.d. Western family of manuscripts, D (Bezae), omits Luke 5:39 because

1. it is omitted by Mark 2:22 and Matt. 9:17
2. it seems to give priority to the OT (cf. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, p. 139)

Where did Luke get the closing comment? It is not from Mark. It is not in Matthew, so possibly not in "Q" (*Quelle*, saying of Jesus possibly written by Matthew). Luke apparently interviewed many people. It must be oral tradition.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is Luke 5 such an important chapter in showing Jesus' power and preeminence?
2. Why did Jesus want the leper to show himself to the priest?
3. Why did Jesus tell the leper not to tell anyone?
4. Why did Jesus say, "Your sins are forgiven"?
5. Why was Jesus' invitation for a tax collector to become a disciple so radical?

LUKE 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Plucking Grain on the Sabbath	Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath	Jesus and Sabbath Laws	The Question About the Sabbath	Picking Corn on the Sabbath
6:1-5	6:1-5	6:1-5	6:1-2 6:3-4 6:5	6:1-5
The Man With A Withered Hand	Healing on the Sabbath		The Man With a Paralyzed Hand	Cure of the Man With a Withered Hand
6:6-11	6:6-11	6:6-11	6:6-10 6:11	6:6-11
The Choosing of the Twelve	The Twelve Apostles	Choosing the Twelve	Jesus Chooses the Twelve Apostles	The Choice of the Twelve
6:12-16	6:12-16	6:12-16	6:12-16	6:12-16
Ministering to a Great Multitude	Jesus Heals a Great Multitude	The Sermon on the Plain (6:17-49)	Jesus Teaches and Heals	The Crowds Follow Jesus
6:17-19	6:17-19	6:17-19	6:17-19	6:17-19
Blessing and Woes	The Beatitudes		Happiness and Sorrow	The First Sermon: the Beatitudes
6:20-26	6:20 6:20b-23	6:20-21 6:22-25	6:20-21 6:22-25	6:20-21 6:22-23
	Jesus Pronounces Woes			The Curses
	6:24-26	6:26	6:26	6:24-25 6:26
Love for Enemies	Love Your Enemies		Love for Enemies	Love of Enemies
6:27-36	6:27-36	6:27-31 6:32-36	6:27-31 6:32-36	6:27-36
Judging Others	Do Not Judge		Judging Others	Compassion and Generosity
6:37-42	6:37-42	6:37-38 6:39-42	6:37-38 6:39-40 6:41-42	6:37-38 Integrity 6:39-42

A Tree Known by Its Fruit	A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit		A Tree and Its Fruit	
6:43-45	6:43-45	6:43-45	6:43-45	6:43-45
The Two Foundations			The Two House Builders	The True Disciple
6:46-49	6:46-49	6:46-49	6:46-49	6:46
				6:47-49

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter seems to divide into several separate incidents:
 1. Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees over His disciples' eating grain on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 6:1-6)
 2. Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees over the "healing of the man with the withered hand" on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 6:6-11)
 3. Jesus chooses twelve disciples (cf. Luke 6:12-19)
 4. Luke's recording of a sermon similar to "The Sermon on the Mount" in Matt. 5:7 (recorded in Luke 6:20-49)

- B. There is an obvious difference between the "Sermon on the Mount" recorded in Matthew and "The Sermon on the Plain" in Luke (cf. Luke 6:17). Luke seems to be written on the level of social conditions and attitudes toward our material world (some scholars would say Luke is dealing with a delayed *Parousia*); whereas Matthew seems to be written as a progression of spiritual levels progressing to Christlikeness (an eschatological setting). It is uncertain why Luke includes the "curses" (i.e., OT prophetic "woes." These woes are antithetically parallel to the blessings), while Matthew completely leaves them out (this shows the sermons recorded in the NT are not verbatim, but summaries and excerpts). Basically, the Beatitudes are not specific commands to be followed, but examples of an attitude toward our present world and our place in it. It is hard to decide whether or not Luke and Matthew record two different sermons using similar themes and examples (cf. Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 312 and 366) or the same sermon recorded differently (cf. D. A. Carson, "Matthew" in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*). Remember each of the Gospel writers selected, adapted, and rearranged Jesus' teachings to address their target audiences. Luke leaves out much of the Jewish elements in Jesus' teaching that Matthew records for his Jewish readership.

C. Luke's version of Jesus' sermon has been greatly ignored by scholarship. Most interpreters use Matthew's account to interpret Luke's account. However, they are very different. Luke's beatitudes are not eschatological, but contemporary. Jesus is addressing His disciples (cf. Luke 6:20). The Kingdom is here! Believers' outward physical conditions must not affect their trust and joy in God.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:1-5

¹Now it happened that He was passing through *some* grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating *the grain*.
²But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ³And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, ⁴how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?" ⁵And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

6:1 "passing through *some* grainfields" This referred to the footpaths through the grain fields which surrounded the villages and towns. These "grainfields" could refer to any kind of cereal grain grown in this area (e.g., barley, wheat).

The Talmud taught that any journey over 2,000 paces on the Sabbath was considered work and, therefore, not permitted. It is interesting that the crowds, along with the Pharisees and the Scribes, were following Jesus on the Sabbath, therefore, they also were guilty of breaking this Sabbath law.

This reflects Luke's continuing emphasis on the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders over the Oral Law (traditions of the Elders). Their legalism came from a sincere desire to keep God's word! They were sincere and obviously very committed. They believed that Moses received the oral traditions from God on Mt. Sinai and passed them on verbally. It is at this point that Jesus' three parables of Luke 5:33-39 are crucial.

■ **"on a Sabbath"** This phrase is found in MSS P⁴, κ , B, L, W and UBS⁴ gives it a "C" rating because a more unusual (unique) option, "on the second first Sabbath," is found in MSS A, C, D, K, X, Delta.

There have been several theories about the unique wording.

1. From a Semitic expression from a Palestinian priestly calendar referring to the Sabbath after the feast of unleavened bread, but the second after Passover, from which the Jews count 50 days until Pentecost (cf. Lev. 23:15, see *Archer Bible Commentary*, vol. 28, p. 607).
2. From a scribal error confusing the three mentions of Jesus' activities of the Sabbath (cf. Luke 4:16,31; 6:1, see Bruce Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 139).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SABBATH

■ **"His disciples were"** Obviously the disciples were following their Master and were violating the traditional Sabbath laws (cf. Matt. 12:1).

■ **"picking the heads. . .rubbing them in their hands"** The Pharisees considered the disciples' actions as

1. harvesting
2. winnowing
3. preparing food on the Sabbath

These actions were illegal according to their oral traditions based on Exod. 34:21. For one example of the rabbinic traditions see *Shabbath* 7:2. Jesus' disciples were not doing anything illegal in their actions according to the gleaning laws of the OT (cf. Deut. 23:25); the problem was the day (cf. Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:15; Deut. 5:12-15) on which they did it! It seems that the Gospel writers record Jesus'

actions on the Sabbath to show

1. the controversies they caused
2. that Jesus did these kinds of things every day and the Sabbath was no exception

6:2 "some of the Pharisees" The Pharisees were assuming that Jesus was violating Exod. 34:21. This shows that Jesus always had a crowd following Him. That crowd was made up of disciples, the sick, the curious, and representatives of the religious leaders trying to catch Him in a situation they could exploit.

It is this mixture (1) of motives and (2) the people to whom Jesus is speaking which causes some of Jesus' teaching (without their specific context) to be so difficult to interpret because we are unsure to whom He addressed His teachings.

6:3 "Have you not even read what David did" This incident from David's life seems to emphasize that human need takes precedence over legalistic rituals and traditions (cf. 1 Sam. 21:1-6). Just a brief comment about this account in 1 Samuel, I think David lied to the priest at Nob to protect him from the charge of helping David. Unfortunately he was killed by Saul for his supposed treason by helping David.

6:4 "the house of God" This refers to the Tabernacle (cf. Exod. 25-31).

■ **"bread"** This refers to the twelve large loaves of bread (which symbolized God's provision for the Twelve Tribes) that were placed on the table in the Holy Place and were replaced every seven days. These loaves were for the priests alone to eat (cf. Exod. 25:30; Lev. 24:5-9). They weighed approximately 6 1/4 pounds.

■ **"and gave it to his companions"** This phrase is repeated in all three Synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt. 12:3; Mark 2:25). This is the implication of 1 Samuel 21, but in reality, David was lying about having companions. He apparently did this to protect the priests at Nob whom he knew Saul would retaliate against. David's companions, as well as other disgruntled Israelites, did not join him until 1 Sam. 22:1.

6:5 "The Son of Man" This was an adjectival phrase from the OT. It was used in Ezekiel 2:1 and Ps. 8:4 in its true etymological meaning of "human being." However, it was used in Dan. 7:13 in a unique context which implied both the humanity and deity of the person addressed by this new eschatological royal title (cf. Mark 8:38; 9:9; 13:26; 14:26). Since this title was not used by rabbinical Judaism and, therefore, had none of the nationalistic, exclusivistic, militaristic implications, Jesus chose it as the perfect title of both veiling and revealing His dual nature, fully man and fully divine (cf. 1 John 4:1-6). It was His favorite self-designation. It is used twenty three times in Luke (cf. Luke 5:24; 6:5; 9:22,26,44,58; 11:30; 12:8,10,40; 17:22,24,26,30; 18:8,31; 20:13; 21:27,36; 22:22,48,69; 24:7).

■ **"is Lord of the Sabbath"** This has staggering Messianic implications (cf. Matt. 12:6). The Sabbath (see Special Topic at Luke 6:1) was divinely instituted (cf. Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 28:11) and here Jesus claims to be Master and Ruler over it.

The Sabbath regulations had become the priority. These traditions, not love for humans made in God's image, had become the issue of religion. The priority of rules had replaced the priority of people. Merit had replaced love. Religious traditions (i.e., the Oral Law) have replaced God's intent (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23).

How does one please God? A good OT analogy might be sacrifice. God intended it as a way for sinful, needy humanity to come to Him and restore broken fellowship, but it turned into ritual, liturgical procedure. So too, Sabbath law! Mankind had become the servant instead of the object (i.e., the reason for the laws).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:6-11

⁶ On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find *reason* to accuse Him. ⁸ But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and

come forward!" And he got up and came forward. ⁹And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?" ¹⁰After looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored. ¹¹But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

6:6 "On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching" This event is paralleled in Matt. 12:9-14 and Mark 3:1-6. The synagogue developed during the Babylonian Exile. It was primarily a place of education, prayer, worship, and fellowship. It was the local expression of Judaism, as the Temple was the national focal point.

Jesus attended the synagogues regularly. He learned His Scriptures and traditions at synagogue school in Nazareth. He fully participated in first century Jewish worship.

It is also interesting that Jesus, apparently purposefully, acted in provocative ways on the Sabbath and in synagogue. He intentionally violated the Oral Traditions (i.e., Talmud) of the elders so as to enter into a theological confrontation/discussion with the religious leaders (both local and national; both Pharisees and Sadducees). The best extended discussion of His theology as it deviates from the traditional norms is the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7, especially 5:17-48).

■ **"a man there whose right hand was withered"** Only Luke, the physician, records the detail that it was the right hand, which probably means his vocational life had been terminated.

6:7 "scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely" This is an imperfect middle indicative which refers to repeated action, the beginning of an action, or the beginning of an action in past time. There was always a contingent of these religious leaders trying to trap or catch Jesus in an infraction of the written or Oral Law (cf. Luke 14:1; 20:20; Mark 3:2).

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which follows Mark 3:2. They assumed He would do something that violated their traditions.

■ **"to accuse Him"** This is a common verb in the Septuagint (cf. Deut. 6:5; I Macc. 7:6,25; II Macc. 4:47; 10:13,21).

6:8 "He knew what they were thinking" See note at Luke 5:22. This same term is used in Luke 9:47 in reference to the disciples, while in Luke 5:22 and 6:8 it refers to His enemies.

■ **"Get up and come forward"** These are both imperatives, the first a present active and the second an aorist active. This man did not ask to be healed, but Jesus uses him as an object lesson for the disciples and the Pharisees. Often Jesus' use of miracles was primarily to teach those who observed.

6:9 This is the issue! What is the Sabbath for (cf. Matt. 12:11; Mark 3:4)?

■ **"a life"** This is a good example of the Greek word *psuchē* used of a person or a life, not of a "soul." Biblically speaking, humans do not have "a soul"; they are a soul (cf. Gen. 2:7). There are several different words in Hebrew and Greek that refer to aspects of humanity, but are really synonymous of earthly life.

6:10 "looking around at them all" Mark (Peter) adds "in anger" (cf. Mark 3:5).

■ **"he said to him"** Some ancient Greek texts add "in anger" (NKJV), which comes from Mark 3:5 where it is directed at the Pharisees, not the crippled man. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter text (MSS P⁴, κ, A, B, C, W) an A rating (certain).

■ **"Stretch out your hand"** This is an aorist active imperative. The Talmud allows for medical help to

save a life on the Sabbath, but not to heal.

■ **"and he did so"** Here is the man's faith act.

6:11 "they themselves were filled with rage" This shows the ongoing scheming of the religious leaders (cf. Mark 3:6). The word "rage," "unreasoning fury," is made up of the word for "mind" (*nous*) with the alpha privative. This term is used in the Gospels only here, but it is used by Paul in 2 Tim. 3:9. It was a common term in wisdom literature in the Septuagint (cf. Job 33:23; Ps. 22:3; Pro. 14:8; 22:15; and Eccl. 11:10).

■ **"and discussed together what they might do to Jesus"** From Mark 3:6 we learn that the consultation was held between the Herodians and the Pharisees, who were traditional enemies (in politics and religion).

These leaders saw themselves as YHWH's defenders! It is amazing that the religious leaders saw no conflict in their premeditated murder compared to Jesus' supposed ritual and Sabbath breaking (cf. Matt. 26:4; John 11:53).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:12-16

¹²It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: ¹⁴Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; ¹⁵and Matthew and Thomas; James *the son of Alphaeus*, and Simon who was called the Zealot; ¹⁶Judas *the son of James*, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

6:12 "He went off to the mountain" In the OT psalms mountains are places of safety, strength, and permanence. They are associated with YHWH's presence (cf. Ps. 121:1) or with the temple (i.e., Mt. Moriah, cf. Ps. 87:1). Moses met YHWH on a mountain (i.e., Mount Sinai, cf. Exod. 19:16-25). Matthew's Gospel, in his recording of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, makes a definite link between Moses and Jesus. Jesus' famous sermon (cf. Matthew 5-7) was given on a mountain. This detail may have come from Mark's Gospel (Peter's eyewitness) in Mark 3:13. However, Luke records this sermon "on a plain."

It is uncertain to what mountain this refers. There is a mountain in Galilee that is mentioned often in connection with Jesus' post-resurrection meeting with disciples (cf. Matt. 26:32; 28:7,10). Whatever the location it was obviously a time to get away and be close to the Father (cf. Luke 9:28).

■ **"to pray and He spent the whole night in prayer to God"** Luke, more than any other Gospel writer, emphasizes Jesus' prayer life (cf. Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:18,28; 11:1-4) and His teachings on prayer (cf. Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8,9-14).

Jesus spent the entire night in prayer (periphrastic imperfect active) before He chose twelve special disciples to later represent Him. Here is the tension between predestination (The Father) and human will (Jesus). Jesus, full of the Spirit, incarnate deity, still needed to pray. Judas the betrayer was one of the prayerful choices!

6:13 "He called His disciples to Him" There were many people who followed Jesus, men and women, old and young (cf. Acts 1:21-22). Jesus selected twelve to be His special representatives and leaders. He spent much time and effort in their discipleship (see Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*).

■ **"twelve"** This seems to relate to the twelve tribes of Israel as a symbol of the people of God.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NUMBER TWELVE

■ **"whom He also named as apostles"** This comment is unique to Luke. This comes from the verb "to send" with the rabbinical implication of delegated authority. It is used in the Greek Classics like our term "ambassador." See Special Topics: Send (*apostellō*) at Luke 9:48 and Chart of the Apostles' Names at

Luke 5:27.

6:14 "Simon, whom He also named Peter" There are three other listings of the twelve apostles. Peter is always first; Judas Iscariot is always last. There are three groups of four which remain the same, even though the order of names within the groups is often reversed (cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Acts 1:13).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PETER, THE MAN

■ **"Andrew"** The Greek term means "manly." From John 1:29-42 we learn that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and that he introduced his brother, Peter, to Jesus.

■ **"James"** This is the Hebrew name "Jacob" (BDB 784), which means "supplanter," cf. Gen. 25:26). There are two men named James in the list of the Twelve. One is the brother of John (cf. Mark 3:17) and part of the inner circle (i.e., Peter, James, and John). This is the brother of John.

■ **"John"** This was James' brother and a member of the inner circle of disciples. He wrote five NT books and lived longer than any other Apostle.

■ **"Philip"** The Greek name means "fond of horses." His call is recorded in John 1:43-51.

■ **"Bartholomew"** The name means "son of Ptolemy." He may be the Nathanael of the Gospel of John (cf. John 1:45-49; 21:20).

■ **"Matthew"** The Hebrew name (from the *Mattithiah*, cf. 1 Chr. 9:31; 15:18,21; 16:5; 25:3,21; Neh. 8:4) means "gift of YHWH." This is referring to Levi (cf. Mark. 2:13-17).

■ **"Thomas"** The Hebrew name means "twin" or Didymus (cf. John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2).

■ **"James the son of Alphaeus"** This is the Hebrew name "Jacob." There are two men named James in the list of the Twelve. One is the brother of John (cf. Luke 6:17) and part of the inner circle (i.e., Peter, James, and John). This one is known as "James the less" (cf. Mark 3:17).

■ **"Simon who was called the Zealot"** The Greek text of Mark has "Cananaean" (also Matt. 10:4). Mark, whose Gospel was written to Romans, may not have wanted to use the political "hot button" word, zealot, which referred to a Jewish anti-Roman guerilla movement. Luke does call him by this term (cf. Acts 1:13). The term Cananaean has several derivatives.

1. from the area of Galilee known as Cana
2. from the OT use of Canaanite as merchant
3. from a general designation as a native of Canaan.

If Luke's designation is right, then zealot is from the Aramaic term for "enthusiast" (cf. Acts 1:17). Jesus' chosen twelve disciples were from several different and competing groups. Simon was a member of a nationalistic group which advocated the violent overthrow of Roman authority. Normally this Simon and Levi (i.e., Matthew, the tax collector) would not have been in the same room with each other.

■ **"Judas the son of James"** He was also called "Lebbeus" (cf. Matt. 10:3) or "Judas" (cf. John 14:22). Both Thaddaeus and Lebbeus mean "beloved child."

■ **"Judas Iscariot"** There are two Simons, two Jameses, and two Judases. The name Iscariot has two possible derivations:

1. man of Kerioth (a city) in Judah (cf. Jos. 15:23, which would mean he was the only Judean)
2. his father's name (cf. John 6:71; 13:2,26)
3. "dagger man" or assassin, which would mean he also was a zealot, like Simon

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: ISCARIOT](#) at Luke 27:3.

■ **"who became a traitor"** There is so much speculation about Judas and his motives. He is mentioned and vilified often in John's Gospel (cf. John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2,26,39; 18:2,3,5). The modern play "Jesus Christ Superstar" depicts him as a faithful but disillusioned follower who tried to force Jesus into fulfilling the role of the Jewish Messiah, which was to overthrow the Romans, punish the wicked, and set up Jerusalem as the capital of the world. However, John depicts his motives as greedy and malicious.

The main problem is the theological issue of God's sovereignty and human free will. Did God or Jesus manipulate Judas? Is Judas responsible for his acts if Satan controlled him or God predicted and caused him to betray Jesus? The Bible does not address these questions directly. God is in control of history; He knows future events, but mankind is responsible for their choices and actions. God is fair, not manipulative.

There is a new book that tries to defend Judas—*Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* by William Klassen, Fortress Press, 1996. I do not agree with this book because it depreciates the testimony of John's Gospel, but it is very interesting and thought provoking.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:17-19

¹⁷ Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and *there was* a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. ¹⁹And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing *them* all.

6:17 This is paralleled in Matt. 4:24-25 and Mark 3:7-8. This introduces the sermon called "the Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5-7 and "the sermon on the Plain" in Luke.

6:18 "to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured" In the Gospels, distinctions are made between physical sickness and demon possession. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC \(UNCLEAN SPIRITS\)](#) at Luke 4:33 and notes on exorcism at Luke 4:35. Although demonic forces might cause physical symptoms, the cure for each is different. Jesus healed all those who were brought to Him. We know from other accounts that healing was sometimes based on

1. the faith of the individual
2. the faith of the sick individual's friends
3. sometimes it came without much faith at all (cf. John 5:1-9a)

Physical healing did not always mean or imply immediate spiritual salvation (cf. John 9).

6:19

NASB	"for power was coming from Him"
NKJV	"for power went out from Him"
NRSV	"for power came out from him"
TEV	"for power was going out from him"
NJB	"because power came out of him"

This is an imperfect passive (deponent) indicative. The Spirit's power resided in Him and flowed to others in need (cf. Luke 5:17; 8:46; Mark 5:30). Ministry took something out of Jesus.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:20-26

²⁰And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He *began* to say, "Blessed are you *who are* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. ²²Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the

Son of Man. ²³Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. ²⁴But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. ²⁵Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to *you* who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶Woe to *you* when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way."

6:20 "turning His gaze toward His disciples" Jesus addresses this sermon to His disciples, while in Matthew He addresses different groups in the large crowd.

■ **"Blessed are you *who are poor*"** Matthew relates these series of Beatitudes (cf. Matt. 5:1-12) to the spiritual life, while Luke's abbreviated form seems to relate to social conditions (i.e., poor, hungry, weeping, and hatred, cf. Luke 6:20-22).

This term (*makarios*) meant "happy" or "honored" (cf. Luke 6:20-22). The English word "happy" comes from the Old English "happenance." Believers' God-given happiness is not based on physical circumstances but inner joy. There are no verbs in these statements. They are exclamatory in form like Aramaic or Hebrew (cf. Ps. 1:1). This blessedness is both a current attitude toward God and life as well as an eschatological hope.

■ **"kingdom of God"** The phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" or "Kingdom of God" is used over 100 times in the Gospels. Matthew, writing for people with a Jewish background who were nervous about pronouncing God's name because of Exod. 20:7, usually used the phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven," although in Matt. 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31,43, even he uses "Kingdom of God." But the Gospels of Mark (cf. Mark 10:14) and Luke were written to Gentiles. The two phrases are synonymous (Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 151-152).

M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, has a list of the places he believes the Kingdom is both present and future:

1. present – Matt. 11:12; 12:28; 16:19; Luke 11:20; 16:16; 17:21 and the parables of: the Sower, the Tares, the Leaven, and the Dragnet
2. future – Dan. 7:27; Matt. 13:43; 19:38; 25:34; 26:29; Mark 9:47; 1 Cor. 6:9; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 20" (p. 161).

6:21 "blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied" Luke does not clearly state when this meeting of needs or change of circumstances will take place. Is it a future time, but in this life ("now" of Luke used twice in Luke 6:21, twice in Luke 6:25) or is it an eschatological setting (like the future eschatological setting of Matthew's Beatitudes, cf. Matt. 5:1-11)? The point is that those who trust Christ will be blessed and physically rewarded (the Matthew parallel focuses on a spiritual future). Salvation changes everything eventually. Most of the early church in Jerusalem was poor (that is one reason why Paul wanted to collect an offering for them from the Gentile churches). Luke is not promising that the gospel will immediately change one's physical, financial, or cultural circumstances, but he does assert it will immediately change one's attitude and hope!

6:22 There were and are repercussions for following Jesus in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-11). This blessing is different from the rest in that there is a condition required—persecution (cf. Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:12-19; Rev. 11:7; 13:7). These pronounced blessings are both now and ultimately in an eschatological setting (in heaven, cf. Luke 6:23).

■ **"Son of Man"** See note at Luke 6:5.

6:23 "Be glad. . . leap" These are both aorist imperatives. Believers' attitudes and actions in the midst of persecution, rejection, and torture are a powerful witness of their salvation and their persecutor's judgment.

■ **"For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets"** Religious persecution is not new. Those who do it think they serve God (cf. John 16:2). The Jews have a track record of this kind of persecution (cf. Heb. 11:36-40).

However, there is an implication that Jesus' disciples are the new prophets. They were foretellers of God's good news. God's OT spokespersons were rejected and now the same thing has happened to Jesus and His followers.

6:24 "woe" The term *ouai* means "alas." This was a prophetic formula used in the Septuagint for introducing a funeral dirge of judgment. These are the corollaries (exact opposite, antithetical parallelism) of the blessings. Luke is the only Gospel that records this cursing section (cf. Luke 6:24-26). This is surprising, especially if Matthew is intentionally making a comparison with Moses because this pattern reflects Deuteronomy 27-28 (cursings and blessings section).

■ **"rich"** The rich are singled out because of their illusions of self-sufficiency. The "woes" are a role-reversal with the "blessed." God's ways are not our ways (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). What looks like prosperity may, in reality, be a curse!

NASB "you are receiving your comfort in full"

NKJV, NRSV "you have received your consolation"

TEV "you have your easy life"

NJB "you are having your consolation now"

This is a Present active indicative. Notice the "this life" orientation (cf. Matt. 6:2,5,16) of this phrase (and of the next three woes as well).

6:25 "Woe to you who laugh now" This seems to refer to the superficial merriment related to earthly comfort. These woes are a contrast to Jesus' blessings of believers (cf. Luke 6:23).

6:26 "when all men speak well of you" This verse contrasts Luke 6:23. The theological balance to this statement is found in 1 Tim. 3:7. We are not to seek the acclaim of the world at any cost, but we are to attempt to remove any handle for criticism so as to facilitate evangelism and ministry.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:27-36

27"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28**bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. **29**Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. **30**Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. **31**Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. **32**If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33**If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. **34**If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same *amount*. **35**But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*. **36**Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

6:27 "I say to you who hear" This is parallel to "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" of Luke 8:8; 14:35; Mark 4:9,23; Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9. Only those who have the indwelling Spirit and are sensitive to His prompting can understand these spiritual truths because they are so different from the world's.

By using this phrase Luke shows that the target group (disciples) for these sayings (cf. Luke 6:27-38) is

different from that of Luke 6:24-26 ("woe to you").

■ **"love your enemies"** This whole section of imperatives deals with an attitude of sacrificial, self-giving love (cf. Luke 6:35; Matt. 5:44). How are believers to do this?

1. do good to those who hate you (Luke 6:27)
2. bless those who curse you (Luke 6:28)
3. pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:28)
4. turn the other cheek (Luke 6:29)
5. give away your clothes (Luke 6:29)
6. give to all who ask (Luke 6:30)

These are to be done even in the presence of abuse by others. We act in such a way because of who we are in Christ, not how we are treated. Our witness of sacrificial, self-giving love is even more powerful in the face of abuse (i.e., Christ's rejection and death).

Luke's representation of Jesus' sermon deals with social issues and concerns now. How we live as believers is crucial in fulfilling the purpose of the church (cf. Luke 24:47; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

6:28 "pray for those who mistreat you" If believers take offense or try to avenge themselves, they lose the blessing, the joy, the contentment. Anger, hatred, and other emotions of the flesh can rob even believers of peace and contentment. They can also open a spiritual door for Satan to attack. We must give the pain to God. Often our love breaks down the barriers and provides an opportunity for witnessing (cf. Rom. 12:14-21).

Our forgiveness releases a joy in us and guilt in the abusers!

6:29 "coat . . . shirt" The first word refers to the outer garment, which was used to sleep in. This was the garment that one who loaned money could keep during the daytime to ensure repayment of a loan in the OT (cf. Exod. 22:25-26; Deut. 24:10-17).

The second term refers to an inner garment worn close to the skin. They were of different lengths. It would be similar to our modern underwear, including a top and shorts.

6:31 This is the universal, positive principle that goes far beyond the OT admonition of Lev. 19:18. The Matthean parallel is 7:12 in which Matthew records Jesus saying that this attitude and action fulfills **all** the Law and the Prophets.

6:32-34 This is a series of conditional sentences (the first is a first class; the other two are third class) that compare our love to the world's love. Possibly in our day, some other examples would be more appropriate:

1. our forgiveness and love while we are driving
2. our help given to others without demanding receipts for a tax break
3. our love and prayers for other denominational groups
4. our help in picking up the neighbor's trash that has blown in our yard without making a big deal out of it

6:35 "love your enemies" This is another present active imperative, an ongoing command to believers (cf. Luke 6:32-34).

NASB	"expecting nothing in return"
NKJV	"hoping for nothing in return"
NRSV	
(footnote)	"despairing of no one"
TEV	"expect nothing back"
NJB	"without any hope of return"

The New Testament: An American Translation, by Edgar J. Goodspeed, has "never despairing." This same meaning is found in *The RSV Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* by Alfred Marshall, p. 251.

This word is found only here in the NT. Most English translations assert that the parallelism of "if you lend to those from whom you expect (hope – *elpizō*) to receive" in Luke 6:34 demands a synonym (cf. Louw and Nids, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 357), but this is a meaning that this word has in no ancient usage.

However, the word used in the Septuagint in the sense of "to despair" or "to be despaired" (cf. Isa. 29:19; II Macc. 9:18), and also in the same sense in the Egyptian papyri (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 56). It was a medical term for a terrible disease, gives credence to "despair."

Another option is that the phrase alludes to Lev. 25:35-36 relating to loaning money to a covenant partner at interest.

■ **"you will be sons of the Most High"** We should exemplify the loving, giving family characteristics of God, not the self-centered, "me first" characteristics of (1) fallen humanity or (2) the evil one (cf. Luke 6:36; Matt. 5:45).

■ **"for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men"** What an extraordinary statement! Thank God there is no tit-for-tat in Him. The only hope for sinners is the unchanging, gracious, merciful, loving character of God (cf. Luke 6:36; Mal. 3:6).

6:36 This verse is a command (present middle [deponent] imperative) related to Luke 6:32-35. We are to live out before the world what we claim to believe and affirm. Actions speak louder than words.

The adjective "merciful" or "compassionate" is used only two times in the NT (cf. James 5:11, where it also describes God, cf. Rom. 12:11; 2 Cor. 1:3), but the noun is used several times where it describes what believers should be (cf. Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12).

There is an interesting possibility that these words of Jesus, recorded in Luke 6:36, reflect the pseudo-Jonathan Targum of Leviticus 22:28, while the parallel in Matt. 5:48 reflects the Targum from Lev. 22:27 (cf. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* [3rd ed.], p. 181, which is mentioned in F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 128). Jesus probably preached these sermons in Aramaic. Early church tradition claimed that "Q" (the sayings of Jesus used by Matthew and Luke) was written by Matthew in Aramaic.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:37-38

³⁷"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

6:37-39 This section deals with the same material recorded in Matthew 7, which speaks of our attitude toward others, within and without the family of God.

6:37 "Do not judge. . .do not condemn" These are two present active imperatives with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act already in process. Christians have a tendency to be critical of one another. This verse is often quoted to prove that Christians should not judge each other at all. But, Matt. 7:5,6,15; 1 Cor. 5:1-12; and 1 John 4:1-6 show that Jesus was assuming that believers evaluate one another spiritually. One's attitude and motives are the keys (cf. Gal. 6:1; Rom. 2:1-11; 14:1-23; James 4:11-12).

The Greek word "judge" is the etymological source for our English word "critic." It seems to imply a critical, judgmental, self-righteous spirit which judges others more severely than it does itself. It emphasizes one set of sins over another set of sins. It excuses one's own faults, but will not excuse the faults of others (cf. 2 Sam. 12:1-9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?

■ **"and you will not be judged. . .you will not be condemned"** Both of these phrases have the strong

double negative.

■ **"pardon, and you will be pardoned"** This is another present active imperative. The first two are negated, but this third and fourth are positive. Not only is the lack of judgment and condemnation crucial, but also the presence of forgiveness. This is similar to what God tells Job in chapter 42 about how he (Job) should act toward his three friends.

This verse contains a significant truth which was repeated quite often in the NT (cf. Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:35; Mark 4:24-25; 11:25; James 2:13; and 5:9). How believers act toward others is a reflection of how God has acted toward them. This is not meant to destroy the biblical truth of justification by faith. It is meant to emphasize the appropriate attitude and lifestyle of those who have been so freely forgiven. Eternal life has observable characteristics!

6:38 "it will be given to you" This is a metaphor from the commercial marketplace. Fairness and kindness result in fairness and kindness.

■ **"they will pour into your lap"** Marketers in this period would often carry dry goods (grain, flour, beans) in a fold in their robe, turned into a pocket by their belt.

■ **"by your standard of measure it will be measured to you"** The number of parallels in Matthew using this maxim is startling (cf. Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:35). This was a familiar cultural proverb of the day.

The passive voice verbs are used throughout Luke 6:37-38 to denote God's activity in

1. judging
2. condemning
3. pardoning
4. giving
5. measuring

How we act toward others gives evidence of our relationship to God. We reap what we sow (cf. Gal. 6:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:39-45

³⁹ And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. ⁴¹Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴²Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. ⁴³For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. ⁴⁴For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. ⁴⁵The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."

6:39 "pit" This Greek term was used in the Septuagint for:

1. a grave, 2 Sam. 18:17
2. an animal trap, Isa. 24:17-18

It is only used three times in the NT. The Matthew passages (cf. Matt. 12:11; 15:14), as this passage in Luke, could refer to a ditch or well. The implication is that false teachers lead their followers to disaster and death.

6:39-40 There is some confusion about exactly how this teaching relates to the immediate context. Verse 39 is paralleled in Matt. 15:14 and Luke 6:40 in Matt. 10:24. Jesus often used the same illustrations in

different ways and contexts. Grammatically the first question of Luke 6:39 expects a "no" answer, while the second question expects a "yes" answer.

6:40 Jesus lived what He taught. He was rejected in the midst of His love and ministry to the people. Jesus' followers will experience the same type of treatment in a fallen world. When we as believers (1) emulate our culture or (2) are fully accepted by our culture, that is a sure sign that we are not modeling Jesus' teachings. New Testament Christianity has never been socially acceptable. A selfish world is made uneasy by self-sacrifice and self-giving love!

NASB	"has been fully trained"
NKJV	"who is perfectly trained"
NRSV	"who is fully qualified"
TEV	"completed their training"
NJB	"fully trained disciple"

This is a perfect passive participle of a term that means

1. baby chicks, old enough to be sold in the market as fryers
2. broken bones, now mended and the arm and leg can be used again
3. torn fishing nets, now repaired and capable of catching fish
4. a fully built ship, now equipped with sails and rigging, ready to sail

The term means fully equipped for the assigned task (cf. Eph. 4:12), or possibly restored to usefulness (cf. Gal. 6:1).

6:41-42 Jesus used humor and Oriental overstatement to convey the tremendously important message to religious people about criticism. This is one reason western literalists have interpreted His sayings so rigidly.

6:41 "speck" "Speck" was used by Classical Greek writers for the material that made up a bird's nest. Therefore, we are talking about bits of plant material and similar insignificant small items.

■ **"do not see the log that is in your own eye"** The "log" referred to some large piece of lumber, a building timber or rafter. Jesus often used this literary form of hyperbole to communicate spiritual truths (cf. Matt. 5:29-30; 19:24; 23:24).

6:42 "brother" In this context this word could refer to

1. other Jews (cf. Luke 14:12; Acts 2:29 [cf. Luke 6:22], 37; 3:17; 7:2)
2. believers (cf. Luke 17:3; 22:32; Acts 1:15; 6:3)

■ **"hypocrite"** This compound word came from the theatrical world and was used for an actor performing behind a mask. It came from two Greek words: "to judge" (*krinō*) and "under" (*hupo*). It described a person acting in one way, but being another (Luke 18:9). A good example of this kind of activity can be seen in the life of David (cf. 2 Sam. 12:1-9). Jesus used this term to describe the self-righteous Pharisees in Matt. 5:20; 6:2,5,16; 15:1,7; 23:13.

This verse implies the appropriateness of believers' concern for other Christians when it is not done in a condescending, self-righteous manner (cf. Rom. 14:1). The Church has always had to spiritually examine and exhort its leadership and membership.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HYPOCRITES

6:43-45 The parallel is in Matt. 7:16,20. Our actions reveal our hearts. Our actions reveal who our true father is (God or Satan). Our actions bring consequences, either positive or negative.

6:45 "for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart" This is a powerful NT truth (cf. Matt. 12:34-

35; 15:18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN SPEECH

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 6:46-49

46"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? **47**Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: **48**he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. **49**But the one who has heard and has not acted *accordingly*, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."

6:46-47 Lip service only is not the essence of true discipleship (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 7:21,22). Obedience which flows from a personal commitment is crucial. Obedience does not precede grace, but it does follow after it!

6:46 "Lord, Lord" The rabbis said that the doubling of a name shows affection (cf. Gen. 22:11).

The Greek word *Kurios* was used in several distinct ways in the first century. It could simply mean (1) "sir"; (2) "master"; (3) "owner"; or (4) "husband." But, in theological contexts, it is usually interpreted with its full meaning derived from the OT substitution of the Hebrew term *adon* (owner, master, husband, lord) when reading Scripture for the covenant name YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic at Luke 1:68. In this context these men were making a theological statement about Jesus, but did not have a personal relationship with Him (cf. Matt. 7:21-25). It is difficult at this early stage in Jesus' ministry to know how much theological weight to attach to this term. Peter uses it early as a theological title for Jesus (cf. Luke 5:8), as does this verse, where Jesus links one's verbal affirmations with obedience.

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (APHISTĒMI)

■ **"hears My words and acts on them"** This parable was unique to Matthew (Matt. 7:24-27) and Luke (Luke 6:47-49). This is similar to the connotation of the Hebrew word *Shema* of Deut. 6:1, where the word implies "to hear so as to do." Christianity involves

1. knowledge
2. personal response
3. a lifestyle of service

It is interesting that both builders are said to hear Jesus' words. Again, it looks as if the context of these warnings is religious people who have heard and responded at some level.

6:48-49 This ending is very similar to Matthew's conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 7:26-27).

6:48 "because it had been well built" This corresponds to "dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock." This phrase is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁷⁵, κ, B, L, and W (the UBS⁴ gives it an A rating). However, another phrase was taken from the Matthew parallel (cf. Luke 7:25) and very early was substituted for the Lukan phrase (cf. MSS A, C, D, and the Vulgate). Many of these scribal additions happened very early in the period of hand copying these texts. Here is a good example. Manuscript P⁷⁵ is from the early third century, while MS A (Alexandrinus) is from the fifth century.

I want to remind you that none of the ancient Greek manuscripts of the NT (over 5,000) completely agree with each other, but the differences really affect no major doctrine. The NT is the best preserved text from the ancient world. We can trust that it faithfully communicates God's truth to us who believe and obey! Within the Greek manuscripts we have the original words. Nothing has been lost! We are just not sure which reading is original.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Jesus continue to challenge the religious leaders on the subject of the oral traditions concerning the Sabbath?
2. Why do the lists of the names of the disciples vary?
3. Why is the Sermon on the Mount so different from the Sermon on the Plain?
4. What is the purpose of the Sermon on the Plain in its Lukan context?

LUKE 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Healing of a Centurion's Servant	Jesus heals a Centurion's Servant	The Centurion's Slave	Jesus Heals a Roman Officer's Servant	Cure of the Centurion's Servant
7:1-10	7:1-10	7:1-10	7:1-5 7:6-8 7:9 7:10	7:1-10
The Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain	Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain	The Widow's Son at Nain	Jesus Raises a Widow's Son	The Son of the widow of Nain Restored to Life
7:11-17	7:11-17	7:11-17	7:11-15 7:16 7:17	7:11-17
The Messengers from John the Baptist	John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus	Jesus and John	The Messengers from John the Baptist	The Baptist's Question-Jesus Commends Him
7:18-30	7:18-35	7:18-23 7:24-30	7:18-19 7:20 7:21-23 7:24-28 7:29-30	7:18-23 7:24-27 7:28-30 Jesus Condemns His Contemporaries
7:31-35		7:31-35	7:31-35	7:31-32 7:33-35
A Sinful Woman Forgiven	A Sinful Woman Forgiven	The Woman Who Was a Sinner	Jesus at the Home of Simon the Pharisee	The Woman Who Was a Sinner
7:36-50	7:36-50	7:36-50	7:36-39 7:40 7:41-42 7:43a 7:43b-47	7:36-38 7:39-43 7:44-50

7:48

7:49

7:50

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 7:1-10

¹When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. ²And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; ⁵for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue." ⁶Now Jesus *started* on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; ⁷for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but *just* say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ⁹Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

7:1 "When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people" This refers to the sermon recorded in Luke 6:20-49.

▣ **"Capernaum"** This was Jesus' local headquarters in Galilee. See note at Luke 4:23.

7:2 "a centurion" A centurion was a Roman (or Gentile conscript) and part of an army of occupation. He seems to have been a God-fearer, much like Cornelius in Acts 10. Every mention of Centurions in the NT is positive. These non-commissioned soldiers were the heart of the Roman army.

▣ **"slave"** The Matthew parallel (Matt. 8:5-13) has the term "boy."

- **"who was highly regarded by him"** This term was common and in the Septuagint, where it is used
 1. of God's name, cf. Deut. 28:58
 2. of the Messiah, cf. Isa. 28:16 and NT in 1 Pet. 2:4,6
 3. of honorable men, cf. Num. 22:15; and NT in Phil. 2:29

The best parallel to this NT usage is 1 Sam. 26:21 and Isa. 13:12, where a person's life is precious.

7:3 "he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come" The parallel account is in Matt. 8:5-13, but not in Mark. From Luke 7:5 we see why the Jewish elders (local synagogue leaders) were willing to be intermediaries.

- **"save"** The Greek term *sozō* is used often in the NT for spiritual salvation (ex. James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12), but here it is used in its OT sense of physical deliverance (ex. James 5:20; Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56). The term literally means "to make whole" (physically and/or spiritually).

7:6 "Lord" This is the vocative form of the Greek term *kurios*, which can be

1. a title of respect like "sir"
2. a title for a superior like "master"
3. a theological affirmation of Jesus as God's Messiah (cf. Luke 7:13)

In this context (like John 4) it is option #1. Also note the ambiguity of its use in Luke 7:19.

- **"do not trouble Yourself"** This is a Present middle imperative (Zerwick and Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, p. 199 and A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, p.99), while Barbara, Tim Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament*, p. 199 and Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 370, call it a present passive imperative.

- **"I am not worthy for You to come under my roof"** Obviously this Roman army officer knew the Jewish attitude toward Gentile homes. There is an obvious contrast between Luke 7:5 (the message of the elders) and this man's own sense of his unworthiness (cf. Luke 7:7).

7:7 "but just say the word" Jesus' physical presence was not demanded. This man was used to delegating authority (cf. Luke 7:8). This gesture shows this Gentile's great faith in the power of Jesus. It also gives a precedent for trusting Jesus' words, not His presence, for one's salvation (physical here, but for the Gentile readers, spiritual also). Luke chooses the accounts he will record to reach Gentiles!

- There is an ancient Greek manuscript variant connected with this verse. Luke has the aorist passive imperative, *iathētō* (cf. P⁷⁵, B, L, and some Coptic translations, the UBS⁴ gives this one a B rating), but other ancient texts have *iathēsetai* (future passive indicative), which occurs in Matt. 8:8 (cf. MSS κ , A, C, D, W, and the Vulgate and Armenian translations). Which one does not change the meaning of the text, but this does show how easily these scribal corrections or alterations occurred (between a.d. 200-400).

7:9 "He marveled" See note at Luke 1:63.

- **"not even in Israel have I found such great faith"** This is an extremely significant theological assertion. Remember that Luke is writing to Gentiles. In this context Jesus commends a Gentile military officer for his faith, heals a widow's child (like Elijah, cf. Luke 4:25-26), and is willing to help a sinful woman and even commend her faith (cf. Luke 7:50). It is obvious that faith, not national origin or privileged standing, is the key to the new age inaugurated by Jesus.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 7:11-17

¹¹Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. ¹²Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd

from the city was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. ¹⁶Fear gripped them all, and they *began* glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!" ¹⁷ This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.

7:11 "He went to a city called Nain" This account is recorded only in Luke. It seems not to be a special event, but a typical event in the travels and ministry of Jesus. Nain is about six miles southeast of Nazareth, close to Mt. Tabor. It is parallel to what Elijah did in Luke 4:25-26 (cf. 1 Kgs. 17:17-24).

■ **"His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd"** There was always a large crowd of the sick, the curious, and religious leaders following Jesus. Much of Luke's presentation of Jesus' life and teachings is structured as travel narratives. These travel narratives include many of the teachings found in Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount." In Luke, Jesus is heading toward the climatic confrontation in Jerusalem. As always in the Gospels, Jesus' healings had several purposes:

1. to help a needy person (a lady in Luke 7:13)
2. to witness to:
 - a. the disciples (for maturity)
 - b. the crowd (for saving faith)
 - c. the townspeople (cf. Luke 7:12)
 - d. the religious leaders who were always there
3. to demonstrate His Messiahship

7:12 "the only son of his mother" How did Jesus know this fact? Possibly

1. someone in the crowd told Him
2. this is another example of His supernatural knowledge
3. this is an editorial comment by the evangelist

The fact that this was the only son meant this woman had no means of support!

■ **"a sizeable crowd from the city was with her"** Jewish funerals involved the entire community and were remarkably noisy and emotional.

7:13 "Lord" This is the first use of this title for Jesus in Luke. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Luke 1:68.

■ **"He felt compassion for her"** This is a developed connotation from "bowels." The ancients thought the lower viscera or the major organs (heart, liver, lungs) were the seat of the emotions (cf. Septuagint of Pro. 12:10; 26:22; Jer. 28:13,51; II Macc. 9:5-6; IV Macc. 10:8; Baruch 2:17). Paul uses this metaphor often (cf. 2 Cor. 6:12; 7:15; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Col. 3:12; Philemon 1:7,12,20). Luke, probably following Paul, also uses it (cf. Luke 1:78; 7:13; 10:33; 15:20; Acts 1:18). It is meaningful to me to know of the human emotions and empathy that Jesus shares with us (cf. Mark 1:41; 6:34; 8:2).

■ **"and said to her"** She would have been leading the funeral procession (Alfred Edersheim, *Jewish Social Life*).

■ **"do not weep"** This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually implies stop an act in process.

7:14 "coffin" This refers to an open bier (cf. NRSV). Jesus did not fear ceremonial defilement by touching ceremonially unclean things or people.

■ **"Young man, I say to you, arise"** This man's age is uncertain, for in Jewish society one was considered to be a young man up to the age of forty. The verb is an aorist passive imperative. Jesus has power over death and hades (cf. Rev. 1:18). What a powerful sign of His Messiahship (cf. Luke 7:22).

7:15 "The dead man sat up and began to speak" The verb "sat up" is rare and used only by medical doctors in Greek literature. The NT never records the words of those who have been raised from the dead. What powerful evidence to confirm Jesus' words and ministry!

7:16 "they began glorifying God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us'" Jesus did work similar to Elijah and Elisha in the very same geographical area. These people were attributing to Jesus the highest title that they knew.

■ **"God has visited His people"** The Jews had experienced YHWH's visitation many times. God is active in the life of His people. There is a real tension in the Bible between the transcendence of God and the immanence of God. He is the Holy One of Israel, yet Father!

7:17 All the Synoptic Gospels have these summary statements (cf. Mark 1:28,45; Matt. 4:24; 9:31; 14:1), but Luke has the most (cf. Luke 4:14,37; 5:15; 7:17). Jesus did not perform miracles (healing, exorcisms, raising the dead) in secret, but in public, and word of it spread rapidly to a needy, expectant Palestine.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 7:18-23

¹⁸The disciples of John reported to him about all these things. ¹⁹Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" ²⁰When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'" ²¹At that very time He cured many *people* of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many *who were blind*. ²²And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: *the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them.* ²³Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

7:18 "The disciples of John reported to him about all these things" The parallel is in Matt. 11:2-19.

7:19 "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else" There have been several theories trying to explain John's confusion about Jesus.

1. He said this only to convince his own disciples (John Calvin, cf. John 1:29-42).
2. John, the outdoors man, trapped in a cell, was getting nervous.
3. John was impatient for Jesus to act.
4. Jesus was not acting in the expected pattern of eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:13).

7:21 The opening clause is a summary of Jesus' ministry to the crowds. His actions clearly revealed who He was, if they could only recognize its prophetic fulfillment.

■ **"gave sight to many *who were blind*"** This is the most common recorded healing with definite Messianic implications (cf. Isa. 35:5-6; 61:1). It is surely a sign of the spiritual blindness which had infected Judaism (cf. John 9).

7:22 "Go and report to John" "Go" is an aorist passive (deponent) participle used in an imperative sense; "Report" is an aorist active imperative.

This is a good example that grammar must be related to context. These are not commands, but a way of directing John's representatives. They came to do this very thing—"report to John." As words have

meaning only in context, so too, grammatical constructions.

■ The rest of Luke 7:22 is a combination of several OT quotes which link up with Jesus' activities recorded in Luke 7:21. The first two partial quotes are from Isa. 61:1 (or possibly Isa. 29:18-19; 32:3-4; 35:5-6; 42:7,16). This is from the section of Isaiah that deals with the new age (chapters 56-66).

■ **"the lepers are cleansed"** Leprosy and barrenness were diseases that Jews thought showed God's displeasure.

■ **"the dead are raised up"** There are only three accounts of resuscitation in the NT, but apparently there were actually many more.

There are three terms which describe God's dealing with humans relating to physical life:

1. Translated. Enoch (cf. Genesis 5), like Elijah (cf. 2 Kings), was taken to heaven without physical death.
2. Resuscitation. Humans are restored to physical life, but will die again.
3. Resurrection. Jesus is the first to have a physical body of the new age. This is the promise of eternal life, a new body prepared for life with God (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

■ **"the poor have the gospel preached to them"** This was the unique element that pointed to the nature of Jesus' mission. God graciously included those whom Jewish society neglected. This is a hint of God's inclusion of the Gentiles.

7:23 "Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me" Jesus was warning John about his presuppositions concerning the Messiah. This is a good word to us also. Judaism missed its own Messiah because of their preconceived images of Him.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 7:24-30

²⁴When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are *found* in royal palaces! ²⁶But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. ²⁷This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way before You.' ²⁸I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." ²⁹When all the people and the tax collectors heard *this*, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

7:24-27 This is a series of questions expecting a "no" answer. They emphasize the quality of John's character.

7:27 "it is written" These references (cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5; Isa. 40:3-4) show that Jesus recognized who and what he was.

7:28 "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John" What a tremendous statement from the Messiah concerning the forerunner (cf. Matt. 11:11)! It must be recognized that Jesus' concluding remarks in Luke 7:28 show that John was the last of the OT prophets, not the first of the NT gospel preachers.

The NT affirms the unique power of John's preaching and message. He was a Spirit-led prophet. However, the NT also depreciates John so that the worship and preeminence goes to Jesus' person and

ministry. There were some heretical groups in the early centuries that tried to elevate John.

■ **"yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he"** As radical as the first part of Luke 7:28 is, this second phrase is even more shocking! It does clearly demonstrate the radical newness of the age of the Spirit, the Kingdom of God. The context shows the least:

1. Roman centurion and his servant (Luke 7:2-10)
2. widow of Nain and her child (Luke 7:11-17)
3. the people of Isa. 61:1 (Luke 7:21-22)
4. tax collectors (Luke 7:29)

7:29-30 These two verses can be seen as to how

1. Jesus comments about how John 6's message was received
2. Luke's comments about Jesus' message was received (NET Bible)

7:29 This verse and Luke 7:30 show the makeup of the crowd that continuously followed Jesus: social outcasts and religious leaders. I am sure that they stood in their respective groups! These two verses may be Luke's editorial comment.

The social outcasts were receptive to a message of repentance and faith (cf. Mark. 1:15), but the religious leaders were not. They thought they were an elite group who were exclusively accepted by God.

NASB	"they acknowledged God's justice"
NKJV	"justified God"
NRSV	"acknowledged the justice of God"
TEV	"who had obeyed God's righteous demands"
NJB	"acknowledged God's saving justice"

This is literally "justified (aorist active indicative) God." The spiritually receptive ones recognized God's righteous ways being revealed in John's message. John's public baptism was an admission of spiritual need and trust in God's acceptance of repentant people.

It is surprising how limited is the Gospel's use of "justify" (cf. Matt. 11:19; 12:37; Luke 7:29,35; 10:29; 16:15; 18:14) when it is used so often in Paul's writings (i.e., 13 times in Romans and 8 times in Galatians). Paul speaks often of justification (i.e., how a sinner is right with God), but Jesus speaks of being part of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus was speaking to Jews who thought they were accepted by God because of Abraham and the Law of Moses, but Paul spoke mostly to Gentiles who had no covenant background. They both address the need of being in fellowship with God and how that fellowship will manifest itself in believers' lives (i.e., words, actions, motives).

■ **"baptized by John"** John's and Jesus' messages were initially similar, but there is a vast difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism. John focused on an OT foundation, whereas Jesus focused on Himself on a NT foundation.

One wonders whether John's disciples who followed Jesus were re-baptized. Rituals are symbols, carriers of meaning, but they are not mechanisms of grace! Religious acts and liturgy without personal faith are barriers instead of bridges to God. The key in true faith is the heart, not just the outward forms of faith.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 7:31-35

³¹"To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? ³²They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' ³³For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!' ³⁴The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' ³⁵Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

7:31-34 This paragraph is paralleled in Matt. 11:16-19. John and Jesus came with different styles of ministry (John as an ascetic; Jesus as socially available), yet the Jewish leaders rejected them both. Verse 30 shows the close-mindedness and self-righteousness of the Jewish leaders.

7:31 "this generation" This term is used in a negative sense of current hearers who see and hear God's truth, but refuse to respond appropriately (cf. Luke 7:31; 9:41; 11:29,50; 17:25). This may be an allusion to Deut. 32:5; Ps. 78:8; Jer. 2:31; 7:29. There is far more guilt connected to those who hear the truth and refuse to embrace it than to those who never have seen or heard.

7:33 "John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine" John the Baptist was a Nazarite (cf. Numbers 6). He also lived in the wilderness and did not freely socialize with those to whom he preached (like Elijah). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: NAZARITE VOW

■ **"and you say, 'He has a demon'"** This was the same charge that they used of Jesus (cf. Luke 11:14-26). They could not explain away God's mighty use of this man so they attributed his power to a supernatural force of evil.

■ This accusation reveals

1. the animosity of the religious elite
2. the compassion of Jesus.

Luke was writing to Gentiles who were also poor. This shows Jesus' love and identification with the common person.

7:35 This was a cultural proverb much like Luke 6:44, "each tree is known by its own fruit." The actions and attitudes of those baptized by John (cf. Luke 7:29) were clearly distinct from the religious leaders (cf. Luke 7:30). The Jews often used the OT idiom "son of. . ." as an adjective to describe a person.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 7:36-50

³⁶ Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined *at the table*. ³⁷ And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, ³⁸ and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." ⁴⁴ Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. ⁴⁷ For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." ⁴⁹ Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began to say to

themselves, "Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

7:36-50 This account is similar to Mary of Bethany's actions recorded in Mark 13:3-9; Matt. 26:6-13; John 12:2-8. It is obvious that on further reflection, the account in Luke, though similar, is distinct from Mary of Bethany's anointing mentioned in the other Gospels.

Luke often uses these meals given by Pharisees to communicate the gospel (cf. Luke 7:36; 11:37; 14:1).

7:36 "one of the Pharisees" Jesus ministered to all groups. He wanted to reach all people. See Special Topic: Pharisees at Luke 5:17.

■ **"was requesting Him to dine with him"** One wonders the motive of this request:

1. curiosity
2. spiritual hunger
3. being seen with Jesus
4. trying to find out something he could use against Him (cf. Luke 7:44-45)

These dinners were social events for the entire community. Although only invited guests ate, anyone was welcome to come and listen to the table conversation.

■ **"reclining at the table"** Luke is the only NT author to use this term *kataklinō* (cf. Luke 7:36; 9:14,15; 14:8; 24:30). Other NT writers use *anakeimai*.

The Jews of the first century did not use tables and chair as the Persians did (cf. Esther 1:6; 7:8) and some Egyptians. Typically they would recline on their left elbow on pillows spread around horseshoe-shaped tables, usually three on a side.

7:37 "a woman in the city who was a sinner" The implication is that she was a local prostitute, however, this phrase is unspecific. To the Jewish leaders, anyone who did not keep all the expected rules and rituals of the Talmud was considered a sinner (e.g., shepherds, tanners). This city was in the north, possibly Capernaum. The other Gospels record an anointing by a woman at a Simon's house, near Jerusalem. However, the other Gospels record a similar anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary Magdalene (cf. Matt. 26:6; Mark 14:3; John 12:2).

■ **"alabaster vial of perfume"** Alabaster was a whitish yellow stone which was named for the town in Egypt (Alabastron) in which it was developed. The perfume was very expensive. Women often carried this as a dowry around their necks on a chain.

7:38 "and standing behind Him at His feet" At these social events others from the town who were not invited were welcome to come and sit along the walls, look in the windows and doors, and listen to the conversations. Remember that Jesus was reclining on his left elbow with His feet behind Him.

■ **"and kept wiping them with the hair of her head"** For a Jewish woman, to have her hair undone in public was a sign of social impropriety.

■ **"kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume"** This was a highly unusual act that seems to symbolize this woman's joy over forgiveness and the deep sense of gratitude for Jesus' attitude concerning people like herself (cf. Luke 7:35).

7:39 "If this man were a prophet" This is a second class conditional sentence. The form of this sentence shows that he did not believe Jesus was a prophet. This is a unique Greek construction which would be understood as "if this man were a prophet, which he is not, he would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching him, but he does not." This Pharisee totally misunderstood Jesus

and His motives, purposes, and actions.

The very early codex B, called Vaticanus because it was found in the Vatican library, has the definite article with "prophet." This is obviously a theological attempt to link Jesus with "the Prophet" of Moses' prophecy in Deut. 18:15. This was a Messianic prediction. But from the context of Luke this Pharisee is not calling Jesus the Messiah, but a non-prophet!

A book that documents these theological variants is Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*. Oxford, 1993.

7:40 "Simon" This was a common name. There are many examples in the NT of people named Simon:

1. Simon Peter, Matt. 4:18
2. Simon the Canaanite, Matt. 10:4; Acts 1:13
3. Simon, Jesus' half-brother, Matt. 13:55
4. Simon the Leper, Matt.26:6; Mark 14:3
5. Simon the Cyrene, Matt. 27:32
6. Simon the Pharisee, Luke 7:40
7. the father of Judas Iscariot, John 6:71
8. Simon Magnes, Acts 8:5
9. Simon the Tanner, Acts 9:43

The parallels in Matthew and Mark also place the dinner at the home of a man named Simon, but he is not called a Pharisee.

7:41 It is only in Luke that Jesus tells this parable to Simon. Matthew and Mark have a totally different reason for the woman's actions (i.e., prepare Jesus for His upcoming death by anointing Him for burial).

▣ **"500 denarii"** A denarius was a common coin of the period. It represented a day's wage for a soldier or day-laborer (cf. Matt. 20:2). See Special Topic: Coins in Use in Palestine in Jesus' Day at Luke 15:8.

7:42 "So which of them will love him more" This account obviously deals with two kinds of people:

1. the self-righteous who thought they needed little or no forgiveness
2. the humble and repentant who knew they needed God's forgiveness

This parable has much in common with the parable of the Pharisee and the sinner (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

7:44-47 There are several actions that Simon the Pharisee did not perform for Jesus that were expected of a host in Jewish culture:

1. he did not wash His feet when he entered, Luke 7:44
2. he did not give Him a kiss of greeting, Luke 7:45
3. he did not anoint Him with oil, Luke 7:46

7:47 "I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven" Jesus did not overlook this woman's sins, but He forgave them. This pericope (gospel story) clearly shows the radically new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). Salvation is based on faith in Jesus, not personal achievement, merit, or performance (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). This is the new covenant way of being accepted by God!

Theologians emphasize the word "love" and turn it into a new requirement for forgiveness and acceptance. Love is surely the by-product of a personal relationship with God through Christ, but it is not the criterion for acceptance. Acceptance is based on the finished and complete work of the Son. Humans must respond in repentance and faith, but they cannot add to or take away from this freely given salvation. A changed and changing life of love, obedience, and perseverance are evidence that we have met God in Christ. Believers are saved "unto good works" (cf. Eph. 2:10), not "by good works" (cf. Rom. 3:21-30)!

7:48 "Your sins have been forgiven" This is a perfect passive indicative. This must have been a tremendous shock to the Jews sitting there who knew that only God could forgive sins (cf. Luke 5:21-24).

7:50 "Your faith has saved you" This is a perfect active indicative. This woman's expression of love

was the result, not the means, of forgiveness. Faith in Christ is the key issue (cf. Luke 5:20; 7:9; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42).

■ **"go in peace"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative (cf. Luke 8:48).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are the accounts of Luke 7 and Matthew 8 so different?
2. Why was Jesus so impressed with this man's faith?
3. Why did Jesus resuscitate the widow of Nain's son?
4. Why did John the Baptist doubt that Jesus was the Messiah? How did Jesus answer his question?
5. Is John the Baptist an OT prophet or a NT preacher?
6. Why is Jesus' statement of Luke 7:48 an anathema to the Jewish leaders?

LUKE 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Some Women Accompany Jesus	Many Women Ministered to Jesus	On Tour	Women Who Accompanied Jesus	The women Accompanying Jesus
8:1-3	8:1-3	8:1-3	8:1-3	8:1-3
The Parable of the Sower	The Parable of the Sower	The Parable of the Sower	The Parable of the Sower	The Parable of the Sower
8:4-8	8:4-8	8:4-8	8:4 8:5-8a 8:8b	8:4 8:5-8
The Purpose of the Parables	The Purpose of the Parables		Purpose of the Parables	Why Jesus Speaks in Parables
8:9-10	8:9-10	8:9-10	8:9-10	8:9-10
The Parable of the Sower Explained	The Parable of the Sower Explained		Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower	The Parable of the Sower Explained
8:11-15	8:11-15	8:11-15	8:11-15	8:11-15
A Light Under a Vessel	The Parable of the Revealed Light	On Obedient Listening	A Lamp Under a Bowl	Parable of the Lamp
8:16-18	8:16-18	8:16-18	8:16 8:17 8:18	8:16-18
The Mother and Brothers of Jesus	Jesus' Mother and Brothers Come to Him	Jesus' True Family	Jesus' Mother and Brothers	The True Family of Jesus
8:19-21	8:19-21	8:19-21	8:19-20 8:21	8:19-21
The Calming of a Storm	Wind and Waves Obey Jesus	Wind and Sea Calmed	Jesus Calms a Storm	The Calming of the Storm
8:22-25	8:22-25	8:22-25	8:22-24a 8:24b-25a 8:25b	8:22-25
The Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac	A Demon-Possessed Man Healed	The Gerasene Demoniac	Jesus Heals a Man with Demons	The Gerasene Demoniac
8:26-31	8:26-31	8:26-31	8:26-29 8:30a	8:26-27 8:28-31

			8:30b-31	
8:32-39		8:32-33	8:32-33	8:32-33
		8:34-39	8:34-38a	8:34-37
			8:38b-39a	8:38-39
			8:39b	
Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment	A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed	Jairus' Daughter Raised	Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Cloak	Cure of the woman with a Hemorrhage – Jairus' Daughter Raise to Life
8:40-42a	8:40-56	8:40-42a	8:40-42a	8:40-42
8:42b-48		8:42b-48	8:42b-45a	
				8:43-48
			8:45b	
			8:46-48	
8:49-56		8:49-56	8:49	8:49-56
			8:50	
			8:51-52	
			8:53-56	

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter is made up of several incidents
 1. the parable of the soils, Luke 8:1-18
 2. Jesus deals with His own family, Luke 8:19-21
 3. Jesus calms a storm, Luke 8:22-25
 4. Jesus heals the Gadarene Demoniac, Luke 8:26-39
 5. Jesus raises Jairus' daughter and heals a woman with an issue of blood, Luke 8:40-55

B. INTERPRETING PARABLES

The Gospels were written many years after Jesus' life. Those who write the Gospels (by the aid of the Spirit) were culturally accustomed to oral teaching. The rabbis taught by oral presentation.

Jesus continued this oral approach to teaching. To our knowledge He never wrote down any of His teachings or sermons. To aid in the memory, teaching presentations were repeated, summarized, and illustrated. The Gospel writers retained these memory aids. Parables are one of these techniques. Parables are hard to define:

"Parables are best defined as stories with two levels of meaning; the story level provides a mirror by which reality is perceived and understood" (*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* [p. 594]).

"A parable is a saying or story that seeks to drive home a point that the speaker wishes to emphasize by illustrating it from a familiar situation of common life" (*The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia* [p. 590]).

It is hard to define exactly what was understood by the term "parable" in Jesus' day

1. Some say it reflects the Hebrew term *mashal*, which was any kind of riddle (Mark 3:23), clever saying (Proverbs, Luke 4:23), short saying (Mark 7:15) or mysterious saying ("dark saying").
2. Others hold to the more limited definition of a short story.

This was a major NT literary genre. Depending on how one defines the term, over one-third of Jesus' recorded teachings are in parabolic form. Parables are certainly authentic sayings of Jesus. If one accepts the second definition, there are still several different types of short stories

1. simple stories (Luke 13:6-9)
2. complex stories (Luke 15:11-32)
3. contrasting stories (Luke 16:1-8; 18:1-8)
4. typological/allegorical stories (Matt. 13:24-30, 47-50; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15; 10:25-37; 14:16-24; 20:9-19; John 10; 15:1-8)

In dealing with this variety of parabolic material, one must interpret these sayings on several levels.

The **first level** would be general hermeneutic principles applicable to all biblical genres:

1. identify the purpose of the entire book, or at least the larger literary unit in which the parable appears
2. identify the original audience. It is significant that the same parable is sometimes given to different groups.
 - a. lost sheep in Luke 15 directed to sinners
 - b. lost sheep in Matthew 18 directed toward disciples
3. be sure to note the immediate context of the parable. Often Jesus or the Gospel writer tells the main point (usually at the end of the parable or immediately after it).
4. express the central intent(s) of the parable in one declarative sentence. Parables often have two or three main characters. Usually there is an implied truth, purpose, or point to each character.
5. check the parallel passages in the other Gospels, then other NT books and OT books.

The **second level** of interpretive principles are those that relate specifically to parabolic material:

1. Read (hear if possible) the parable again and again. These were given for oral impact, not written analysis.
2. Most parables have only one central truth, which is related to the historical and literary contexts of both Jesus and/or the evangelist.
3. Be careful of interpreting the details making it an allegory instead of a parable. Often they are just part of the setting of the story.
4. Remember parables are not reality. They are life-like analogies, but often exaggerations, to drive home a point (truth).
5. Identify the main points of the story that a first century Jewish audience would have understood. Then look for the twist or surprise. Usually it comes toward the end of the story (cf. A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, pp. 221-224).
6. All parables were given to elicit a response. That response is usually related to the concept of "the Kingdom of God." Jesus was the inaugurator of the new Messianic Kingdom (Matt. 21:31; Luke

17:21). Those who heard Him must respond to Him now! The Kingdom is also future (Matthew 25). A person's future is dependent on how he responded to Jesus at the time. Kingdom parables described the new kingdom that had arrived in Jesus. They described its ethical and radical demands for discipleship. Nothing can be as it was. All is radically new and focused on Jesus!

7. Parables often do not express the point or central truth. The interpreter must seek the contextual keys that reveal the original culturally obvious central truths which, because of time, language, and culture, are now obscure to us.

A **third level** that is often controversial is that of the hiddenness of parabolic truth. Jesus often spoke of the hiddenness of parables (cf. Matt. 13:9-15; Mark 4:9-13; Luke 8:8-10; John 10:6; 16:25). This is related to the prophecy in Isa. 6:9-10. The heart of the hearer determines the level of understanding (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9,15,16,43; Mark 4:9,23,33-34; 7:16; 8:18; Luke 8:8; 9:44; 14:35).

However, it must also be stated that often the crowd (cf. Matt. 15:10; Mark 7:14) and the Pharisees (cf. Matt. 21:45; Mark 12:12; Luke 20:19) understood exactly what Jesus was saying, but refused to respond appropriately by faith and repentance. In one sense this is the truth of the Parable of the Soils (cf. Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8). The parables could conceal or reveal truth (cf. Matt. 13:16-17; 16:12; 17:13; Luke 8:10; 10:23-24).

Grant Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 239, makes the point that "parables are an 'encounter mechanism' and function differently depending on the audience. . . Each group (i.e., leaders, crowds, disciples) is encountered differently by the parables." Often even the disciples did not understand either His parables or His teachings (cf. Matt. 15:16; Mark 6:52; 7:18; 8:17-18,21,33; 9:10,32; Luke 9:45; 18:34; John 12:16).

A **fourth level** is also controversial. It deals with the central truth of parables. Most modern interpreters have reacted (justifiably so) against the allegorical interpretation of the parables. Allegory turned the details into elaborate systems of truth. This method of interpretation does not focus on the historical setting, literary setting, or authorial intent; it presents the thoughts of the interpreter, not the inspired text.

However, it must be admitted that the parables that Jesus interpreted are very close to allegorical or at least typological. Jesus used the details to convey truth (the Sower, Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8 and the wicked tenants, Matthew 21; Mark 12, Luke 20).

Some of the other parables also have several main truths. A good example is the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). It is not only the love of the Father and waywardness of the younger son, but also the attitude of the older son, that is integral to the full meaning of the parable.

Here is a helpful statement from *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* by Peter Cotterell and Max Turner:

"It was Adulf Julicher more than any other who directed New Testament scholarship towards a decisive attempt to understand the role of parable in the teaching of Jesus. The radical allegorizing of the parables was abandoned and the search begun for a key that would enable us to penetrate their true meaning. But as Jeremias made clear, 'His efforts to free the parables from the fantastic and arbitrary interpretations of every detail caused him to fall into a fatal error.' The error was to insist not merely that a parable should be understood as conveying a single idea, but that the idea should be as general as possible" (p. 308).

Another helpful statement from *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant Osborne is:

"Yet I have noted many indications that the parables are indeed allegories, albeit controlled by the author's intention. Blomberg (1990) in fact argues that there are as many points as there are characters in the parables and that they are indeed allegories. While this is somewhat overstated, it is nearer the truth than the 'one point' approach" (p. 240).

Should parables be used to teach doctrinal truths or illuminate doctrinal truths? Most interpreters have been influenced by the abuse of the allegorical method of interpreting parables, which allowed them to establish doctrines that had no connection to Jesus' original intent or that of the Gospel writer. Meaning must be linked to authorial intent. Jesus and the Gospel writers were under

inspiration, but interpreters are not.

However badly the parables have been abused, they still function as vehicles of truth. Hear Bernard Ramm on this point!

"Parables do teach doctrine and the claim that they may not be used at all in doctrinal writing is improper. . .we must check our results with plain, evident teaching of our Lord, and with the rest of the New Testament. Parables with proper cautions may be used to illustrate doctrine, illuminate Christian experience and to teach practical lessons." *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (p. 285).

In conclusion let me give three quotes that reflect warnings in our interpretation of parables:

1. Taken from *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart:
"The parables have suffered a fate of misinterpretation in the church second only to the Revelation" (p. 135).
2. Taken from *Understanding and Applying the Bible* by J. Robertson McQuilkin:
"Parables have been the source of untold blessing in enlightening God's people concerning spiritual truth. At the same time, parables have been the source of untold confusion in both doctrine and practice in the church" (p. 164).
3. Taken from *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant Osborne:
"Parables have been among the most written about yet hermeneutically abused portions of Scripture. . .the most dynamic, yet the most difficult to comprehend of the biblical genres. The potential of the parable for communication is enormous, since it creates a comparison or story based upon everyday experiences. However, that story itself is capable of many meanings, and the modern reader has as much difficulty interpreting it as did the ancient hearers" (p. 235).

C. A Checklist for Interpreting Parables

1. General Hermeneutical Principles
 - a. What is the central purpose of:
 - (1) the whole Gospel
 - (2) the literary unit
 - (3) the immediate context
 - b. Identify, if possible, the original audience (disciples, crowd, religious leaders)
 - c. Seek the historical setting
 - (1) of Jesus
 - (2) of the Gospel author
 - d. What is the main truth(s) of the story
 - (1) express it in one declarative sentence
 - (2) list the main characters of the parable (usually 2 or 3) and assign a purpose, truth, or plot development to each
 - e. Check the other gospels for their use of the parabolic material. Is it the same or different?
2. Special Hermeneutics
 - a. Read (or better, listen to) the story again and again
 - b. Identify the cultural aspects of the story. Look for what would have surprised the original hearers. This surprising twist usually comes toward the end. It can be a statement of Jesus or the hearers or a character in the story or the Gospel writer
 - c. What response was Jesus seeking to elicit in the story?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:1-3

¹Soon afterwards, He *began* going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, ²and *also* some women who

had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

8:1

NASB "from one city and village to another"
NKJV "every city and village"
NRSV "cities and villages"
TEV, NJB "towns and villages"

Jesus was trying to reach everyone with the Good News. This extensive tour of Galilee was precipitated by the leaders' rejection of Him in Judea.

- ▣ **"proclaiming and preaching"** These two Greek terms (*kērussō* and *euangelizō*) are synonymous. They (usually, but not always, cf. Luke 1:19) both reflect the public announcement of the gospel. Both of these are present participles.
- ▣ **"the kingdom of God"** This refers to the reign of God in human hearts now that will one day be consummated in God's reign over all the earth. This is the focal message of Jesus' ministry (cf. Matt. 6:10). See Special Topic at Luke 4:21.
- ▣ **"The twelve"** See Special Topic at Luke 6:13.

8:2 "some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses" This is a periphrastic perfect passive. Jesus had healed or exorcized this group of women. These women apparently followed and contributed to the needs of Jesus and the Apostolic group (money for sure and probably cooking, washing clothes, etc.). They traveled with Jesus and the Twelve. See Special Topic: The Demonic at Luke 4:33

▣ **"Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out"** This phrase indicates that this person is being introduced for the first time. Therefore, she is not the woman who anointed Jesus at Simon's house.

This phrase says several things about her.

1. her given name – Mary
2. where she was born/grew up – Magdala (cf. Matt. 15:39)
3. her condition from which Jesus freed her – demon possession (the seven denotes a full and complete possession)

8:3 "Joanna" She is mentioned only here and in Luke 24:10. She was married to a servant of Herod Antipas (see Special Topic at Luke 3:1), which means she was a woman of means. How much or how often she traveled with Jesus and the Apostolic group is uncertain. She traveled through Galilee in Luke 8 and was present in Jerusalem during the Passion Week. She may have seen the crucifixion and helped prepare the spices for burial (cf. Luke 23:55-56). She then returned to the tomb (cf. Luke 24:10).

▣ **"Susanna"** There is no other mention of this woman in the NT.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS](#)

NASB "to their support"
NKJV "who provided for Him"
NRSV, NJB "who provided for them"
TEV "to help Jesus and his disciples"

The Greek manuscript evidence is divided between the singular (cf. MSS κ , A, L, and Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:41) and the plural (cf. MSS B, D, and W). It is hard to decide which is original (UBS⁴ gives the plural a "B" rating, meaning "almost certain"), but as with most variants, it really does not make much difference. Several women followed Jesus and the Apostles and helped them.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:4-8

⁴When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: ⁵"The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. ⁸Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

8:4 "parable" See introduction to the chapter for hermeneutical helps.

8:5 ""The sower went out to sow his seed"" This would have been an agricultural procedure everyone in that culture would have identified with. There may have been a sower in the distance that Jesus pointed to.

This parable is repeated in all three Synoptic Gospels. In many ways this parable, accompanied with Jesus' interpretation, is the paradigm for all the rest.

Notice that salvation is not human discovery or merit, but divine revelation (word of God); also note this is not a text on predestination, but the eternal consequences of human choices! This is really a parable about different soils (i.e., human hearts).

■ **"road"** The farmer sowed his entire field, even the footpaths that traversed them then he plowed it all. The seed that fell in these well-worn paths did not penetrate the packed soil and it was quickly trampled on by passers-by.

8:6 "rocky soil" The farmer could not tell where the rocky ledges or the large underground boulders were located, but the seeds did not have enough soil in which to root.

8:7 This refers to the well established, thorny weeds which were plowed under (therefore they could not be seen), but quickly reestablished and crowded out the newly germinated grain.

8:8 "a hundred times as great" Matthew has a scale of grain production graded from 30 to 60 to 100 (cf. Matt. 13:8).

■ **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear"** This implies that an openness to the Spirit was required for understanding (cf. Mark 4:9; Matt. 13:9). In a sense, these parables were spiritual riddles. The heart (prepared by the Spirit, cf. John 6:44,65) of the hearer was crucial.

Notice also that of the four types of soil, three allowed the seed to germinate, but only one allowed fruit-bearing. Salvation involves evidence. Eternal life has observable characteristics! Be careful of an initial response as the only evidence of salvation. The yield varies, but not fruitfulness. True salvation is an initial response to the gospel followed by a daily response. This parable is a warning against an "easy believism" (as is John 15)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:9-10

⁹His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. ¹⁰And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is* in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

8:9 "His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant" Even the inner group of Apostles did not understand the spiritual significance of parables. This is comforting to me when I do not understand Jesus' words either.

8:10 "To you it has been granted" This is a perfect passive indicative. We are responsible stewards of the spiritual truths we possess. "To whom much is given, much is required" (cf. Luke 12:48).

This private teaching, which seems to be a regular occurrence, may explain the differences between the Synoptic Gospels (i.e., public teaching) and John's Gospel (private teaching). Jesus speaks very differently in John. It is possible that the parabolic teachings, so common in the Synoptics, were done before the crowds and that the totally different style (i.e., "I Am" statements) of the Gospel of John were done in private with the disciples.

It is just possible that this whole issue of special instruction for the Twelve may have functioned in the early church as a way of accentuating Apostolic authority. They, and they alone, knew the "true" interpretation of Jesus' words. All revelation comes through these chosen and inspired disciples (NT authors).

■ **"the mysteries of the kingdom of God"** This is the Greek term *mustērion*. It is used in the NT in several different senses. Here in Luke it is plural. In Mark 4:11 and here it is revealed truth which the leaders and the crowd could not comprehend (cf. Isa. 6:9-10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MYSTERY IN THE NT

■ **"but to the rest it is in parables"** Parables had the linguistic ability

1. to reveal truths
2. to hide truths

■ **"so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand"** This is a quote from Isa. 6:9. This prophetic passage (Isa. 6:9-10) is used often to explain unbelief (cf. Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; John 12:40; Acts 28:26,27; Rom. 11:8).

This emphasizes that only a heart and mind touched by the Spirit of God can understand the gospel. This is the mystery of Divine Sovereignty and required human response. Somehow both are true! Humans can only respond to God's initiation. The question remains, "Does He touch all or only some?" The evidence of a Divine touch is a human response (repentance, faith, obedience, perseverance).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:11-15

¹¹Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. ¹²Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. ¹³Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance."

8:11 "the word of God" See note at Luke 5:1.

8:12 "the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts" The NT teaches the reality of a personal force of evil out to thwart God's gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN](#) at Luke 4:2.

The NET Bible (footnote #23, p. 1822) makes the interesting observation that each of the Synoptic Gospels uses a different name for God's opponent.

1. Luke – "the devil"
2. Matthew – "the evil one"
3. Mark – "Satan"

This shows the freedom of the Gospel writers to record true events and teachings in their own words.

■ **"will not believe and be saved"** It is so hard to precisely define the procedure and process of salvation (ex. the variety of conversions in Acts). This is because the NT approaches the subject from several different angles:

1. repentance and faith
2. faith and works
3. faith and baptism
4. faith and tongues

However, the consistent requirement is faith. I have come to understand this faith as having three crucial aspects.

1. receiving/welcoming a person (Jesus)
2. believing truths about that person (the NT)
3. living a life emulating that person (Christlikeness).

Some of these are initial; others develop over time. New Testament faith is a dynamic relationship which is difficult to explain. It is more than just faith, but it starts there and finishes there for us. In reality it starts and finishes with God.

■ **"from their heart"** This is the OT use of the term "heart" to refer to the person (cf. Luke 8:15). Often today we speak of inviting Jesus into our heart, which is the same metaphorical usage of heart as the will, mind, and emotions of a person. See Special Topic at Luke 1:51.

8:13 "those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy" This shows that the joyful acceptance of the gospel is not automatically eternal salvation! The word "receive" (cf. John 1:12) is synonymous with "believer" (cf. John 3:16). Receive/believe is used in John 8:31 for Jews who later tried to kill Jesus (cf. Luke 8:59).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

8:14 "are choked with worries and riches and pleasure of *this* life" Here is another group who, after what seems to be a vital initial response to the Good News, succumbed to the pressures of earthly fallen life (cf. Demas in 2 Tim. 4:10; God and mammon in Luke 16:13). The theological question has always been, "Are these people lost, immature or saved and lost?"

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY \(APHISTĒMI\)](#) at Luke 6:46.

■ **"bring no fruit to maturity"** This issue is fruit-bearing, not germination only (cf. Matthew 7).

8:15 "hold it fast and bear fruit with perseverance" Both of these are present active indicatives. Here is the key—the harvest is the result of a whole life, not one emotional incident of dedication to God (cf. Gal. 6:9). There is a good article on "Apostasy" in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 38-40.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:16-18

¹⁶Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. ¹⁷For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor *anything* secret that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

8:16 "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container" This is related to the

preceding parable. It emphasizes the true believer's need to live and share the truth of the gospel. We are saved to serve, to tell.

■ **"lampstand"** This could refer to several different ways by which lights were positioned in the home so as to give off the most illumination:

1. an out-cropping in the wall
2. a hanger on the wall
3. some type of pedestal

8:17-18 These two verses must relate to the previous context of "apparent" believers. The intentions of the heart will one day be revealed. God looks first at the heart, not the religious actions. One's true motive will become evident (1) in this life or (2) on judgment day.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:19-21

¹⁹And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. ²⁰And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." ²¹But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

8:21 "My mother and My brothers" This shocking statement shows Jesus' self-understanding and the radical nature of biblical faith that can only be described in terms of a new birth, a new family. Family life was such an important aspect of Jewish life (cf. J. Duncan, M. Derrett, *Jesus' Audience*, pp. 38-45) that to use this of fellow believers is significant. Believers relate to deity as family members; God is Father, Jesus is the unique Son and Savior, but believers, even the least, are children of God too!

■ **"who hear the word of God and do it"** This reflects the Hebrew word *Shema* (cf. Deut. 5:1; 6:4), which means hear so as to do (cf. Luke 11:28). This is the emphasis of the book of James. Eternal life has observable characteristics!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:22-25

²² Now on one of *those* days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out. ²³But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they *began* to be swamped and to be in danger. ²⁴They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. ²⁵And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"

8:23 "a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake" The Sea of Galilee is several hundred feet below sea level, surrounded by high, rolling hills. The wind that funnels down from these hills is able to swirl the lake into a tempest in a relatively short time.

One wonders how this miracle is related to God's

1. control of the waters (cf. Ps. 65:7; 89:9; 107:23-32)
2. victory over chaos (cf. Job 9:13; Ps. 89:10-11; Isa. 27:1; 51:10)

Water is the only aspect of creation not said to be spoken into existence in Genesis 1. There may have been many OT allusions behind this event. These Jewish fishermen would have known these verses much like the tumultuous waters.

8:24 "Master, Master" See note at Luke 5:5.

■ **"we are perishing"** This is a present middle indicative. Remember these were seasoned fishermen. It must have been some storm!

8:25 "Where is your faith" The parallels in Matthew (cf. Matt. 8:26) and Mark (cf. Mark 4:40) add "why are you afraid?" Many of Jesus' miracles were for the purpose of training the disciples.

■ **"Who then is this"** This verse clearly displays the Apostles' theological immaturity. Jesus faced several types of unbelief: (1) His family's; (2) the crowds'; and (3) the disciples'. Numbers 1 and 3 are spiritually growing. Their unbelief is based on ignorance, but number 2 is willful.

Everyone who hears the gospel must answer this question about Jesus! It is the crucial issue.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:26-31

26Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. **27**And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. **28**Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me." **29**For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. **30**And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. **31**They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.

8:26 "country of the Gerasenes" This area goes by several names in the Gospels:

1. Gadarenes (Matt. 8:28; MSS A, W)
2. Gerasenes (Mark 5:1, MSS P7⁷⁵, B, D)
3. Gergesenes (Luke 8:26,37; MSS κ, L)

It is sometimes called Gadara. There is a town by this same name several miles away from the sea, but we have learned from archeological evidence that this town owned land near the sea.

8:27 "a man" Matthew 8:28 has two men, but this is characteristic of the Gospel of Matthew, which often has "two," while the other Synoptics have one. Another example would be the blind man/men of Jericho (cf. Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35). Some have supposed that two were mentioned because this number was required to be witnesses in court (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16). There is a good article in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 371-377.

■ **"who was possessed with demons"** See Special Topic: The Demonic at Luke 4:33 and the note at Luke 4:35.

■ **"in the tombs"** He had been ostracized by the community and this was the only place where he could find shelter. During this period of time small manmade or natural caves were used as burial places. Whether this location was connected with his demon possession is uncertain. There are many specific questions about demons and angels which cannot be answered because there is not enough biblical information. Our world is permeated by a personal force of evil with his servants, the demonic, who are out to thwart the will of God and to destroy mankind, God's ultimate creation and the focus of His love and attention.

8:28

NASB
NKJV

"What business do we have with each other"
"What have I to do with You"

NRSV "What have you to do with me"
TEV, NJB "What do you want with me"

This is literally "what to me and to you." In *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, Bratcher and Nida note that "In classical Greek the phrase would mean 'what have we in common?' Here, however, it corresponds to the Hebrew 'Why do you meddle with me'" (p. 49). This idiom is illustrated in Jdgs. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10; 19:22; 1 Kgs. 17:18; 2 Chr. 35:21.

▣ **"Jesus, Son of the Most High God"** These demons knew who Jesus was (cf. James 2:19; Mark 1:23), but Jesus refused their testimonies because He knew that the religious leaders who could not deny His power would later accuse Him of using Satan's power (cf. Luke 11:14-26). See notes at Luke 1:32 and 1:76.

▣ **"do not torment me"** It is interesting that in this conversation sometimes the plural is used of the demons and sometimes the singular (head demon).

This is grammatically an aorist active subjunctive of prohibition functioning as an Aorist active imperative, which implies "never start an action" (cf. Barbara and Timothy Friberg's *Analytical Greek New Testament*, p. 120). The demonic knew that judgment was coming and that Jesus had power and authority over them (cf. Mark 1:23-24; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:9; 20:10). The parallels in Matt. 8:29 and Mark 5:7 also imply eschatological judgment. These demons apparently did not know about the two comings of the Messiah. This context shows that even "spirits" can suffer!

8:29 This describes the man's previous life (cf. Mark 5:3-5; Matt. 8:28).

▣ **"into the desert"** These non-inhabited regions were often associated in the OT with the demonic (cf. Luke 4:1-2).

8:30 "Legion" In the Roman Army 6,000 troops made up a Legion (though in reality they often had less than this ideal number). This may have been a metaphor of the degree of their control over the man. However, because of Luke 8:32, which describes the demons causing the death of many hogs, it may be literal.

8:31 "the abyss" This seems to refer to Hades in Rom. 10:7. It is also mentioned in Rev. 9:1; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3. Let me quote my note from Rev. 9:1 (see www.freebiblecommentary.org):

▣ **"the key of the bottomless pit was given to him"** A "key" is mentioned in Rev. 1:18 and Rev. 20:1. It symbolizes authority. God exercises authority over the demonic hordes of judgment. The abyss is a Greek term that meant "depth" negated by an alpha privative. It is used in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) in Gen. 1:2 and 7:11.

It seems to be synonymous with the term "*tartarus*" (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4 and I Enoch 21:7), a place where evil angels are held in prison (cf. Luke 8:31; Jude 6; Rev. 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3; and I Enoch 10:4; 86:1; 88:1; Jubilees 5:6-11). Paul used this term in Rom. 10:7 for the place of the dead (cf. Isa. 24:21-22). Later the rabbis said it was the name of the unrighteous part of *Sheol/Hades*."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:32-33

³² Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and *the demons* implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. ³³ And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

8:32 "swine" Obviously this was a Gentile area (cf. Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8).

8:33 Notice that the demons made a request to Jesus. The text does not tell us why Jesus allowed these

demons to go into the hogs or why they wanted to. Possibly the demons leaving the man and entering the hogs was a visible way of encouraging the man to believe he was delivered. Perhaps it was a visual aid, similar to Jesus putting spit (cf. Mark 8:23) and/or mud into blind eyes (cf. John 9:6) or putting His fingers in a deaf person's ears (cf. Mark 7:33). The demons may have requested it because

1. they preferred hogs to the abyss
2. this action would cause the townspeople to ask Jesus to leave

Demons do not do things to help Jesus!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:34-39

³⁴When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. ³⁵The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. ³⁶Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. ³⁷And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned. ³⁸But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, ³⁹"Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

8:34-37 What a sad account of fear and greed (cf. Mark 5:15). There was no joy over the man's restitution, just fear (cf. Luke 8:37). They were so concerned over the loss of a herd of pigs and other possible consequences that they asked Jesus to leave, and He did! This is a good example that shows that miracles, in and of themselves, do not always result in faith!

8:38-39 "the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him" Jesus wanted this Gentile man to witness to his family and friends about the love and power of God. This was the first "home missionary" (assuming he was a Gentile). This man's presence and testimony may have negatively affected Jesus' mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:40-42

⁴⁰And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. ⁴¹And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and *began* to implore Him to come to his house; ⁴²for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him.

8:41 "Jairus" This is a Hebrew name which means "he who gives light" (BDB 22, cf. Jdgs. 10:3) or "YHWH has enlightened."

▣ **"he was an officer of the synagogue"** He was in charge of both the order of service on the Sabbath and the physical maintenance of the synagogue. This was a man of religious stature in the community.

8:42 "for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying" The girl was this man's only child. She was at the age of becoming a marriageable woman, responsible for keeping the Law (*bat mitzvah*). Jesus was his only hope!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:43-48

43And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, **44**came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. **45**And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You." **46**But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me." **47**When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. **48**And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

8:43 "a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years and could not be healed by anyone" It is interesting to me that Luke leaves out the references to (1) the doctors' inability to heal the woman and (2) her spending her entire savings trying to be healed (There is a Greek manuscript variant connected with the inclusion of this phrase concerning doctors in Luke. It is missing in MSS P⁷⁵ and B. It may have been assimilated from Mark 5:26). This ailment would have made her ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 15:25-27). She could not have attended synagogue or religious festivals. The rabbinical cures for this kind of illness are very strange:

1. carry the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in the summer and a cotton rag in the winter
2. carry the barley corn from the dung of a white female donkey (cf. *Shabb.* 110 A & B)

8:44 "and touched the fringe of His cloak" This refers to His *tallith*. This was the prayer shawl worn by rabbinical teachers in fulfillment of Num. 15:38-40 and Deut. 22:12. It has four tassels (cf. Matt. 9:20) to symbolize the law of Israel and she touched one of these.

There is a Greek manuscript variant connected to the word "the fringe." It is included in MSS P⁷⁵, A, B, C, L W, but missing in some Old Latin manuscripts. Possibly scribes were influenced by its absence at Mark 5:27. The UBS⁴ gives its inclusion a B rating (almost certain).

8:45 "Jesus said, 'Who is the one who touched Me?'" Either Jesus did not know who touched Him or He wanted the woman to make a public profession of her faith and healing.

NASB "Peter said"
NKJV "Peter and those with him"

The shorter reading is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁷⁵ and B, but the vast majority of ancient texts support the longer reading (cf. MSS κ , A, C*, D, L, P, and W; Mark 5:31 does not mention Peter specifically, but does say, "His disciple said to Him"). The UBS⁴ translation committee chooses the shorter reading and give it a "B" rating (almost certain).

8:46 "for I was aware that power had gone out of Me" Exactly what this involves is uncertain. Apparently, Jesus' physical healing of others took something out of Him (cf. Luke 5:17; 6:19; Mark 5:30).

8:47 Her illness made her ceremonially unclean. She should never have touched a religious teacher. She now testified that her touch had immediately resulted in her healing (cf. Luke 8:44).

8:48 "your faith has made you well" Not her touch, but acting on her faith in Him was the key. Faith itself is not the issue, but the object of faith (i.e., Jesus). There was nothing magical here, nor was it the power of positive thinking, but the power of Jesus. This is another use of the Greek *sōzō* in both its OT and NT senses. It is a perfect active indicative, which implied she was healed and remained healed of the physical problem and her spiritual problem.

■ **"go in peace"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. She was not only physically healed, but

spiritually healed.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 8:49-56

⁴⁹While He was still speaking, someone came from *the house of the synagogue official*, saying, "Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." ⁵⁰But when Jesus heard *this*, He answered him, "Do not be afraid *any longer*; only believe, and she will be made well." ⁵¹When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl's father and mother. ⁵²Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, "Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep." ⁵³And they *began* laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. ⁵⁴He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Child, arise!" ⁵⁵And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for *something* to be given her to eat. ⁵⁶Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

8:49 "Your daughter has died" This is a perfect active indicative. She died and had entered into death. Whether this girl was dead or in a coma is difficult to know (cf. Acts 20:7-12). The family thought she was dead and had hired professional mourners, which was a common practice in that day.

■ **"do not trouble"** This is a present active imperative. This word was also used by the centurion seeking Jesus for healing (cf. Luke 7:6).

■ **"the Teacher"** Luke never calls Jesus "rabbi" because he is writing to Gentiles. However, this designation is also used often in Matthew's Gospel. It was a way to characterize Jesus' ministry. He acted, then He explained the significance of His person, work, and mission. Preaching and teaching are used interchangeably in the Gospels.

8:50 "Do not be afraid" This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with the negative participle, which usually denotes the cessation of an act in process.

This man had stood there patiently as Jesus visited with the woman, but now it was too late. This delay may have been purposeful to test this man's faith in Jesus (cf. Mary and Martha's test of faith in John 11).

■ **"only believe"** This is an aorist active imperative. Faith is the opposite of fear (doubt). Believe what? Believe that Jesus was capable of healing his daughter and fulfilling His word.

This is still the issue today. Will Jesus fulfill His word? Can we trust Him to do what He promised?

8:51 "He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James" This is the inner circle of disciples who were present at all the intimate, special times with the Lord.

8:52 "they" This must refer to the crowd of mourners gathered at this home (cf. Luke 8:53).

■ **"Stop weeping"** This is another Present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act in progress.

■ **"asleep"** Sleep is an OT circumlocution for physical death (cf. John 11:11). It is difficult to know whether this is a healing (cf. Luke 8:52) or a resuscitation (cf. Luke 8:49,53,55). This series of miracles has shown Jesus' power over nature, the demonic, illness, and death.

8:54 "arise" This is a present active imperative. This is a common verb with a large semantic range; it is often used of resuscitation (cf. Luke 7:14,22; 8:54; 9:2; 20:37), but also of the resurrection (cf. Luke 9:22; 24:6,34). Jesus has power over death (cf. John 10:17-18).

8:56 "He instructed them to tell no one what had happened" In the Synoptics, Jesus' deity is veiled

until after the great truths of Calvary and the resurrection are revealed.

1. demons not allowed to reveal His person
 - a. Mark 1:34; 3:12
 - b. Luke 4:34-35,41
2. those He healed not allowed to tell others about it
 - a. Matt. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16
 - b. Mark 1:43-44; 5:43; 7:36
 - c. Luke 5:14; 8:56
3. the disciples not allowed to reveal His Messiahship
 - a. Matt. 16:20; 17:9
 - b. Mark 8:30; 9:9
 - c. Luke 9:21 The crowds wanted favors, not truth; healing, not conversion

Jesus did not want to be known as a healer. The crowds wanted favors, not truth; healing, not conversion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the major truth in the parable of the soils?
2. Is it possible for someone to receive Jesus Christ and then later to be lost?
3. Why does Jesus mention the Kingdom of God so often?
4. Why did Mary and Jesus' brothers come to see Him?
5. Is demon possession a live option today? Is it a possibility for believers?
6. Why did Jesus tell the parents not to say anything about the raising of their daughter?

LUKE 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Mission of the Twelve	Sending Out the Twelve	Commissioning and Instruction of the Twelve	Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Disciples	The Mission of the Twelve
9:1-6	9:1-6	9:1-6	9:1-5 9:6	9:1-6
Herod's Anxiety	John the Baptist Beheaded	Herod Asks About Jesus	Herod's Confusion	Herod and Jesus
9:7-9	9:7-9	9:7-9	9:7-9	9:7-9
The Feeding of the Five Thousand	Feeding the Five Thousand	Five Thousand Fed	Jesus Feeds Five Thousand	The Return of the Apostles—Miracle of the Loaves
9:10-17	9:10-17	9:10-11 9:12-17	9:10-11 9:12 9:13a 9:13b-14a 9:14b 9:15-17	9:10-11 9:12-17
Peter's Declaration About Jesus	Peter Confesses Jesus As the Christ	Peter's Confession	Peter's Declaration About Jesus	Peter's Profession of Faith
9:18-20	9:18-20	9:18-20	9:18 9:19 9:20a 9:20b	9:18-21
Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection	Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection		Jesus Speaks about His Suffering and Death	First Prophecy of the Passion
9:21-27	9:21-22 Take Up the Cross and Follow Him 9:23-27	9:21-22 On Discipleship 9:23-27	9:21-22 9:23-27	9:22 The Condition of Following Christ 9:23-26 The Kingdom Will Come Soon 9:27
The Transfiguration of Jesus	Jesus Transfigured on the Mount	The Transfiguration	The Transfiguration	The Transfiguration

9:28-36	9:28-36	9:28-36	9:28-33	9:28-36
			9:34-35	
			9:36	
The Healing of a Boy with an Unclean Spirit	A Boy Is Healed	Epileptic Child Healed	Jesus Heals a Boy with an Evil Spirit	The Epileptic Demoniac
9:37-43a	9:37-42	9:37-43a	9:37-40	9:37-43a
			9:41	
			9:42-43a	
Jesus Again Foretells His Death	Jesus Again Predicts His Death	The Passion Foretold Again	Jesus Speaks Again About His Death	Second Prophecy of the Passion
9:43b-45	9:43-45	9:43b-45	9:43b-45	9:43b-45
Who Is Greatest?	Who Is the Greatest?	True Greatness	Who Is Greatest?	Who Is Greatest?
9:46-48	9:46-48	9:46-48	9:46-48	9:46-48
He Who Is Not Against You Is For You	Jesus forbids Sectarianism	The Unknown Exorcist	Whoever Is Not Against You Is For You	On Using Jesus' Name
9:49-50	9:49-50	9:49-50	9:49	9:49-50
		Events on the Way to Jerusalem (9:51-18:14)	9:50	
A Samaritan Village Refuses to Receive Jesus	A Samaritan Village Rejects the Savior	The Hostile Samaritans	A Samaritan Village Refuses to Receive Jesus	A Samaritan Village is Inhospitable
9:51-56	9:51-56	9:51-56	9:51-54	9:51-56
			9:55-56	
The Would-Be Followers of Jesus	The Cost of Discipleship	Claims of Discipleship	The Would-Be Followers of Jesus	Hardships of the Apostolic Calling
9:57-62	9:57-62	9:57-62	9:57	9:57-58
			9:58	
			9:59a	9:59-60
			9:59b	
			9:60	
			9:61	9:61-62
			9:62	

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:1-6

¹And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. ²And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. ³And He said to them, "Take nothing for *your* journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not *even* have two tunics apiece. ⁴Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. ⁵And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

9:1 "He called the twelve together" Possibly all twelve were not with Jesus all the time. They had responsibilities at home with their families (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8) and it is quite possible that different groups of Apostles (four groups of three) went home at different times for short periods.

Here Luke seems to follow Mark 6:7 in calling the disciples "the Twelve" (*dōdeka*, MSS P⁷⁵, A, B, D, W), but some Greek manuscripts address them as

1. his disciples – in several lectionaries
2. his twelve disciples (cf. Mark 10:1) – MSS C³, E, F, H
3. twelve apostles – MSS κ , C*, L

The UBS⁴ gives "the Twelve" a B rating (almost certain).

■ **"gave them power and authority"** *Dunamis* means the ability to overcome; *exousia* means legal right or authority. These two terms are used earlier in Luke 4:36, also in connection with Jesus' exorcisms of demons. See Special Topic: Luke's Use of *Exousia* at Luke 20:2.

■ **"over all the demons and to heal diseases"** Notice the distinction that is made between demon possession and physical illness. Demons often cause physical symptoms, but in exorcisms there is a clear distinction in the NT between demonic activity and physical diseases. See Special Topic: The Demonic at Luke 4:33.

9:2 "He sent them out" The term "sent" (*apostellō*) is related to the term "apostle" (*apostolos*). The primary meaning in rabbinical circles was "to send someone" as an official representative with authority. They were to preach that the kingdom of God had come in Jesus of Nazareth and then confirm their message with signs.

Jesus' power and authority can be delegated to His followers. Surely there is an intensity shared between the Twelve and Jesus that cannot be duplicated, but God's power is available to His church. Where is the power in our day? It seems that these power signs are used to confirm the gospel message and give credence to the gospel preacher. This is still true today. However, in cultures where the gospel message has taken root, then believers must walk by faith, not by sight; trust in God, do not demand miracles (cf. John 4:48). Miracles are not the answer to faith problems! It is also very possible that the judgment of God on the modern western church is the perception of success, but the reality of

ineffectiveness.

Signs and miracles, as well as demonic and angelic activity, increased in Jesus' and the Apostles' day. This spiritual activity is surely present in every age, but it intensified at Jesus' first coming and will intensify again as His Second Coming draws near.

I rejoice in the manifestations of God's love and power (i.e., the gifts are still active), but I trust in gospel truths, not the presence or absence of physical confirmations. Miracles and signs can be counterfeit (cf. Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13; 16:14; 19:20). Believers must not demand confirmation! Childlike faith is spiritually superior to supernatural signs and wonders.

This is a good place to compare Luke's account of the mission of the Twelve to Matthew's account (cf. Matt. 10:5), where Jesus specifically says not to go to the Gentiles or Samaritans, but only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The question arises, what exactly did Jesus say? Does Luke edit Jesus' words or does Matthew expand Jesus' words? This is the kind of question that cannot be answered. Each evangelist (Gospel writer) had a particular audience in mind (Matthew – Jews, Luke – Gentiles). They select, arrange, and adapt Jesus' words to fit this target audience (see Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp 127-148). This example of the sending of the Twelve illustrates the differences! This does not violate inspiration; it is part of it!

■ **"the kingdom of God"** This was the central thrust of Jesus' teachings. It relates to the reign of God in human hearts now that will one day be consummated with God's reign over all the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10). This new day of God's activity (the New Age of the Spirit) began in Jesus' ministry. They did not yet know all the gospel details, but they did know the gospel person—Jesus. It is Him they preach. See Special Topic: The Kingdom of God at Luke 4:21.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

9:3 "Take nothing for *your* journey, neither a staff" There seems to be a contradiction between this verse and Mark 6:8. Some explain it by saying that there was a confusion in translating the two Aramaic terms. Others assert that "a staff" is mentioned because often it had a secret compartment for carrying money. Although I cannot explain the discrepancy, it is obvious the main thrust of this verse is that they were to depend on God's provision, not their own. It is also obvious that this was not a universal principle to be followed in all ages (cf. Luke 22:35-36).

These comparisons are confusing and painful to our simplistic understanding of the nature of the inspiration of the Gospels, but we cannot get away from them. A good discussion of this and other "discrepancies" between Gospel accounts is found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 422-424.

9:4 "Whatever house you enter, stay there" The disciples were not to be moving from house to house seeking better food or accommodations, but were to stay where they were first invited. This showed the community that they were not self-seeking.

9:5 "shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them" This was a cultural sign of rejection. The rabbis did this whenever they had to travel through Gentile areas before reentering Jewish areas. It was also used in the book of Acts (cf. Acts 13:51). This may have been a subtle way of treating Jewish unbelievers the way they treated Gentiles.

9:6 As Jesus passed through all the villages preaching and healing, so now the Apostolic group mimics the Master. See Robert Coleman's *The Master Plan of Discipleship*.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:7-9

⁷Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, ⁸and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. ⁹Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying

to see Him.

9:7 "Herod the tetrarch" This refers to Herod Antipas. He was the one who had John the Baptist beheaded and was ruler of Galilee and Perea. He took power from his father, Herod the Great, in 4 b.c. and reigned until a.d. 39. See Special Topic: The Family of Herod the Great at Luke 3:1.

Luke mentions this Herod often.

1. his perplexity and desire to see Jesus, Luke 9:7-9
2. his attempt to kill Jesus, Luke 13:31-33
3. his questioning of Jesus at the request of Pilate, Luke 23:8-12

■ **"he was greatly perplexed"** This is an imperfect active indicative, which refers to repeated action in past time. Luke uses this term (*diaporeō*) several times (Luke 9:7; Acts 2:12; 5:24; 10:17). It is not used by any other NT writers.

■ **"John had risen from the dead"** Matthew (cf. Matt. 14:2) and Mark (cf. Mark 6:14) tell us that Herod was worried about Jesus being John the Baptist.

9:8 "by some that Elijah had appeared" In this context all three of the guesses involve a resuscitation. They are repeated again in Luke 9:19. Elijah and John the Baptist were both prophets, similar in their lifestyle and dress.

9:9 "I myself had John beheaded" The fuller account is in Mark 6:14-29.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:10-11

¹⁰When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. ¹¹But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He *began* speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.

9:10 "When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done" Jesus tried to provide a time of debriefing, rest, and recuperation, but from Luke 9:11, it is obvious that a crowd followed Him. It is amazing how Jesus always had time for common people (welcoming, speaking about the Kingdom, and curing those in need). But He needed time alone with the Twelve. See Robert Coleman, *Master Plan of Discipleship*.

■ **"to a city"** There are several textual variants.

1. "a city" – MSS P⁷⁵, κ^1 , B, L, X (UBS⁴ gives it a B rating)
2. "a town" – MS D
3. "a desert place of a city" – MSS A, C, W
4. "a desert place" – MSS κ^{*2} (similar to Matt. 14:13; Mark 6:32)

Again the variants do not affect the meaning of the text.

■ **"Bethsaida"** This is a city on the north side of the Sea of Tiberias (cf. John 6:1, Sea of Galilee). The name means "house of hunting." This was the home of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (cf. John 1:44; 12:21). Philip the tetrarch had enlarged this village into a city and renamed it Julias, after Augustus Caesar's daughter (cf. Josephus *Antiq.* 18.2.1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:12-17

¹²Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get

something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place." ¹³But He said to them, "You give them *something* to eat!" And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people." ¹⁴(For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, "Have them sit down *to eat* in groups of about fifty each." ¹⁵They did so, and had them all sit down. ¹⁶Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke *them*, and kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before the people. ¹⁷And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets *full*.

9:12 Jesus' popularity had caused Him to preach out in the countryside; no building was large enough and the Jewish leaders did not want Him preaching in the Synagogues. The problem was that there were no facilities in these remote areas to accommodate the needs of the crowd (food, shelter, latrines, etc.). The Apostles were exhibiting concern and practicality, but Jesus wanted them to exhibit faith!

9:13 "You give them *something* to eat" The account of feeding the five thousand is recorded in all four Gospels (cf. Matt. 14:13-31; Mark 6:32-44; John 6:1-4). These miraculous feedings were tremendous evidences of Jesus as the promised Messiah based on the rabbinical interpretation of OT promises about the Messiah providing food, like Moses (cf. Deut. 18:15,18; Ps. 132:15; Isa. 49:10). It is even possible it is an allusion to 2 Kgs. 4:42-44, which would make it another sign of Jesus' prophetic role. However, they are also related to the temptation experiences of Jesus (cf. Luke 4:3-4). Quite often the crowds misunderstood His motive and followed Him for the wrong reasons (cf. John 6:14,15).

▣ **"We have no more than five loaves and two fish"** We learn from John 6:9 that this was one boy's lunch. Jesus' command (aorist active imperative) was met with an analysis of their resources. They were not trusting in His provision!

▣ **"unless"** This is a third class condition which usually has *ean*, but here it has *ei* (cf. 1 Cor. 14:5 and Phil. 3:12). This denotes potential action.

9:14 "(For there were about five thousand men)" Exactly how large the crowd was is uncertain, but the presence of at least some women and children is probable, indicating many more people.

▣ **"Sit down *to eat* in groups of about fifty each"** Jesus organized the task. Just think of how many groups of fifty it would take to accommodate 5,000 plus people. Even with twelve disciples serving them, this was a major task!

9:16 "He looked up to heaven" Jesus knew and acknowledged the source of His power. The typical physical position for Jewish prayer was:

1. standing
2. hands lifted to God
3. eyes open looking up
4. direct address to God

▣ **"He blessed them, broke *them*, and kept giving *them*"** The first two verbs are aorist active indicatives, implying a prayer and a breaking, but the third is an imperfect active indicative, implying a continual giving. The miracle continued to occur as He broke the food and kept passing it out! Think again of the size of this crowd! The disciples were amazed again.

9:17 "twelve baskets *full*" "Baskets" are also mentioned in the feeding of the four thousand, found in Mark 8:8. But, the baskets there are large, hamper-sized baskets (*spuris*), while the baskets in this text are small knapsacks (*kophinos*). The disciples collected the food to eat later. Jesus did not regularly multiply

food for the disciples' needs.

Luke follows Mark's chronology, but for some reason, a major section of Mark (i.e., Mark 6:45-8:26) is omitted between Luke 9:17 and Luke 9:18. The exact reason is uncertain, but most scholars assume it has to do with Luke wanting to keep Jesus' activity in Galilee. Mark's Gospel has Jesus' activity outside Galilee (Mark 6:14-8:30). Luke's structure is Jesus traveling to Jerusalem. To maintain this emphasis he omits some events of Jesus' life that Mark chose to include.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:18-22

¹⁸And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" ¹⁹They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." ²⁰And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." ²¹But He warned them and instructed *them* not to tell this to anyone, ²²saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."

9:18 "while He was praying alone" For a fuller discussion of this event see Matt. 16:13ff. Luke records Jesus praying before the major events of His ministry much more than any of the other Gospels. He was praying alone, possibly removed a distance from the disciples; the phrase may mean that only Jesus and His special inner circle of disciples (Peter, James, and John) were present.

■ **"Who do people say that I am"** The same three guesses mentioned in Luke 9:8 and 9 are repeated here. It is important that Elijah is connected with the Messianic kingdom (cf. Mal. 4:5). "One of the prophets of old" possibly refers to Moses' statement in Deut. 18:15,18 about "the Prophet."

9:20 "But who do you say that I am" The "you" (plural) is emphatic. This question was given to all the disciples.

■ **"The Christ of God"** Peter, as a spokesman for the others, affirmed that Jesus was the promised Messiah (see Special Topic at Luke 2:11). Christ is the Greek translation of "the Anointed One." However, their concept of what this meant was formed more by rabbinical Judaism than Jesus' teachings (cf. Acts 1:6). The Jews of Jesus' day were expecting an empowered Jewish leader, like the Judges of the OT, to militarily free Israel from foreign domination and restore the Jews to a place of power and independence. In a sense this judgmental aspect is exactly what He will do when He returns. However, they had missed the Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Ezekiel 9-14; Zechariah 9 aspect of a humble, suffering, and dying Savior.

9:21 "But He warned them and instructed *them* not to tell this to anyone" These are two strong terms for a command, even an implied threat. There has been much discussion about this because it seems so unusual. Apparently the gospel was not yet complete and they had nothing to tell except their false Messianic views (cf. see full list of texts at Luke 8:56). We must remember that these Gospels were written decades after the events. The Evangelists knew the full account, but they (except John) wrote as if it was an unfolding truth to their readers.

9:22 "The Son of Man" This was Jesus' self-chosen designation. It had no rabbinical connotations. It is a phrase that means "human being" (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1). However, in Dan. 7:13-14 it involves the idea of deity. See Special Topic at Luke 5:24.

■ **"must"** This Greek word, *dei* means "necessity." Jesus had to suffer (cf. Luke 9:44; 12:50; 13:33; 17:25; 18:31-33; 22:37; 24:7,26,46). What a shocking reflection on human sin (cf. Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21)! In a sense this term should be translated with all the following phrases.

■ **"suffer many things"** The great stumbling block to Jesus being the Messiah for the Jewish people was His suffering and death (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). The OT seems to depict one coming of the Messiah, in power and glory. The NT reveals that such passages as Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; Isa. 53; Ezek. 9-14; and Zech. 9 describe the coming of the Messiah as a Suffering Servant, which the Jewish nation—and for a long time, the Apostles—misunderstood.

■ **"be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes"** This may be an allusion to Ps. 118:22 (cf. Luke 20:17). The term "rejected" is a legal term for the examination and rejecting of someone. This series of nouns reflects the deliberations of the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling court of the Jews in Jerusalem made up of seventy members that had limited authority under the Roman Empire.

Jesus fully understood His mission and its cost (cf. Mark 10:45). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SANHEDRIN

■ **"raised up on the third day"** Jesus was in the grave somewhere around thirty hours, but in Jewish reckoning of time, it was three days (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-4). Each part of a day, twilight to twilight, was counted as a full day.

1. died at 3 p.m., but buried before 6 p.m. on Friday (day one)
2. in the tomb all of the high holy Sabbath of Passover Week (day two)
3. arose sometime before dawn Sunday following the high holy Sabbath (day three)

This phrase could refer to Hos. 6:1-2. It is interpreted in a similar way in the Aramaic Targum on this verse. However, Jesus seems to be making an allusion to Jonah 1:17 (cf. Matt. 12:39; 16:4). This type of predictive sign was exactly what the Pharisees were asking for in Luke 9:12 (cf. Matt. 16:4). This type of prediction was the basis of defining a true prophet according to Deut. 13:2-5; 18:18-22. Jesus gave them sign after sign, but they could not comprehend. Luke used the phrase "three days" often (cf. Luke 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 24:7,21,46; Acts 10:40) in connection with Jesus' resurrection.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RESURRECTION

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:23-27

²³And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. ²⁵For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

9:23 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"anyone"** Here again is the mystery of election and free will. Jesus' invitation is wide open to all (possibly all who had heard Him preach and were fed), but we know from other texts that no one can respond without the wooing and drawing of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Food alone is a poor motive (cf. John 6:15).

■ **"he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me"** There are three imperatives in this phrase. The first is an aorist middle (deponent, "deny himself"), followed by an aorist active ("take up daily"), but then a present active ("and continue to follow Me"). There is a gate and then a road (cf. Matt. 7:13-14). There is an initial response and an ongoing response. Both are necessary! This speaks of our once-and-for-all death to selfish ambitions and our ongoing fellowship of Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:38; Gal. 2:20; 6:14). The Jews understood that "the cross" referred to a once-for-all death. Condemned criminals had to

carry their own cross (the top beam) to the place of execution. We die to self so as to live daily for God (cf. Rom. 6; 8:36; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16).

The Fall (Genesis 3) has made mankind's independence and self-centeredness the goal of life, but now believers must return to selfless dependence on God. This should become a world view and life directive (i.e., daily). It is not a one-time decision, but a recurrent, volitional choice of priorities (cf. Luke 14:33).

9:24 "life. . . life" There is a play on two connotations of the Greek word *psuchē*, which reflects the OT term *nephesh*. Both of these terms simply refer to a human's personality or life force (cf. Luke 17:33; Matt. 10:38-39; John 12:25). I think these two terms relate to the two Jewish ages. Physical life is bound to this fallen age of rebellion, but eternal life is part of the age to come. See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at Luke 9:2.

Not only is there a play on the word "life," but also on the word "save." Its OT sense was physical deliverance, but its NT connotation is eternal spiritual salvation.

Our decisions about knowing, trusting, and following Jesus have in-time and beyond-time consequences! He lay down His life for us; we must reciprocate (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16)!

9:25 This is a penetrating question. It is very similar to the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-20. Those who cling to this world (age) lose the next. One cannot serve/love God and mammon (cf. Luke 16:13; Matt. 6:24).

9:26 "whoever" The warning is as wide as the invitation (cf. Luke 9:23,24).

▣ **"is ashamed of Me and My words"** This refers to the time when each person is confronted with the gospel. This same truth is expressed in a different way in Matt. 10:32-33 and Luke 12:8-9. What people decide today about the gospel determines their future. Jesus is the gospel!

▣ **"when He comes"** The OT clearly reveals one coming of the Messiah. However, Jesus showed that Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; and Isaiah 53 also refer to a suffering of the Messiah. The second glorious coming of the Messiah as Lord and Judge of the *Kosmos* will be exactly the way the Jews were expecting Him to come the first time. Their closed-minded, theological dogmatism caused them to reject Jesus.

The Second Coming is a major and oft repeated NT truth (cf. Matt. 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:3,27,30,37; 26:64; Mark 8:38-39; 13:26; Luke 21:27; John 21:22; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; 15:23; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7,10; 2:1,8; James 5:7-8; 2 Pet. 1:16; 3:4,12; 1 John 2:28; Rev. 1:7).

SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SECOND COMING

▣ **"In His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels"** This is an OT prediction from Dan. 7:10 (cf. Matt. 16:27; Mark 13:20; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess. 1:7). This refers to the Second Coming. This was another way of asserting the deity of Jesus. Several times in Matthew the angels are the eschatological gatherers and dividers of humanity (cf. Matt. 13:39-41,49; 24:31).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for "glory" (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term (which referred to a pair of scales) meaning "to be heavy." That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God's majesty (cf. Exod. 15:16; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1). See Special Topic at Luke 2:9.

9:27 There have been many theories to explain Jesus' statement. It may have referred to

1. Jesus' ascension
2. the Kingdom already present in Jesus
3. the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost

4. the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70
5. the expectation of Jesus' early return
6. the rapid spread of Christianity
7. the transfiguration

These theories focus on different phrases in the text:

- a. "some of the people standing here"
- b. "the Kingdom of God"
- c. "come in its power" (parallels in Mark 9:1)

The best guess is #7 because of the immediate context (cf. Mark. 9; Matt. 17; also 2 Pet. 1:16-18). Also, no other theory can explain all three aspects of the Markan text (Mark 8:38).

■ **"truthfully"** Luke has replaced the "amen" of Mark 9:1 with *alēthōs* because his Gentile audience would not know the Hebrew term. See Special Topic: Amen at Luke 4:24.

■ **"not"** This is the strong double negative.

■ **"taste death"** This same idiom is used in the Synoptic parallels of Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1. It is also used in John 8:51,52 and Hebrews 2:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:28- 36

²⁸Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became white and gleaming.* ³⁰And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, ³¹who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. ³³And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah" -- not realizing what he was saying. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud formed and *began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.* ³⁵Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" ³⁶And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

9:28 "some eight days after these sayings" The parallel in Mark 9:2 has "six days." The reason for the difference is one of the mysteries of why God allowed four Gospels to be written which do not agree on chronology, sequence, or details! These differences are the reason the term "inerrant" is an inappropriate adjective for Scripture. Which one of the four Gospels is the historically accurate one? They are all true, but they are eastern and ancient, not western and modern literary accounts.

One theory about Mark's "six days" is that it links this event to Exod. 24:12-18.

■ "went up on the mountain to pray" Context seems to make Mt. Hermon the best possibility (cf. Matthew 16 at Caesarea Philippi). Tradition from the non-Canonical *Gospel According to Hebrews* affirms Mt. Tabor. In the fourth century the tradition grew that Mt. Tabor was also the Mount of Temptation as well as transfiguration, but this cannot be true.

Only Luke mentions "to pray." Jesus' prayer life is a recurrent theme in Luke's Gospel. Prayer is crucial.

9:29 The other two Synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt. 17:1-11; Mark 9:2-8) describe this same event with the Greek term *metamorphoō*, which means to transfigure, to change the external form. Paul uses this metaphorically of Christians being changed in Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18. Luke simply describes the outburst of radiant glory (cf. Mark 9:3) connected to Jesus' meeting with two OT leaders.

9:30 "Moses and Elijah" Apparently they were (1) two eschatological OT figures (cf. Deuteronomy 18 and Malachi 3-4) or (2) those who had unusual deaths and their bodies were never found. There is no evidence in Judaism that Moses and Elijah represented the Law and Prophets sections of the Hebrew canon. They were meant to encourage Jesus and discuss His upcoming (periphrastic present active infinitive) crucifixion and resurrection (cf. Luke 9:31).

9:32 "Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep" Literally this is "were having been burdened," a periphrastic perfect passive. This experience is very similar to what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Matt. 26:43).

▣ **"they saw His glory"** This was one of the purposes of the event. Little by little it was dawning on them who He was!

9:33 Peter was very impetuous and often spoke out of turn. The term "tabernacles" refers to the leafy booths that were made to briefly live in during the Feast of the Tabernacles.

Peter wanted to hold on to this glorious moment. Who wouldn't?! However, they were needed down in the valley, and so are we.

▣ **"not realizing what he was saying"** This can be understood as Peter not recognizing the uniqueness of Jesus. He cannot/could not be one with even Moses and Elijah. He was not a prophet but the incarnation of God (cf. Luke 9:35).

9:34 "a cloud" I think this is related to the *Shekinah* Glory of the OT (cf. Exod. 13:21,22; 14:19,20,24; 16:10; 19:9,16; 24:15,16,18; 40:34-38; Num. 9:15-23), which represents the very presence of YHWH. It is seen several times in the NT.

1. at Jesus' baptism
2. at the transfiguration
3. at the ascension
4. at the return of Jesus at the Second Coming (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13ff)

In a sense it is the transportation of deity (cf. Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 1:7).

▣ **"formed and began to overshadow them"** This is the very same word used of the Spirit overshadowing Mary in the conception of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:35). This was an awesome spiritual experience!

9:35 "a voice came out of the cloud" This kind of event, of God's speaking out of a cloud, was not unique. The rabbis referred to it as a *Bath-kol*. It was the tradition during the inter-biblical period of how to know and affirm God's will.

▣ **"This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him"** This statement of the Father is recorded three different ways in the Synoptic Gospels.

1. Mark, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" (Mark 9:7)
2. Matthew, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matt. 17:5)
3. Luke, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (MSS P⁴⁵, P⁷⁵, x, B, L; UBS⁴ gives it a "B" rating)

The Lukan statements seem to be a combination of the Royal Messianic Psalm, Psalm 2 (My Son) and the Servant Song of Isaiah 42:1 (My Chosen One, cf. Luke 23:35). In this combination the two functions (Savior and Judge) or two comings of Christ are united—Savior and Judge/King.

The common element in all three is, "Listen to Him!" (Present active imperative - plural). This may be an allusion to one Messianic passage of Deut. 18:15.

9:36 This experience was so awesome that they:

1. did not ask Jesus any questions

2. did not tell anyone, even the other disciples, until after the resurrection.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:37-43a

³⁷On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. ³⁸And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, ³⁹and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming *at the mouth*; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as *it leaves*. ⁴⁰I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not." ⁴¹And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." ⁴²While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him *to the ground* and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father. ⁴³And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

9:37-62 This is a series of events that clearly illustrates the disciples' lack of spiritual maturity.

1. the demonized boy, Luke 9:37-43
2. the prophecy of Jesus' death, Luke 9:43-45
3. the fight over who is greatest, Luke 9:46-48
4. jealousy over other exorcists, Luke 9:49-50
5. the anger of the Apostles, Luke 9:51-56
6. mixed loyalties, Luke 9:57-62

9:37-43a Mark 9:14-20 is a much fuller account of this healing.

9:39 The physical symptoms are of a grand mal seizure. Demons often manifest symptoms of diseases. However, the NT makes a clear distinction between disease and demon manifestation.

9:40 Jesus had given power and authority over the demonic to His Apostles in Luke 9:1-6. However, in this instance they were unable to exorcize the boy.

9:41 "Jesus answered" This is an allusion to the Song of Moses from Deut. 32:5,20; it addresses not only the disciples (cf. Matt. 17:19-21), but also the crowd (Israel).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:43b-45

^{43b}But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, ⁴⁴"Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." ⁴⁵But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

9:44

NASB, NRSV "Let those words sink into your ears"

NKJV "Let those words sink down into your ears"

TEV "Don't forget what I am about to tell you"

NJB "For your part, you must have these words constantly in mind"

This is an idiom (cf. Exod. 17:14). The verb *tithēmi* basically means "to place," "to set," or "to lay." Here the imperative is used to encourage attention and remembrance. This phrase functions like Jesus' "Amen, Amen" to introduce a significant truth statement.

▣ **"the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men"** In all the Synoptic Gospels Jesus predicts and warns the disciples about the upcoming events in Jerusalem. This is an allusion to Isaiah 53,

especially Luke 9:12, in the Septuagint (i.e., "deliverance"). Mark has a much fuller account in Luke 9:30-32. He predicted this for several reasons:

1. to show His knowledge of future events
2. to reveal the redemptive plan of God
3. to try to help them prepare

9:45 Only Luke has this statement. Jesus spoke to them, but someone veiled (periphrastic perfect passive participle) their eyes (cf. Luke 18:34). Was it the Spirit or was it Satan? If it is the Spirit, then the disciples were just not ready to receive this truth. It would come in time. If Satan, then the purpose is to cause them not to understand and, therefore, cause more fear and confusion. What surprises me is that Jesus makes this statement to them and, for some reason, it is veiled. Why would Luke add this? What could be his purpose?

The confusion and fear of the disciples is revealed in the last phrase, "they were afraid to ask Him about this statement" (cf. Luke 9:36). This entire section deals with the Apostles' immaturity.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:46-48

⁴⁶An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. ⁴⁷But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, ⁴⁸and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."

9:46-48 This discussion is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mark 9:33-37; Matt. 18:1-5), but each is slightly different. Verses 37-56 have a series of events which reveals the disciples' immaturity.

Here they argue over who of them was greatest (obviously they did not acknowledge Peter's leadership). Jesus defines true greatness as service, not control!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

9:47 "knowing what they were thinking in their heart" See the discussion at Luke 5:22 and 6:8.

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase. Some texts have "knowing" (cf. MSS κ , B, F) and some have "seeing" (cf. MSS A, C, D, L, W, and the Vulgate). Either one makes sense in this context. UBS⁴ puts "knowing" in the text but gives it a C rating.

9:48 "in My name" See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

■ **"receives Him who sent Me"** This phrase reflects the theological emphasis of John's Gospel (cf. John 17:3,8,18,21,23,25). Jesus acknowledges His dependence on the Father (cf. Luke 10:16). Jesus serves also!

■ This same type of teaching is also found in Luke 22:26 and Matt. 10:40-42. Jesus must have used this concept often in different teaching situations.

The truth is that greatness is in service and that those whom men consider "the least" are significant to God.

Also, the life-changing power of Jesus' name means that not only do we speak it, we must conform to and emulate Him. Jesus is the ultimate example of love, service and, therefore, greatness (cf. Mark 9:35b).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (APOSTELLŌ)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:49-50

⁴⁹John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." ⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder *him*; for he who is not against you is for you."

9:49-50 This is also found in Mark 9:38-40.

9:49 "someone" The question is, was it a Jewish exorcist simply using Jesus' name as a magic formula or was this a disciple, but not part of the Twelve?

9:50 This is an important principle in our relationship to other Christian denominations ("in My name"), however, it cannot be a blank check of acceptance (cf. Luke 11:23).

■ **"Do not hinder him"** This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act in process. The disciples were jealous of others involved in ministry. Oh my!

■ **"he who is not against you is for you"** When one compares Luke 11:23a and Matt. 12:30a with this text, there seems to be a paradox. Many of Jesus' teachings were framed in this type of tension-filled statement. It is an eastern way of expressing truth. All truths can be taken to extremes. Metaphors, analogies, and illustrations all break down when pressed. Remember these were oral statements given in specific contexts. See *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 466-467.

Be careful of proof-texting literalism! All Scripture is inspired, not just my favorite parts and verses. A little knowledge often causes undue dogmatism and judgmentalism!

This brief account may reflect a situation in the later church (*setz im laben* of Luke). The Gospels have two authors: (1) Jesus and (2) the evangelist. The evangelist wrote his Gospel for a later target audience. It is possible, even probable, that some of Jesus' actions and teachings were chosen to relate to and impact later controversies.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EASTERN LITERATURE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:51-56⁵¹When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; ⁵²and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. ⁵³But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.]"And they went on to another village.

9:51-62 A new section of Luke's Gospel that describes Jesus' travel to Jerusalem begins here (cf. Luke 9:51-19:44). Luke structures his Gospel around Jesus' travels and especially His march to Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 18:38; 19:11,28). We are thankful that Luke recorded this section, for this tremendous information is unique to Luke.

9:51

NASB "when the days were approaching"

NKJV "when the time had come"

NRSV "when the days drew near"

TEV, NJB "As the time drew near"

This is another idiom, literally "to fill up with" (a present passive infinitive). There was a set plan for Jesus' life and death (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). Jesus had revealed to them what would happen in

Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:22,31) and now Luke comments that the time of these events was approaching.

■ **"for His ascension"** Jesus has told them of His upcoming trial, death, and resurrection (cf. Luke 9:22; Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31), but now Luke introduces "the ascension," that special event forty days after the resurrection, where Jesus is taken into heaven by a cloud from the Mount of Olives (cf. Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2,9,11,22; 1 Tim. 3:16). It had not been mentioned before and it is not defined here at all, but simply mentioned in passing. It may be an intentional linking of Elijah's ascension (2 Kgs. 2:9-11) with Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:2,11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ASCENSION

NASB	"He was determined to go to Jerusalem"
NKJV	"He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"
NRSV	"he set his face to go to Jerusalem"
TEV	"he made up his mind and set out on his way to Jerusalem"
NJB	"he resolutely turned his face toward Jerusalem"

This is another Semitic idiom. The NRSV is closest to a literal translation. He metaphorically looked straight ahead. He let nothing distract Him to the right or to the left. God's will was in Jerusalem (cf. Mark 10:32). This may be an allusion to Isa. 50:7 or Jer. 42:15,17 (cf. Dan. 9:3).

9:52 This is the only time the Gospels mention Jesus sending people ahead of Him to prepare for His visit. Who they were and why they were rejected is uncertain.

It is surprising that Luke is the only Synoptic Gospel to record this negative account when his other accounts related to Samaritans are so positive (cf. Luke 10:25-27; 17:11-19; Acts 1:8; 8:1-13,14,25; 9:31; 15:3). Luke mentions this outcast group often to show Jesus' love and concern for all people (i.e., his Gentile audience), but not here!

9:53 "they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem" This relates to Jewish/Samaritan prejudices. These two groups hated each other. It is also possible that they knew He was traveling to a feast at the Temple and they rejected Jerusalem as the site of the true Temple, which they thought was on Mt. Gerizim, near Shechem. Josephus mentions Jewish travelers to Jerusalem feasts being harassed (cf. *Antiq.* 20.6.1).

This verse sets the stage for the request of James and John in Luke 9:54, which Jesus rebukes in Luke 9:55.

9:54 "James and John" See Mark 3:17, where these two men are called "sons of thunder." This very incident is how they got their nicknames.

■ The KJV (NRSV and TEV footnote) inserts a phrase ("just as Elijah did," which is in MSS A, C, D, W), but it is not in MSS P^{45,75}, κ , B, or L. The UBS⁴ committee gave the shorter reading a "B" rating (almost certain).

9:55-56 The KJV inserts a phrase ("and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them'"), which is found only in the uncial manuscript K and later versions. It is missing in MSS P^{45,75}, κ , A, B, C, L, and W. The UBS⁴ committee gave the shorter reading an "A" rating (certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 9:57-62

⁵⁷As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." ⁵⁹And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." ⁶⁰But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury

their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." ⁶²But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

9:57-62 The cost of discipleship is a radical commitment that supersedes all cultural and family ties. There are three different people who want to follow Jesus (cf. Luke 9:57,59,61). In the context of Middle Eastern culture (see Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, pp. 22-32), Jesus' call to follow was a radical commitment not to an easy life, but to suffering and rejection. It was a call to leave the most significant cultural commitment—"family"—and become a part of a new family (cf. Luke 8:19-21; Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35).

Jesus tries to get these "would-be" followers to count the cost before they make the choice (cf. Luke 14:25-35). His first coming was one of suffering and rejection; this will certainly be the experience of His followers also. These first century Jews were expecting a powerful, glorious, conquering Messiah (Daniel), not a Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53).

9:57 "someone said to Him" The parallel in Matthew 8:19-22 has "a scribe said."

■ **"I will follow You wherever You go"** This eager disciple had good intentions, but did not realize the price of followship (cf. Matt. 26:33,35). Talk is easy; daily denial and focused commitment are very hard.

9:58 Jesus is calling for a reality check. Jesus' Jewish followers were still thinking in terms of kingdom benefits and perks (cf. Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45; Acts 1:6), which is very much like "what's in it for me" Christianity, which turns the gospel into a message of more-and-more for me!

9:59 "Follow Me" This imperative reflects the terminology which the rabbis used to call their disciples. We have examples of Jesus saying this very thing to the Twelve (cf. Luke 5:27; 9:23,59; 18:22; Matt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Mark 2:14; 8:34; 10:21; John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 21:19-22).

■ **"permit me first to go and bury my father"** This is very similar to Elisha's response to Elijah in 1 Kgs. 19:19-20. In the ancient world children (especially the oldest male) were duty-bound to care for their parents (cf. Luke 9:61). However, Jesus' call to followship superceded every earthly call (cf. Matt. 10:37-39; Luke 14:26-35). This statement would have shocked the rabbis.

This is another example of one word with two connotations (like "life" [*psuchē*] in Luke 9:24). Here the word "dead" refers to the spiritually dead (cf. Eph. 2:1) and the physically dead. The death is related to their lack of response to Jesus' words and call.

9:60 "go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God" These imperatives show the mandate of the Great Commission ministry (cf. Luke 24:47; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). The self-centered life of the fall (cf. Genesis 3) is replaced by the kingdom-centered, Spirit-filled, service to others. Jesus' followers are to mimic Jesus' actions (cf. Luke 8:1; 9:6). He sent out the Twelve (Luke 9) to preach, as well as the Seventy (Luke 10).

9:62 What a shocking statement! The Kingdom is ultimate! It must take priority over every aspect of self and culture. Followship with God in Christ is the only worthy goal. Keep focused!

In ancient times plowing with an animal held two dangers of not staying focused on the ground ahead:

1. One could hit a rock or root and damage the plow.
2. One could plow a crooked row and cause loss of crop.

Again this type of call for priority discipleship cannot be used in every family issue. We all live in families and are called on to act responsibly toward them (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8). John was told to care for Jesus' mother (cf. John 19:26), which he did until her death in Palestine; then John went to Asia Minor. Jesus' statements are hard-hitting priority truths, but they must not be pushed so as to damage other Scriptural truths.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Luke give such a condensed account of these events?
2. How is demon possession related to physical illness?
3. How does one reconcile 9:3 with Mk. 6:8?
4. Explain in your own words what Luke 9:23 means.
5. Why did Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus?

LUKE 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Mission of the Seventy-Two	The Seventy Sent Out	Mission of the Seventy	Jesus Sends Out Seventy-Two	The Mission of the Seventy-Two Disciples
10:1-12	10:1-12	10:1-12	10:1-12	10:1-12
Woes to Unrepentant Cities	Woe to the Unrepentant Cities		The Unbelieving Towns	
10:13-16	10:13-16	10:13-16	10:13-15 10:16	10:13-15 10:16
The Return of the Seventy-Two	The Seventy Return with Joy	Return of the Seventy	The Return of the Seventy-Two	True Cause for the Apostles to Rejoice
10:17-20	10:17-20	10:17-20	10:17 10:18-20	10:17-20
The Rejoicing of Jesus	Jesus Rejoices in Spirit	Prayer of Jesus	Jesus Rejoices	The Good News Revealed to the Simple—The Father and the Son
10:21-24	10:21-24	10:21-22 10:23-24	10:21 10:22 10:23-24	10:21-22 The Privilege of the Disciples 10:23-24
The Good Samaritan	The Parable of the Good Samaritan	A Lawyer's Question	The Parable of the Good Samaritan	The Great Commandment
10:25-37	10:25-37	10:25-28 The Good Samaritan 10:29-37	10:25 10:26 10:27 10:28 10:29 10:30-35 10:36 10:37a 10:37b	10:25-28 The Parable of the Good Samaritan 10:29-37
Visiting Martha and Mary	Mary and Martha Worship and Serve	Martha and Mary	Jesus Visits with Martha and Mary	Martha and Mary
10:38-42	10:38-42	10:38-42	10:38-40	10:38-42

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Much of this chapter is unique to Luke's Gospel
 1. the mission of the seventy, Luke 10:1-20
 2. dinner at Martha and Mary's, Luke 10:38-42
- B. Luke and Matthew record Jesus' praise to the Father, Luke 10:21-24; Matt. 11:25-27
- C. Along with the other Synoptic Gospels, Luke records the question of the scribe/lawyer, Luke 10:25-37; Mark 12:28-31; Matt. 22:34-40

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 10:1-12

¹Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. ²And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ³Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' ⁶If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. ⁸Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; ⁹and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹²I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city."

10:1 "appointed" Luke uses this term in two different senses.

1. to make known by lifting up (i.e., a torch to see or a hand to designate), Luke 1:80; Acts 1:24
2. to assign a task to, Luke 10:1

Both of these follow Septuagint uses (#1, Hab. 3:2; #2, Dan. 1:11)

- **"seventy others"** Several manuscripts have the number "seventy-two." There has been much discussion about which number is appropriate. There are two possible theories about the origin of this larger number:
 1. it comes from Num. 11:16-26, where Moses appoints seventy elders
 2. it comes from the rabbis' interpretation of Genesis 10-11, where seventy (Masoretic Text) or seventy-two (Septuagint) represents the nations and languages of the world. Option two fits Luke's overall purpose in writing the Gospel (cf. Luke 24:47).

The Greek manuscript tradition is equally divided as to which number is original ("seventy," MSS κ , A, C, L, W, and "seventy-two," MSS P⁷⁵, B, D). If one approaches this variant with the position that the most unusual reading is probably true, then "seventy-two" is original. The number 70 was a common round number in the OT (cf. Exod. 1:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

- **"in pairs"** This methodology follows the sending (same verb, *apostellō*) of the Twelve (cf. Luke 9:1-6; Mark 6:7).
- **"ahead of Him"** Now this is a new element. The Twelve went to villages that Jesus Himself never visited to heal, exorcize demons, and preach. The first time we hear of Jesus sending representatives ahead is in Luke 9:52, concerning a village in Samaria.

10:2 "The harvest is plentiful" Apparently Jesus used the same phrases and teachings in different locations under different circumstances (cf. Matt. 9:37-38 and John 4:35). It is important to note that we are to pray for God to send workers, not to simply go ourselves. Need does not constitute a call! However, the priority of the gospel is an issue every believer must contemplate!

NASB	"beseech"
NKJV, TEV	"pray"
NRSV, NJB	"ask"

The term *deomai* is characteristic of Luke's writing (eight times in Luke and seven times in Acts, once in Matthew and never in Mark and John). Here it is an aorist passive (deponent) imperative. It follows his emphasis on prayer. Believers see the evangelistic potential, recognize the spiritual need, and appeal to the only One who can help (God). It is His field and His harvest (cf. Matt. 9:35-38)! The Great commission (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) is a worldview!

- **"send"** This is literally the stronger word "thrust" (*ekballō*). There is an urgency and a mandate.

10:3	
NASB, TEV	"Go"
NKJV	"Go your way"
NRSV	"Go on your way"
NJB	"Start off now"

This is a present active imperative. Theologically this is parallel to the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19, "Go" (aorist participle used in the sense of an imperative). In context this looks like a specific assignment; so this cannot be interpreted "as you are going through life" or "through your daily affairs." This is a specific mission.

This section of Luke is similar to the sending out of the Twelve in Luke 9.

- **"I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves"** The parallel in Matt. 10:16 has a fuller statement.

Luke wants these representatives to know that there will be opposition and rejection (cf. Luke 10:11). The Spirit of God is with them and will provide for them.

This is a foreshadowing of the reception Jesus will receive in Jerusalem.

10:4 The significance of this verse is that they are to depend totally on God's provision, not their own resources (cf. Luke 9:3-5). Jesus repeats this to the disciples at the Last Supper (cf. Luke 23:35-36).

■ **"greet no one on the way"** Their mission was so important that they were not to be delayed with long, detailed, ceremonial eastern greeting rituals (cf. 2 Kgs. 4:29).

10:6 "If a man of peace is there" The "if" is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action. This is literally "son of peace." The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (vol. 2, p. 143) makes the statement that this expression in Luke denotes that salvation has come to this welcoming home (cf. Luke 1:79; 2:14,29; 7:50; 8:48; 12:51; 19:38). The home welcomes Jesus' messengers and Jesus' message!

■ **"if"** The second "if" in Luke 10:6 is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

10:7 "stay in the house" This is a Present active imperative. This was to be the standard operating procedure of traveling missionaries (cf. Luke 9:4).

■ **"eating and drinking what they give you"** These are both perfect active participles. Missionaries are not to seek better and better accommodations or food. Hospitality was a cultural requirement in the east. They gave the best they had to guests (and still do).

■ **"for the laborer is worthy of his wages"** This was an eastern agricultural proverb or truism (cf. Matt. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:18)

■ **"Do not keep moving"** This is a present imperative with the negative particle which usually implies "stop an act already in process." Apparently they were moving from home to home with the object of getting the finest facilities available.

10:8 "eat what is set before you" These being conservative Jews, they were likely to be very picky about the food that was offered to them. The Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:18-20) is more important than food laws (cf. Mark 7:1-23). For believers the Mosaic food laws of Leviticus 11 are annulled (i.e., Acts 10:9-16,34; 15:6-11; 1 Cor. 10:27).

10:9 "heal those in it who are sick" This is another present active imperative. There are two possible ways to interpret this phrase: (1) their task was to heal anyone and everyone in order to confirm their message about Jesus and the Kingdom of God or (2) they were to heal those who had faith (much like, stay in those homes who welcome you).

Jesus did both of these in different settings (cf. Matt. 4:23; 8:16; 9:35; 14:14; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14, while Mark says "many," Mark 1:34; 3:10).

■ **"The kingdom of God has come near to you"** This verb is a perfect active indicative. The Kingdom of God is inaugurated in Jesus' coming (cf. Luke 10:11; 11:20; 21:31; Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 6:10; 10:7; Mark 1:15). There comes a time in every person's life when God draws near. That is the time of response (cf. Luke 19:9; 2 Cor. 6:2).

This is such a controversial text today because of the theological view that the Kingdom is future only. I would like to include my notes from my commentary on Mark 1:15 (www.freebiblecommentary.org):

"Mark 1:15 "time is fulfilled" This phrase is introduced by *hoti*, which usually denotes a quote and is common in Mark. This reflects Peter's memory of Jesus' words. This is perfect passive indicative, which has prophetic/messianic significance (cf. Eph. 1:10; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 1:3). The

passive voice reflects God's activity in and control of time and history.

■ **"the kingdom of God"** This refers to God's reign. It is both a present reality and a future consummation. In Matthew's Gospel this is usually referred to as "kingdom of heaven." These phrases are synonymous (compare Matt. 13:11 with Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10). The kingdom arrived when Jesus was born. It is described and embodied in Jesus' life and teachings. It will be consummated at His return. It was the subject of Jesus' sermons and parables. It was the central theme of His spoken messages.

NASB, NKJV "is at hand"

NRSV "has come near"

TEV "is near"

NJB "is close at hand"

This is a perfect active indicative, which implies that the kingdom was a past reality (cf. Luke 10:1-3) as well as a current reality (cf. Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20; 17:21). The phrase "the time is fulfilled" parallels this phrase and emphasizes the reality of God's prophetic word now becoming a historical event. The "New Age of Righteousness" was inaugurated at Jesus' birth, but not fully known until the Passion Week's events and not fully empowered until Pentecost.

Although the Kingdom has truly come, there are also NT texts which imply that its complete manifestation is future (cf. Luke 9:1; 14:25; Matt. 26:29; Luke 22:18; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). What we do with Christ now determines our eschatological hope (cf. Luke 8:38)."

10:10-11 Jesus had just received this same type of treatment in Samaria (cf. Luke 9:51-56). However, Jesus' reaction to the potential rejection of "the seventy" was severe and put in an eschatological-judgment setting. We must be very careful of building theological systems out of one text. We only have a small percentage of Jesus' words and actions. The Gospel writers selected what they did record for evangelism and the needs of the early church. Moderns must be content with the snapshots we have of Jesus' life without trying to turn them into dogmatic rules for every culture and every situation. Our only hope is to keep the main truth of the event, pericopes, or paragraph, and not turn all the details into a Christian Talmud!

10:11 This was a cultural gesture of rejection and judgment (cf. Matt. 10:14; Luke 9:5)

10:12 **"I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day"** I believe the Bible does teach degrees of both reward and punishment based on how much one understands, receives, and acts on the will of God.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT

■ **"Sodom"** This evil city's fiery destruction was a symbol of God's judgment (cf. Matt. 10:15). Jesus surely knew of an end-time judgment (cf. Matt. 5:21-30; 7:13-27; 10:15; 11:20-24; 12:36,41-42; 25:1-46; Luke 11:31-32).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 10:13-15

¹³"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.

¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!"

10:13

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "Woe"

TEV "How terrible"

This is one of the OT prophetic literary markers. It symbolized a funeral dirge. Luke records more of Jesus' woes than any other Gospel writer (cf. Luke 6:24, 25, 26; 10:13; 11:42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 52; 17:1; 21:23; 22:22). Life choices have spiritual consequences.

■ **"Chorazin"** This was a city in Galilee, two miles north of Capernaum. It is mentioned only in Matt. 11:21 and here. We do not have any recorded information about Jesus' ministry in this city.

The point is that cities (Bethsaida and Capernaum) where Jesus taught and ministered were responsible. Many OT cities who were judged by God would have responded to Jesus' message and miracles if only given the chance.

■ **"if"** This is a second class conditional sentence (cf. Matt. 11:23), where a false assertion heightened a false result. Jesus' miracles were not done in Tyre and Sidon and they did not repent.

■ **"Tyre and Sidon"** These were two of the major seaport towns in Phoenicia, which is modern Lebanon (cf. Matt. 11:22,24). They are often used in the OT as symbols of pride and arrogance (cf. Isaiah 23; Ezekiel 26-28).

■ **"would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes"** These are OT symbols of repentance or mourning. Several could be listed:

1. sitting on the ground
2. wearing sackcloth
3. putting ashes or dirt on the head
4. pulling out one's beard or hair (disheveled hair)
5. tearing one's clothing
6. wailing loudly
7. being barefoot

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES

10:14 Light and understanding bring spiritual responsibility (cf. Luke 12:47-48). See Special Topic: Degrees of Reward and Punishment at Luke 10:12.

10:15 "Capernaum" This was Jesus' self-chosen headquarters. To whom much is given, much is required.

The question of Luke 10:15 expects a "no" answer.

NASB, NRSV "You will be brought down"

NKJV "You. . .will be thrust down"

TEV "You will be thrown down"

NJB "you shall be flung down"

This is possibly an allusion to Num. 16:30; Ezek. 31:18; or 32:18 in the Septuagint (which uses *katabainō*). The parallel in Matt. 11:23 speaks of being brought down to *hades* or the pit (cf. Isa. 14:13,15; Ezek. 26:20; 31:14; 32:24). This Greek word is found in several ancient manuscripts (cf. P⁷⁵, B, D).

However, the rarer and more intense *katabibazō* (thrust down) is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁵, κ , A, C, L, W, and the Vulgate and Peshitta translations.

The meaning of the text is not affected, but which term was original cannot be determined.

■ **"Hades"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 14:15 or Ezek. 26:20; 28:8; 31:14; 32:18,24. This referred to the realm of the dead (cf. Luke 16:23). According to the rabbis, there was a righteous part called *Paradise* and a wicked part called *Tartarus*. This may be true. Jesus' words to one of the criminals crucified with Him in Luke 23:43 seem to imply a righteous part of Hades because Jesus did not return to heaven until

forty days after Passover. At Jesus' resurrection He took the righteous part of *Hades* (*sheol*) to be with Him. Therefore, Paul can now say in 2 Cor. 5:6,8 that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?](#) at Luke 16:23.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 10:16

16"The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

10:16 To reject the gospel is to reject Jesus. To reject Jesus is to reject the Father (cf. 1 John 5:10-12). It is extremely important that we realize the dignity which believers have as Christian witnesses (cf. Luke 9:48; Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37; John 13:20). The gospel is not our message, but God's. People do not reject us, but Him.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 10:17-20

17The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 19Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. 20Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

10:17 "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" This is a present passive indicative. This was surprising to the seventy because they were not expecting this. It was a sign that the power and authority of God in Christ had been effectively delegated to His followers, and that the kingdom of Satan had been effectively defeated.

For "name" see [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD](#) at Luke 9:48.

10:18 "He said to them, 'I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning'" This is an imperfect tense followed by an aorist tense. This statement is only in Luke's Gospel. There has been much discussion about exactly what this relates to: (1) Satan's fall from heaven, or (2) Satan's fall from earthly power. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN](#) at Luke 4:2. It seems to me that #2 is best because the context relates this entire account to the exorcisms by the seventy.

When did Satan fall from heaven? (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 John 5:19)

1. before Gen. 1:1 (angelic fall predates creation)
2. between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 (gap theory)
3. after Job 1-2 (Satan in heaven)
4. after Zech. 3:1-2 (Satan in heaven)
5. metaphors in Isa. 14:12-16; Ezek. 28:12-16 (possibly refers to Satan being kicked out of heaven because of pride)
6. during Jesus' life on earth (cf. Matt. 12:29; John 12:31; 16:11); especially His victory over satanic temptation, cf. Luke 4:1-13
7. during the mission of the seventy (here)
8. after Calvary/Resurrection (Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 15:24)
9. in the future (Rev. 12:9)
10. every time they performed an exorcism

F. F. Bruce in *Answers to Questions*, thinks that Satan was cast out of heaven to the earth as the immediate consequence of Jesus' earthly ministry (p. 228). This same thought is found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 465-466.

George E. Ladd in *A Theology of the New Testament*, thinks it is only metaphorical of Satan's defeat in the mission of the seventy, but that Satan's final destruction is future (pp. 67, 625).

10:19 "I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of

the enemy" This is a perfect active indicative (a past event with abiding results). There have been many theories concerning this reference:

1. that snakes and scorpions are symbols of the power of the evil one
2. that this is a reference to Ps. 91:13-14; Rom. 16:20
3. that it is related to Mark 16:17-18, which is a non-inspired manuscript addition to the Gospel of Mark

It is obvious to me that #1 is the only possible meaning in this context. This is a wonderful truth for believers living and serving in a fallen world. See Special Topic: Luke's Use of *Exousia* at Luke 20:2.

■ **"and nothing will injure you"** This is a strong double negative. This must be interpreted in the light of other NT texts. But it does assert God's presence, protection and provision (cf. 1 John 5:19).

10:20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice" This is a present imperative with the negative particle, which usually means stop an act already in process. They are not to rejoice over the power of exorcism, but rejoice (Present active imperative) over the fact that their names are written in the Book of Life.

■ **"but rejoice that"** This is a present active imperative. There is a place for appropriate rejoicing!

■ **"your names are recorded in heaven"** This is a perfect passive indicative (abiding results). Daniel 7:10 and Revelation 20:12 list the two books which are symbols of God's memory and mankind's destiny. They are

1. the Book of Life (those who know God, cf. Exod. 32:32; Ps. 69:28; Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27)
2. the Book of Deeds (the acts of the saved and the unsaved, cf. Ps. 56:8; 139:16; Isa. 65:6; Mal. 3:16)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 10:21-22

²¹At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. ²²All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

10:21-22 This is paralleled in Matt. 11:25-27. Because the wording is so similar, it may be an early hymn in liturgy.

10:21

NASB	"He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit"
NKJV	"Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit"
NRSV	"Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit"
TEV	"Jesus was filled with joy by the Holy Spirit"
NJB	"filled with joy by the Holy Spirit"

There are several different forms of this phrase in the Greek manuscript tradition. This is probably because this is an unusual and unique phrase, "he exulted in (by) the Holy Spirit." The exact text is uncertain, but the sense is not affected. Because of the seventy's spiritual victories over the demonic, Jesus was greatly encouraged and began to praise the Father.

■ **"I praise You"** This is a present middle indicative. This word is used several times in OT Wisdom Literature in the sense of "to give thanks" or "praise." In the middle voice in Koine Greek it means to profess, confess openly (cf. Rom. 14:11; 15:9; Phil. 2:11; Rev. 3:5).

■ **"O Father, Lord of heaven and earth"** Notice how Jesus combines YHWH's immanence (Father, see Special Topic at Luke 22:42) and transcendence (Lord of heaven and earth). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Luke 1:68. It is this combination of glory, power, and intimacy that describes deity so well to the human experience. His power and awesomeness are seen in nature; His love and mercy are seen in Christ.

■ **"infants"** In Matthew 18 this obviously refers to new believers. Also notice John's use of "my little children" in 1 John to describe believers. Here it refers to Jesus' disciples, who are still immature in so many ways.

■ **"this way was well-pleasing in Your sight"** The Father reveals truth to believers to show that the gospel is not a human discovery and that no flesh will glory before God (cf. Eph. 2:9). God's gospel is based solely on His unchanging character of grace and mercy, not human performance or merit at any level.

10:22 In Luke 10:21 Jesus addresses the Father, but in Luke 10:22 He addresses the disciples. Because of this abrupt transition some Greek manuscripts added a descriptive phrase.

■ **"all things have been handed over to Me by My Father"** This is a recurrent theme in the NT (cf. Matt. 11:27; 28:18; John 3:35; 13:3; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 1:16-19; 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:22). Jesus was the Father's agent in (1) creation, (2) redemption, and (3) judgment.

■ **"no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son"** This is the theological assertion that Jesus fully and completely reveals the Father (cf. John 1:14; 14:6,9-10; 17:25-26; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Only a personal revelation could fully reveal a personal God.

■ **"and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him"** This shows how both the Spirit and the Son reveal the Father. Humans do not understand until their hearts and minds are quickened by Divine agency (cf. John 6:44,65; 17:2).

These words of Jesus in Luke 10:22 sound so much like John's Gospel (cf. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 379-380). This is evidence that John truly recorded Jesus' words. A good explanation of the difference between the words of Jesus, recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, and John may be that John records the private conversations (cf. Luke 10:23), while the Synoptics record public teaching (parables).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 10:23-24

²³Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, ²⁴for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them*, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear *them*."

10:23 "Turning to the disciples, He said privately" This phrase shows the presence of "the crowd," or at least the seventy. The Gospels do not always tell us to whom Jesus directed His words.

■ **"Blessed"** This is a beatitude like Matt. 5:1-12. Jesus is pronouncing the benefit of His choice to reveal to His disciples truths which they could have never had apart from Him.

These disciples had seen and heard the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. They lived during the culmination of God's OT promises. No OT prophet fully understood God's plan (cf. Heb. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:10-12), but in Jesus they (the disciples) now understand (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Col. 1:26-27; Heb. 1:2-3).

■ **"many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them*"** The Matthew parallel has "prophets and righteous men" (cf. Matt. 13:16-17). Surely the "kings" in Luke refers to the godly Kings of Judah, such as David, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

It is always shocking and humbling to me to realize that NT believers know more of the eternal plan and purposes of God than any OT person (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, etc.). The question then comes, "What are we doing with the knowledge?" With light comes responsibility (cf. Luke 12:47-48).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 10:25-37

25And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" **26**And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" **27**And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." **28**And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." **29**But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" **30**Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. **31**And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32**Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33**But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, **34**and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35**On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' **36**Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?" **37**And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

10:25-37 This dialogue and parable of the Good Samaritan is discussed from an eastern perspective in Kenneth Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, pp. 33-56. It is so helpful to allow the culture of the original author to illuminate the text.

10:25 "lawyer" This refers to scribes (cf. Mark 12:28) and from Matt. 22:34, a Pharisee. Scribes developed during the exilic period and supplanted the Levites as interpreters of the written OT and oral traditions (Talmud) to the contemporary situation. They could be Sadducees or Pharisees. Most in Jesus' day were Pharisees. They will become the rabbis of our day. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SCRIBES](#) at Luke 5:21.

▣ **"stood up"** This shows that they were in an official teaching session of Jesus.

▣ **"test"** This term implies evil motives on the scribe's part; Luke 10:29 seems to substantiate this. This term is used in the NT in the connotation of "to test with a view toward destruction." See Special Topic at Luke 4:2.

▣ **"what shall I do to inherit eternal life"** This implies one great act or a series of human acts. This man, as most first century Jews (cf. Luke 18:18), based salvation on human actions and merits (keeping the Mosaic Law, cf. Lev. 18:5; Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:1-14). Luke, writing to Gentiles, asks about salvation instead of the greatest commandment of the Jewish Law. Since all humans are sinful (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23), they cannot be saved by their actions. This is where the gift of God in Christ's death and resurrection is crucial (cf. Rom. 5:6-11; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9).

Notice that Jesus does not say here "trust Me," but describes how a person who has trusted Jesus will act (cf. Matt. 25:31-46). Jews thought they were right with God because of their lineage (i.e., seed of Abraham) and obedience to the Mosaic Law and its interpretation in the Oral Tradition. Jesus tries to startle this man's thinking by highlighting "love," unexpected, outrageous love.

■ **"eternal life"** "Eternal life" is a characterization used often by John to describe the life of the new age, God's kind of life. This question shows that this was a Pharisee because the Sadducees denied the resurrection. He was interpreting this phrase in light of his own background so, therefore, eternal life was a continuation of the present order.

10:26

NASB	"How does it read to you"
NKJV, NJB	"What is your reading of it"
NRSV	"What do you read there"
TEV	"How do you interpret them"

This man was a trained Bible interpreter, so Jesus asked him about his personal understanding of the question. Jesus even affirms his interpretation. There are two concerns here.

1. All believers need to be able to document what they believe from Scripture, not from culture, traditions, or denominational indoctrination. This man knew his Bible!
2. Though right on a theological truth, he missed the most important thing—salvation through faith in Christ.

10:27 "What is written in the Law" This refers to the Mosaic Law (Genesis - Deuteronomy). Every Jewish person in first century Palestine went to Synagogue school as a child. This man had further training in the OT. He knew the OT well, especially the writings of Moses.

Jesus is testing his knowledge just as he was trying to test Jesus.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

■ **"he answered and said, 'You shall love the Lord your God'"** This is from Deut. 6:4-5, called the *Shema* ("to hear so as to do"). This man possibly pointed to his phylactery, which contained this verse. It shows that primary focus is on our attitude of commitment toward God that includes everything we are.

■ **"and your neighbor as yourself"** This is a quote from Lev. 19:18 in the Septuagint. Jesus linked theological truth to practical, ethical demands. It is impossible to love God and hate those made in His image (cf. 1 John 2:9-11; 3:15; 4:20).

It is impossible to love your neighbor (i.e., covenant brother or sister) as yourself if you do not love yourself. There is an appropriate self-love which is based on God's priority love for mankind. We are His creation, fashioned in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26,27). We must rejoice in our giftedness and accept our physical, mental, and psychological makeup (cf. Psalm 139). To criticize ourselves is to criticize our Maker! He can transform our fallenness into a reflection of His glory (i.e., Christlikeness).

Christianity involves a personal faith commitment to God through Christ. It starts as an individual volitional decision of repentance and faith. However, it issues in a family experience (so important in Eastern culture). We are gifted for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). We are part of the body of Christ. How we treat others reveals our true devotion to Christ. The oneness of God and mankind made in the image and likeness of God demands an appropriate response toward God and toward other humans, (i.e., especially those of the household of faith).

10:28 "do this" This is a present active imperative. We must act on our understanding of God's truth and will. Remember that Jesus was speaking to a scribe.

■ **"and you will live"** This is not Jesus' affirmation of potential works-righteousness, but a response geared to the man's OT understanding (cf. Ezek. 20:11). For NT understanding of the place of the Mosaic Law in salvation see Gal. 3:6-14 and Rom. 3:20-21. The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 is an internal, mercy-based covenant, not a performance-based covenant. Mankind was unable to choose the right and avoid the evil (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23). The Sermon on the Mount extends OT performance to attitude, yet it still demands holiness (cf. Matt. 5:48). The first truth of the gospel is mankind's inability and spiritual need (cf.

Rom. 3:9-18). One only needs a Savior when they realize their need!

10:29 "who is my neighbor" This was a hot question in Judaism. Mostly it was Jews only, and often only certain Jews.

10:30 "A man" The implication was a fellow Jew. For guidelines on interpreting parables, see the contextual insights in Luke 8, B.

▣ **"Jerusalem to Jericho"** Jerome later called this highway "the bloody way" because of the violence which so often occurred there. It was a seventeen mile trip which descended 3000 feet.

10:31-32 "priest. . .Levite" These religious leaders were afraid of (1) thieves; (2) defilement (cf. Lev. 21 or Num 19:11); (3) involvement; and (4) time constraints.

10:33 "Samaritan" Jesus really shocked these Jews by using a hated Samaritan as the hero of the parable. Samaritans were half Jew and half pagan, resulting from the resettlement policies of the Assyrian exile of the northern ten tribes in 722 b.c. (i.e., fall of Samaria). They had developed a rival temple (Mt. Gerizim) and a rival text (the Samaritan Pentateuch).

10:34 "oil. . .wine" These were medicines of the day, oil for softening the skin and wine, with its natural alcohol, for killing infections.

▣ **"brought him to an inn"** Today there are archaeological remains of two caravan-stop compounds about halfway between Jerusalem and Jericho.

10:35 "two denarii" One denarius was a day's wage for a laborer or soldier. This amount would pay for about 14 days' room and board.

▣ **"when I return I will repay you"** Apparently the man was a regular customer. His care and concern was consistent and persistent.

10:36 Here is the key point of the parable and Jesus' answer to this man's question in Luke 10:29.

10:37 "The one who took showed mercy toward him" The scribe could not bring himself to say "Samaritan."

▣ **"Go and do the same"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative and a present active imperative. This verse links up contextually to Luke 10:28.

This extension of "neighbor" from OT "covenant partner" (i.e., fellow Jew) to the hated Samaritan would have shocked this lawyer/scribe. Yet, it is this very extension that characterized Jesus' teaching (and Luke's emphasis). The OT categories of national and racial emphasis are expanded into global spheres. The new paradigm is believer vs. unbeliever, not Jew vs. Gentile (cf. Rom. 3:22; 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). No NT author reaffirms OT national, racial, or geographical promises. Jerusalem is no longer a city in Palestine, but the "New Jerusalem" coming down out of heaven to a recreated earth (cf. Rev. 21:2). The new age is not Jewish!! The gospel is not about Israel but about Jesus!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 10:38-42

³⁸Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you

are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴²but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

10:38 "Now as they were traveling along" This is the way Luke structures this portion of his Gospel. Jesus is traveling to His divine destiny to Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:51,56,57; 10:38; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31,35; 19:1,11).

▣ **"a village"** From John 11:1 we know the village is Bethany, only two miles from Jerusalem on the Mt of Olives on the road to Jericho.

▣ **"Martha"** In Aramaic this means "lady," the feminine form of "Lord."

▣ **"welcomed Him into her home"** Martha was acting like the head of the house. Apparently Lazarus was not home. It was usual for the villagers around Jerusalem to welcome pilgrims into their homes during feast days. At certain times during the year the population of the Holy City swelled to two or three times its normal size. There were no accommodations available.

10:39 "Mary" In Hebrew this is Miriam, which means "bitter" (cf. Ruth 1:20).

▣ **"was seated at the Lord's feet"** A crowd must have followed Jesus to Bethany. It was highly unusual for a rabbi to teach women (another example of Luke's inclusive theme). Mary took advantage of the occasion to learn. "Sitting at the feet" was the common term for teaching situations (cf. Acts 22:3).

10:40 "was distracted" Apparently both women sat down to listen. Mary remained listening, but Martha's personality began to worry about the task of hostess.

▣ **"Lord, do You not care"** Martha agitated herself and then blamed her sister and then Jesus! The question expects a "yes" answer.

▣ **"left me to do all the serving alone"** Martha was majoring on a minor!

▣ **"tell her to help me"** This is an aorist active imperative.

10:41 "you are worried and bothered about so many things" It was not that Martha's concern was inappropriate, but her attitude and anxiety were out of bounds. She missed a once-in-a-lifetime moment because of daily concerns.

10:42 Jesus may have used Martha's elaborate dinner preparations as a metaphor for life's priorities.

NASB	"but <i>only</i> one thing is necessary"
NKJV	"but one thing is needed"
NRSV	"there is need of only one thing"
TEV	"but just one is needed"
NJB	"yet a few are needed, indeed only one"

The question is, to what does "thing" refer? It could refer to a simple meal versus an elaborate meal, or it could refer to Jesus' visit and teaching. The remainder of the verse implies the second option.

There are several textual variants connected to this statement. The NJB follows one variant that adds "a few are needed" (cf. MSS P³, κ, B, L).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of

the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this parable so significant?
2. Did Jesus answer his questions?
3. How is love related to salvation?

LUKE 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Teaching About Prayer	The Model Prayer	Sayings on Prayer	Jesus' Teaching on Prayer	The Lord's Prayer
11:1-4	11:1-4	11:1-4	11:1-4	11:1-4
	A Friend Comes at Midnight			The Importunate Friend
11:5-13	11:5-8	11:5-8	11:5-13	11:5-8
	Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking			Effective Prayer
	11:9-13	11:9-13		11:9-13
Jesus and Beelzebul	A House Divided Cannot Stand	Sources of Jesus' Power	Jesus and Beelzebul	Jesus and Beelzebul
11:14-23	11:14-23	11:14-23	11:14-15	11:14-22
			11:16-20	
			11:21-22	No Compromise
			11:23	11:23
The Return of the Unclean Spirit	An Unclean Spirit Returns		The Return of the Evil Spirit	Return of the Unclean Spirit
11:24-26	11:24-26	11:24-26	11:24-26	11:24-26
True Blessedness	Keeping the Word		True Happiness	The Truly Blessed
11:27-28	11:27-28	11:27-28	11:27	11:27-28
			11:28	
The Demand for a Sign	Seeking a Sign	Request for a Sign	The Demand for a Miracle	The Sign of Jonah
11:29-32	11:29-32	11:29-32	11:29-32	11:29-32
The Light of the Body	The Lamp of the Body	Concerning Light	The Light of the Body	The Parable of the Lamp Repeated
11:33-36	11:33-36	11:33-36	11:33-36	11:33-36
The Denouncing of the Pharisees and Lawyers	Woe to the Pharisees and Lawyers	Against Pharisees and Lawyers	Jesus Accuses the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law	The Pharisees and the Lawyers Attacked
11:37-44	11:37-54	11:37-41	11:37-41	11:37-44
		11:42-44	11:42	
			11:43-44	

11:45-54	11:45-52	11:45	11:45-46
		11:46-51	
			11:47-48
			11:49-51
		11:52	11:52
	11:53-54	11:53-54	11:53-54

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 11:1-4

- A. There are many textual variants of Luke 11:1-4 (and, for that matter, the whole chapter) which are attempts to harmonize Jesus' prayer in this context with Matt. 6:9-13, which was used liturgically in the church very early.
- B. It is still surprising to modern readers and interpreters how differently the Synoptic Gospels record Jesus' life and teachings. These eyewitness accounts (i.e., Mark from Peter, Luke from interviews or written documents from eyewitnesses) are verified by their very differentness. We have essentially what Jesus said, but not the exact wording.
- C. The doctrine of inspiration must cover the variety found within the four Gospels. Remember they are salvation tracts, not modern western biographies nor histories. We must be content with the trustworthiness of the differing accounts.
- D. From 5:33 it seems that John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray in a patterned way. Here, too, Jesus is setting a pattern (present middle [deponent] subjunctive). The different elements of this prayer were to be repeated emphases in regular prayer, not necessarily the exact words.
 1. God's character magnified
 2. God's reign increase
 3. God's provision sure
 4. God's forgiveness certain
 5. God's presence effective

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:1-4

¹It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." ²And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. ³Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

11:1 "while Jesus was praying in a certain place" Luke often records Jesus praying before significant events or teachings. This prayer emphasis is unique to Luke (although Mark mentions it twice, cf. Mark 1:35; 6:46). Matthew records Jesus telling His disciples to pray, but does not mention Jesus praying as much as Luke.

■ **"after He had finished"** Jesus' regular prayer life impressed and interested the Apostles. It was the source of His fellowship and intimacy with the Father. Jesus' power, authority, and message came from this intimacy. The disciples were delegated the power, authority, and message, but to fulfill their assignment, they also needed Jesus' fellowship with the Father. This only occurs by faith through prayer.

■ **"teach us to pray"** This is an aorist active imperative. These disciples felt an urgency about this request. They needed Jesus' peace and composure.

■ **"as John also taught his disciples"** We know from John 1:29-41 that some of Jesus' disciples were first John the Baptist's disciples.

It was the task of the teacher (rabbi) to train his followers in all the ways and truths necessary to function independently at some point in the future (cf. Luke 5:33). Prayer establishes a life-long dependence on the Father. This was the key to Jesus' earthly mission (cf. Luke 10:21-24).

11:2 "And He said to them, 'When you pray, say'" It seems that one's attitude is more significant than one's words, however, this particular phraseology implies that the form may be repeated (cf. Matt. 6:9). Luke's version is much shorter than Matthew's (cf. Matt. 6:9-13). Jesus probably repeated His teachings on this subject several times and to different groups.

■ **"Father"** The OT introduces the intimate familial metaphor of God as Father.

1. in Deuteronomy the analogy of God as Father is used (Deut. 1:31; 32:6)
2. this analogy is stated in Ps. 103:13 and developed in Ps. 68:5 (the father of orphans)
3. the nation of Israel is often described as YHWH's "son" (cf. Hos. 11:1; Mal. 3:17)
4. it was common in the prophets (cf. Isa. 1:2; 63:8; Israel as son, God as Father, 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9)

Jesus spoke Aramaic, which means that many of the places where "Father" appears as the Greek *Pater* it may reflect the Aramaic *Abba* (cf. Luke 14:36). This familial term "Daddy" or "papa" reflects Jesus' intimacy with the Father; His revealing this to His followers also encourages our own intimacy with the Father. The term "Father" was used sparingly in the OT (and not often in rabbinical literature) for YHWH, but Jesus uses it often and pervasively. It is a major revelation of our new relationship with God through Christ. Heaven is a family experience.

There are several ancient Greek uncial manuscripts that change "Father" (MSS P⁷⁵, κ , B, L) into the phrase found in Matt. 6:9, "Our Father who are in heaven" (MSS A, C, D, W). The UBS⁴ gives the short reading an "A" rating (certain). Luke's version of "the Lord's Prayer" is much more condensed.

■ **"hallowed be Your name"** This is an aorist passive imperative. "Hallowed" comes from the root "be holy" (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY](#) at Luke 1:35) and refers to the character of God (cf. 2 Kgs. 19:22; Ps. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Isa. 1:4; 29:23 [used 28 times in Isaiah]). He is separated from evil. This term was used often in the Septuagint

1. of things, Gen. 2:3; Amos 2:12
2. of people

- a. a firstborn, Exod. 13:2,12
- b. Israel, Exod. 19:14
- c. Priests, Exod. 19:22; 29:21; 2 Chr. 26:18
- d. Levites, Neh. 12:47

■ **"Your kingdom come"** This aorist active imperative refers to the reign of God in human's hearts now that will one day be consummated over all the earth. This is an eschatological emphasis (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#) at Luke 4:21). The kingdom of God is spoken of in the Synoptic Gospels as

1. past (Luke 13:28)
2. present (Luke 17:21; Matt. 4:17; 12:28)
3. future (Luke 11:2; Matt. 6:10)

11:3 "Give us each day" This is another present active imperative. The Matthew parallel has an aorist active imperative. Verse 3 emphasizes our continual daily dependence on God.

This is one example of modern theologians asserting that Luke has a modified eschatology that envisions a delayed Second Coming. The argument runs like this: Matthew has the aorist, implying a once-for-all giving (i.e., eschatological fulfillment), but Luke has the present, implying a regular (daily) giving through time. This may be true. Paul, Luke's friend and missionary companion, also emphasizes a delayed Second Coming in 2 Thessalonians (one of Paul's early books).

■ **"each day"** Luke uses the phrase *kath' hēmeran* often (cf. Luke 9:23; 11:3; 16:19; 19:47; 22:53; Acts 2:46,47; 3:2; 16:11; 17:11). It denotes repeated action.

■ **"daily"** The Greek word translated "daily" (*epiousios*) is found only here and in Matt. 6:11. It is used of a master giving a slave enough food to accomplish the task he was assigned for that day (Koine papyri found in Egypt, cf. TEV). The emphasis here seems to be that

1. believers' need to trust God constantly
2. God provides for us on a daily basis (Greek idiomatic usage), not a once-for-all provision

This word may also carry the eschatological emphasis of "bread of the future or new age." This would imply that the kingdom is present now in believers (analogous to "eternal life" now). This is the "already-yet-future" tension of Jesus' preaching.

■ **"bread"** There have been many theories as to the meaning of this word in this context:

1. physical bread
2. the bread of the Eucharist (cf. Acts 2:46)
3. bread as referring to the word of God (cf. Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. John 6:41,48,51,58)
5. the Messianic bread (cf. Luke 14:15)

It seems to me the literal is best here, but it is used for God's provision of all believers' daily needs.

11:4 "And forgive us our sins" This is an aorist active imperative. This seems to refer to the finished work of God in Christ in the lives of believers (initial justification and sanctification) as well as the ongoing need for forgiveness (progressive sanctification, cf. 1 John 1:9).

The Greek term "sin" means "to miss the mark." The Matthew parallel has Jesus' Aramaic "debts," which is a Jewish idiom that Luke's Gentile readers would not understand.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#)

■ **"For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us"** Forgiving is a sign that we have been forgiven (cf. Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 7:1-2; 10:8; 18:35; Luke 6:36; Col. 3:13; James 2:13; 5:9). Our forgiveness of others is not the grounds of our being forgiven, but the result and evidence of a new heart and a new mind (i.e., the new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-35). This phrase is the only one

relating to human actions.

■ **"lead us not into temptation"** This is a negated aorist active subjunctive ("don't ever"). The term "temptation" (*peirazō*) is a term that has the connotation in the NT of "to tempt with the view toward destruction." See Special Topics at Luke 10:25. Jesus told his disciples to pray for this very same thing in Luke 22:40,46. James 1:13 uses a different word (*dokimazō*) for test, which has the connotation of "to test with a view toward approval." God does not test us for destruction, but He does test us to strengthen us (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3; Jdgs. 2:22; 2 Chr. 32:31; Matt. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12-16).

Several ancient Greek uncial manuscripts add a phrase from Matt. 6:13 (MSS A, C, D, W). The short text of Luke is found in MSS P⁷⁵, κ^* ,¹, C, L. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter reading an "A" rating (certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:5-13

⁵Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.' ⁸I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. ⁹So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. ¹¹Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? ¹²Or *if* he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

11:5-13 This is a story not to illustrate God's reluctance to answer our prayers, but His willingness. This is called a contrasting parable. It is a fictitious account to highlight mankind's reluctance but God's willingness.

11:5

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB

"suppose one of you"

NKJV

"which of you"

This is literally "who of you." Luke uses this often to introduce Jesus' teachings (cf. Luke 11:5,11; 12:25; 14:5,28; 15:4; 17:7). This literary introduction can be seen in the OT in Isa. 42:23 and 50:10.

This verse culturally expects an emphatic "no" answer (see Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, pp. 119-141).

11:6 "for a friend of mine has come to me" Travelers might travel at night to avoid the heat in some Middle Eastern countries, but in others travel at night was dangerous and unusual.

■ **"I have nothing to set before him"** It was a host's cultural duty to provide a meal.

11:7 "Do not bother me" This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually means stop an act already in process. Then the homeowner lists two reasons why he cannot get up.

11:8 This verse explains the point of the parable. Persistence is an important aspect of prayer (cf. Luke 11:9-10). This is not because God is reluctant, but because prayer develops intimacy with God. Our greatest need is God, not the answer to all our prayers (cf. Luke 18:1-6).

God invites His children to come to Him even in times and circumstances that may seem inappropriate. God is more available than any ancient host (cf. Ps. 23:5-6).

11:9 "ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened" These are all present active imperatives which speak of habitual, lifestyle commands (cf. Deut. 4:29; Jer. 29:13). It is important that one balance human persistence with God's responsive character. Believers cannot force God to do that which is not good for them. However, at the same time, they can bring any perceived need to their heavenly Father at any time and as often as desired. Jesus prayed the same prayer in Gethsemane three times (cf. Mark 15:36,39,41; Matt. 26:39,42,44). Paul also prayed three times about his thorn in the flesh (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8). But the great thing about prayer is not that one receives a specific answer to his request, but that he has spent time with the Father!

Persistence (literally "shamelessness") is important (cf. Luke 18:2-8). However, it does not coerce a reluctant God, but reveals the level of interest and concern of the person praying. Neither one's many words nor his repeated prayers will motivate the Father to give that which is not in one's best interest. The best thing believers get in prayer is a growing relationship and dependence on God.

11:11-12 Both questions expect a "no" answer. Jesus used the analogy of a father and son to describe the mystery of prayer. Matthew gives two examples, while Luke gives three (cf. Luke 11:12, although there is some confusion in the manuscript tradition). The whole point of the illustrations was that God will give believers the "good things." Luke defines this "good" as "the Holy Spirit" (cf. Luke 11:13). Often the worst thing our Father could do for us is answer our inappropriate, selfish prayers! All three examples are a play on things that look alike: stone as bread, fish as eel, and egg as a coiled, pale scorpion.

11:11 "instead of a fish" The Semitic form of this would use "and instead" (cf. MSS P^{45,75}, B), while the normal Greek idiom would require "not instead" (cf. MSS κ , A, D, L, W). This clearly shows how later Greek scribes did not fully understand the Aramaic influence on the writers of the NT (even Luke) and changed the unusual Semitic forms to their common Koine Greek forms.

We do not have the exact words of Jesus. The Gospels are not video tapes, but Holy Spirit-inspired memories. Their differences do not affect inspiration or trustworthiness.

11:13 This is a First class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. In a rather oblique way this is an affirmation of the sinfulness of all men (cf. Rom. 3:9,23). The contrast is between evil human beings and a loving God. God shows His character by the analogy of the human family.

■ **"how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him"** There is some question about the wording of this verse. It is important to look up the parallel in Matt. 7:11, which replaces "the Holy Spirit" with "good things." Manuscripts P⁴⁵ and D of Luke 11:13 have "good gift" (as does the Greek text used by Ambrose). This seems to imply that this reference is more to spiritual gifts (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 53) than to the Holy Spirit Himself (there is no article). I do not know of one place in the Scriptures that we are to ask the Father for the Holy Spirit since we are given the Holy Spirit at salvation. The indwelling Spirit comes when Jesus is received. However, the manuscript attestation of "Holy Spirit" is overwhelming (cf. MSS P⁷⁵, κ , A, B, C, W).

There is another variant in this text. The designation for God can be (1) "the Father from heaven" (cf. MSS P⁷⁵, κ , L) or (2) "the Father will give from heaven" (cf. MS P⁴⁵ and the parallel in Matt. 7:11). As with most variants, the meaning of the text is not affected.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:14-23

¹⁴And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed. ¹⁵But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." ¹⁶Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷But He knew their thoughts and said to them, "Any kingdom divided

against itself is laid waste; and a house *divided* against itself falls. ¹⁸"If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges. ²⁰But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹When a strong *man*, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. ²²But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. ²³He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters."

11:14 "a demon, and it was mute" Matthew 12:22 says the demon caused blindness as well as dumbness. Both Matt. 12:22-32 and Mark 3:2-30 record this same discussion in a different settings and locations.

There is a Greek manuscript variant here in the phrase "and it was mute." Most manuscripts omit "and it was" (cf. MSS P^{45,75}, κ , A*, B, L).

Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 158, says the full form reflects a Semitism used by Luke, but the shorter reading has overwhelming Greek manuscript attestation. The translation committee of the UBS³ put the phrase in brackets and gave it a "D" rating (with great difficulty). However, the UBS⁴ has it as a "C" Rating (difficulty in deciding). Scholars change their minds!

As with most of these variants, this does not affect the thrust of the verse or affect the meaning of the paragraph as a whole.

11:15 "But some of them said" Matthew 12:24 has "Pharisee," while Mark 3:22 has "scribes from Jerusalem."

■ **"Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons"** Beelzebul is an OT fertility god (*Ba'al* BDB 127) of Ekron (cf. 2 Kgs. 1:2,3,6,16). The manuscripts of the NT differ between the spelling of Beelzebub and Beelzebul (cf. Mark 3:22 and Matt. 10:25). This is probably due to the Jews' attempt to make fun of idols by slightly changing their names. The term *Zebub* means "lord of dung." *Zebul* means "is exalted" and later became a title in Judaism for the chief of demons. It is found in the Vulgate and Peshitta translations.

The phrase "the ruler of the demons" identifies "Beelzebul" as Satan (cf. Luke 11:18). Although the OT is silent on the relationship between Satan and the demonic (see Special Topic: The Demonic in the To at Luke 4:1), interbiblical literature (affected by Zoroastrianism) identifies Satan as the head of demons.

Also the relationship between the OT fallen angels and the demonic is uncertain (cf. Rev. 12:9). I Enoch says the *Nephilim* of Genesis 6, who died in the flood, became the demonic seeking a physical body.

11:16 "to test Him" This term (*peirazō*, see note at Luke 11:4 and Special Topic at Luke 10:25) is used in the NT with the connotation of "to test with a view toward destruction."

This paragraph seems to mix two separate issues:

1. exorcisms of Jesus
2. testing by those wanting a sign

The exorcisms themselves were the most relevant sign that could be given of Jesus' origin, authority, and power.

■ **"demanding of Him a sign from heaven"** They had a sign, the exorcism, but they would not accept it (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22). The demand for signs became a major stumbling block to the Jews (cf. Luke 11:29-30; Matt. 12:38; John 2:18; 6:30).

This repeated insistence for a sign reminds us of Jesus' temptation (cf. Matthew 4; Luke 4), where Satan tempts Him to jump from the pinnacle of the temple, apparently on a crowded feast day to impress the Jewish crowd (cf. Luke 4:9).

■ **"He knew their thoughts"** See notes at Luke 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; 24:38.

11:17-18 Jesus asserts the logical absurdity of His opponents. Why would Satan defeat his own servants (cf. Luke 11:18)?

11:18 "if" This is the first of three first class conditional sentences (cf. Luke 11:18, 19, 20) which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary/logical purposes.

The one in Luke 11:19 is an example of how the first class conditional is not true to reality, but to help the author make a strong, logical point. In reality, this statement is not true!

■ **"his kingdom"** Satan has a kingdom and wants to keep it and expand it. There is a spiritual conflict (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 4:14,27; 6:11-12,16; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

11:19 "by whom do your sons cast them out" The Jews were quite active in exorcisms (cf. Acts 19:13-16; see Josephus, *Antiq.* 8.2.5). If they denied Jesus' power to exorcize demons, how did they explain Jewish exorcisms (esp. those using Jesus' name, cf. Luke 9:49-50; Mark 9:38-40)?

■ **"So they will be your judges"** At least these Jewish exorcists who were using Jesus' name recognized His power. This crowd (Matthew says Pharisees) had committed the unpardonable sin by calling light dark. They clearly saw and heard, but deemed it evil!

SPECIAL TOPIC: Exegetical Procedures for Interpreting "The Unpardonable Sin"

11:20 "by the finger of God" This phrase is used several times in the OT:

1. God as creator, Ps. 8:3
2. God as giver of revelation, Exod. 31:18; Deut. 9:10
3. God as redeemer, the plague which brought deliverance from Egypt, Exod. 8:19

This is an anthropomorphic phrase (see Special Topic at Luke 1:51). Humans have only earthly vocabulary to describe spiritual persons, events, and things. All our language about God is analogical and metaphorical. God is personal and, therefore, the Bible describes Him in human terms (physical, emotional, relational). God is an eternal Spirit, present throughout creation. He does not have a human body, though He can take that form (e.g., Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14).

■ **"then the kingdom of God has come upon you"** The logic is overwhelming. If Jesus cast out demons by God's power, then He was the Messiah. The crowd's rejection of Him and His power and authority was a rejection of YHWH (cf. 1 John 5:10-12).

The casting out of demons showed the defeat of Satan and his kingdom. The eschatological event (cf. Isa. 24:21-23; Rev. 20:1-3) has come in the ministry of Jesus. The kingdom is present (cf. Matt. 12:28), yet future! This is the NT tension of the "already" and "not yet." Satan is defeated and is being defeated!

11:21-22 Jesus' power over the kingdom of Satan and his followers shows Jesus' God-given authority. The exorcism of Jesus and those He delegates clearly shows God's power over the evil one (even "a strong, fully armed" – perfect passive participle). Satan is helpless against Jesus, cf. Luke 11:22; 10:18).

11:22 "plunder" This may be an allusion to Isa. 53:12b ("He will divide the booty with the strong"). It (*skulon*) is a metaphor of military victory, the dividing of spoils (cf. Septuagint of Exod. 15:9; Num. 31:11,12,26,27; 1 Sam. 23:3).

11:23 This seems to contradict 9:50, but remember the ones to whom Jesus is speaking. In Luke 9:50 He is addressing His disciples about tolerance. Jewish exorcists or other disciples recognized Jesus' power and were using it to help people. However, here it is those who are trying to test Jesus (cf. Luke 11:16) who were rejecting His power and authority from God by asserting that He was using Satan's power. There are two totally different contexts and recipients!

24"When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26Then it goes and takes *along* seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

11:24-26 This passage has three possible meanings.

1. The Jewish exorcists performed exorcisms without personal faith, and the demonic spirit returned.
2. It is an allusion to national Israel in the sense of their rejection of idol worship without replacing it with a faith relationship to YHWH.
3. It referred to the preaching of John the Baptist, whom they accepted as being from God, while rejecting Jesus.

The last condition was far worse than the existential problem.

11:24 "the unclean spirit" See Special Topic: The Demonic at Luke 4:33 and the note on Exorcism at Luke 4:35.

▣ **"it passes through waterless places seeking rest"** In the OT the demonic lived in uninhabited places (cf. Lev. 16:10; Isa. 13:21; 34:11).

The term "rest" (*anapausis*) is used in the Septuagint of Isa. 34:14 (according to Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 2, p. 925), which describes the resting place of the *Lilith* (female night demon). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#) at Luke 4:1.

11:26 "seven other spirits" This is metaphorical for a more severe possession.

▣ **"the last state of that man becomes worse than the first"** Evil, if not dealt with decisively by faith in Christ, can develop and progress. Evil can and will intensify because its ultimate goal is the destruction of the person.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:27-28

27While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed."

28But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

11:27 The parallel in Matt. 12:46-50 records the account of Jesus' mother and brothers seeking an audience with Him. Luke has recorded this earlier in Luke 8:19-21.

This shows us that the Gospels are not structured chronologically. This does not depreciate their historicity, but helps us remember that the Gospels are not modern, western cause-and-effect, sequential histories, nor are they biographies. They are gospel tracts for the purpose of salvation and Christian maturity. The main issue is the person and work of Christ.

11:28 "But He said" Jesus was appreciative of the woman's affirmation of approval, but He affirmed that an even closer relationship (even a blessing) exists between those who hear and follow (cf. Luke 6:46-49) His message more than those who simply have family ties (i.e., blood kin).

NASB	"On the contrary"
NKJV	"more than"
NRSV, TEV	"rather"
NJB	"more"

The Greek compound (*men + oun*) has several connotations. It addresses what has just been said and adds to it. It can (1) affirm it, (2) negate it, or (3) go beyond it (cf. Rom. 9:20; 10:18; Phil. 3:8). Option three

fits this context best.

■ **"blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it"** This is parallel to Luke 8:21. These are both present active participles. Together they reflect the Hebrew word *shema*, Deut. 6:4-6. Jesus' true family are those who hear and do God's will expressed in God's word! God wants a people who reveal and demonstrate His characteristics to the world.

Jesus is the one who is giving the word (*Logos*) and is the Word (cf. John 1:1). Believers are blessed when they hear and do the gospel.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:29-32

²⁹As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. ³⁰For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. ³²The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

11:29 "this generation is a wicked generation" The Matthew parallel (cf. Luke 12:38-42) calls them "an evil and adulterous generation," which Luke's Gentile readers would not have understood in its OT connotation (i.e., faithless, idolatrous, e.g., Exod. 34:15-16; Deut. 31:16; Jdgs. 2:17; 8:27; Ezek. 6:9; 23:30; Hos. 3:1; 4:12; 9:1). This verse may refer to Luke 11:16.

■ **"it seeks a sign"** In Mark 8:11-12 Jesus refuses to give a sign! Both Matthew and Luke record Jesus as alluding to the sign of the prophet Jonah.

1. Matthew to his being in the great fish three days (i.e., Jesus' resurrection)
2. Luke to his preaching on Nineveh repenting (i.e., what the crowd should do)

They had heard Jesus' teachings and had seen the healings and the exorcisms performed by Him, but they wanted some ultimate sign to convince them to believe on Him. This is exactly the temptation of Matt. 4:5-7, to which Jesus would not succumb. However, in reality, He had given them sign after sign, but they would not or could not see!

■ **"yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah"** The Matthew parallel (Matt. 12:38-42) emphasizes Jonah in the great fish three days as Jesus was three days in the grave (Hades). We must remember that this is three days by Jewish reckoning, not three twenty-four hour periods. Any part of a day, which for them was evening to evening (cf. Genesis 1), was reckoned as a full day. Jesus' allusion to Jonah confirms the historicity of the prophet Jonah (as does 2 Kgs. 14:25). It is precisely the experience in the great fish that was used as the analogy. Also, Jonah's preaching resulted in the salvation of Gentiles (Luke's target audience was Gentiles).

Luke emphasizes the repentance of Nineveh at Jonah's preaching. In Luke Jesus is calling for the crowds' repentance in light of His teachings and miracles as the OT sign they sought (cf. Luke 11:32).

11:30 It was Jonah's preaching which God used to cause ancient Nineveh, the capital of the evil and cruel Assyria (Israel's enemy), to repent. The Matthew parallel uses Jonah in the great fish for three days and Jesus in the earth three days as the sign.

11:31 "The Queen of the South" This refers to the visit of the Queen of Sheba (a Gentile) to hear Solomon's wisdom recorded in 1 Kings 10 and 2 Chronicles 9.

■ **"something greater than Solomon is here"** What a tremendous self-affirmation and the self-understanding of this carpenter of Nazareth. He saw himself as having greater wisdom (i.e., "something")

than Solomon (cf. Luke 11:49,52).

Jesus, in His dialogs with different groups, clearly asserts that He is "greater than"

1. the temple, Matt. 12:6,8
2. Jonah, Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:31
3. greater than Solomon, Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:32
4. greater than Jacob, John 4:12
5. greater than John the Baptist, John 5:36
6. greater than Abraham, John 8:53

This is either the rambling of a mad man or the witness of incarnate deity! Each hearer/reader must decide.

11:32 "men of Nineveh" This is obviously the generic use of "men" as people.

▣ **"something greater than Jonah is here"** Notice again "something." Jesus' wisdom and message are greater than any OT wisdom and message. Jonah's message caused a pagan nation to repent. Jesus' message is greater than Jonah's, but these religious leaders will not repent and believe. Their condemnation is far worse because the message they heard was so superior!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:33-36

³³No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. ³⁵Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness. ³⁶If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays."

11:33-36 These same metaphors are used in Matt. 5:15; Mark 4:21; and Luke 8:16, but with different applications. Apparently Jesus used the same illustrations in different settings. Here they refer to mankind's attitudes and openness to God in Christ.

This is commonly called the unpardonable sin (see Special Topic at Luke 11:19). See notes below from my commentaries on the parallel contexts in Mark 3:29 and Matt. 12:31-32.

"Mark 3:29 "but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit" This must be understood in its pre-Pentecostal historical setting. It was used in the sense of God's truth being rejected. The teaching of this verse has commonly been called "the unpardonable sin." It must be interpreted in light of the following criteria:

1. the distinction in the OT between "intentional" and "unintentional sins," (cf. Num. 15:27-31)
2. the unbelief of Jesus' own family contrasted with the unbelief of the Pharisees in this context
3. the statements of forgiveness in Mark 3:28
4. the differences between the Gospel parallels, particularly the change of "son of man," (cf. Matt. 12:32; Luke 12:10) to "sons of men," (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28)

In light of the above, this sin is committed by those who, in the presence of great light and understanding, still reject Jesus as God's means of revelation and salvation. They turn the light of the gospel into the darkness of Satan (cf. Mark 3:30). They reject the Spirit's drawing and conviction (cf. John 6:44,65). The unpardonable sin is not a rejection by God because of some single act or word, but the continual, ongoing rejection of God in Christ by willful unbelievers (i.e., the scribes and Pharisees).

This sin can only be committed by those who have been exposed to the gospel. Those who have heard the message about Jesus clearly are the most responsible for its rejection. This is especially true of modern cultures that have continual access to the gospel, but reject Jesus (i.e., America, western culture).

■ **"never has forgiveness"** This statement must balance with Mark 3:28.

■ **"but is guilty of an eternal sin"** This was a willful rejection of the gospel (i.e., the person and works of Jesus) in the presence of great light!

There are many variants related to the phrase "an eternal sin." Some ancient Greek manuscripts (1) changed it to a GENITIVE phrase (i.e., *hamartias*) - C*, D, W; (2) added "judgment" (i.e., *kriseōs*) - A and C2 (cf. KJV); or (3) added "torment" (i.e., *kolaseōs*), minuscule 1234.

It was shocking to the early scribes to talk about an "eternal sin." Robert B. Girdlestone, in his book *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, has an interesting comment on the word "eternal":

"The adjective *aiōnios* is used more than forty times in the N.T. with respect to *eternal life*, which is regarded partly as a present gift, partly as a promise for the future. It is also applied to God's endless existence in Rom. 16.26; to the endless efficacy of Christ's atonement in Heb. 9.12, 13.20; and to past ages in Rom. 16.25, 2 Tim. 1.9, Titus 1.2.

This word is used with reference to *eternal fire*, Matt. 18.8,25. 41, Jude 7; *eternal punishment*, Matt. 25.46; *eternal judgment* or *condemnation*, Mark 3:29, Heb. 6.2; *eternal destruction*, 2 Thess. 1.9. The word in these passages implies *finality*, and apparently signifies that when these judgments shall be inflicted, the time of probation, change, or the chance of retrieving one's fortune, will have gone by absolutely and for ever. We understand very little about the future, about the relation of human life to the rest of existence, and about the moral weight of unbelief, as viewed in the light of eternity. If, on the one hand, it is wrong to add to God's word, on the other we must not take away from it; and if we stagger under the doctrine of eternal punishment as it is set forth in Scripture, we must be content to wait, cleaving to the Gospel of God's love in Christ, while acknowledging that there is a dark background which we are unable to comprehend" (pp. 318-319).

Matt. 12:31-32 This reference to blasphemy against the Spirit is often called "the unpardonable sin." From the parallel in Mark 3:28 it is obvious that "Son of Man" was not a title for Jesus in this context but a generic use of the Hebrew idiom "sons of men" or "mankind." This is supported by the parallelism of Matt. 3:31 and 3:32. The sin discussed was not the sin of ignorance, but of willful rejection of God and His truth in the presence of great light. Many people worry about whether they have committed this sin. People who desire to know God or are afraid that they have committed this sin have not! This sin is the continuing rejection of Jesus in the presence of great light, to the point of spiritual callousness. This is similar to Heb. 6 and 10."

11:34

NASB, NJB	"clear"
NKJV, NIV	"good"
NRSV	"healthy"
TEV, REB	"sound"

See note at Matt. 6:22-23 at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GENEROUS/SINCERE (HAPLOTES)

11:36

NASB, NRSV,	
NJB	"rays"
NKJV	"bright shining"
TEV	"its brightness"
REB, NIV	"shines"

This word normally means "lightning" (cf. Luke 17:24; 24:4), but here it denotes "a bright shining" (see Harold Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (p. 57).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:37-41

³⁷Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined *at the table*. ³⁸When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal. ³⁹But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. ⁴⁰You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you."

11:37 "a Pharisee asked" Remember this context deals with the Pharisees' rejection of Jesus. This account (cf. Luke 11:37-41) illustrates their spiritual blindness to the major truths and nit-picking legalism based on Talmudic regulations (human traditions, cf. Isa. 29:13). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES](#) at Luke 5:17.

▣ **"lunch"** The terms *ariston* and *deipnon* distinguish between a meal about noon (or earlier, cf. Matt. 22:4; John 21:12,15) and a larger meal about 4 p.m. (cf. Luke 14:12). This first term is used here for an early meal in the mid-morning.

11:38 "When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal" Apparently Jesus, on purpose, left out this expected rabbinical ceremonial procedure in order to bring the Pharisee into dialogue (this parallels Jesus' actions on the Sabbath).

The word wash is *baptizō*, where it means to ceremonially purify by washing. Modern interpreters must be careful of using etymology to dogmatically define Greek words and then insert their technical definition (dying by means of immersion) into every place that word is used. This context is not referring to immersion, but the Jewish ritual of pouring a certain amount (two hen eggs) of water over the elbow until it drips off the fingers and then again over the fingers until it drips off the elbow.

There is a good article in Robert B. Girdlestone's *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 152-157 on the Hebrew *thaval* and the Greek *baptizō*.

11:39 "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter" Jesus wanted to discuss the Pharisees' orientation of minute details (Talmud) as a sign of being spiritual. The heart is the key to all religious acts. God knows the heart (cf. 1 Sam. 2:7; 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 6:30; Ps. 7:9; 44:21; Pro. 15:11; 21:2; Jer. 11:20; 17:9-10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27).

11:40 This question expects a "yes" answer.

▣ **"You foolish ones"** See Special Topic following.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR FOOLISH PEOPLE](#)

11:41

NASB "charity"

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB "alms"

TEV —

This verse seems to imply that if the inside of the cup is loving and obedient, then it will show in outward manifestations of love to the poor and needy, not legalisms and elitisms (cf. Luke 11:42; Micah 6:8). See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: ALMSGIVING](#)

▣ **"then all things are clean for you"** This was a radical statement for those brought up under kosher

rules (cf. Leviticus 11). However, Jesus modified the OT requirement (cf. Mark 7:1-23), thereby showing He is Lord of Scripture (i.e., its only true interpreter, cf. Matt. 5:17-48). This truth is used as an illustration for Peter in Acts 10:9-16. Paul followed this understanding of ceremonial defilement (cf. Rom. 14:14,20; 1 Cor. 10:25-26; 1 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:42-44

⁴²"But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every *kind* of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. ⁴³Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places. ⁴⁴Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over *them* are unaware of it."

11:42 "'woe to you'" This reflects an OT prophetic curse formula using a funeral dirge (cf. Luke 11:42,43,44,46,52; Matt. 23:13-36).

▣ **"pay tithes on"** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHING

▣ **"yet disregard justice and the love of God"** It is extremely important that we do not let rituals or liturgical acts blind us to God's will for His people, which is

1. love for God (cf. Deut. 6:4-6; Luke 10:27)
2. justice towards humans (cf. Lev. 19:18; Luke 10:27)

▣ **"but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others"** They strained at a gnat and swallowed the camel (cf. Matt. 23:24). Is tithing the spices of the kitchen more important, more spiritual, than how we live and love?

An early church heretic, Marcion (early second century in Rome), rejected the OT and only accepted a modified Gospel of Luke and certain letters of Paul as inspired. Since he rejected the OT, the phrase, "but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others" is omitted in codex Bezae (D), but included in most earlier Greek manuscripts and versions, so probably its omission in MS D was due to his influence.

11:43 "For you love the chief seats in the synagogues" These were places of prominence. The chief seats were on a semi-circular bench around a place where the Torah was kept, facing the congregation (cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 2, p. 167). See parallel in Matt. 23:1-12.

▣ **"and the respectful greetings in the market place"** Apparently there were standard phrases and titles used by religious leaders for one another, spoken in public. This phrase, therefore, rebukes their pride in their positions in the synagogue and society. They loved being recognized and praised!

11:44 "'For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over *them* are unaware of it'"

Physical contact with the tomb made one ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 21:1-4; Num. 19:11-22) for one week (rabbinical interpretation), however, in this case the people would not realize it, therefore, the Jews white-washed the tombs in order to avoid this type of inadvertent ceremonial defilement (cf. Matt. 23:27). Jesus accuses these self-righteous, legalistic leaders of being the real cause of spiritual defilement!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:45-52

⁴⁵One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too." ⁴⁶But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ⁴⁷Woe to

you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and *it was* your fathers *who* killed them. ⁴⁸So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build *their tombs*. ⁴⁹For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they will kill and *some* they will persecute, ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, ⁵¹from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.' ⁵²Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."

11:45 "One of the lawyers" This refers to a scribe (see Special Topic at Luke 5:21) whose major task was to interpret the oral (Talmud) and written (OT) law. They took the place of the local Levites as instructors and interpreters of the Law and became the religious experts for people to consult about daily matters (binding and loosing). Most scribes in Jesus' day were also Pharisees.

▣ **"you insult us too"** The Greek term *hubrizō* means "violent mistreatment" (cf. Matt. 22:6; Luke 18:32; Acts 14:5; 1 Thess. 2:2). It is common in the Septuagint ("to insult," cf. 2 Sam. 19:44; II Macc. 14:42 and "to be haughty," Jer. 31:29). These Jewish religious leaders felt the sting of Jesus' comments (cf. Matthew 23).

11:46 "For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear" There is a word play (cognate accusative) in this verse. The verb and noun (twice) of "burden" are used. This refers to rabbinical nit-picking interpretations of the Torah developed in the Oral Traditions (later codified in the Talmud). These religious rules and procedures were so complicated and contradictory that normal working people could not do them (cf. Matt. 23:4; Acts 15:10).

NASB	"while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers"
NKJV	"you yourselves do not touch the burden with one of your fingers"
NRSV	"you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them"
TEV	"you yourselves will not stretch out a finger to help them carry those loads"
NJB	"burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your fingertips"

They did meticulously perform their rabbinical interpretations, yet would not make any exceptions for others or even take time to help others.

The word "touch" is found only here in the NT (not in the Septuagint or the Egyptian Papyri). M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 1, p. 187, says it is a medical term used of lightly touching a sore. If this was the general connotation, then these religious leaders would not even sympathize with the plight of the common person ("people of the land") as they tried to keep the meticulous rules of the Pharisees.

11:47 "you build the tombs of the prophets" The parallel in Matt. 23:29-33 is striking! In the OT God's people would kill God's prophets (i.e., reject their message) and then build large tombs for them to honor their memory. The building of monuments to God's spokesmen is not what God wanted. He desires obedience to His message. As the leaders of the OT killed the prophets, these leaders will kill Jesus and His followers (cf. Matt. 23:34).

11:49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said" There is no place in the OT where this is quoted. Therefore, many believed that Jesus was referring to Himself as "the Wisdom of God" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24,30; Col. 2:3), which would be an allusion to Pro. 8:22-31. This OT text is the background to John 1:1-14.

▣ **"prophets and apostles"** This seems to refer to OT and NT speakers for God. This is a panorama of how the Jews received God's spokespersons (death and persecution).

11:50 "may be charged against this generation" This is a shocking verse. Jesus was the culmination

of Jewish theology, history, and hope. To miss Him was to miss everything! Ultimate truth had come and now they were rejecting Him (cf. Luke 11:14-26,29-36)! See full note at Luke 11:31.

This may refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 by Titus.

11:51 "from the blood of Abel" This refers to the first premeditated murder in the Bible, recorded in Gen. 4:8.

▣ **"to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God"** This refers to the incident recorded in 2 Chr. 24:20-22.

It is possible that Jesus chose one example (i.e., Abel) from Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew canon, and one (Zechariah) from 2 Chronicles, the last book of the Hebrew canon, to illustrate the ongoing problem of the Jews (cf. Deut. 9:6,7,13,24,27; 31:27).

The altar referred to is the sacrificial altar at the entrance to the temple, while the "House of God" refers to the building itself, which had two major chambers, the outer one called "the Holy Place" and the inner one called "the Holy of Holies."

Abel's death was an evidence of the fall (cf. Genesis 3), while Zechariah's death showed a willful disregard for God's special dwelling place (the temple). The Jews now were plotting (cf. Luke 11:53-54) to murder Jesus also.

11:52 "For you have taken away the key of knowledge" The Jewish leaders who should have recognized Jesus ("the key of knowledge") not only missed Him, but led others into their willful blindness in God's name (cf. Matt. 23:13). This is shocking condemnation of the religious elite of Jesus' day.

When we share Christ we use the "keys of the kingdom" (cf. Matt. 16:19). When believers live godless or arrogant lives, they become like the Pharisees (cf. Matt. 23:13-15) who hinder people seeking God.

Jesus, not human knowledge, is the key of wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-31). Jesus has the keys of death and hades (cf. Rev. 1:18). Jesus is the true descendant and promise of David (cf. 2 Samuel 7 and Rev. 3:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 11:53-54

⁵³When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, ⁵⁴plotting against Him to catch *Him* in something He might say.

11:53

NASB, NRSV "began to be very hostile"

NKJV "began to assail *Him* vehemently"

TEV "began to criticize him bitterly"

NJB "began a furious attack on him"

The first term, *deinōs*, means "terrible," "vehement," or "dreadfully" (cf. Matt. 8:6). It was used in the Septuagint in Job 10:16 and 19:11 in the same sense.

The second term, *enechō*, means to fix upon in the sense of to hold a grudge (cf. Mark 6:19). The anger and hatred of the religious leaders, both Sadducees and Pharisees, which is so evident the last week of Jesus' life in Jerusalem, started much earlier (cf. Mark 6:19; Luke 11:53). This settled opposition was instigated by Jesus' pointed condemnation of their hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and arrogance.

NASB "to question Him closely on many subjects"

NKJV, NRSV "to cross-examine Him about many things"

TEV "ask him questions about many things"

NJB "tried to force answers from him on innumerable questions"

The verb *apostomatizō* is used only here in the NT. It is not used in the Septuagint, but is used in classical and late Greek literature in the sense of rote memory or repeating what someone else has said. It seems to imply a rapid series of questions so as not to give Jesus a chance to think through His answers.

The whole purpose was to catch Him in a misspoken response, so they could condemn Him (cf. Luke 11:54) as He so powerfully condemned them! But they could not (cf. Luke 20:26).

11:54 "to catch *Him* in something He might say" This word literally means "to hunt wild animals." Jesus had become a serious theological problem. They must eliminate Him (cf. Luke 20:20) to maintain their leadership.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the Lord's Prayer, as recorded in Matthew and Luke, different?
2. How do we reconcile Luke 11:4 and James. 1:13?
3. Is God reluctant to hear our prayers and we must continue asking over and over?
4. Why is it so significant that they were calling Jesus Beelzebul?
5. Why was Jesus so angry with the religious leaders of first century Judaism?

LUKE 12

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Warning Against Hypocrisy	Beware of Hypocrisy	Encouragement of Disciples	A Warning Against Hypocrisy	Open and Fearless Speech
12:1-3	12:1-3	12:1-3	12:1-3	12:1-3
Whom to Fear	Jesus Teaches the Fear of God		Whom to Fear	
12:4-7	12:4-7	12:4-7	12:4-5 12:6-7	12:4-7
Confessing Christ Before Men	Confess Christ Before Men		Confessing and Rejecting Christ	
12:8-12	12:8-12	12:8-12	12:8-9 12:10 12:11-12	12:8-9 12:10 12:11-12
The Parable of the Rich Fool	The Parable of the Rich Fool	Parable of the Rich Fool	The Parable of the Rich Fool	On Hoarding Possessions
12:13-21	12:13-21	12:13-21	12:13 12:14-15 12:16-20 12:21	12:13-15 12:16-21
Care and Anxiety	Do Not Worry	On Anxiety	Trust in God	Trust in Providence
12:22-34	12:22-34	12:22-31 12:32-34	12:22-28 12:29-31 Riches in Heaven 12:32-34	12:22-31 12:32 On Almsgiving 12:33-34
Watchful Servant	The Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant	On Watchfulness	Watchful Servants	On Being Ready for the Master's Return
12:35-40	12:35-48	12:35-38 12:39-40	12:35-40 The Faithful or the Unfaithful Servant	12:35-40
12:41-48		12:41-48	12:41 12:42-46	12:41-46

			12:47-48	12:47-48
Jesus the Cause of Division	Christ Brings Division	On the End of the Age	Jesus the Cause of Division	Jesus and His Passion
				12:51-53
	Discern the Time		Understanding the Time	On Reading the Signs of the Times
12:54-56	12:54-56	12:54-56	12:54-56	12:54-56
Settling With Your Accuser	Make Peace with Your Adversary		Settle With Your Opponent	
12:57-59	12:57-59	12:57-59	12:57-59	12:57-59

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF TO WHOM JESUS ADDRESSES HIS WORDS

- Luke 12:1-12 disciples
- Luke 12:13-21 a person in the crowd
- Luke 12:22-53 disciples
- Luke 12:54-56 the crowd (also Luke 13:1-9)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:1-3

¹Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. ³Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.

12:1 "after so many thousands of people had gathered together" The term "thousands" reflects an OT term "myriad" (cf. LXX Gen. 24:60; Lev. 26:8; Num. 10:36; Deut. 32:30), which usually denotes tens of thousands. Here it seems to mean a very large number. This continues the Synoptic Gospels' emphasis on "the crowd." Huge numbers of people came to hear Jesus.

1. the common people
2. the sick
3. the curious
4. disciples
5. the religious elite

One reason it is hard to interpret Jesus' words is because modern interpreters are not sure to which group in the crowd Jesus is talking. Jesus' teachings are received only by those with open ears and receptive hearts (i.e., the parable of the soils, cf. Luke 8:4-15).

■ **"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees"** This is a present active imperative ("be on your guard," NJB) of a word used often in the Septuagint (e.g., Gen. 24:6; Exod. 10:28; 34:12; Deut. 4:9) and used only by Luke in the NT (cf. Luke 17:3; 20:46; 21:34; Acts 5:35; 20:28). It seems to refer to an attitude of "nit-picking" legalism (cf. Luke 11:37-52) instead of the love and care for the poor and needy people in God's name (cf. Luke 11:41; 12:33; 18:22).

The term "leaven" (*zumē*) is used in two senses in both the OT and the NT:

1. a sense of corruption and, therefore, a symbol of evil
 - a. Exod. 12:15; 13:3,7; 23:18; 34:25; Lev. 2:11; 6:17; Deut. 16:3
 - b. Matt. 16:6,11; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; Gal. 5:9; 1 Cor. 5:6-8
2. a sense of permeation and, therefore, influence, not a symbol of evil
 - a. Lev. 7:13; 23:17; Amos 4:5
 - b. Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

Only context can determine the meaning of this word (which is true of all words!).

■ **"hypocrisy"** This comes from two Greek words, "to judge" and "under" (cf. Luke 6:42; 12:56; 13:15). This was a theatrical term that speaks of "actors playing a part behind a mask" (cf. LXX II Macc. 5:25; 6:21,24; IV Macc. 6:15,17). The following context shows that the secrets of these religious leaders' hearts will one day be clearly revealed (cf. Luke 12:2-3).

In the Matthew parallel (cf. Matt. 16:12) the leaven refers to the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but here in Luke it is related to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Each inspired Gospel writer had the editorial right to select from Jesus' words, sayings, and miracles and choose those that best communicated the gospel to his readers. They also had the editorial right to arrange Jesus' sayings and miracles for theological (not chronological) purposes. They even had the limited right to modify or adapt His words and actions within certain boundaries. This accounts for the differences among the four Gospels. I do not believe they had the editorial right to invent words, actions, dialogs, or events! They all used various sources for their Gospel. These Gospels are not western histories or biographies, but evangelistic tracts targeting certain people-groups.

12:2 "covered up" This is a periphrastic perfect passive indicative. Sinful humans attempt to completely conceal their sins and bad attitudes, but they cannot.

The future passive indicative in Luke 12:2 ("will not be revealed. . . will not be known") point toward an eschatological judgment (cf. Luke 12:40,45-47). Jesus knew the true motives and thoughts of the human heart and mind, and one day all will know! The divine judgment will reveal the true intents and thoughts of the unbelieving heart.

12:3 In context this may refer to the scheming and plotting of the Pharisees (cf. Luke 11:53-54) and the Sadducees (cf. Matt. 16:6) against Jesus (and possibly also the Herodians, cf. Mark 8:15).

■ **"proclaimed upon the housetop"** In Palestine the houses had flat roofs that were used as places to eat, sleep, and socialize in hot weather. This then is a metaphor of people talking to their neighbors and the report spreading all over town.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:4-7

4"I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no

more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

12:4 "My friends" This is the only use of this phrase in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus often talks about "a friend," but only here does He say "My friends." However, it occurs three times in John 15:14-15. What a tremendous affirmation of His disciples, not just Lord, but friend!

■ **"do not be afraid"** "Do not be afraid" is an aorist passive (deponent) subjunctive. "Fear" (Luke 12:5) is another aorist passive (deponent) subjunctive. The second and third "fear" in Luke 12:5 are aorist passive (deponent) imperatives.

There is obviously an intended word play in these two verses. The difference between these forms is only an accent mark. The subjunctive mood denotes a contingency. In light of human choices and their consequences the imperative gives God's inspired directive! Fear is not and should not characterize believers, but rather awe and respect toward God, which are always wise and appropriate. Circumstances and even evil people are temporary, but God and His judgments are permanent and affect the body (physical and temporal) and the soul (spiritual and eternal).

■ **"kill the body"** Earthly enemies can terminate our physical life, but only God can give eternal life (cf. Matt. 10:28)!

12:5 "who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell " This is referring to God the Father. In the OT monotheism was affirmed by attributing all causality to YHWH (cf. Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; Job 5:18; Isa. 30:26; Hos. 6:1). Further progressive revelation asserts that God allows evil to exist to serve His purposes (cf. A. B. Davidson, *An Old Testament Theology*, pp. 300-306).

However, sometimes we say that God sends no one to hell, that humans send themselves by their unbelief. This again, is the mystery of predestination and human free will. Humans are responsible for their choices and actions. God is the One who will make them responsible. The mystery is why some do not believe!

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE](#) at Luke 2:14.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM](#)

■ **"hell"** The term *Gehenna* is an abbreviation of the OT phrase "the valley of Hinnom." It was the site of the worship of the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (which is a corruption of the Hebrew term for king, MLK, BDB 572). This worship is mentioned often throughout the OT (cf. Lev. 18:12; 1 Kgs. 11:7; 2 Kgs. 23:10; 2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 32:35; Ezek. 16:20). This place was called *Topeth* (burning) and is described in 2 Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; 23:10; Jer. 7:32; 19:4-6; 32:34-35. The Jews turned this area south of Jerusalem into the garbage dump for the city because they were so ashamed their ancestors used it for idolatry (offering their children as sacrifices for the fertility of crops, herds, and people). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?](#) at Luke 16:23.

■ **"fear Him"** This is an aorist passive (deponent) imperative (cf. Luke 12:5b, repeated for emphasis). It is used in the sense of reverence for God as being the high and holy Creator/Redeemer/Judge.

12:6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents" Sparrows were not used as sacrifices, but were eaten by the poor (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 594).

The "two cents" is the Greek term *assarion*, which comes from the Latin *as*. It was a small brass coin worth about one tenth of a denarius. These birds were very inexpensive. See the parallel in Matt. 10:24-33.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: COINS IN USE IN PALESTINE IN JESUS' DAY](#) at Luke 15:8.

■ **"Yet not one of them is forgotten before God"** This is a periphrastic perfect passive indicative. Usually sparrows were sold four for two cents and they received one free. Even the free one is not forgotten by God (cf. Matt. 10:29-30). God truly loves human beings because they were created in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

■ God is not only the creator, but the provider and sustainer of all life (cf. Neh. 9:6; Matt. 5:45; Col. 1:17). He is moving all creation toward His purposes.

For a good discussion of the doctrine of "Providence," see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd edition, pp. 412-435.

God has a special relationship of care for those who trust His Son (i.e., Father). Believers can trust God's provision in every area of life (cf. 1 Pet. 5:7).

12:7 "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered" This is a perfect passive indicative. This does not mean that God literally keeps track of every hair on our heads, but is metaphorical (cf. OT idiom in 1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; and 1 Kgs. 1:52, see Archer Bible Commentary, vol. 28A, p. 960) of every problem, every need, every aspect, and every situation of believers' lives being a concern to Him.

■ **"Do not fear"** This is a perfect middle (deponent) imperative with the negative particle, which usually means stop an act already in process. Fear is a characteristic of fallen, guilty humanity, but should not be of believers!

Christians must be careful not to interpret this paragraph as a general promise that nothing bad will ever happen to them. This is untrue in history and in the first century. This is a promise that God will be for us at eschatological judgment! The next paragraph also speaks of eschatological judgment, as well as contemporary judgments. The thrust of them both is God is with us and for us, but we live in a fallen world. Bad things happen (see John William Wenham, *The Goodness of God*)! The world has rejected God's Son; it will reject, persecute, and kill His followers (cf. Matt. 10:21-22; John 16:2), but God will be with them in time and will set everything straight when time is no more! My favorite book on this subject is Hannah Whithall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. It has been a blessing.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:8-12

8"And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; **9**but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. **10**And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him. **11**When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; **12**for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

12:8 "everyone" I love the inclusive pronouns used to describe the gospel invitation, like John 3:15-16 ("whoever") and 1:12 ("as many as") as well as Rom. 10:9-13 ("whosoever"). In this verse "everyone" shows the extent of the love of God (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; and 2 Pet. 3:9).

However, "everyone" is limited to those who truly believe and receive the gospel. Passages like Matt. 7:21-23 show that there are those who speak with their lips, but not their hearts (cf. Isa. 29:13).

■ **"who confesses Me before men"** The term "confesses" (aorist active subjunctive) translates the Greek work *homologeō*. It is used in 1 John 1:9 for believers confessing their sins to God. However, this same term is used in Matt. 10:32 and Mark 8:38 for believers' public affirmation of trust in Jesus. We cannot institutionalize this verse into a set liturgical form, but all humans who profess, share, and live their trust in and knowledge of Christ fulfill this verse. Mark 8:38 puts this same saying of Jesus into an eschatological context.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION

■ **"Son of Man. . . Son of Man"** I believe one of the problems dealing with the interpretation of the "unpardonable sin" in Luke 12:10 is that we mistakenly identify these two phrases. The term "Son of Man" in Luke 12:8 applies to Jesus, but the term "Son of Man" in Luke 12:10, because of the parallels in Matt. 12:31-32 (Son of Man) and Mark 3:28-29 (sons of men), is used generically to speak of mankind (cf. Luke 12:9; Matt. 12:31a). The "unpardonable sin" is the rejection of Jesus in the presence of great light. We know this because the other two contexts (i.e., Matthew and Mark) also follow the Beelzebul controversy. See extensive notes at Luke 11:33-36 and Special Topic at Luke 11:19.

■ **"before the angels of God"** This is a circumlocution for God's presence (cf. Luke 15:7,10). This verse is a theological affirmation of the power of Jesus' intercession to God on behalf of believers (cf. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

12:9 "denies" The term (aorist middle [deponent] participle) means "to deny," "to disclaim," "to disown," "to renounce," or "to refuse." It is used in the same sense in the Septuagint (cf. Gen. 18:15; IV Macc. 8:7; 10:15; Wisdom 12:27; 16:16). It is a word that has the connotation of rejection of Jesus. It is the culmination of unbelief and rejection! The temporal refusal of the gospel has eternal consequences.

12:10 "everyone" The inclusive term is used in both Luke 12:8 and Luke 12:10. The gospel is as wide as all humanity, but judgment is also as wide as all of those who say "no"!

12:11 The verbs of Luke 12:11 are subjunctives (contingency), which implies that this specific persecution will not happen to every believer, but it will surely happen to some!

■ **"authorities"** See Special Topic: *Archē* at Luke 1:2.

■ **"do not worry"** This is an aorist active subjunctive with the negative particle which implies do not even start to be worried.

■ **"about how or what you are to speak"** This cannot be a proof-text for a preacher's lack of personal study and preparation to preach on Sundays! This is a promise to those believers going through persecution and public trials.

12:12 "for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" In times of persecution God will provide special help for these powerful witnessing opportunities (cf. Luke 21:15; Matt. 10:16-20).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:13-21

¹³Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the *family* inheritance with me." ¹⁴But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." ¹⁶And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. ¹⁷And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.'" ²⁰But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' ²¹So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

12:13 "Someone in the crowd said to Him" Apparently this man broke into Jesus' teaching session to ask a trivial question related to family inheritance. He did not think anything unusual about this because these were common questions addressed to rabbis, and it seems to relate to Deut. 21:15-17.

12:14 "But He said to him, "Man"'" This is a mild reproach (cf. Luke 22:58,60; Rom. 2:3; 9:20).

▣ **"who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you"** Jesus is rejecting the idea that He is just another rabbi or local Levite. His task of proclaiming the arrival of the Kingdom of God took precedence over all other issues of life.

The term "arbitrator" is used only here in the NT and not at all in the Septuagint, but it is common in Greek literature. The verb form ("divide") is used in Luke 12:13 by Jesus' questioner. Because of the rareness of the term several other terms are found in the Greek MSS, but UBS⁴ gives this reading (MSS P⁷⁵, κ, B. L.) a "B" rating (almost certain).

12:15 "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed" This is a very emphatic statement in Greek (a present active imperative and a present middle imperative, both plural). Greed (or covetousness) is the attitude and lifestyle of "more and more for me at any cost" (cf. Rom. 1:29; Eph. 4:19; 5:3; Col. 3:5)! It is the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil! Greed kills (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

12:16 "And He told them a parable" The following context deals with right and wrong attitudes toward earthly possessions. This parable emphasizes the false security that money and possessions provide. There was a Roman proverb that says, "Money is like sea water, the more you drink, the more you want!" The problem here is not money, but the love of money, the priority of money, the self-sufficiency that money seems to provide (cf. Mark 8:36-37).

12:17 "he began reasoning to himself" This is an imperfect middle (deponent) indicative. It can be understood in two ways.

1. the rich man of Jesus' parable began to reason (NASB)
2. the rich man reasoned within himself over and over again

12:19 "soul" This is the Greek term *psuchē*, which reflects the Hebrew term *nephesh*. This refers to our being, our self, our personhood (cf. Acts 2:41; 3:23; Rom. 13:1) or life force connected to this planet, this physical sphere of existence.

▣ **"take your ease"** The theological emphasis here is on the frailty and presumption of human plans (cf. Pro. 27:1; James 4:13-15). True life is much more than physical prosperity!

12:20 "You fool" This man was not a theological atheist, but he lived his life in practical atheism, as so many in the church today (cf. Ps. 14:1; 53:1). The NT book of James is a good NT commentary on the priority of wealth!

This is a different word for "fool" (*aphrōn*, cf. Luke 11:40; 12:20; 1 Cor. 15:36) and not the word "fool" (*mōros*) of Matt. 5:22, which reflects the Aramaic *raca*. Jesus Himself uses *mōros* in Matt. 23:17,19. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR FOOLISH PEOPLE](#) at Luke 11:40.

▣ **"required"** This is surprisingly a plural. It is literally "they require your soul."

1. Luke often uses this form without focusing on the "they" (cf. Luke 6:38; 12:11,20; 16:9; 23:31).
2. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 2, p. 176, thinks it is a circumlocution of the rabbis to avoid using God's name, therefore, a form of the OT "plural of majesty."
3. Michael Magill, *NT Transline* (p. 239) thinks it refers to angels (cf. Luke 16:22).

▣ **"and now who will own what you have prepared"** This is a penetrating question for materialists (cf. Ps. 39:6; 49:10; Eccl. 2:18-23).

12:21 "rich toward God" It is so hard to keep time and eternity in proper balance in a fallen world with the residual effects of the fall in all of us (cf. Luke 12:33; Matt. 6:19-34).

Surprisingly MS D (fifth century) and some Old Latin versions (a,b,d from the fourth and fifth centuries) omit Luke 12:21. The UBS⁴ gives its inclusion an A rating (certain), because it is found in MSS P^{45,75}, κ , A, B, L, W, and many Old Latin versions.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:22-32

²²And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not worry about *your* life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by worrying can add a *single* hour to his life's span? ²⁶If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more *will He clothe* you? You men of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. ³¹But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ³²Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."

12:22 "And He said to His disciples" Apparently Jesus directed His teachings to different groups in this large audience (the sick, the curious, the religious leaders, the disciples). This paragraph is paralleled in Matt. 6:25-33, which is part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

The pronoun "His" is missing in some very early MSS (P^{45,75}, B) and two Old Latin versions c and e). However, its inclusion follows Luke's writing style and it is found in MSS κ , A, D, L, W. The UBS⁴ cannot decide between its inclusion or exclusion, so it puts it in brackets.

■ **"do not worry about *your* life"** This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually implies stop an act in process. The disciples were worrying (cf. Luke 12:11,22,25,26) about physical needs (cf. Matt. 6:25,27,28,31,34).

The term life is *psuchē*, as in Luke 12:19 and 23, which denotes the self.

12:23 This is the theological summary. Believers are co-inheritors (cf. Rom. 8:17) of all things (cf. Luke 12:31-32).

12:24 "Consider the ravens" Even these unclean birds (cf. Lev. 11:15) were provided for by God (cf. Ps. 147:9) and even used by God (cf. Gen. 8:7; 1 Kgs. 17:4,6). This verse may reflect Job 38:41.

■ **"how much more valuable you are than the birds"** This is the second time Jesus has made this statement (cf. Luke 12:7; Matt. 10:31).

12:25 "which of you by worrying can add a *single* hour to his life's span" The term *pēchus* is literally "cubit." It is the distance between a man's elbow and his longest finger. It is usually about 18 inches long. It is used in two different ways in Greek.

1. it can be used of size (cf. John 21:8; Rev. 21:17)
2. it can be used of time (cf. Matt. 6:27; Luke 12:25)

The same dual meaning is found in the Greek term *hēlikia* (NKJV, "add one cubit to his stature"). It can refer to size (cf. Luke 19:3; Eph. 4:13) or time (cf. John 9:21,23; Heb. 11:11). Both terms seem to refer to

time in this context.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CUBIT

12:26 "if" This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

12:27 "consider" This is an aorist active imperative. The term is made up of the preposition *kata* plus the verb to understand or comprehend (cf. Matt. 7:3), which denotes very careful consideration. Luke uses it often in his writings (cf. Luke 6:41; 12:24,27; 20:23; Acts 7:31,32; 11:6; 27:39).

▣ **"lilies"** This refers to the anemones, crocuses, or irises of Palestine. In Song of Songs 5:13, this flower is used for the color of a woman's lips.

NASB, NKJV

NET, NIV, "how they grow: they neither toil nor spin"

NJB, NRSV

(footnote),

REB "they never spin or weave"

The NASB follows MSS P^{45,75}, κ , A, B, L, W, while the NJB follows MS D. The UBS⁴ gives the first option a "B" rating (almost certain). This is also the wording of Matt. 6:28.

▣ **"not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these"** Nature reflects the beauty and design of its creator. Nature is part of the revelation of God (cf. Ps. 19:1-6). The beauty, intricacy, and power of nature is becoming a way of asserting evidence of the existence of God (cf. Rom. 1:19; 2:14; see *Mere Creation*, ed. William A. Dembski and *The Battle of Beginnings* by Del Ratzsch.

12:28 "if" This is another first class conditional sentence (cf. Luke 12:26).

▣ **"the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace"** This reflects an OT idiom of the transitory nature of grass (human life) compared to God (cf. Isa. 40:6-8; Job 8:12; 14:1-2; Ps. 37:2,20; 90:5-6; 102:11-12; 103:15-17; James 1:10-11; 1 Pet. 1:24-25).

▣ **"how much more will He clothe you"** This is the repeated theme of Luke 12:24b. Humans are more important than grass.

▣ **"You men of little faith"** This is a compound term "little" plus "faith." It is used especially by Matthew (cf. Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8), but only here in Luke. It is not used at all in the Septuagint or the Koine Egyptian Papyri. Even flawed, weak, and worrying believers are valuable to God.

12:29 "do not seek what you will eat" This is a present active imperative which relates to the next two phrases, "what you will eat" and "what you will drink" (both aorist active subjunctives). The pronoun "you" is placed first in the Greek sentence to emphasize the God's provision for believers/disciples.

▣ **"do not keep worrying"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with the negative particle, which usually denotes stopping an act in process (cf. Luke 12:11; Matt. 6:31).

This Greek word *meteōrizō* is used only here in the NT. In Greek literature it means "to lift up" (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 405). It is used several times in the Septuagint in this same sense. Because of this some scholars (Luther) want to translate it as "do not be high minded." However, we must remember the linguistic principle that context determines meaning, not etymology or lexicons. "Worry" fits this context best.

12:30 "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek" God knows what humans need (cf.

Matt. 6:32); He will provide in His time and in His way. This is often called the doctrine of Providence. God provides the physical needs of all life on this planet (cf. Matt. 5:45). Jesus is God's agent in this role in Col. 1:17 and Heb. 1:3. For a good discussion of this concept see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 412-435.

■ **"your Father"** This surely goes back to Jesus' teaching on prayer (cf. Luke 11:2,13; also note 6:36).

12:31 "But seek His kingdom" This is a present active imperative. When we have God, we have everything, but without Him even physical life is fearful and anxious!

Several early Greek manuscripts have "The Kingdom of God" (cf. MSS P⁴⁵, A, D¹, W, and most Old Latin versions, as well as the Vulgate and Syriac translations, cf. NKJV), but most English translations (NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV) have "His kingdom" (cf. MSS κ , B, D^{*}, L, and the Coptic version) Context makes the pronoun antecedent obvious. The UBS⁴ editors give the pronoun a "B" rating (almost certain). The papyri manuscript P⁷⁵ omits both.

12:32 "do not be afraid" This is another present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually means stop an act in process. Jesus said this often (cf. Matt. 17:7; 28:10; Mark 6:50; Luke 5:10; 12:32; John 6:20; Rev. 1:17).

■ **"little flock"** This is the only use of this term in the NT. It emphasizes the significance of the Christian community (cf. Luke 13:18-21). This term is used in Isa. 40:11 (and 40:14 in the LXX) for God as Shepherd (cf. Psalm 23.) In Zechariah 13 the Messiah ("My Shepherd," "My Associate") is depicted as the smitten shepherd of God. Jesus spoke of Himself as "the Good Shepherd" in John 10:11-18.

■ **"for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom"** The term *eudokeō* is used in the Synoptic Gospels predominately for God the Father being "well-pleased" with the Son (cf. Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; and 2 Pet. 1:17).

In this context the focus is on the Father's will to make us part of His family and Kingdom (cf. Eph. 1:5,9). Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 260, call this verb "a characteristically Jewish Greek verb." It occurs often in the Septuagint. Luke knew the Septuagint well.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:33-34

³³Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

12:33 "Sell your possessions" This is an aorist active imperative. It is not a universal command, but deals with the priority structure of our lives (cf. Luke 14:33; 18:22; Matt. 19:21; 1 Cor. 13:3). If God is not priority, everything and anything else must be eliminated from first place (cf. Matt. 5:29-30). This recurrent theme clearly shows the radical aspect of the Christian commitment. God must be first! All else is idolatry. However, many people in the Bible—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Jewish Kings, Zachaeus, Joseph of Arimathea, are wealthy. Wealth is not the problem, but the priority of wealth!

■ **"and give to charity"** This probably refers to 11:41. Love for the poor and needy is evidence that God has changed one's perspective and worldview. Luke's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' love for the outcasts and ostracized of society. See Special Topic: Alms at Luke 11:41.

■ **"make yourselves money belts"** This is another aorist active imperative. The term *ballantion* is used only by Luke in the NT (cf. Luke 10:4; 12:33; 22:35,36). It is used in the Septuagint for a bag or purse (cf. Job 14:17; Pro. 1:14).

John uses a different term, *glōsskomon*, for the disciples' money box (cf. Luke 12:6; 13:29). This term originally referred to a box used to store musical reeds or mouthpieces.

Matthew and Mark use the term *zōnē* which refers to

1. a girdle (cf. Matt. 3:4; Mark 1:6; Acts 21:11; Rev. 1:13; 15:6 and the Septuagint for priestly sash in Exod. 28:4,39,40; Deut. 23:14) or
2. a money belt (cf. Matt. 10:9; Mark 6:8)

■ The rest of the verse lists several characteristics of the money bag of generous believers (cf. Matt. 6:19-20).

1. will not wear out
2. will not fail or be exhausted
3. thief cannot steal
4. moth cannot corrupt

Ancient sources of wealth were

1. weight of precious metals or jewels
2. expensive clothing adorned with gold, silver, or jewels
3. food stores

Security was a major problem. Thieves could steal, mildew destroy, and insects or rodents could eat. This list was a way of describing believers' secure inheritance with God (cf. 1 Pet. 1:4-5), which was evidenced by generosity while here on earth.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:35-38

³⁵Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. ³⁶Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them. ³⁸Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them so*, blessed are those *slaves*."

12:34 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be" This is a summary statement. One's relationship to God is observable by how he/she handles their earthly resources. For modern, western believers, priority commitments are clearly seen in their checkbooks and calendars. We fool ourselves into thinking that by giving to God of the excess of our wealth and a few hours out of our week in gathered worship, we are NT disciples!

12:35

NASB	"Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit"
NKJV	"Let your waist be girded and <i>your</i> lamps burning"
NRSV	"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit"
TEV	"Be ready for whatever comes, dressed for action and with your lamps lit"
NJB	"See that you have your belts done up and your lamps lit"

This verse has a main verb and two related participles (periphrastic).

1. the present imperative of *eimi* ("let be")
2. the perfect passive participle, "having your loins girdled" (a symbol for constantly being ready for action)
3. the present passive participle, "keep burning" (but used as a middle voice, referring to oil lamps)

These are all idioms for being ready for strenuous activity at any moment (cf. Luke 12:36; Matt. 25:1-13). These relate to the activity of servants waiting for their master's return, as believers wait for the return of Christ (cf. Luke 12:37-38,43).

12:37 "truly I say to you" See Special Topic: Amen at Luke 4:24.

■ **"he will gird himself"** This shocking reversal of roles reminds one of Jesus' actions in the upper room in washing the disciples feet (cf. John 13:4). The standard treatment of slaves is stated in Luke 17:7-10.

12:38 "the second watch" The Romans divided the night into four watches (6-9, 9-12, 12-3, 3-6, cf. Matt. 14:25; Mark 13:35), but the Jews divided the night into three (6-10, 10-2, 2-6, cf. Jdgs. 7:19).

■ **"whether. . .even"** This verse is a third class conditional sentence (*kai + ean*, twice), which speaks of potential action.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:39-40

³⁹"But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

12:39 "if" This is a second class conditional sentence (*ei + an* + subjunctive), which makes a false assertion to emphasize a false conclusion. It is often called the "contrary to fact condition." Example: "if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming (which he did not), he would not have allowed his house to be broken into (which it was)." Some other examples of this construction in Luke are 4:26; 7:39; 17:6; 19:23.

■ **"what hour the thief was coming"** This metaphor is common in the NT in dealing with the any-moment return of the Lord (cf. 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; and Rev. 3:3; 16:15). There is a tension in the NT between the "any-moment return of the Lord" and "some events must occur first." See Special Topic below.

Only the Father knows the time of the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7)!

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANY-MOMENT RETURN OF JESUS VERSUS THE NOT YET \(NT PARADOX\)](#)

■ **"he would not have allowed"** There is an addition of several words from the parallel of this saying in Matt. 24:43 that is found in MSS $\kappa^{1,2}$, A, B, L, W. The shorter reading is found in P⁷⁵, κ^* , D. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter reading a "B" rating (almost certain).

■ **"broken into"** This is literally "dug through." Robbers were called "mud diggers" because they dug through the mud-thatched walls of homes and businesses.

12:40 "You too, be ready" This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. This is our responsibility (cf. Luke 21:36; Mark 13:33)!

[SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN](#)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:41-48

⁴¹Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone *else* as well?" ⁴²And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? ⁴³Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, *both* men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; ⁴⁶the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will,

will receive many lashes, ⁴⁸but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

12:41 This is exactly the question that modern interpreters ask of Jesus' teachings, "Who are they directed to?" There were many different groups in the crowds that followed Jesus; a crucial element of interpretation is "which group is addressed?"

12:42-48 This is paralleled in Matt. 24:45-51, but is not found in Mark. It is these sayings and teachings (those common to Matthew and Luke, but not Mark) that are assumed to have been contained in a list of Jesus' sayings that modern biblical scholars called "Quelle," from the German for "source." This list has never been found, but it is logically necessary for at least one current theory (the two-source theory, see Introduction to Luke) related to modern understanding of the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels.

12:42 Notice how the steward is characterized:

1. the faithful
2. sensible
3. in charge of the other servants

These seem to be referring to either the Twelve or later church leaders. It must be emphatically stated that every believer is a called, gifted minister, so Jesus' words may refer to alert and diligent believers who live every day in light of the Second Coming!

12:43 This is the repeated emphasis from Luke 12:35-38.

▣ **"blessed"** This is the term used in the Beatitudes (*makarios*, cf. Luke 6:20-22; Matt. 5:3-11). Jesus regularly used it to pronounce a type of person blessed, privileged, or happy (cf. Luke 1:45; 6:20-22; 7:23; 10:23; 11:27,28; 12:37,38,43; 14:14,15; 23:29).

12:44 "Truly" This is the term *alēthōs* used in the sense of the Hebrew "amen." See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN](#) at Luke 4:24. Luke was writing to Gentiles who would not have understood the Hebrew term.

12:45 "if" This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action.

12:46 "and will cut him in pieces" This was an OT form of capital punishment (cf. LXX of 2 Sam. 12:31; 1 Chr. 20:3). It is used literally in the LXX of Exod. 29:17; Ezek. 24:4. Here it is used figuratively to intensify the eschatological judgment even on those who claim to know and serve Jesus! This term appears in the NT only here and in Matt. 24:57. Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 165, provide an inscription which also uses the term figuratively.

12:47-48 This seems to assert degrees of punishment. Verse 47 implies that humans are punished in accordance with the best light they have (cf. James. 4:17). Verse 48 implies that everyone has some light and has not lived up to it (cf. Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14). For other passages on the seeming degrees of punishment see Luke 10:12-15; 11:31-32; Matt. 18:6,7. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS](#) at Luke 10:12

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:49-53

⁴⁹"I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! ⁵¹Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; ⁵²for from now on five *members* in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. ⁵³They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and

daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

12:49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth" The word "fire" is placed first in the Greek sentence for emphasis (see Special Topic at Luke 3:17). In John 3:17-21 it states that Jesus did not come the first time as Judge, but as Savior. After being among fallen humans, He now wishes eschatological judgment was already present (cf. Luke 12:49b). Gospel hearers are divided into two, and only two, groups by how they respond to Jesus and His message (cf. Luke 24:44-49).

▣ **"how I wish it were already kindled"** Some see this as

1. a second class conditional sentence (cf. Bass-Debrunner-Funk, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, pp. 359-360)
2. a Semitic idiom (cf. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, p. 123)
3. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 2, p. 182, takes *ti* as "how" and *ei* as "that" (*hoti*), but also admits, "it is not clear what this passage meant"
4. George M. Lamsa's translation of the ancient Syriac (Aramaic) manuscripts is "and I wish to do it, if it has not already been kindled"

Jesus wants the Kingdom of God to be manifest on the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10), even though there will be a great cost to Himself and others (the loss of unbelievers eternally and the persecution of believers temporarily).

12:50 "I have a baptism to undergo" The Greek has "a baptism to be baptized with." From Mark 10:38 it is obvious that this does not refer to Jesus' water baptism, but to

1. the persecution and rejection of His preaching
2. His testing in Gethsemane
3. His crucifixion on Calvary

Jesus saw Himself as the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15 (the Promised Seed) and Isaiah 53 (Suffering Servant). He saw Psalm 22 as foreshadowing His own experience.

▣ **"how distressed"** This term means a mental pressure (cf. Phil. 1:23). Jesus' struggle is so clearly seen in Gethsemane (cf. Mark 14:32-42; Matt. 26:36-46; and Luke 22:40-46).

Salvation may be free, but it was not cheap!

A good discussion of this verse is found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 472-475. This is a good resource book for difficult texts, both OT and NT. I commend it to you!

12:51 "Do not suppose that I came to grant peace on earth" See the parallel in Matt. 10:34-39. Even the close family relationships in a Jewish home will experience division over Jesus. There is a priority commitment needed to follow Him! Believers form a new family, the family of God (cf. Luke 8:21; 11:27-28)!

12:53 This may be a poem or dirge. It may be an allusion to Micah 7:6, because of the Matthew parallel (cf. Matt. 10:35,36), which quotes Micah 7:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:54-56

⁵⁴And He was also saying to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out. ⁵⁵And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out *that way*. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?"

12:54 "He was saying to the crowds" Notice Jesus expressly states the group He is addressing (see

note at Luke 12:41).

■ **"When you see"** Jesus offers a series of weather forecasting signs (Luke 12:54-55) that this Palestinian audience knew well. They could predict the weather, but were blind to the coming judgment of God. They missed God's Messiah (cf. Luke 12:56)!

12:56 "hypocrites" See Special Topic at Luke 6:42.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 12:57-59

⁵⁷"And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right? ⁵⁸For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on *your way there* make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. ⁵⁹I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."

12:57-59 This is paralleled in Matt. 5:25-26. This brief teaching fits the general topic of eschatological judgment, but it does not fit well into this context. Luke is selecting, arranging, and adapting Jesus' words from

1. Mark
2. Quell
3. his unique sources (cf. Luke 1:1-4)
4. Paul

The Gospels are not chronological, sequential, cause-and-effect biographies. They are targeted, evangelistic tracts (see Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth* pp. 127-148).

12:59 "cent" This is the term *lepton*. It was the smallest Jewish coin and was made of copper (cf. Mark 12:42). It was worth about 1/64 of a *denarius*. See Special Topic: Coins in Use in Palestine in Jesus' Day at Luke 15:8.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the "leaven of the Pharisees"?
2. Describe the difference between the NT term "Hades" and "Gehenna."
3. How does one confess Jesus Christ publicly?
4. How does one explain Luke 12:33?
5. What is the central truth of Luke 12:35-41?
6. Are there degrees of heaven and hell?

LUKE 13

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Repent or Perish	Repent or Perish	On Repentance	Turn From Your Sin or Die	Examples Inviting Repentance
13:1-5	13:1-5	13:1-5	13:1-5	13:1-5
The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree	The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree		The Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree	Parable of the Barren Fig Tree
13:6-9	13:6-9	13:6-9	13:6-9	13:6-9
The Healing of a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath	A Spirit of Infirmity	A Crippled Woman Healed	Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath	Healing of a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath
13:10-17	13:10-17	13:10-17	13:10-13 13:14 13:15-17	13:10-13 13:14-17
The Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven	The Parable of the Mustard Seed	Parables of Mustard Seed and Yeast	The Parable of the Mustard Seed	Parable of the Mustard Seed
13:18-19	13:18-19	13:18-19	13:18-19	13:18-19
	The Parable of the Leaven		The Parable of the Yeast	Parable of the Yeast
13:20-21	13:20-21	13:20-21	13:20-21	13:20-21
The Narrow Door	The Narrow Way	On the End of the Age	The Narrow Door	The Narrow Door: Rejection of the Jews, Call of the Gentiles
13:22-30	13:22-33	13:22-30	13:22-23a 13:23b-30	13:22-24 13:25-27 13:28-29 13:30
The Lament Over Jerusalem		Words to Herod Antipas	Jesus' Love for Jerusalem	Herod the Fox
13:31-35		13:31-33	13:31	13:31-33
	Jesus Laments Over Jerusalem	Lament Over Jerusalem	13:32-33	Jerusalem Admonished
	13:34-35	13:34-35	13:34-35	13:34-35

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 13:1-5

¹Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ²And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*? ³I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

13:1 "there were some present" This phrase (an imperfect indicative) can mean

1. they were always in the crowd
2. they had just arrived

■ **"the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices"** We do not have any other historical reference of this account, but because of the tendency of the Galileans to be rabble rousers and the personality of Pilate, it is surely factual. Why mention it except to establish a historical point of reference?

Apparently these Galilean Jews came to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice at the temple, and something went terribly wrong that involved the Roman government, not just temple police (i.e., special Levites). Most commentators assume they were involved in the "zealot" movement (free Palestine from Rome at any cost).

13:2 "And He answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*'" Old Testament theology tended to relate the problems in life to personal sin (cf. Deut. 27-28), however, the Book of Job, Psalm 73, and Jesus in this passage (see also John 9) assert that is not always the case.

It is hard theologically to know the reason for problems or persecutions in this world.

1. It could be punishment for personal sin and rebellion.
2. It could be the activity of personal evil.
3. It could be the results of living in a fallen world (statistical evil).
4. It could be an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Jesus is asking questions the Jewish hearers would relate to #1 and the traditional theology of the rabbis (cf. The three friends of Job). The presence of problems, persecutions, and hard times is not a sign

of God's wrath. However, the crucial issues relate to the lack of repentance from sin and faith in Jesus! Bad things happen! Two good books that have helped me in this area are Hannah Whithall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of A Happy Life* and John Wenham, *The Goodness of God*.

An added thought, these Galileans were in the temple area, but the temple (the great Jewish hope) could not save them.

13:3 "but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" This is a third class conditional sentence. It is a Present active subjunctive followed by a Future middle indicative. This is emphasizing the need for personal repentance (cf. Luke 13:3,5; 15:7,10; 17:3,4; Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 20:21). Repentance is the turning from sin and self, while faith is turning to God. The term "repent" in Hebrew means "a change of action." The term repent in Greek means "change of mind." Both are required. Notice that both are initial and ongoing (see note at Luke 13:5). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#) at Luke 3:3.

13:4 Here is another local historical incident that Jesus' hearers knew about personally. Jesus intensifies His truth statements by these historical illustrations of personal (intentional, Luke 13:1-2) and natural (unintentional, Luke 13:4) contemporary events.

NASB	"culprits"
NKJV	"sinners"
NRSV	"offenders"
TEV, NJB	–omit–

This is literally the term "debts" as in Matt. 6:12, which was a Jewish idiom for sin or sinners. Luke does not use the term in his version of the Lord's Prayer (cf. Luke 11:2-4) because his Gentile readers would not normally comprehend this idiom.

13:5 This verse is parallel to Luke 13:3. Verse 3 has a present subjunctive, while Luke 13:5 has an aorist subjunctive. This seems to refer to a decisive act of repentance (and faith) versus the ongoing need for repentance in Luke 13:3. Both are necessary.

■ **"perish"** This is the future middle indicative form of the term *apollumi*. See Special Topic at Luke 19:10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 13:6-8

⁶And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. ⁷And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?' ⁸And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; ⁹and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*; but if not, cut it down.'"

13:6 "A man" The NASB 1970 has "a certain man" (*tis*). This is a literary marker for Luke's introducing a parable of Jesus (cf. Luke 10:30; 12:16; 13:6; 14:16; 15:4; 16:1,19; 19:12).

■ **"had a fig tree"** The fig tree was often used as a symbol of Israel (cf. Hos. 9:10; Joel 1:7). However, in the account in Matt. 21:19ff, the fig tree is a symbol of Israel's leaders only. In the OT allusion from Isaiah 5, the bad fruit came from God's special vineyard. This context seems to refer to national Israel as a whole, whose spiritual life and priorities were characterized in her leaders.

13:7 "for three years" It takes several years for a fruit tree of any kind to start producing fruit. That time had passed by three years. God was patient, but there is a limit to His longsuffering.

13:8-9 This symbolizes the patience and mercy of God, however, Luke 13:9 shows the reality of judgment. God wants a righteous people who reflect His character. This passage, like John 15:2-6, is a warning against unfruitful lives in His people! God takes obedience seriously (cf. Luke 6:46). This is not works-righteousness, but true salvation evidenced by godly living (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Salvation is not a product, a ticket to heaven, or a fire insurance policy, but a changed and changing life of godliness! Eternal life has observable characteristics (cf. Matthew 7).

13:9 "and if" This is the Greek compound *kai ean*, which makes this a partial third class conditional sentence (potential action). Its being incomplete was a way of making the supposed conclusion stand out.

■ **"but if not"** This is a first class conditional sentence (*ei de mē ge*), which assumes it will not bear fruit even with further special care (cf. Luke 3:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 13:10-17

¹⁰And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. ¹²When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness." ¹³And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God. ¹⁴But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? ¹⁶"And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

13:10 Many of Jesus' teachings and miracles were done in synagogues on the Sabbath for two unrelated reasons:

1. Jesus fulfilled all Jewish requirements. Sabbath worship was surely one of these (cf. Gen. 2:2-3; Exod. 20:8-11).
2. He acted on the Sabbath to instigate dialog with the religious leaders who cherished their rules and traditions over people.

13:11 "a woman" Luke uniquely records Jesus' ministry to women. This was shocking to Jewish sensibilities! See Special Topic: Women in the Bible at Luke 2:36.

■ **"a sickness caused by a spirit"** Obviously this was a case of demon possession. The NT makes a distinction between someone being demonized and someone being diseased, although demons often do cause disease. See Special Topic at Luke 4:33.

■ **"bent double"** This is a Greek medical term for "a bent spine." Luke was a Gentile physician (cf. Col. 4:14) or at least a highly educated man.

13:12 "When Jesus saw her" Jesus does this (1) out of compassion for this lady and/or (2) to engage the religious leaders in theological dialog. She does not expect or ask Him to act on her behalf.

■ **"Woman, you are freed from your sickness"** This is a perfect passive indicative. Jesus usually never lays hands on people for exorcism. Apparently at His word the demon fled, but Jesus laid hands on her to

increase her faith and to enable her to stand erect (cf. Luke 13:13).

13:13 "and He laid His hands on her" See [SPECIAL TOPIC: LAYING ON OF HANDS](#) in the Bible at Luke 4:40.

13:14 "But the synagogue official, indignant" This man asserts that there are six other days of the week on which this could have legally occurred (according to rabbinical Oral Traditions' interpretation of Exod. 20:9 and Deut. 5:13), but this lady had been attending synagogue services weekly for eighteen years in her pitiful condition and had not been helped by Jewish rules, Jewish healers (scribes), or synagogue worship! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SABBATH](#) at Luke 6:1.

13:15-16 Jesus exposed this man and all who think like him (plural, hypocrites). The rabbis had great compassion in their oral traditions for the human treatment of animals on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 14:5), but were restrictive in their treatment of humans. Jesus illustrates the fallacy of the rabbinical system's legalism without compassion for people. We must be careful of our rules. They often become more important than people. People are priority with God. Only people are eternal. God made creation for fellowship with people! Our rules often say more about us than about God!

13:15 "hypocrites" See Special Topic at Luke 6:42.

13:16 This verse obviously links the demonic and Satan (see Special Topic at Luke 4:2). He is the chief demon (cf. Luke 11:15,18). This woman was bound in a worse way than any oxen (cf. Luke 13:15). Verse 16 expects a "yes" answer.

13:17 "all His opponents were being humiliated" This shows the presence of many religious leaders in the synagogue. This one "ruler of the synagogue" spoke on behalf of many who were present.

The word "ashamed" (imperfect passive indicative) is used only here in the Gospels, but is used nine times by Paul (i.e., Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians). Luke must have heard it often in Paul's sermons. It was used often in the Septuagint (esp. Isa. 45:16). Luke knew this Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible well. He was influenced by its terminology and idioms.

▣ **"the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things done by Him"** What a contrast: religious leaders embarrassed, but the common people (people of the land) rejoicing over Jesus' words and deeds (cf. Luke 9:43; 13:17; 18:43; 19:37)! Again, the hearts of the hearers determines the response (e.g., the parable of the soils, cf. Luke 8:4-15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 13:18-21

¹⁸So He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." ²⁰And again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

13:18 "What is the kingdom of God like" Here are two parables that imply the smallness and insignificance of the kingdom then, but, one day, its pervasiveness and power.

13:19 "the birds of the air nested in its branches" A mustard seed grew to about ten feet tall. This OT quote is a symbol of the pervasiveness, protection, and provision of the kingdom of God (cf. Ezek. 17:23; 31:6; Dan. 4:12,21).

13:21 "leaven" This is not a symbol of evil in this context, but a sign of pervasiveness. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: LEAVEN](#) at Luke 12:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 13:22-30

²²And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. ²³And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there *just* a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, ²⁴"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' ²⁶Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; ²⁷and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.' ²⁸In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. ²⁹And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline *at the table* in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And behold, *some* are last who will be first and *some* are first who will be last."

13:22 Here again is Luke's emphasis on Jesus traveling on His way to Jerusalem to His divine appointment (cf. Luke 9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11,28; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29).

13:23 "Lord, are there *just* a few who are being saved" This was a highly discussed issue among the rabbis (cf. Matt. 7:13-14). They argued whether all the Jews would be saved from God's wrath on Judgment Day or just certain sects within Judaism (their own). This question may also relate to the OT concept of "remnant" (cf. Isa. 10:20-23; 16:14; Micah 2:17; 4:6-8; 5:7-9; 7:18-20). The tragedy of ancient Israel was that although they were the special chosen nation of YHWH, most never had a personal faith relationship with Him. Israel's history is one of judgment, restoration, and judgment again. The prophets only saw a faithful remnant (*sh'ar*) returning from Assyrian and Babylonian exile.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES

13:24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door" This is a Present middle (deponent) imperative - plural. The term "strive" means "to enter an athletic contest." We get the English word "agony" from this Greek term (cf. Luke 22:44). This is not emphasizing works righteousness, but that following Jesus costs. Jesus, not Jewish legalism, is the door to salvation (cf. Luke 13:25-26; John 10:1-3,7; Galatians). In Matt. 7:13 it is a narrow gate that leads to a path, but here it is a narrow door that enters the house.

■ **"for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able"** This asserts that many of those who thought they were certain of entrance into the kingdom will be surprised (cf. Luke 13:28; Matt. 8:12). This is a shocking verse for legalists of all ages and cultures. Salvation is not human effort, but a response of personal faith to God's gift and provision—Jesus (cf. John 10:1-18; 14:6). The picture here may be of many people wailing outside a small door and trying to enter all at once. At the moment of the Parousia there will be no time to prepare or act (cf. Matt. 15:1-13).

13:25 This is very similar to the eschatological parable of preparation and persistence found in Matt. 15:1-13. Whenever one encounters Jesus, that is the time of salvation. People must not put off the spiritual decision that needs to be made today. In this parable, when the host of the feast recognizes that the time for the meal has come, He locks the door so that no more guests may come in.

Humans do not initiate spiritual decisions. They can only respond to God's initiation (cf. John 6:44,65). God has spoken through Christ. They must respond now or be locked out of the Messianic banquet.

13:26 "we ate and drank in Your presence" Often Jews trusted in their racial ancestry (cf. Luke 3:8; John 8:31-59) or religious performance (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). Knowing Jesus in the flesh or simply calling on

His name (liturgically or flippantly) is not equivalent to a personal faith relationship (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13).

13:27

NASB "I do not know where you are from"
NKJV "I do not know you, where are you from"
NRSV, NJB "I do not know where you came from"
TEV "I don't know where you came from"

Verses 25 and 27 are parallel, but Luke 13:27 seems to have dropped the pronoun "you" (*humas*) in the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁷⁵ (early third century), B (fourth century), L (eighth century), and 070 (sixth century). The question comes, "Was it originally an exact parallel?" Many other ancient texts have it (cf. MSS κ , A, W, and most early versions). Jesus' words to these hearers paralleled His words to the religionists of Matt. 7:21-23! Religious rules, actions, and liturgy, without personal faith, were a horrible tragedy to national Israel and a modern tragedy to legalists!

M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, p. 192, asserts that the phrase ("where are you from") relates to the speaker's birthplace or family. If so, this may refer to the Jewish preoccupation with Abraham as their ancestor (cf. Matt. 3:9; John 8:33,37,39). The two Jewish hopes were (1) their racial ancestry and (2) their Mosaic temple (*cultus*). Jesus depreciates both and replaces them with personal faith in Himself as the only way to be right with God.

■ **"all you evildoers"** This seems to be a quote of Ps. 6:8 (cf. Matt. 7:23).

13:28 "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" This is used for eschatological rejection (cf. Matt. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:15; 25:30; Rev. 18:19). These Jews are grieving (see Special Topic at Luke 10:13) because

1. Abraham and the Patriarchs will be with Jesus
2. these Jewish leaders will not be with Jesus
3. Gentiles from all over the world will be with Jesus

NASB "but yourselves being thrown out"
NKJV "and yourselves thrust out"
NRSV "and you yourselves thrown out"
TEV "while you are thrown out"
NJB "and yourselves thrown out"

The imagery of a locked entrance (cf. Luke 13:24-25) is changed and intensified to an extraction. Some who thought they were in will be cast out. The image has switched from a house owner to the Kingdom of God.

13:29 "recline at the table in the kingdom of God" This refers to the imagery of the Messianic banquet (cf. Isa. 25:6-8; 55:1-2; 65:13-14), often referred to in the book of Revelation as the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (cf. Rev. 3:20; 19:9). This is an inaugural event of the beginning of the consummated Kingdom of God (cf. Luke 14:15; 22:16,30).

13:30 Verses 25-27 refer to Jesus' hearers. Some respond to Him, some think they have responded to Him, and many openly reject Him. The eschatological consequences for rejecting Him are severe.

Verse 30 relates to the evaluation of believers within the Kingdom. Those who seemed so prominent here will not be in heaven (cf. Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31). God's ways of evaluation are different from human ways (cf. Isa. 55:8-11). Motives and attitudes will one day be known and rewarded.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 13:31-35

³¹**Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for**

Herod wants to kill You." ³²And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I reach My goal.'

³³Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem. ³⁴O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her!* How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!* ³⁵Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'*"

13:31 Was this an act of kindness or a way to get Jesus out of town so that He could not condemn them and increase His disciples?

▣ **"Go away, leave here"** This is an aorist active imperative followed by a present middle (deponent) imperative.

▣ **"Herod"** See note at Luke 9:7.

▣ **"wants to kill you"** This is ironic because, in reality, the Pharisees (see Special Topic at Luke 5:17) and Sadducees (see Special Topic at Luke 20:27) also wanted Jesus dead. Perhaps the Pharisees were hoping Herod would kill Him and save them the trouble and blame.

13:32 "Go and tell" This is an aorist passive (deponent) participle used in the sense of an imperative plus an Aorist active imperative. However, this is a good example of an imperative used as a literary device (not literally). Jesus is not asking these Pharisees to serve as His messenger to Herod.

▣ **"I cast out demons and perform cures"** This may relate to 9:7. Herod knew of Jesus and wanted to question Him.

▣ **"today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal"** This phrase clearly shows that Jesus knew that it was God's will for Him to die in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 13:33; John 5:36; 17:23; 19:28) and no one (Herod) could stop God's redemptive plan. Luke's Gospel has been emphasizing Jesus' determined travel to Jerusalem since 9:51.

It is possible that this phrase is an apocalyptic idiom of Luke 3:5, which refers to a period of persecution (cf. Dan. 7:25; 8:14; 12:12; and possibly Luke 4:25).

13:34 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" The doubling is a Semitic way of showing intensity (cf. Gen. 22:11 and LXX Gen. 22:1). However, in most NT examples it shows mild reproach.

▣ **"the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her"** This is another expression of God's repeated attempt to call His people to repentance (cf. Hos. 11:2). The Jewish people killed these "sent" messengers by stoning, which was the Mosaic punishment for blasphemy (they were thought to bring a false message). Now the city will kill "the Son" (cf. Luke 20:9-18).

▣ **"How often I wanted to gather your children together"** This is another phrase which shows God's repeated attempts at communication and fellowship. Notice that Jesus expresses Himself as YHWH.

▣ **"as a hen gathers her brood under her wings"** This is a feminine metaphor used by Jesus for Himself. Deity is neither male or female (cf. Gen. 1:2; Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Ps. 17:8; 36:7; Isa. 49:15; 16:9-13; and Hos. 11:1-4). God is an eternal, omnipresent Spirit. He made both males and females and incorporated the best in Himself. Humans call God "He" because of His personality and the ancient tradition from the Jewish patriarchal culture.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHADOW AS METAPHOR FOR PROTECTION AND CARE

13:35 "your house is left to you *desolate*" The metaphor of "your house" is reminiscent of Luke 11:21-26. This verse is not directed to Jewish leadership only, but the inhabitants of Jerusalem who represented all of Israel. God's repeated overtures of love had been repeatedly and violently rejected. Now come the consequences.

But, please remember that the consequences of their sin, and our sin, were paid for through Christ's death on our behalf in this very city just condemned. Jesus is God's open door of forgiveness for whosoever will (cf. John 1:12; 3:16). That door is open as long as life remains and time remains!

▣ **"*desolate*"** This term is not found in the ancient Greek manuscripts P^{45,75}, κ , A, B, L, W, or the Greek texts used by Epaphranus and Augustine. This same textual problem occurs in Matt. 23:38. The UBS⁴ rates the addition of "desolate" in Matt. 23:38 as "B" (almost certain) but its omission here as "B" (almost certain). It seems to have been added later (MS D) to clarify the meaning of the Greek phrase, or possibly as an allusion to Jer. 22:5. For many it is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 (cf. Luke 21), which foreshadows the destruction preceding the Second Coming. Jerusalem's destruction in the lifetime of these hearers was a powerful witness of the trustworthiness of Jesus' words.

▣ **"you shall not see Me until *the time* when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'"** This is an allusion to Ps. 118:26 in the Septuagint.

This has a double reference: (1) it refers to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:38) and (2) it refers to the Second Coming. Notice that Jesus comes as the prophets came "in the name of the Lord," which means YHWH's representative. This judgment pronouncement was not permanent, but conditional. God's heart breaks for His rebellious people (cf. Hos. 11:8-9; Rom. 9-11; Zech. 12:10).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Are illnesses and problem in life a sign of God's displeasure?
2. Is Israel still the major thrust of God's redemption of all the earth?
3. Why was Jesus in such controversy with the Pharisees over the oral law?
4. How many people will be saved?
5. Is God masculine or feminine?

LUKE 14

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Healing of the Man with Dropsy 14:1-6	A Man with Dropsy Healed on the Sabbath 14:1-6	Healing a Man with Dropsy 14:1-6	Jesus Heals a Sick Man 14:1-3 14:4-5 14:6	Healing of a Dropsical Man on the Sabbath 14:1-6
A Lesson to Guests and a Host 14:7-14	Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14	On Humility 14:7-11 14:12-14	Humility and Hospitality 14:7-11 14:12-14	On Choosing Places at Table 14:7-11 On Choosing Guests to be Invited 14:12-14
The Parable of the Great Banquet 14:15-24	The Parable of the Great Supper 14:15-24	The Great Dinner 14:15-24	The Parable of the Great Feast 14:15 14:16-24	The Invited Guests Who Make Excuses 14:15-20 14:21-24
The Cost of Discipleship 14:25-33	Leaving All to Follow Christ 14:25-33	Conditions of Discipleship 14:25-33	The Cost of Being a Disciple 14:25-33	Renouncing All that One Holds Dear 14:25-27 Renouncing Possessions 14:28-33
The Tasteless Salt 14:34-35	Tasteless Salt is Worthless 14:34-35		Worthless Salt 14:34-35	On Loss of Enthusiasm in a Disciple 14:34-35

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PARABLES (See full notes at the [Introduction to Chapter 8](#))

- A. Look to the context that precedes and follows to determine
 1. the recipients of Jesus' words
 2. the purpose of the parable
- B. Determine the major theme (themes are usually linked to the number of main characters).
- C. Do not press minor details into theological interpretations (parables are fictitious stories).
- D. Avoid allegorizing and spiritualizing unless something in the text demands it.
- E. Do not build doctrine solely on parables; they serve best as illustrations.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 14:1-6

¹It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. ²And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. ³And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" ⁴But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. ⁵And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" ⁶And they could make no reply to this.

14:1

NASB	"one of the leaders of the Pharisees"
NKJV	"one of the rulers of the Pharisees"
NRSV	"of a leader of the Pharisees"
TEV, NJB	"of one of the leading Pharisees"

The NASB seems a bit interpretative; he was a local religious leader, who was a Pharisee.

■ **"on the Sabbath"** This was a continuing controversy between the written Law of Moses and the rabbinical interpretations of it known as the Oral Law, which was later codified in the Talmud. Jesus had continually confronted the Pharisees on their nit-picking rules that superceded and depreciated people (cf. Luke 4:31ff; 6:6ff; 13:10ff). This paragraph looks like a purposeful confrontation either on the part of Jesus or on the part of the Pharisees. See Special Topic at Luke 6:1.

■ **"to eat"** Notice Jesus continues to try to engage the Pharisees in dialog. He eats with them (cf. Luke 7:36; 11:37). He worships with them. He performs miracles before them. In many ways Christianity is an extension of Phariseeism, as is rabbinical Judaism. Pharisees were lifestyle practitioners of their faith. They were serious about God's word and will. The missing elements were

1. personal faith in Jesus
2. salvation as a gift of God's grace (to all)
3. not trusting in human performance as a means of being right with God

Luke uses meals and the dialogue which accompanies them as a literary way for Jesus to present truth (cf. Luke 5:29; 7:36; 9:13; 10:39; 11:37; 14:1; 22:14; 24:30, much in the same way John uses dialogues). Eating was an intimate and important social event for family, friends, and community in the first century Mediterranean world.

■ **"they were watching Him closely"** This is a periphrastic imperfect middle. They continued to watch Jesus for the purpose of finding something He said or did by which to condemn Him, both to the Jewish population and to the Romans.

14:2 "dropsy" Notice that Jesus does not heal this man based on his faith, but as a sign to religious leaders (just like the women in Luke 13:10-17) with whom He was still trying to work (cf. Luke 14:3). Dropsy was a retention of fluid that resulted in swelling (the term is from the root for "water"). It usually was the result of other physical problems. It is only mentioned here in the NT, which is appropriate for a physician (cf. Col. 4:14), although it is used by non-physicians in Greek literature. The rabbis said this disease was caused by serious sin, which may add to the drama of the moment. Some commentators think this man was planted there by the Pharisees to trick Jesus into doing something disallowed by the Oral Traditions on the Sabbath.

14:3-4 Jesus is asking these experts in the Mosaic Law a practical question. These were not cold hearted men, but they were committed to worshiping YHWH through a system of rabbinical discussions (Shammai and Hillel), which interpreted OT texts. In the long history of these religious debates, the priority of human beings was lost. Jesus tries to restore the central place of mankind, made in the image of God. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (cf. Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5) and the Sabbath is made for mankind, not mankind for the Sabbath (cf. Mark 2:27). Legalism and self-righteousness are still alive and well among very sincere and committed religious people.

14:3 "the lawyers" See special Topic at Luke 5:21.

14:5 "He said to them, 'Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day'" There is a manuscript problem here:

1. the term "son" (*uios*) is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts P^{45,75}, A, B, and W
2. the term "donkey" (*onos*) is found in MSS κ and L

The two words have a very similar ending. The manuscript evidence supports "son" (UBS⁴ gives it a "B" rating, meaning "almost certain"), while the context supports "donkey." If one follows the principle of the most unusual being the most ancient attestation, then "son" is to be preferred, but the major thrust of Jesus' statement is that the Jews had greater compassion for animals than for humans (cf. Luke 13:15).

14:6 Jesus' questions (Luke 14:4) and examples (Luke 14:6) were so devastating that these religious leaders could not respond. Their rules had become more important than people!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 14:7-11

⁷And He *began* speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor *at the table*, saying to them, ⁸"When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, ⁹and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give *your* place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. ¹¹For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

14:7 This account is unique to Luke's Gospel. Jesus was not the only guest at this meal. In the first century Palestinian setting, weddings and meals were a community event. Some were invited to eat (cf. Luke 14:12-14), but many others came to stand around and listen, even participate in the dinner conversation.

▣ **"they had been picking out the places of honor"** One would have to be acquainted with the Orient to understand the confusion in the seating arrangement at all their social events. The right people had to be in the right place (i.e., social and religious elite) before the meal could begin. Verses 7-14 deal with a lesson, not in proper etiquette or procedures, but in humility (cf. Luke 14:11; 18:14; Matt. 23:12; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5; Job 22:29; Pro. 29:23). The opposite of humility is addressed in Luke 11:43; 20:46; Matt. 23:1-12; Mark 12:38-40.

14:9 "and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place" The only place to recline that was left by this time was at the end of the table. This role reversal (common in Jesus' teachings) is also emphasized in Luke 13:30.

14:11 The NASB Study Bible (p. 1491) makes a good comment here, "a basic principle repeated often in the Bible (see Luke 11:43; 18:14; 20:46; 2 Chr. 7:14-15; Pro. 3:34; 25:6-7; Matt. 18:4; 23:12; James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6)."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 14:12-14

¹²And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment. ¹³But when you give a reception, invite *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,* ¹⁴and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

14:12 "do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors" This account is found only in Luke. This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually means "stop an act already in process." Jesus often gives truth that is diametrically opposed to what is normal, cultural, or expected (cf. Isa. 55:8-9).

14:13 Jesus reflects His own ministry by denoting the people whom the OT prophecies predict will be ministered to by the Messiah (cf. Deut. 14:28-29; 16:11-14; 26:11-13; Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:7,16; Jer. 31:8). Kingdom people care about the needy, ostracized, sick, and poor. Fellowship with God is evidenced by care, concern, and ministry to these kinds of people. This type of ministry characterized Jesus' life and should characterize the life of all Kingdom people.

14:14 Throughout Luke's Gospel Jesus "blesses" (*makarios*, cf. Luke 6:20-22; 7:23; 10:23; 11:27-28; 12:37-38; 14:14; 23:29) as well as warns (i.e., "woes," cf. Luke 6:24-26; 10:13; 11:42-52; 17:1; 21:23; 22:22) His hearers.

This blessing is reserved for the eschatological judgment. It is based on selfless actions now which reflect a new attitude toward God (cf. Matt. 25:31-46). Jesus is using the term "righteous" in the sense of Matt. 6:1, which involved almsgiving (see Special Topic at Luke 11:41), prayer, and fasting (see Special Topic at Luke 5:33). Judaism saw these as meritorious acts to be rewarded by God. The motive for religious actions is crucial. God looks at the heart first!

The NASB Study Bible (p. 1491) has a helpful summary of the Scriptures related to the resurrection of all vs. the resurrection of some. "All will be resurrected (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). Some hold that the resurrection of the righteous (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 20:4-6) is distinct from the 'general' resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12,21; Heb. 6:2; Rev. 20:11-15)."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 14:15-24

¹⁵When one of those who were reclining *at the table* with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" ¹⁶But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; ¹⁷and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' ¹⁹Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' ²⁰Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' ²¹And the slave came *back* and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' ²²And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel *them* to come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

14:15 "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God" This was obviously a heartfelt outburst, but Jesus recognizes in it the Jewish self-righteous attitude that expected to be blessed. This entire context involves the Jews' expectation of God's love (Israel's chosenness, cf. John 8:31-59).

■ **"eat bread in the kingdom of God"** It is obvious that this was a Pharisee speaking because they expected a physical after-life (see Special Topic at Luke 5:17). The Messianic banquet is a very common metaphor in Scripture to describe personal, joyful fellowship with God in heaven (cf. Luke 13:29; Ps. 23:5; Isa. 25:6-9; Matt. 8:11-12; 26:29; Rev. 19:9). One must realize the social bond and intimate fellowship involved in eating together in the Mediterranean world.

14:16-24 This is a parallel to Matt. 22:2-14, although the details differ (in Matthew it is a wedding feast).

14:17 It seems to have been the custom in Palestine of Jesus' day for formal invitations to a banquet to be sent early, and on the day of the dinner (or feast) the servants were sent to tell the guests that all was ready (table set, food hot), to come now.

14:18 ""But they all alike began to make excuses" The excuses were:

1. bought a piece of land
2. bought oxen
3. just got married

Although these things are not improper actions, they show an attitude of false priorities, lack of commitment, and a sense of personal rejection or belittling of the host.

14:21 These social meals were very expensive. Preparations were made based on those invited, who were expected to be there. There was also the loss of respect to the host who had graciously invited them.

■ The host's first thought was to invite the needy of the community (cf. Luke 14:21). This list has OT Messianic implications. When this was still not enough, even the travelers and aliens who were passing by were invited (cf. Luke 14:23). This second category may be a way to refer to "Gentiles" (see Kenneth Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, pp. 100-103).

14:23 Maybe this is an answer to the question of how many will be saved in Luke 13:23. God's house will be filled (i.e., Gentiles and foreigners will be invited and will rush to Jesus for salvation).

14:24 "none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner" This is a summary word by Jesus. It obviously refers to national Israel (cf. Luke 14:15; Romans 9-11). The Gentiles had been included; Israel had failed to fulfill her missionary mandate of Gen. 12:3 (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Eph. 2:11-13). Now the host (God) closes the door!!

Throughout her history Israel had rebelled against YHWH (cf. Acts 7); only a faith remnant was truly right with God. Salvation has always been an act of grace and mercy from God. However, God wanted a righteous, separate people to be witnesses of His character to a fallen world (cf. Ezek. 36:22). It is this desire for personal righteousness that confused Israel (and still confuses legalists). The righteousness was the result, the evidence of a personal faith relationship with God, not the basis of that relationship!

Oh, the tragedy in time and eternity of legalism and self-righteousness!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 14:25-33

²⁵Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

14:25 "Now large crowds were going along with Him" This is an imperfect tense. These large crowds characterize Luke's Gospel's structure of Jesus' ministry since 9:51 as He travels to Jerusalem to die.

14:26 "If" This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **"anyone"** What a wonderful word! Thank God for the Bible's invitations to "anyone," "everyone," "as many as," and "whosoever"! However, there are also demands and requirements. Notice it comes contextually after Luke 14:21! All are welcome!

▣ **"comes to me"** This is the personal requirement for salvation (much like John's Gospel). Faith (see Special Topic at Luke 1:45) in Jesus is key to forgiveness and a personal relationship with God. We were created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) to know Him and fellowship with Him (cf. Gen. 3:8). Life without Him is futile and empty (i.e., Mark 8:36). As Augustine said, there is a God-shaped hole in every human being, and we will never be happy until we find peace with Him.

▣ **"hate his own father"** This is a Hebrew idiom of comparison (cf. Gen. 29:31,33; Deut. 21:15; Mal. 1:2-3 [Rom. 9:13]; John 12:25). It is obvious that this cannot be taken literally because of Jesus' statement of honoring your father and mother in Matt. 15:4, which reflects the Ten Commandments. This section speaks of death to self (cf. Gal. 2:20) and earthly priorities. In the Near East commitment to family superceded every other commitment, but Jesus must become believers' first priority (cf. Luke 12:49-53; Matt. 10:34-39).

▣ **"even his own life"** Jesus sets the pattern of ministry (cf. Luke 9:23; 17:33; 1 John 3:16).

▣ **"he cannot be My disciple"** This point is emphasized in Luke 14:27 and 33. It is difficult to balance the

grace of God so clearly demonstrated in the parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24) with the radical call to a complete sacrifice of self in Luke 14:25-33. Both are true. Grace initiates and provides, but receivers must make a life-altering, priority choice! Fellowship (Luke 14:25) is not the same as discipleship. Just as in the parable of the soils, germination is not the same as fruit bearing!

14:27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross" This refers not to problems believers face, but to death itself (cf. Luke 9:23-26; Matt. 10:34-39; 16:24; Gal. 2:20). It was the custom in Palestine of the first century for condemned prisoners who were to be crucified to carry the cross beam to the place of crucifixion.

14:28-32 This speaks of the need to recognize the cost of followship! No quick decisions! The gospel is absolutely free, but it costs everything that we are and have (cf. Matt. 13:44-46). In light of this, western modern Christianity is a weak manifestation of "what's in it for me" cultural religion! Modern western Christians have turned biblical faith into a weekly event, a place we park our car for a few hours instead of a 24 hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week relationship of service to Christ. We only give the leftovers of our busy lives and plans to Him. We worship and praise Him with peripherals and non-essentials. This is why we have such large, beautiful church buildings and elaborate organizations and programs and **NO SPIRITUAL POWER, NO CHANGED LIVES, NO WHATEVER-IT-TAKES ATTITUDES!!** God forgive us for cultural, peripheral, easy believism!

Just one additional thought, this emphasis on counting the cost of discipleship must also relate to the age one receives Christ. One must be old enough to

1. know the Scriptures
2. know that they violated them
3. understand the gospel
4. be able to access the "cost of discipleship"

If "decisions" are made too early they result in confused Christians or perpetual "pre-Christians"!

14:31 "will not first sit down and consider where he is strong enough" This does not mean estimating our own resources, but our deliberate conscious choice of the cost of followship.

14:33 Before we dismiss this as hyperbole, reread the context and parallels (cf. Luke 9:23-26,61-62; 12:33; 15:22). Biblical faith is a serious priority commitment. Nothing, nothing, nothing must be above Him (family, nation, livelihood, one's own life). If anything precedes Him, give it away. Whatever is left, use it for Him! See F. F. Bruce, *answers to Questions*, p. 54.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 14:34-35

³⁴"Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? ³⁵It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

14:34 "salt is good" Because of the extreme value of salt in the ancient world

1. for healing and cleansing
2. for preserving food
3. for flavoring food
4. for sustaining moisture in humans in very dry climates

Salt was a prized possession. It was often used to pay soldiers' wages. Christians are called the "salt of the earth" because of their penetrating and preserving power in a lost world. Believers are salt. It is not an option. The only choice is what kind of salt will they be. Salt can become adulterated and useless. Lost people are watching.

14:35 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" This referred to the fact that unless the Holy Spirit aids believers' insight they cannot understand spiritual truth (cf. Matt. 13:9,43; Mark 4:9,23; Luke 8:8; Rev.

2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9). However, it also implies a willingness of the individual to hear and respond.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus continue to confront the religious leaders about their Oral Traditions?
2. Explain the metaphor and purpose of the Messianic Banquet.
3. Does Jesus want us to be poor and without family ties to be true disciples?
4. How are Christians "salt"?
 Why are they "salt"?
 What is their purpose in the lost world?

LUKE 15

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Parables About the Lost (15:1-32)		Three Parables of God's Mercy (15:1-22)
The Parable of the Lost Sheep	The Parable of the Lost Sheep	The Lost Sheep	The Lost Sheep	The Lost Sheep
15:1-7	15:1-7	15:1-2 15:3-7	15:1-3 15:4-7	15:1-3 15:4-7
The Parable of the Lost Coin	The Parable of the Lost Coin	The Lost Coin	The Lost Coin	The Lost Drachma
15:8-10	15:8-10	25:8-10	15:8-10	15:8-10
The Parable of the Lost Son	The Parable of the Lost Son	The Lost Son	The Lost Son	The Lost Son (The Prodigal) and the Dutiful Son
15:11-24	15:11-32	15:11-24	15:11-20a 15:20b-24	15:11-13 15:14-20a 15:20b-24
15:25-32		15:25-32	15:25-32	15:25-30 15:31-32

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Luke 14:25-35 sets the stage that many in the crowd, on hearing the cost of discipleship, ceased to follow Jesus. Luke 15 shows that the religious and social outcasts continued to come to Him.
- B. These three parables have four foci:
1. the lostness of man
 2. God's active love for all men (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9)
 3. the Savior's mission of seeking and saving (cf. Mark 10:45)
 4. the self-righteous reaction of the religious leaders (cf. Luke 15:2, typified in the older brother, 25-32)
- C. Notice the main characters in the parables were people who were looked down on by the religious authorities: shepherds, women, and rebellious children.
- D. Three parables, which are unique to Luke (Matt. 18:12-14 uses the "lost sheep," but in a context referring to disciples, not Pharisees), disclose Jesus' understanding of God's seeking and saving character and purpose (the restoration of all fallen, sinful humanity to full fellowship with Himself, cf. John 4:23; Luke 19:10).
- E. Luke 15 and 16 have a series of five parables. Remember chapter divisions are not inspired.
- F. There is one resource I have found especially helpful in the interpretation of the parables in Luke: Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* and *Through Peasant Eyes*, Eerdmans, 1983. It is not so much the author's supposed chiasms as his knowledge of Near Eastern society and customs that has brought such insight to this eastern genre.

PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PARABLES

(for a full discussion, see [Introduction to Chapter 8](#))

- A. Look to the context that precedes and follows to determine the purpose of the parable.
- B. Determine the major theme (occasionally themes).
- C. Do not press minor details into theological interpretations.
- D. Avoid allegorizing and spiritualizing unless something in the text demands it.
- E. Do not build doctrine on parables.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 15:1-2

¹Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. ²Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

15:1 "all" Luke often uses hyperbole (i.e., use of "all" in Luke 3:16; 4:15; 9:1) to accentuate the impact that Jesus had on the outcasts of Palestine. Surely not every outcast and sinner approached Jesus, but many did (cf. Luke 1:65,66; 2:1,38,47; 3:15,20; 4:5,15; 6:26; 7:16,17,29; etc.).

▣ **"tax collectors"** These Jews worked for the Romans (or Herod) and their salary usually came from over-taxing their countrymen. They were hated and ostracized by the local people. Jesus even called one

of them to be an Apostle, Levi (cf. Matt. 9:9-10).

■ **"sinners"** This refers to either

1. openly immoral persons
2. persons who were outcasts because of their occupation
3. common villagers who did not completely follow the Oral Traditions

It was very difficult for common people to fully observe all the rabbinical rules.

These two groups characterized all those rejected by the religious elite of Jesus' day (cf. Luke 5:30; Mark 2:16). The sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, zealots, Essenes) of Judaism even excluded each other as acceptable to God. Religion had become a status based on performance or exclusive party affiliation.

■ **"were coming near Him"** This PERIPHRASTIC IMPERFECT implies this was a normal occurrence.

They found acceptance with Jesus, which they never found with the other religious leaders. It is interesting that this same Greek VERB is used for approaching God in Heb. 7:19 and James 4:8. These people were seeking God (cf. 2 Chr. 15:2); the Pharisees were claiming to seek Him, but in reality, they were clinging to their traditions (cf. Isa. 29:13) and leading people away from God (cf. Matt. 23:16,24; Rom. 2:19).

■ **"to listen to Him"** This is a present infinitive. These outcasts wanted to hear Jesus' teachings.

15:2 "the Pharisees and the scribes" This is the same order as Luke 5:30; usually the order is reversed i.e., Luke 5:17,21). They were probably part of an official delegation sent from Jerusalem to spy on Jesus. They were hoping to find something to officially charge Him with in court. In Jesus' day most scribes (Mosaic lawyers) were Pharisees. See Special Topics: Pharisees at Luke 5:17 and Scribes at Luke 5:21.

■ **"began to grumble"** This is an imperfect active indicative, which denotes repeated action in past time (cf. Luke 5:30).

This is a compound (*dia + goguzō*) used only here and in Luke 19:7. Both involve the grumbling of the religious elite. In the Septuagint this compound was used of the Israelites who grumbled at Moses and even YHWH during the Wilderness Wandering period (cf. Exod. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; Num. 14:2).

■ **"This man"** This is often used in the Gospels in a derogatory sense as a way to not use the person's name (cf. Mark 14:71).

■ **"receives sinners"** This present middle (deponent) indicative means Jesus continuously made the choice to include these people. He may have sponsored this meal and specifically invited them. This same criticism is seen in Luke 5:27-32 (cf. Luke 7:34).

Jesus' reception of the outcast, needy, and sick is one of the OT Messianic signs these religious leaders should have recognized (see note at Luke 14:13). The surprising aspect of these three parables is not only the type of people addressed (shepherds, women, rebellious children), but also the implication that Jesus receives and forgives sinners. This is the unique domain of God (cf. Mark 2:1-12)! This is a powerful evidence of Jesus' self-understanding (i.e., Incarnated Deity).

■ **"and eats with them"** This is a present active indicative. Often wealthy Jews fed the poor of their community by giving alms to the local synagogue (see Special Topic at Luke 11:41). However, they never ate with them. To eat with someone in this culture showed full acceptance and fellowship. Jesus loved/loves sinners and tried/tries to reach them for God, which changes them from being sinners to guests and friends. In a sense these eating events foreshadow the Messianic banquet. Some who think they will be there, will not.

This is the theological setting of all three parables in Luke 15. The parallel in Matt. 18:12-13 also shows the heart of God.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 15:3-7

³So He told them this parable, saying, ⁴"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the

one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

15:4 "What man among you" Jesus is referring to herdsmen. These were some of the vocations ostracized by the Pharisees because their jobs prevented them from observing all the rules and regulations of the Oral Traditions. Those rejected by the religious leaders were welcomed by Jesus. As a matter of fact, it was to shepherds that the first announcement of the birth of the Messiah was made (cf. Luke 2).

■ **"leave the ninety-nine"** This is a very specific number. The shepherd would count the sheep as he put them in an enclosure for the night. Every sheep was important to the shepherd. A flock of one hundred sheep was considered a medium sized flock. The ninety nine were not left alone, but with other shepherds or still in the enclosure. The metaphor of God as Shepherd is common in the OT (cf. Psalm 23; 80:1; Isa. 40:10,11). It is also used of false leaders (cf. Ezek. 34:1ff; Isa. 56:9-12). There is even a wounded Messianic shepherd in Zechariah 13. Jesus calls Himself "the Good Shepherd" in John 10.

■ **"in the open pasture"** This term means uninhabited pasture land.

■ **"the one which is lost"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 53:6. Sinful Jews are identified as lost sheep (cf. Jer. 50:6; Matt. 9:36; 10:6).

15:5 "lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing" One of the beautiful works of art depicting Jesus is of a shepherd with a lamb on His shoulders. This shows the loving care of the shepherd.

15:6 "Rejoice with Me" This aorist passive (deponent) Imperative is repeated in Luke 15:9 and is paralleled in Luke 15:23 (literally as "be merry," aorist passive subjunctive). This command reflects the desire of God who wants to accept and rejoice over all who return to Him through a repentant faith response to His Messiah, His Son.

15:7 "repents" This is a present active participle denoting ongoing action. The Greek term *metanoēō* means "a change of mind." The matching Hebrew term means a "change of action." Both are involved in repentance. It is interesting that Matthew and Luke mention "repentance" so much more than Mark and John, who do not mention the word at all. See Special Topic at Luke 3:3.

The gospel can be summarized as (1) repent and (2) believe/faith/trust (i.e., Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21). Luke mentions the need to repent often (cf. Luke 5:32; 10:13; 11:32; 13:3,5; 15:7,10; 16:30; also notice Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21; 24:47; 26:20).

■ **"joy in heaven over one sinner"** This shows God's heart and the priority of people being saved. In the three parables of this chapter the gospel's purpose is clearly revealed (the restoration of the image of God in humanity, cf. Gen. 1:26-27, and humanity's restored fellowship with God, cf. Gen. 3:8).

■ **"who need no repentance"** This is irony, not doctrine, like Luke 5:31-32; Matt. 9:12-13 and Mark 2:17. Those who knew they were in spiritual need readily came to Jesus, but the religious elite felt no such need. Jesus eats, fellowships with, and forgives those who came (and come) to Him in faith and repentance.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 15:8-10

⁸"Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I

had lost!" ¹⁰In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

15:8 "if" This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action.

▣ **"ten silver coins"** This Greek word *drachma*, is used only here in the NT. It was a day's wage for a soldier or laborer (similar to a *dēnarius*). These were this woman's status symbol and possibly her dowry. Near Eastern custom informs us that this may have been a headdress.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COINS IN USE IN PALESTINE IN JESUS' DAY

▣ **"and search carefully until she finds it"** This is not meant to denote a universalism (in the end all will be saved). The details of a parable cannot be forced into theological doctrine. As Rom. 5:18 must be interpreted in the context of Romans 1-8, so too, small phrases cannot be used to teach truths that are clearly denied in the immediate context (cf. "sinner who repents," Luke 15:7, 10). If all exercised repentance and faith, all could be saved, but the mystery of evil is that even in the presence of great light, many will not respond (i.e., the Pharisees). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE UNPARDONABLE SIN](#) at Luke 11:19.

I believe that Jesus' death covers all sin, but the gospel demands an initial and continuing faith response.

▣ **"light a lamp"** The poorer homes of this time had no windows and thus no natural light.

15:9 This repeats the theological emphasis of Luke 15:6-7.

15:10 "the angels of God" This is a rabbinical way of referring to God (as is "joy in heaven" in Luke 15:7). Matthew has many of these phrases that refer to God without mentioning His name (circumlocutions).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 15:11-24

¹¹And He said, "A man had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. ¹³And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. ¹⁴Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him. ¹⁷But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" ²⁰So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; ²³and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate."

15:11 "two sons" These will typify the Jews who heard Jesus: (1) the common people and (2) the

religious leaders. Their response to the lostness of all humans (in this context, Israelites) before God will be very different. One group rejoices in the potential salvation of all humans, but the other is offended by God's love for all humans.

15:12 "give me the share of the estate that falls to me" This did not belong to him until his father's death. It would involve one-third of the estate with two thirds going to the oldest son (cf. Deut. 21:17). This shows a rebellious, unloving, independent spirit. This very question would have been unheard of in eastern culture. This implies a desire for the father's death (cf. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, pp. 142-206).

▣ **"So he divided his wealth between them"** There are several cultural and legal reasons for an early inheritance to be given, but not at the request of a son! The father's actions in allowing this inappropriate and culturally unheard of request does not denote God's character, but is a literary device to accentuate God's undeserved and overwhelming love and forgiveness later in the parable.

As for the older son, his silence at both the brother's request and the father's action would be unforgivable in eastern culture. He should have vigorously protested. He also will be singled out for censure at the conclusion of the parable. As a matter of fact, he represents the attitudes of the Pharisees. (Will they accept sinners like God does, or will he reject his brother?)

15:13 "gathered everything together" To transfer the farm assets into cash meant to (1) disrupt the farm and even jeopardize its future existence and (2) sell them at a very reduced price.

If land was involved, the buyer did not take possession until after the father's death. The father would have use of it until then.

▣ **"and went on a journey"** This represents the younger son's seeking independence from the family. He will do it his way!

NASB	"there he squandered his estate with loose living"
NKJV	"there he wasted his possession with prodigal living"
NRSV	"there he squandered his property in dissolute living"
TEV	"where he wasted his money in reckless living"
NJB	"where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery"
PESHITTA	
(Syriac)	"there he wasted his wealth in extravagant living"

This is from the verb *sōzō* (save) with the alpha privative (one who cannot save). All English translations translate *asōtōs*, an adverb which occurs only here in the NT, as immoral, godless, riotous living (cf. Luke 15:3 and the LXX of Pro. 7:11; 28:7). However, the fifth century Syriac (Aramaic) version denotes one who is careless or thoughtless with his resources (German Bible Society's *Greek - English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, lists "wastefulness" as a translation option for *asōtia*, p. 69), but not necessarily immoral (cf. *Kittel*, vol. 1, p. 507 and Louw and Nida, vol. 1, p. 753).

15:15 "he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country" The key interpretive issue is the word "hired" (*kollaō*). It is used predominately by Luke and Paul. It can mean "associate with" (cf. Acts 5:13; 9:26; 10:28), "cleave to" (cf. Matt. 19:5; Luke 10:11), or "join" (cf. Acts 8:29; 17:74). It originally meant "to glue." Did this young foolish Jew hire himself out for wages or did he cling desperately to a local, non-Jewish farmer for life? The question is one of desperation. How desperate was the young man? How much in need?

Possibly "the citizen" was trying to get rid of the Jewish young man by asking him to feed pigs! Perhaps he was so hungry, so desperate, so in need, that he would do anything just to survive.

15:16

NASB, NKJV	"he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods"
NRSV	"he would have gladly filled himself with the pods"
TEV	"he wished he could fill himself with the bean pods"

NJB "he would willingly have filled himself with the husks"

The first two translations follow the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁷⁵, κ, B, D, L, and Augustine's Greek text, which has the verb *gemizō* and the word "stomach." However, the last three follow the ancient Greek manuscript A and the Old Latin Vulgate and Syriac versions, which have the verb *chortazō* and excludes the word "stomach." Usually when κ and B agree over A, modern textual critics follow the former manuscripts. However, the UBS⁴ gives the second option a "B" (almost certain) rating. It is somewhat surprising that the NASB (1995) follows KJV.

As usual, this variant does not affect the meaning of the passage.

■ **"the pods"** There were apparently two types of this carob bean (cf. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, pp. 171-172). One is found in Syria, which is sweet and eaten by the general population. The other is a wild carob which is a short plant with black, sour berries. It does not provide enough sustenance for life. It is these wild berries that the young man wanted to eat, but he knew they would not help his hunger.

■ **"and no one was giving anything to him"** In context this may mean that other servants would not let him eat the pigs' food. Here is the problem of a cruel world. This is a situation that this young man did not plan for, now he was in life-threatening need (cf. Luke 15:17).

15:17

NASB, TEV,

NJB "he came to his senses"

NKJV, NRSV,

PESHITTA "he came to himself"

This is a Hebraic idiom of (1) acceptance of responsibility and repentance or (2) a person's internal thought process, an epiphany (cf. Luke 18:4, the exact Greek phrase). Verses 18-19 imply meaning #1.

■ **"hired men"** There were several levels of servants in rural village life of the Near East (cf. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, p. 176):

1. *doulos*, a domestic servant who lived with the master
2. *paidēs*, slaves who performed menial tasks but lived on the farm
3. *misthos*, temporary, hired workers who did not live on the farm

In context #2 fits best as the desire of the son.

15:18 "against heaven" This is another circumlocution which refers to God. See note at Luke 15:10.

15:20 "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him. . .and ran. . .and embraced him and kissed him" The father's expectancy and unusual actions reflect the intensity of his love.

The last two actions, "embraced him" and "kissed him," may reflect the Septuagint of Gen. 33:4; 45:14-15, which denotes reunion. The last action, "kissed him," could be a sign of forgiveness from 2 Sam. 14:33. This compound term, *kata + phileō*, implies fervent affection (cf. Luke 7:38; Acts 20:37).

When interpreting parables one must look for the central truth (usually in what would be culturally shocking or unexpected) and not push (allegorize) all the details. The father's actions in allowing the young man's initial request which jeopardized the whole family, was morally and culturally inappropriate. They must not be attributed as characteristics of God. God will not give us what would destroy us! He does, however, give us the freedom to destroy ourselves! However, the father's unconditional forgiveness and gracious restoration of such an undeserving person is surely a characteristic of God. Remember the parable's larger context is the unforgiving and non-accepting attitude of the Pharisees (i.e., the older brother, Luke 15:25-32, especially Luke 15:28).

15:21 There is a Greek manuscript variant in the verse. Some ancient texts at the end of the sentence have "your son," but others add the remaining phrase from Luke 15:19 ("make me as one of your hired

men"). Scribes tended to fill out phrases, therefore, UBS⁴ gives the shorter text an "A" rating (certain).

15:22 The intensity of the moment is carried by the three aorist active imperatives. The slaves are commanded to do these things immediately!

- ▣ **"best robe"** This was a sign of position in the family.
- ▣ **"a ring"** This was a sign of his restored family position and authority.
- ▣ **"sandals"** This was a sign of a son of the owner, not a hired servant.

15:23 "the fattened calf" The Jews ate red meat only at very special occasions. This was the most valuable meat available.

Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant/Through Peasant Eyes*, makes the comment that by implication the killing of the fatted calf involved the whole community. There would be too much meat just for the estate. If so, this implies that the father solves the problem of the young son's acceptance back into the community by this feast (cf. pp. 181-187).

Also notice that this lavish banquet for the rebellious son is the unexpected element of the parable. Table fellowship was a Jewish metaphor for heaven (eschatological banquet). The shock is that the younger son (symbolizing the tax collectors and sinners) is the object of the feast, while the older son (symbolizing the religious leaders) refuses to attend and makes the point that there is no feast for him. This role reversal is typical of Jesus' teachings.

15:24 This parallels Luke 15:6-7 and 9-10. Heaven rejoices at the restoration of sinners!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 15:25-32

25"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. **26**And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be. **27**And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' **28**But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* imploring him. **29**But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; **30**but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' **31**And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. **32**But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

15:25 "older son" If the prodigal represents lost and fallen humanity, then the older son represents the self-righteous attitude of religious leaders.

This parable has two main truths:

1. God's joy over one who repents
 2. God's pain when part of His spiritual family will not forgive and accept other parts of the sinful family
- In many ways nothing has changed. Sin and unforgiveness still live in the church building! There are two types of estrangement:
1. open rebellion
 2. hidden superiority and jealousy

Each of these sons, for opposite reasons, was out of fellowship with the father.

15:28 God loves Pharisees also!

15:29 "I have been serving you" This shows the son's pent-up anger and resentment, possibly even jealousy and envy. The older son feels he deserves the father's love because of his obedience and continuance (i.e., self-righteous legalism, cf. parable at Matt. 20:1-16).

▣ **"never given me a young goat"** This was a less expensive animal than the fattened calf. He feels neglected.

15:30 "this son of yours" This phrase shows the depth of the older son's anger and continued rejection of his brother.

▣ **"with prostitutes"** This was only speculation on the elder son's part.

15:31 "all that is mine is yours" The remaining inheritance belonged completely to this son. The life and livelihood of the younger son was, in reality, in the hands of the older brother. The younger son was completely at the older brother's mercy once the father died.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the major thrust of these three parables?
2. Which son represents you?
3. Why is there no conclusion to the last parable?

LUKE 16

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Parable of the Dishonest Steward	The Parable of the Unjust Steward	The Dishonest Manager	The Shrewd Manager	The Crafty Steward
16:1-13	16:1-13	16:1-13	16:1-8	16:1-4 16:5-7 16:8 The Right Use of Money 16:9-12 16:13
The Law and the Kingdom of God	The Law, the Prophets, and the Kingdom of God	Teaching About the Law	Some Sayings of Jesus	Against the Pharisees and Their Love of Money
16:14-18	16:14-18	16:14-15 16:16-17 16:18	16:14-15 16:16-17 16:18	16:14-15 The Kingdom Stormed 16:16 The Law Remains 16:17 Marriage Indissoluble 16:18
The Rich Man and Lazarus	The Rich Man and Lazarus	The Rich Man and Lazarus	The Rich Man and Lazarus	The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus
16:19-31	16:19-31	16:19-31	16:19-31	16:19-22 16:23-26 16:27-31

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Luke 16 is related contextually to Luke 15:
1. Both were addressed to Pharisees, 15:2-3; 16:14;
 2. The additional audience was the disciples, 14:33; 16:1;
 3. The parables of these two chapters were designed to rebuke the attitudes of the religious leaders and to reveal to the disciples God's redemptive and seeking heart;
 4. The unifying issue of Luke 15 was God's love for lost sinners, while Luke 16 focuses on the Pharisees' love for money, 16:14-15. (Luke 16 is unified by a rabbinical play on "mammon" or money.)
- B. The parable (16:1-13) has caused much controversy in interpretation, for it seems to praise fraud. However, it must be understood that this is a certain type of parable (i.e., a contrasting story) which illustrates a positive truth by a negative example (cf. Luke 18:1-8).
1. The keys to a proper interpretation of the parable
 - a. who is speaking in Luke 16:8a, Jesus or the landowner of the parable?
 - b. verses 8b-13
 - (1) Jesus' comments on the problem of the love of money
 - (2) the early churches' comments (the author of the gospel)
 - (3) a separate literary unit?
 2. Do not read too much into the details of the parable. Look for the central truth(s).
 3. There are similarities between the Prodigal Son and the Unjust Steward:
 - a. a merciful father/landowner
 - b. in one, a son is unfaithful; in the other, a well paid steward is unfaithful;
 - c. in both, neither offers excuses for his sins but throws himself on the mercy of the father/debtors
- C. This chapter does not have an obvious unifying theme. It is often hard to see the literary units. Is Luke 16:13 an independent saying? How are Luke 16:16-17 and 18 related to the larger context? Luke seems to have combined several unrelated sayings of Jesus, but why and how remains uncertain. The overarching theme is the inappropriate priority of self, wealth, and this world order.
- D. The account of Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 is the fifth parable in a series (Luke 15-16). It seems to have been designed illustrate the truths of Luke 16:8b-13 and 14. The improper love of money is the issue in Luke 16.
- The Pharisees whom Jesus was addressing were like Lazarus' brothers (Luke 16:29). They had the Law and the Prophets, but they chose not to respond in the appropriate way! They believed in a future physical life with God, but they missed the fact that faith in Jesus is the key to this future life. There is a surprise reversal awaiting the religious leaders of Jesus' day.
- E. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* and *Through Peasant Eyes*, is a thought-provoking and helpful structural and cultural approach to interpreting the parables in Luke.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 16:1-9

¹Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and

this *manager* was reported to him as squandering his possessions. ²And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' ³The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.' ⁵And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he *began* saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' ⁷Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' ⁸And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. ⁹And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings."

16:1 "disciples" The term *mathētēs* meant "learners." The NT does not focus on decisions, but on disciples (cf. Matt. 28:19). Christianity is an initial decision of faith and repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21) followed by a lifestyle of faith and repentance.

Jesus is warning the disciples about the attitudes and actions (i.e., "Leaven of the Pharisees," cf. Luke 12:1) of the religious leaders.

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "There was a"

NKJV "There was a certain"

TEV "There was once a"

The Greek term *tis* or *ti* often introduces parables in Luke (cf. Luke 7:41; 10:30; 14:16; 15:11; 16:1,19; 19:12; 20:9 [MS A]). Notice that in this series of five parables in Luke 15-16, *tis* introduces three of them.

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "manager"

NKJV "steward"

TEV "a servant who managed"

The Greek term *oikonomos* could refer to

1. a person hired to manage an estate (cf. Luke 12:42; 16:1,3,8)
2. an administrator or steward (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10)
3. a city treasurer (cf. Rom. 16:23)

This may have been an educated slave or a hired freed person.

NASB "reported"

NKJV "an accusation"

NRSV "charges"

TEV "was told"

NJB "was denounced"

This term is from the same root as "devil" [*diabolos*, *dia* plus *bollos*], which literally meant "to throw across" or metaphorically "to accuse."

■ **"squandering"** This same word (*diaskorpizō*) was used of the Prodigal Son (cf. Luke 15:13).

▣ **"possessions"** This same word is used in Luke 14:33.

16:2 "Give an account of your stewardship" This is an aorist active imperative. From the context the steward was possibly guilty of loaning money or property (usury, cf. Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:36; Deut. 23:19). The Talmud assigned an amount to be legally charged by a loaner in *Baba Bathra* 10:4. This steward exceeded this amount, possibly even by the amount to which he later reduced the bill.

▣ **"you are no longer a steward"** Notice that the man was not jailed or whipped, but dismissed! This would have been surprising to the original hearers. It would have said something significant about the merciful character of the landlord.

16:3-4 The man reviewed his employment options to himself.

16:4

NASB, TEV	"I know what I shall do"
NKJV	"I have resolved what to do"
NRSV	"I have decided what to do"
NJB	"Ah, I know what I will do"

This phrase was an idiom for sudden insight! He, like the prodigal son (cf. Luke 15:17), came to himself and chose to act decisively.

▣ **"they"** This refers to the master's debtors (cf. Luke 16:4), for whom he has reduced their contractual obligations to the landlord.

16:6

NASB, NKJV,	
NJB	"a hundred measures of oil"
NRSV	"a hundred jugs of olive oil"
TEV	"a thousand barrels of olive oil"

This was literally "100 *bath*," which was a Hebrew liquid measure. The amount is uncertain but one *bath* equaled approximately 8 to 9 gallons. Apparently there were differing standards of the measure in Palestine in Jesus' day. Besides, Jesus often used exaggerated numbers (hyperbole) in His parables for emphasis or shock value.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: Ancient near Eastern Weights and Volumes \(Metrology\)](#)

16:7

NASB, NKJV,	
NJB	"a hundred measures of wheat"
NRSV	"a hundred containers of wheat"
TEV	"a thousand bushels of wheat"

This was literally "100 *kor*," which was a Hebrew dry measure. The amount is uncertain but one *kor* equaled approximately ten to twelve bushels.

16:8

NASB, NRSV	"his master"
NKJV, TEV,	
NJB	"the master"

The Greek text does not have "his," but "the." The antecedent of this title has caused great discussion among commentators. It is either (1) Jesus referred to as "Lord" or (2) the landowner of the parable

referred to as "lord." In context it is the landowner (cf. Luke 16:3,5). It depends on where the parable stops.

■ **"He had acted shrewdly"** This phrase is the interpretive crux of the parable. The man's decisive action in the face of impending crisis is extolled, not the manner of his actions.

The same landowner who dismissed the steward in Luke 16:2 praised him in Luke 16:8. This is the twist (main point) of the parable. Presumably the village tenant farmers were praising the landowner for his generosity and he, in turn, commented about the actions of the steward.

The steward was praised because he recognized the coming disaster and his guiltiness. He acted swiftly, gambling on the mercy of (1) the debtors (cf. Luke 16:4-5) or (2) the landlord. This reflects sinners who recognize their guilt and coming judgment and quickly respond to Jesus' offer of forgiveness and mercy (cf. Luke 16:16).

■ **"The sons of this age. . .the sons of light"** This was a Hebrew idiom. Hebrew, being an ancient language, had few adjectives and, therefore, used "son of. . ." as an adjectival idiom.

The Jews saw two ages (cf. Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 20:34-35), the current evil age (cf. Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2) and the age to come (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 1:3; 1 John 2:15-17). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME](#) at Luke 9:2. Believers live in the tension-filled time in which these ages have been overlapped (the two comings of Christ). Believers live in the "already and not yet" tension of the Kingdom of God and often they do not handle it well.

NASB	"more shrewd in relation to their own kind"
NKJV	"more shrewd in their generation"
NRSV	"more shrewd in dealing with their own generation"
TEV	"much more shrewd in handling their affairs"
NJB	"more astute in dealing with their own kind"
PESHITTA	"wiser in their generation"

This verse is contrasting how unbelievers act in a crisis situation and how believers should act (cf. Luke 16:1). However, the interpretive issue is how does this relate to Luke 16:9? What exactly is Jesus saying? See comments at Luke 16:9.

16:8 Jesus wants His followers to live wisely (cf. Matt. 10:16), but often they are foolish!

16:9 This verse is ironic sarcasm.

1. make friends by means of the wealth of unrighteousness
2. when it fails (Vulgate and NKJV have "when you fail")
3. they (cf. Luke 16:4) will receive you into the eternal dwellings
 - a. temporal setting – people of this world, "their homes" (cf. Luke 16:4)
 - b. eschatological setting, (1) people of God; (2) angels; or (3) God Himself, "eternal dwelling"

The point is, "Act now"!

NASB	"make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness,"
NKJV	"make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon"
NRSV	"make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth"
TEV	"make friends for yourselves with worldly wealth"
NJB	"use money, tainted as it is, to win friends"

This is an aorist active imperative, which denotes urgency. "Mammon" was an Aramaic word for "riches," which was personified as a god in the Babylonian Talmud and in the nation of Syria. The word originally meant "to entrust something to someone." This is a summary of what the unjust steward did.

This may be sarcastic because of Luke 16:13. The contrast was between evil stewards who prepared for a physical future and kingdom people who did not prepare for the spiritual future.

■ **"they will receive you into the eternal dwellings"** The Jews (Pharisees) believed in an afterlife of

physical bliss (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Ps. 11:7; 16:11; 17:15; 140:13; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 16:10-13

10"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. **11**Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? **12**And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? **13**No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

16:10 "a very little thing" This referred to earthly wealth or stewardship. Humans reveal their character in their daily choices and actions.

■ **"in much"** This is used twice in this verse. It refers to heavenly wealth (cf. Matt. 6:19-34).

16:11 "if" This is a first class conditional which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Believers must use the things of this world to (1) help people come to know Christ and (2) to help believers.

■ **"entrust"** There is a word play between "faithful" (*pistos*, Luke 16:10,11,12) and "entrust" (*pisteuō*, Future active indicative). Believers are stewards (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-5; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). The question is what kind of stewards (cf. Matt. 5:13-15).

The rhetorical question of Luke 16:11 expects a negative answer (as does Luke 16:12). People who do not know God cannot be faithful even in small things. An unstated contrast is the point of the parable. Smart people can get other people whom they have bribed to help them in this life (cf. Luke 16:4), but they have no resources for the next life ("eternal dwellings").

16:12 "if" This also is a first class conditional sentence. This rhetorical question is negated. Unbelievers are unfaithful in all things.

■ **"that which is another's"** Many interpreters see this as a reference to God's ownership of all things. Believers are stewards of everything and owners of nothing. This is true of the gospel and worldly resources.

■ **"that which is your own"** There is a Greek manuscript variant involving the pronoun. UBS⁴ text says "you" (*hūmeteron*) an "A" rating (certain, cf. MSS P⁷⁵, x, A, D, W, and the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian versions).

But, other modern, eclectic Greek texts such as Nestles' 21st Edition have "our" (*hēmēteron*, i.e., the Father's and the Son's, cf. MSS B and L). The effect on meaning is negligible, but it gives the opportunity to discuss how the NT was copied and why variants like this occurred. Often one person read a Greek text while several others wrote down what he read. Therefore, words that sound alike were often confused. The pronunciation of these two pronouns was very similar, thus the variant! See Appendix Two.

16:13 "no servant can serve two masters" One cannot have two priorities (i.e., self and God). One must choose between this world's goods or spiritual treasures (cf. Matt. 6:19-34; 10:34-39; 1 John 2:15-17). "You cannot serve God and wealth."

■ **"hate . . . love"** This was a Hebrew idiom of comparison (cf. Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Mal. 1:2-3; Luke 14:26; 16:13; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13). God and His kingdom must be priority.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 16:14-15

14Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. **15**And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God."

16:14-18 This may be a separate unit of thought inserted by Luke from Jesus' teachings at another time. It is related to the parable in Luke 16:1-13 and 19-31. The central issue is worldly wealth and the priority of self. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH](#) at Luke 12:21.

16:14 "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money" This is a unifying theme of Luke 16. It shows that although the disciples were addressed in Luke 16:1, the Pharisees were equally a target for this truth (cf. Luke 15:2) and the next parable (Luke 16:19-31).

NASB	"and were scoffing at Him"
NKJV	"and they derided Him"
NRSV	"and they ridiculed him"
TEV	"they made fun of Jesus"
NJB	"and jeered at him"

This is an Imperfect active indicative, implying (1) a repeated action or (2) the beginning of an action in past time. It is a compound idiom "to turn up the nose" (cf. Luke 23:35). This same term is used in the Septuagint in Ps. 2:4; 21:8; 34:16. This set the stage for the parable of Luke 16:19-31. The Pharisees heard and understood His teachings about money, but rejected them in light of their traditional understanding of money as a sign of divine blessing (cf. Deuteronomy 28).

16:15 "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men" This could refer to either public, weekly almsgiving or ostentatious giving in the temple (cf. Mark 12:41-44). Luke often records Jesus' teachings about this kind of self righteousness (cf. Luke 10:29; 16:15; 18:9,14). This was the problem of the Pharisees!

■ **"God knows your hearts"** We must remember that God knows the motives of the human heart, which determine the appropriateness or inappropriateness of every action (cf. 1 Sam. 2:7; 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 6:30; Ps. 7:9; 44:21; 139:1-4; Pro. 15:11; 21:2; Jer. 11:20; 17:9-10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27).

■ **"for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God"** Here is the surprising role reversal theme again. The Pharisees were thought of as the best of the best, but God judges by a different standard (cf. Matt. 5:20,48). God Himself is the standard and all fall short (cf. Rom. 3:23). Salvation must be a grace gift because fallen humanity cannot obtain it by merit (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God provided a way through His Messiah; all are welcomed through Him, but they would not come!

NASB	"detestable"
NKJV, NRSV	"abomination"
TEV	"worth nothing"
NJB	"loathsome"

In the Septuagint this term (in its various forms) relates to

1. idolatry (idol and its worship)
2. eschatological event or person (Daniel)

Here it is an idiom of that which pulls fallen humanity away from YHWH. It is worldliness versus spirituality. It is the priority of the immediate versus the eternal. It is humans' desire for independence from God.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 16:16-17

16"The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. **17**But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail."

16:16-18 As a commentator I feel so unsure about the meaning of these verses. They seem so unrelated and out of place. I am sure they are sayings of Jesus, but why Luke chose to put them into this context remains a mystery to me. Here is a good place to remind interpreters that clear texts must interpret difficult texts. It would be inappropriate to use these verses, or for that matter Luke 16, as the only biblical support for any doctrine or application. The overall meaning of Luke 15-16 is clear, but we must not push the details into doctrine.

16:16 "The Law and the Prophets" These were two of the three sections of the Hebrew Canon. Therefore, this phrase refers to the entire OT being in effect (cf. Luke 16:29; 24:44; Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Acts 13:15; 28:23).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DIVISIONS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

▣ **"until John"** John the Baptist was the last OT prophet and the first preacher of the New Age (cf. Matt. 11:13). He was the theological and temporal watershed between the Old Covenant in Moses and the New Covenant in Christ.

▣ **"the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached"** The NASB, NRSV, and TEV include the term "gospel" or "Good News" in their translations, but this is not in the Greek text. It comes by implication from the verb "to preach" (*euangelizō*), which means "to proclaim good news" (cf. Luke 4:18; 9:6).

For "the kingdom of God" see Special Topic at Luke 4:21.

NASB, NJB	"everyone is forcing his way into it"
NKJV	"everyone is pressing into it"
NRSV	"everyone tries to enter it by force"
TEV	"everyone forces their way in"

"Everyone" is a hyperbole but it refers to those who hear the gospel.

This refers to the enthusiasm of the religious outcasts (i.e., the verb is a present middle [deponent] indicative) in accepting the teachings of Jesus versus the stand-offishness and rejection of the religious leaders. This saying of Jesus is used in a very different sense in Matt. 11:12.

It is possible that the verb is not middle but passive, denoting that those who hear the gospel preached are urged (by the Spirit) to respond in repentance and faith (NET Bible, p. 1856).

The Septuagint uses this same verb in a passive sense in Gen. 33:11 and Jdgs. 19:7. It may be used in a passive sense in Matt. 11:12.

16:17 Jesus, though asserting a new day had come with the proclamation of His gospel, nevertheless affirmed the stability and eternity of the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-20). Jesus rejected the Oral Tradition of the Jews and its interpretations (cf. Matt. 5:21-48) and even changed some OT requirements (cf. Mark 7:19, food laws; Matt. 19:7-8, divorce and remarriage), thereby showing His superiority, even over Scripture!

NASB, NRSV	"one stroke of a letter"
NKJV	"one tittle"
TEV	"the smallest detail"
NJB	"one little stroke"

The word *kepaia* literally means "a horn," which in this context, refers to the small points or lines that

distinguished one Hebrew letter from another (cf. Matt. 5:18). Therefore, the TEV expresses the meaning well. However, remember how Jesus commonly used hyperbole. This probably means the OT is God's revelation and it remains so. It is a permanent reflection of God's character and purpose. It surely does not mean that detailed observance of all OT ceremonial and cultic requirements is God's will for all humans. Verse 16 has asserted that a new day of openness and availability has arrived in Christ. Acts 15 clearly shows that Gentiles (Luke's audience) do not have to become practicing Jews to become Christians. See Paul's discussion of the purpose of the OT in Galatians 3 (www.freebiblecommentary.org).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 16:18

18"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery."

16:18 "everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery" This must be understood in the light of the context, as one example of the Jewish leaders trying to circumvent the obvious purpose of the Mosaic Law (cf. Luke 16:16-17 and the passage in Deut. 24:1-4), with the interpretations of their Talmudic, rabbinical traditions (Hillel, very liberal and Shammai, very conservative).

■ **"commits adultery"** Does remarriage mean that one commits adultery? Was Jesus discussing Moses' statements found in Deut. 24:1-4? Moses wrote this to protect the rejected women of his day, who were so vulnerable to abuse. The only appropriate reason given for the dissolution of a marriage was sexually inappropriate behavior (Shammai, cf. Matt. 5:32). If a woman was put away the community assumed she was dismissed for sexual infidelity (she was stigmatized as an adulteress). This interpretation is confirmed by the passive voice verbals ("causes her to commit adultery) of Matt. 5:32 and 19:9.

For more information on divorce go to www.freebiblecommentary.org and click on "Controversial and Difficult Texts," then click on the "Christian Home" (audio lessons).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 16:19-31

19"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' 25But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' 27And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—28for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' 31But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

16:19-31 "there was a rich man" This is the fifth in a series of parables in Luke 15 and 16. It is a highly unusual parable because

1. it has no introduction
2. it has no explicit application
3. a person is specifically named.

However, the context demands that it be interpreted in light of Luke 16:8b-13. It is a parable. One cannot force the details to give believers theological answers in the area of the intermediate, disembodied state of the dead or a description of hell (because the text has *hades*, not *Gehenna*).

Luke often introduces parables by *tis* ("a certain _____," cf. Luke 15:11; 16:1,19). See note at Luke 16:1.

▣ **"rich man"** The Latin tradition called him *Dives* which is the Latin term for "rich." There are several other names given to this rich man found in different geographical areas and periods (cf. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce Metzger, pp. 165-166).

▣ **"he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen;"** Purple was a very expensive dye derived from shellfish. This was an extravagantly rich man with beautiful outer garments and soft undergarments. He dressed in this type of clothing often (imperfect middle indicative).

16:20 "Lazarus" This was the Hebrew name "Eleazar" (BDB 46), which meant "God is my help." This is a purposeful word play on the name. Nobody helps this poor man but God! This is part of the literary plot not an actual person.

▣ **"was laid"** This is a pluperfect passive indicative, which denotes regular begging. Poor and sick people always begged in rich neighborhoods or public places (cf. Acts 3:2).

▣ **"covered with sores"** This is a perfect passive participle of *helkos* (cf. LXX Exod. 9:9,10,11; Lev. 13:18). Luke would have noticed this detail in Jesus' parable.

16:21 "longing to be fed" This is the same word used of the Prodigal Son with the pigs in Luke 15:16. There is similarity between these two parables (cf. Contextual Insights, B. 3.).

▣ **"with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table"** All people in this culture ate with their hands. The very wealthy used white bread to wipe their hands and then threw it on the floor (cf. Matt. 15:27).

The word "crumbs" is in italics, which denotes it is not in the Greek text but is implied by the context. The word does appear in the parallel from Matt. 15:27 and is included in MSS κ^2 , A, D, W. However, it is missing in MSS P⁷⁵, κ^* , B, L. The UBS⁴ gives it exclusion a "B" rating (almost certain).

▣ **"even the dogs were coming and licking his sores"** This showed that Lazarus was too weak to fend off these scavenging animals. Dogs were not house pets in this time and culture, but street mongrels.

16:22 Notice the contrasts in this verse:

1. one apparently unburied (by implication), one properly buried
2. one carried by the angels, one's transportation unmentioned
3. one with Abraham in paradise, one in torment apart from Abraham

Notice the commonalities.

1. both die
2. both are conscious

It is not stated why the poor one is accepted and the wealthy rejected, but in the larger context it is related to how they used their wealth (or lack of it). Their spiritual lives were not revealed by the physical circumstances (cf. Deuteronomy 28 vs. Job and Psalm 73). The rich man's lack of concern for the poor illustrated his selfish, earthly priorities.

One can learn the priorities of modern, western people by their checkbooks and calendars!

NASB, NKJV "Abraham's bosom"

NRSV	"to be with Abraham"
TEV	"to sit beside Abraham at the feast in heaven"
NJB	"into Abraham's embrace"

This is a parable, not a teaching passage on heaven or how one gets there! This parable has nothing to say about heaven or hell. It uses the OT concept of *sheol* (BDB 982) or *hades* (the holding place of the dead which the rabbis said was divided into a righteous section called "paradise" and a wicked section called *tartarus*).

Abraham's bosom was an idiom for eating next to Abraham at a feast. This would be a reference to a welcoming meal for Jews into the righteous side of *hades* (paradise, cf. Luke 23:43).

16:23 "In Hades" *Hades* was equivalent to the OT *Sheol* which referred to the realm of the dead. It was distinct from *Gehenna*, which was the term Jesus used to describe "eternal punishment." *Gehenna* was from two Hebrew words, "*ge* – valley" and "*henna*" – a contraction of "sons of Hinnom" (cf. 2 Kgs. 23:10; 2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31). This was the valley south of Jerusalem where the Phoenician fire god (*Molech*, BDB 574) was worshiped by child sacrifice. The Jews turned it into a garbage dump. It was distinct from *Hades*. This term is only used one time outside the words of Jesus (cf. James. 3:6).

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?](#) at Luke 3:17.

- **"He lifted up his eyes"** The OT described reality in the language of description, using the five senses. This type of phenomenological language was based on God being "up" and the dead being in the ground (where they were buried). This is not anti-scientific, but pre-scientific. I Enoch 22-23 and IV Ezra 7:75-78 are Jewish inter-testamental documentation of the belief in a division of *Sheol* before Judgment Day.
- **"being in torment"** Many have used this passage to assert that there is suffering for the wicked now (cf. Luke 16:25,28), even before Judgment Day (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:4-15). There are some OT passages of fire being related to *Sheol*, but remember that this is a parable. The details are not always meant to convey doctrinal truth. It is best to seek a central truth unless Jesus interprets the parable at a typological level (cf. Parable of the Soils or Wicked Tenants). There is no other NT text which teaches this truth.

16:24 "Father Abraham, have mercy on me" In a sense this was an attempt to use his Jewishness for favors. Rabbinical theology often asserted the merits of being Abraham's descendants. He was said to guard the realm of punishment lest any Jew be led there.

- **"send Lazarus"** The rich man still thought of Lazarus as a slave to do his bidding.

16:25 Again an unexpected role reversal! The rich man's wealth was supposed to be a sign of God's love (cf. Deuteronomy 28).

16:26 This verse expresses the pain and surprise that many will feel when they discover who is with God and who is not! It also denotes the permanency of the division at death ("fixed," perfect passive [implication by God] indicative). There are no second chances. Jesus is surely addressing this to Pharisees who trusted so confidently in their supposed religious standing with God.

NASV, NRSV	"a great chasm"
NKJV, NJB	"a great gulf"
TEV	"a deep pit"

This term *chasma* is used in the Septuagint for a deep pit or hole (cf. 2 Sam. 18:17, where Absalom was buried).

16:27-29 "they have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them" Notice that these brothers were not damned because of their wealth, but because of their rejection of biblical revelation and its claims

on their daily lives (i.e., "Let them hear them," aorist active imperative). Humans are spiritually responsible for the light they have from natural revelation (cf. Psalm 19; Romans 1-2) and special revelation (cf. Ps. 19:7-13; 119; Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 12:48; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

16:28

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB "warn"

NKJV "testify"

This is the compound term *dia plus marturomai*, which denotes an earnest warning or solemn testimony (cf. LXX Exod. 19:10; Deut. 4:26; Zech. 3:7). This very term is used only here in the Gospels, but often by Luke to describe Christian witness in Acts (cf. Acts 2:40; 8:25; 10:42; 18:5; 20:21,23,24; 23:11; 28:23).

■ **"this place of torment"** In context this place refers to *hades*, not *Gehenna*. It is current, not future. This is the only place in the NT that speaks of the torment of the unbelieving dead before Judgment Day. Since the details of parables are often just part of the story, one cannot use parables as the only source for a biblical doctrine.

The term "torture" is a metaphor from metallurgy. Harold K. Moulton, *Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, has an interesting note as to the source of this metaphor:

"Noun, *lapis Lydius*, a species of stone from Lydia, which being applied to metals was thought to indicate any alloy which might be mixed with them, and therefore used in the trial of metals; hence, *examination* of a person, especially by torture; in N.T. *torture, torment, severe pain*, Mat. 4.24; Lu.16.23, 28.

Verb, *to apply the lapis Lydius or touchstone*; met. *to examine, scrutinise, try*, either by words or torture; in N.T. *to afflict, torment*; pass. *to be afflicted, tormented, pained*, by diseases, Mat. 8.6, 29, et al.; *to be tossed, agitated*, as by the waves, Mat. 14.24" (pp. 66-67).

16:29 "if" This is a third class conditional sentence, which denotes potential action.

16:30 "repent" The Hebrew term for repentance meant a change of action. The Greek term meant a change of mind. Repentance is a willingness to change. It does not mean a total cessation of sin, but a desire for its end. As fallen humanity we live for ourselves, but as believers we live for God! Repentance and faith are God's requirements of the New Covenant for salvation (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). Jesus said "unless you repent, you will all perish" (cf. Luke 13:3,5). Repentance is God's will for fallen humanity (cf. Ezek. 18:23,30,32; 2 Pet. 3:9). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#) at Luke 3:3.

The mystery of the sovereignty of God and human free will can be clearly demonstrated by repentance as a requirement for salvation. However, it is also a gift of God (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). There is always a tension in the biblical presentation of God's initiating grace and mankind's needed response. The new covenant, like the old covenant, has an "if – then" structure. There are several terms used in the NT which relate to the concept of repentance. The classical text is 2 Cor. 7:8-11. The terms are:

1. "sorrow," [*lupe*] Luke 16:9,10,11, which was morally neutral
2. "regret," [*metamelomai*] Luke 16:8,10, which meant "sorrow over past acts." It was used of Judas (cf. Matt. 27:3) and Esau, (cf. Heb. 12:16-18)
3. "repentance," [*metanoēō*] Luke 16:9,10,11, which meant a change of mind, a new character, a new direction of life.

It is not sorrow that characterized repentance, but a willingness to change to conform to God's will.

6:31 There are two conditional sentences in this verse.

1. The first one is First class, denoting that Moses and the Prophets are speaking.
2. The second is third class, denoting that these brothers should have listened to God's revelation.
This is exactly the point of the parable of the unjust steward. These brothers did not understand the

need for decisive action immediately! They are really the focus of the parable. Lazarus' being raised from the dead did not convince the hard-hearted religious leaders in Jerusalem. It only forced them to plan Jesus' death (cf. John 11:46; 12:9-11). A miracle is not automatically the answer to mankind's spiritual need (cf. Matt. 7:21-23; 24:24; Mark 13:22; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:13-14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do each the paragraph divisions of the chapter relate to the theme of the use of money? (1-8a; 8b-13; 14-18; 19-31)
2. Why is wealth dangerous?
3. What is the central truth of the parable (Luke 16:1-8a) and (9-31)?
4. Who is speaking and to whom are they speaking in Luke 16:8a and 8b?
5. Are verses 19-31 a parable or a historical account? Why?
6. Can we base our theology of the intermediate state on the details of this passage? (Luke 16:19-31)

LUKE 17

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Some Sayings of Jesus	Jesus Warns of Offenses		Sin	On Leading Others Astray
17:1-4	17:1-4	17:1-4	17:1-3a	17:1-3a
				Brotherly Correction
			17:3b-4	17:3b-4
	Faith and Duty		Faith	The Power of Faith
17:5-6	17:5-10	17:5-6	17:5	17:5-6
			17:6	
			A Servant's Duty	Humble Service
17:7-10		17:7-10	17:7-10	17:7-10
The Cleansing of Ten Lepers	Ten Lepers Cleansed	Ten Lepers Cleansed	Jesus Heals Ten Men	The Ten Victims of Skin-Disease
17:11-19	17:11-19	17:11-19	17:11-13	17:11-19
			17:14a	
			17:14b-19	
The Coming of the Kingdom	The Coming of the Kingdom	The Kingdom is Among You	The Coming of the Kingdom	The Coming of the Kingdom of God
17:20-37	17:20-37	17:20-21	17:20-21	17:20-21
		The End of the Age		The Day of the Son of Man
		17:22-37	17:22-30	17:22-25
				17:26-30
			17:31-36	17:31-37
			17:37a	
			17:37b	

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five

translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 17:1-4

¹He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! ²It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. ³Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

17:1 "He said to His disciples" The context remains the same. Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees (cf. Luke 15:2; 16:14), but at this point he addresses the disciples again (cf. Luke 16:1; 17:5).

▣ **"It is inevitable"** We live in a fallen, rebellious world. Get ready!

NASB	"stumbling blocks"
NKJV	"offenses"
NRSV	"occasions for stumbling"
TEV	"things that make people fall into sin"
NJB	"causes of falling"

The term is *skandalon*, which in the LXX, translated a Hebrew term (BDB 430) "snare" (cf. Jos. 23:13; Jdgs. 2:3; 8:27), which denoted a baited trap stick. It can also be understood as a "stumbling block" (cf. Lev. 19:14; 1 Sam. 25:31; Ps. 119:165). The Anchor Bible (vol. 28A, p. 1138) notes that in time it came to mean to impel someone to "apostasy" or "abandonment of allegiance (to God or to His word as proclaimed by Jesus)."

▣ **"but woe to him through whom they come"** This is paralleled in Matthew 18. Disciples are addressed and warned (cf. Matt. 18:4-6,8-10). Jesus is referring to both the Pharisees and sinning believers. True believers are responsible for their brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8-10; Gal. 6:1-4).

Paul, in 1 Cor. 11:19, even asserts that these false teachers and their followers are manifested so that the true believers are clearly revealed.

17:2 "if" This is a First class conditional sentence which, in this context, reaffirms the inevitability that stumbling blocks will come and, so too, will judgment.

▣ **"a millstone"** In the OT grain was ground by hand mills, usually one flat stone (cf. Job 41:24) and one handheld rubbing stone (cf. Jdgs. 9:53). By NT times grinding was done by two round stones (18 to 20 inches). Wooden pegs held them in place and allowed the top one to rotate. The ground grain would work its way out around the edges.

It is possible that Jesus is referring to a larger pair of stones rotated by two men (cf. Matt. 24:41) or an even larger one pulled by animals (cf. Jdgs. 16:21).

▣ **"thrown into the sea"** Jews, being semi-desert dwellers, were always afraid of large bodies of water.

Even Solomon's fleet was manned by Phoenicians, not Jews. Drowning was a terrifying prospect.

The severity of the warning is surprising. It could possibly be

1. a way of showing how important these new believers are to God
2. a way of referring to apostasy or causing these new believers to renounce their new faith (see Special Topic at Luke 6:46)
3. simply an eastern hyperbole, so common in Jesus' teachings

■ **"one of these little ones"** This is not referring to children, but to new believers (cf. Matthew 18 and I Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, chapter 46).

NASB, NRSV "to stumble"

NKJV "offend"

TEV "to sin"

NJB "the downfall"

This is the term *skandalizō*, which literally meant a baited animal trap trigger (the noun is used in Luke 17:1). It came to be used metaphorically of something that caused someone to be tempted, an impediment in one's spiritual or moral growth, or an occasion for sinning.

It is often used of someone taking offense to Jesus or the gospel (cf. Matt. 11:6; 13:57; 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11), but this does not fit in this context if it is addressing believers. If, however, the target audience is Pharisees, then this connotation is right on target.

If believers are the audience, then it refers to godly living and forgiveness (cf. Luke 17:3-4). The Christian community must be one of openness, godliness, forgiveness, and fellowship. Wounded believers are a major problem (cf. 1 Cor. 8:12), then and now!

17:3

NASB, NRSV "Be on guard"

NKJV "Take heed to yourself"

TEV "So watch what you do"

NJB "Keep watch on yourselves"

This is a present active imperative, which denotes an ongoing command. Believers must guard their actions and personal choices (cf. Heb. 2:1; 2 Pet. 1:19). We are our brothers' (lost and saved) keeper!

Luke uses this term literally, "take heed to yourselves" (*prosechete heautois*) often in his writings (cf. Luke 12:1; 17:3; 21:34; Acts 5:35; 20:28 and just the verb in Luke 20:46).

■ **"If. . .if"** These are Third class conditional sentences, which speak of potential action. It is amazing to me how much the Bible talks about forgiving as evidence of forgiveness (cf. Matt. 6:12,14-15; 18:21-35; Luke 6:38).

■ **"your brother sins, rebuke him"** This is an Aorist active imperative, which denotes urgency. This is paralleled in Matt. 18:15-18 and is discussed in Gal. 6:1-5. As the family of God, we are responsible for one another.

■ **"if he repents"** This is an aorist active subjunctive with *ean*, which denotes a third class conditional sentence. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#) at Luke 3:3.

■ **"forgive him"** This is another aorist active imperative, which denotes urgency. Believers are not to hold grudges or become bitter towards each other. Forgiveness always cleanses two hearts!

17:4 "And if he sins against you seven times a day" This is a third class conditional sentence. Peter asks this question in the parallel in Matt. 18:21-22.

■ **"returns to you seven times, saying 'I repent'"** This may reflect the OT term for repent (*shub*, "turn") and the Greek word "repent" (*metanoēō*). Fellowship and restoration are not affected by numbers (7 x 70 in Matt. 18:21-22), but by an attitude of acceptance, which is modeled by a gracious God and a sacrificial Messiah. Believers are to emulate the love and forgiveness of the Trinity (cf. 1 John 3:16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

■ **"forgive him"** This is a future active indicative used in the sense of the aorist active imperative of verse 3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 17:5-6

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" ⁶And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.

17:5 "Increase our faith" This is another aorist active imperative denoting urgency. In light of Jesus' statements in Luke 17:1-4, the Twelve felt a need for even greater faith to fulfill the ideals and requirements of the New Covenant, the gospel, and the New Age! This does not refer to saving faith, but daily faith, faithfulness in working with people—imperfect, impatient, often unloving, ungrateful believers and unbelievers!

17:6 "If you had faith" The initial phrase of this conditional sentence is first class, which is assumed to be true, but the second phrase is introduced with "an," which denotes a second class. The implication would be that Jesus knows they have faith, but will they use it appropriately (i.e., interpersonal relationships)?

■ **"like a mustard seed"** A good source of quick but accurate information about the animals and plants of the Bible is United Bible Societies' *Helps For Translators: Fauna and Flora of the Bible*.

The article on "mustard" (*sinapi*) is on pp. 145-146. The seed referred to by Jesus is from the common black mustard plant. The seed is not actually the smallest (orchid), but was proverbial in Palestine for its smallness.

■ **"mulberry tree"** The exact type of tree that Jesus is referring to is uncertain. Only Luke uses the name of these related and often confused trees in the NT:

1. mulberry tree (*sukaminos*) – brought from Persia. It is referred to only here in the NT (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol. 2, p. 226, calls it a "black mulberry")
2. sycamore tree (*sukomoreā*) – a large tree (cf. Luke 19:4; A. T. Robertson calls it a "white mulberry")

The context demands a large tree in contrast to the very small seed. The meaning is that a little faith can affect large or great things (a Matthew parallel [17:20] has mountain instead of a tree).

Theologically it must be stressed that it is not the amount of faith, or the enthusiasm, or commitment which a person has that causes the results, but the object of his faith. Human faith is not the key, but faith in Jesus. He is the source of the effectiveness!

■ **"Be uprooted and be planted by the sea"** This is obviously a hyperbolic idiom. Trees cannot be planted in the sea. It expresses the impossible, similar to 18:25. But what is impossible for humans is possible for God!

These are both aorist passive imperatives. Faith in Christ makes a visible difference in one's situation and attitude. In context these believers loving and caring for each other was very difficult, but faith in Jesus would enable them to love and forgive one another.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 17:7-10

7"Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? **8**But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and *properly* clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? **9**He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? **10**So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done *only* that which we ought to have done.'"

17:7-10 This is an entirely new literary unit. This is a very important statement that reminds us that all of our works and efforts do not merit God's love. This is a truth that is often forgotten, especially by church workers. God always acts in grace, never as a reward for human merit. Believers are slaves who have been turned into children. We must love and care for the rest of the family.

17:7 There is a series of rhetorical questions here. This is typical of Jesus' teaching in the Synoptic Gospels. In Luke's Gospel notice: 2:49; 5:21-23,34; 6:32-34,46; 7:24-26; 9:25; 11:5-7; 13:2-4; 14:28,31,34; 16:11-12; 17:7-9,17-18;18:7-8; 22:27,48,52.

Verse 7 contextually expects a "no" answer. MS D even adds the MĒ particle.

17:8 This question expects a "yes" answer (use of *ou*).

17:9 This question expects a "no" answer (use of MĒ).

17:10 Is this text saying

1. that the slave, after his long day in the field, should go and eat first before serving the owner's meal (TEV, NJB)
2. that he should sit down with the owner and eat (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NIV)
3. even that he should be served by the owner (cf. Luke 12:37, which would be another dramatic reversal of roles so characteristic of Luke)

There is surely ambiguity here, but the intent of the paragraph is clear.

The very opposite of this is found in Luke 12:37. Eastern literature often approaches truth by presenting the opposites! Modern western interpreters often miss the significant differences between eastern and western literary forms. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: EASTERN LITERATURE](#) at Luke 9:50.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 17:11-19

11While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. **12**As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; **13**and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" **14**When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. **15**Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, **16**and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. **17**Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? **18**Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" **19**And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

17:11-19 This is a new topic.

17:11 "While He was on the way to Jerusalem" Remember we are in a larger literary unit unique to Luke's Gospel, structured as Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:51-19:28).

NASB "He was passing between Samaria and Galilee"

NKJV	"He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee"
NRSV	"Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee"
TEV	"he went along the border between Samaria and Galilee"
NJB	"he was traveling in the borderlands of Samaria and Galilee"

"Between" or "through" (i.e., *dia* with the accusative) is found in MSS κ , B, and L.

1. Jesus is moving south, so Galilee should have been listed first
2. by this time, Jesus should be far more to the south than the border of Galilee and Samaria
3. Jesus is moving eastward along the border to take a traditional route south to Jerusalem

This reaffirms my contention that Luke is not primarily in chronological order, but in theological order.

17:12 "ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him" These diseased people (lepers) were forced to live in isolated, communal settings where all normal social barriers were removed (cf. Num. 5:1-3). It seems in this context that the lepers were made up of Jews and Samaritans. The rabbis assert that this was a divine illness sent by God on sinners (cf. 2 Kgs. 5:25-27; 15:5; 2 Chr. 26:16-23).

17:13 "Master" This is the Greek term *epistatēs*. See note at Luke 5:5. It was a title of respect. Whether it had theological implications is hard to know. These men had hope that Jesus could and would help them. They must have heard about Him.

17:14 "Go and show yourselves to the priests" The lepers had to act (an aorist passive [deponent] participle used in an imperatival sense and an aorist active imperative) in faith on Jesus' pronouncement that they were cleansed although their skin was still diseased (cf. Lev. 13:14 and 2 Kgs. 5:8-14).

This may have been Jesus' attempt to witness to the priests of Jerusalem even before His arrival. It also shows that Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic Law in His attentiveness to these Levitical regulations.

17:15 Only one cured leper turned back to give thanks, as did Naaman in 2 Kgs. 5:15.

17:16 "And he was a Samaritan" This seems to be an editorial comment by Luke or his source. The hatred between the Jews and Samaritans began after the Assyrian exile of the Northern Ten Tribes in 722 b.c. The subsequent imported Gentile population married the remaining Jewish population and the Judean Jews considered them religious half-breeds and refused to have any social or religious contract with them whatsoever. Jesus used this intense bias in two different parables that speak of God's love for all men (cf. Luke 10:25-37). This context also speaks of believers' need to love and forgive one another (cf. Luke 17:1-6).

17:19 "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well" This construction is parallel to Luke 17:14 (aorist active participles used in an imperatival sense and a present middle [deponent] Imperative).

▣ Notice that faith is the hand that received Jesus' power. The man's faith did not cure him; Jesus cured him by means of his faith (cf. Luke 7:9,50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42; Mark 5:34; 10:52; Matt. 9:22,29; 15:28).

The verb is a perfect active indicative implying the cure remained. The verb is *sōzō*, the normal term for salvation in the NT, however, here it is used in its OT sense of physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15). Surely this man was both physically and spiritually saved (purposeful ambiguity). What a tragedy physical healing would be which resulted in eternal death! The man's request and gratitude reveal his faith in Jesus. But what of the other healthy nine?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 17:20-21

²⁰Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; ²¹nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

17:20 "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees" They had been present in the crowd which followed Jesus. They were present at all of Jesus' public teaching times and miracles.

▣ **"when the kingdom of God was coming"** The Pharisees (see Special Topic at Luke 5:17) were particularly interested in the afterlife, in contradistinction to the Sadducees (see Special Topic at Luke 20:27), who denied it. This is similar to the questions asked by several disciples in Mark 13:4. Luke's Gospel is unique in that it divides Jesus' eschatological discussion into two separate passages, Luke 17:20-37 and Luke 21. In both Matthew and Mark this eschatological passage is in one chapter (cf. Matthew 24 and Mark 13). Jesus may have repeated these teachings in different places at different times. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#) at Luke 4:21.

▣ **"not coming with signs to be observed"** This is a medical term for closely watching the symptoms and making a diagnosis. Here it is used of careful observation. Luke uses it often to denote the Scribes (see Special Topic at Luke 5:21) and Pharisees watching Jesus to find something with which to condemn Him (cf. Luke 6:7; 14:1; 20:20).

17:21 "nor will they say, 'Look, here it is or, "There it is"'" This introduces Luke 17:23 (cf. Matt. 24:23,26). The implication is that Jesus' return will be seen and known by all (cf. Luke 17:24; Matt. 24:27).

NASB "the kingdom of God is in your midst"
NKJV, TEV "the Kingdom of God is within you"
NRSV, NJB "the Kingdom of God is among you"

This is used in a sense of (1) within each of you or (2) among you (plural). In *The Jerome Biblical Commentary, NT*, p. 150, the three exegetical choices of the ancient church are mentioned.

1. within you — the Gospel of Thomas

Hippolytus

Origen

Athanasius

Ambrose

Jerome

Bede

2. in your midst — Ephraem

Cyril of Alexandria

Theophylat

3. within your grasp — Tertullian

Cyprian

This refers to their personal faith response to Jesus, therefore, options #2 and 3 fit this context best. Option #1 would not apply to Pharisees! It would seem to be a "Gnostic" type theological statement. Jesus' personal presence brought the kingdom, and His personal return will consummate it. It is the reign of God in human hearts now that will one day be consummated over all the earth. When Jesus prays in the Lord's Prayer that "His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" (cf. Matt. 6:10), He is praying for the kingdom to come. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#) at Luke 4:21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 17:22-37

²²And He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. ²³They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after *them*. ²⁴For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. ²⁵But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. ²⁶And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: ²⁷they were

eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; ²⁹but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. ³²Remember Lot's wife. ³³Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses *his life* will preserve it. ³⁴I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. ³⁵There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. ³⁶[Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.] ³⁷And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered."

17:22 "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man" The phrase "the days will come" seems to imply times of trials, persecution, illness, etc. Although post-millennialists (see *The Meaning of the Millennium, Four Views*, ed. By Robert Glouise) have asserted that things are going to get better and better and then the Lord will return, the Bible seems to teach that things are going to get worse and worse before the Lord's return (cf. Dan. 12:1; Rom. 8:18-23).

▣ **"the Son of Man"** This seems to be a self-designation used by Jesus that comes from Ezek. 2:1 and Dan. 7:13, which implies both human and divine qualities. See fuller note at Luke 6:5 and Special Topic at Luke 5:24.

▣ **"you will not see it"** Jesus is addressing the disciples in Luke 17:22-27. Therefore, this must denote

1. they will be killed and suffer persecution before His return
2. there will be a delay in the *Parousia* (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2)
3. it will come suddenly with no advance signs or warning

Jesus clearly admitted that He did not know the time or date of His return (cf. Matt. 24:36), but this phrase implies a delay.

17:23 "They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!'" This verse is related to Luke 17:24, which assures the believers that Jesus will have a public, visible coming of which none of His disciples will be ignorant.

NASB	"Do not go away, and do not run after <i>them</i>"
NKJV	"Do not go after <i>them</i> or follow <i>them</i>"
NRSV	"Do not go, do not set off in pursuit"
TEV	"But don't go out looking for it"
NJB	"Make no move; do not set off in pursuit"

These are both aorist active subjunctives used in the sense of imperatives. The aorist subjunctive with the negative particle means "do not even start." Believers are not to get caught up in end-time frenzy or fanatical speculation on supposed physical manifestations.

17:24 This verse is paralleled in Matt. 24:27, but is absent in Mark 13. It is asserting that Jesus' return will be visible and obvious to all, no secret coming! Matthew 24:40-41 (Luke 17:27) in context refers to those who are killed in judgment ("as in the days of Noah"), not a select group of Gentile believers or the visible church.

There is a Greek manuscript variant related to the close of the verse. Some ancient Greek texts have "in His day" (cf. MSS κ , A, L, W, and the Vulgate and Syriac Versions). However, several other ancient

manuscripts do not have it (cf. MSS P⁷⁵, B, and some Coptic Versions). Textually it is impossible to choose between these manuscripts, however, the phrase is found only here in the NT and may have caused scribes' confusion. The most unusual reading is probably original. See Appendix Two. But as so often is the case with these variants, the thrust of the passage is not affected by either choice.

17:25 "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation" Jesus has revealed this message several times to His disciples (cf. Matt. 16:21; 17:9,12,22-23; 20:18-19; Mark 8:31; 9:12; Luke 9:22,44; 12:50; 13:32-33; 18:32-33). A suffering Messiah was unexpected by the Jews of Jesus' day (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23), but the OT passages, as well as NT, are specific.

1. Genesis 3:15
2. Psalm 22; 118:22
3. Isaiah 8:14; 52:13-53:12
4. Zechariah 12:10
5. Luke 2:34
6. Matthew 21:42-46
7. Acts 2:23

■ **"this generation"** Jesus used this phrase to refer to those contemporary Palestinian Jews who heard Him speak, but did not believe (cf. Luke 7:31; 9:41; 11:29,30,31,32,51; 16:8; 17:25; 21:32; Acts 2:40). "He came to His own and those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). This phrase is used in such a way as to clearly reveal that the way people respond to Jesus determines their destiny. The kingdom was inaugurated by Jesus' incarnation and will be consummated at His return.

17:26 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah" Noah's life is described in Genesis 6-9. The emphasis here is the continuation of the normal activities of life before the flood (cf. Luke 17:27-30; Matt. 24:36-39). Only eight people prepared for God's coming Judgment (cf. Gen. 7:7,13).

17:28-29 "Lot" Lot's life in Sodom is described in Gen. 12:5,13-14,19.

17:30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed" This context asserts several things about the Second Coming:

1. that it will be visible and public (cf. Luke 17:23,24)
2. that there will be normal social life (cf. Luke 17:27)
3. that it will be sudden
4. that it will be unexpected

This same revelation is described in Matt. 16:27; 24:29-44; 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Thess. 4:12-18; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7; and Rev. 11:15-19; 19:1-21.

17:31-32 This context has three examples which emphasize that believers should not be unduly concerned with worldly possessions or entanglements. These are used in other contexts with different applications. This leads me to believe that Jesus used the same teachings in different settings and in different ways. The three mentioned are

1. the person on the roof (cf. Matt. 24:17)
2. the man in the field
3. the negative example of one who turned back, Lot's wife (cf. Gen. 19:26)

Matthew 24 seems to combine the problems which will be present at the Second Coming with the problems related to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman general (later Emperor), Titus in a.d. 70. Verses 31-32 (cf. Matt. 24:17-18) may refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in the sense that some took Jesus' warnings and fled, but others did not act and were killed. Whatever the context (a.d. 70 or end-time) this is a context of the fate of unprepared, unexpecting unbelievers!

17:33 "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it" The term "keep" in the middle voice, means to acquire, gain, or earn. Jesus' call to discipleship was a call to personal abandonment (cf. Gal. 2:20; 1 John

3:16). It is a radical decision of self denunciation (cf. Luke 9:24; Matt. 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; John 12:25).

The term "life" is literally the term *psuche*, often translated "soul," but it refers to the entire person. See note at Luke 12:19.

This same teaching is found in Luke 9:24 and Matt. 10:34-39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; John 12:25, which deals with the need for ultimate commitment to Jesus alone.

17:34 "on that night" This refers to the night of the Lord's return (cf. Luke 17:30).

▣ **"two in one bed"** The Greek idiom can mean a man and his wife.

17:34-35 These two examples are often used as a proof-text for a secret rapture of believers (by dispensational premillennialists). However, in this context, it seems to emphasize the separation of the lost and saved at the Second Coming, by the angels (cf. Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27). In this context it is the judgment on the unprepared, the unbelieving ("as in the day of Noah," cf. Matt. 24:40-41). I do not believe in a secret rapture, but rather the visible return of the Lord, along the lines of 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

17:36 Verse 36 is not found in the early Greek manuscripts P⁷⁵, κ , A, B, L, or W. It comes from Matt. 24:40 and seems to be included in this parallel passage by a later scribe. The UBS⁴ committee rated its omission as "certain."

17:37 The exact meaning of this statement is uncertain. It is obvious the people who heard Jesus speak understood what He meant. It possibly

1. relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, as do Luke 17:31-32
2. is a common proverb (cf. Matt. 24:48)
3. means the spiritually dead attract God's judgment

The term "eagle" (*aetos*) is also used in a similar way in Matt. 24:28. The OT background is that the birds of prey (vultures) are attracted to battles and slaughter (cf. Job 39:26-30; Ezek. 39:17; Hab. 1:8). This implies an end-time judgment scene.

If it is true that Luke, like Matthew 24, refers to the fall of Jerusalem (cf. Luke 17:31-35), then it is possible that "eagle" may refer to the Roman army, whose standards were topped with eagles.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this chapter primarily written for the disciples or the Pharisees?
2. Why did the Jews hate the Samaritans?
3. Will the Second Coming be expected or unexpected, visible or secret?
4. Does the NT use the term "rapture"?
Define the concept in your own terms.

LUKE 18

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Parable of the Widow and the Judge	The Parable of the Persistent Widow	The Unjust Judge	The Parable of the Widow and the Judge	The Unscrupulous Judge and the Importunate Widow
18:1-8	18:1-8	18:1-8	18:1-5 18:6-8	18:1-5 18:6-8
The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector	The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector	Pharisee and Tax Collector	The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector	The Pharisee and the Tax Collector
18:9-14	18:9-14	18:9-14	18:9-14	18:9-14
Little Children Blessed	Jesus Blesses Little Children	From Galilee to Jerusalem (18:15-19:27) Blessing the Children	Jesus Blesses Little Children	Jesus and the Children
18:15-17	18:15-17	18:15-17	18:15-17	18:15-17
The Rich Ruler	Jesus Counsels the Rich Young Ruler	The Rich Ruler	The Rich Man	The Rich Aristocrat
18:18-23	18:18-23	18:18-25	18:18 18:19-20 18:21 18:22-23	18:18-23 The Danger of Riches
18:24-30	18:24-30	18:26-27 18:28-30	18:24-25 18:26 18:27 18:28 18:29-30	18:24-27 The Reward of Renunciation 18:28-30
A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection	Jesus A Third Time Predicts His Death and Resurrection	The Passion Foretold Again	Jesus Speaks a Third Time About His Death	Third Prophecy of the Passion
18:31-34	18:31-34	18:31-34	18:31-33 18:34	18:31-34
The Healing of a Blind Beggar Near Jericho	A Blind Man Receives His Sight	A Blind Man Healed	Jesus Heals a Blind Beggar	Entering Jericho: the Blind Man
18:35-43	18:35-43	18:35-43	18:35-36	18:35-43

18:37

18:38

18:39

18:40-41a

18:41b

18:43

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) Jesus' teaching is often illustrated by parables.
- B. Parables (OT *mashal*, BDB 605 II) take many forms.
 1. proverb (Luke 4:23)
 2. story (Luke 15 and 16)
 3. allegory (Luke 8:4-15)
 4. simile (Luke 13:19,21; 17:6)
 5. contrast (Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8)
- C. For guidelines on the interpretation of parables, see the introduction to Luke 8.
- D. This chapter is connected by the question of saving faith.
 1. First parable (Luke 18:1-8), will the Son of Man find faith (persistent, prayerful faith) when He returns?
 2. Second parable (Luke 18:9-14), the wrong kind of faith (self-righteous) versus repentant faith (the sinner, tax collector).
 3. Parabolic example (Luke 18:15-17), Jesus and childlike faith without which no one can enter the kingdom.
 4. Parabolic example (Luke 18:18-30), priority faith (rich, young, moral ruler). Jesus and the Kingdom must be number one!
 5. Jesus' sacrificial death (Luke 18:31-34) is the key to eternal life which is received by faith.
 6. Prophetic example (Luke 18:35-43) of the blind receiving their sight (physical and spiritual), which is the work of the "suffering" Messiah by faith (cf. Luke 18:42).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 18:1-8

¹Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, ²saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. ³There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' ⁴For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" ⁶And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; ⁷now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? ⁸I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

18:1 "Now He was telling them a parable" This is an antithetical or contrasting parable similar to Luke 11:5-13. It is a story that relates to the exact opposite of what God is truly like. The pronoun "them" refers to the disciples (cf. Luke 16:1; 17:5,22,37; 17:37).

■ **"that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart"** Notice the Greek terms:

1. *dei*, which means "ought" or "necessary."

2. *pas*, here in adverbial form (*panote*), which means "always."

This phrase is a mandate to keep on praying and not become discouraged (cf. Eph. 6:18). In several parallel passages in Paul's writings, persistent prayer is linked to thanksgiving (cf. Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:3; 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17-18).

Prayer is a worldview; thanksgiving is an attitude; both dictate believers' actions toward people and circumstances.

■ **"not to lose heart"** The Greek term is *egkakeō* (cf. 2 Cor. 4:1,16; Gal. 6:9; Eph. 3:13; 2 Thess. 3:13), which is probably the same as *ekkakeō*, which literally means "not to give in to the bad," but metaphorically to be faint, to be remiss, or to be slothful.

18:2 "a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man" He was not swayed by God's opinion or mankind's opinion. His judgments were based on personal interest or personal preference.

18:3 "a widow" Again Luke shows Jesus' concern and care for the socially powerless and/or ostracized. Widows were often taken advantage of in Jewish society (cf. Exod. 22:21-24; Deut. 10:18; 24:17). Luke is characterized by Jesus' interaction with and care for women.

■ **"give me legal protection"** This could mean vindicate or give me justice (cf. Luke 18:7 and 8).

18:4 "for a while he was unwilling" This is an imperfect active indicative, which denotes the judge's ongoing refusal to act on behalf of the widow.

■ **"even though"** This is a first class conditional sentence (cf. Robert Nanna, *A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 123), which asserts the reality of the statements of Luke 18:2.

In a sense this is similar to Luke 15:17. This judge had an epiphany; he came to himself. He began to realize the consequences of his decision.

18:5 "wear me out" This literally meant "to blacken one's eye" (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). Here it is used metaphorically of someone or something that continually bothers.

18:7 "not" This is a double negative, which was a strong way of expressing "no, never under any circumstances."

1. Our heavenly Father is exactly the opposite of the unrighteous, inattentive, self-seeking judge.
2. His delay has a beneficial purpose (i.e., full number of the elect, cf. Rom. 11:25; John 10:16).

■ **"who cry to Him day and night"** This phrase characterizes the persistent prayers of the elect (cf. Luke 11:9-13; Matt. 7:7-12). Persistence does not overcome God's reluctance, but it demonstrates trust and conviction.

■ **"His elect"** This is an OT way of referring to God's people, especially as servants (cf. Isa. 42-43; 44:28-45:7).

SPECIAL TOPIC: Election/predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance

■ **"who cry to Him day and night"** This is a way of expressing continual action (i.e., always). The order of "day and night" reflects a Gentile idiom, while 2:37, "night and day," reflects a Hebrew idiom. Luke was a researcher. He used his sources' idioms, yet he was also an editor and compiler and at times his own idioms become part of his Gospel (cf. Acts 9:24; 20:31; 26:7).

■ **"will He delay long over them"** This is the second of two rhetorical questions in Luke 18:7 which contrast God and the attitude of this wicked judge. The first question expects a "yes" answer and this, the second question, a "no" answer.

The Greek "delay" (*makrothumeō*, put wrath far away) is ambiguous and may mean one of two things:

1. help for the persistent elect to grow in faith
2. more time for the wicked to repent (cf. Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9)
3. the NASB (1970) has a marginal alternate translation, "and yet He is longsuffering over them," which denotes the patience of God with sinners

18:8 This is a surprising conclusion to this parable. It seems to be unrelated to the story. Jesus' return will be the mechanism of God's bringing justice to the elect (cf. Rev. 6:9-11).

What then does the prepositional phrase *en tachei* mean: (1) suddenly or (2) quickly? Is this a contrasting parable or a parable of differing motives for a delayed adjudication?

Many commentators assert that Luke's Gospel suggests a delayed Second Coming and tries to prepare a Gentile audience for this surprising development (ex. 12:35-48; 17:22-30).

■ **"when the Son of Man comes"** This is an emphasis on the eschatological coming of the Messiah as Judge. The term "Son of Man" is primarily drawn from Ezek. 2:1 and Dan. 7:13, where it combines human and divine qualities. See Special Topic at Luke 17:22.

■ **"will He find faith on the earth"** The NT emphasizes the physical, bodily return of Jesus Christ. However, it does not tell us when or how. It does tell us to be actively involved in the kingdom's work and to be ready moment-by-moment for His coming. This phrase seems to reflect this two-pronged piece of advice.

"Faith" has the definite article. This is

1. the belief that God will answer their prayers for help (cf. Luke 18:7). His best answer will be sending His Son back into the world a second time to set all things straight as He promised.
2. M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, p. 204, takes *kai* as "yet" (cf. John 9:30; 16:32), which implies not a direct contrast to the wicked judge, but gives reason for God's delay in answering His elect (the faith development).
3. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, pp. 127-141, thinks it relates to the soon-coming event of Passion Week, described in Luke 18:31-34. These disciples will need persistent prayer and faith development very soon.
4. This is faith in Christ or Christianity.

The emphasis may be on what believers are praying for. Are they asking God repeatedly for personal things or kingdom things? If personal things, then believers are more like the unrighteous judge than they want to admit.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 18:9-14

⁹And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

18:9 "He also told this parable" This is the second parable about persistence in prayer.

▣ **"to some people"** Parables are addressed to the Pharisees and disciples in Luke 15-17, but here to "people" (i.e., the crowd, also note 15:3; 19:11). Context implies the ones addressed were Pharisees (cf. Luke 16:14-15). Parables are always told in public settings. They either make clear or hide truth, depending on the heart of the hearer!

▣ **"who trusted in themselves that they were righteous"** The term "trusted" is a perfect active participle of the term *peithō*, which is translated in the NT as "persuade," "trust" or "be assured." Jesus addresses those Jews (and all people) who think they are right with God based on their ancestry, attitudes, and actions. The Jews of Jesus' day considered (1) prayer (cf. Matt. 6:4-5), (2) almsgiving (cf. Matt. 6:2-4), and (3) fasting (cf. Matt. 6:16-18) as acts which brought personal righteousness (cf. Matt. 6:1).

The former parable dealt with a judge who did not believe in or respect God. This parable deals with those who outwardly seem to believe and respect God, but in actuality were trusting in their own goodness and performance. They felt God owed them! They expected to be fully compensated for their righteous acts (almsgiving, fasting, and prayer, as well as their keeping the rules of the Oral Tradition of the elders).

Self-righteousness may be the most dangerous sin of "religious" people (cf. Luke 10:29; 16:15; 18:9,14).

18:9 "and viewed others with contempt" The Greek term *exoutheneō* is used only by Luke (cf. Luke 18:9; 23:11; Acts 4:11 [LXX]) and Paul (cf. Rom. 14:3,10; 1 Cor. 1:28; 6:4; 16:11; 2 Cor. 10:10; Gal. 4:14; 1 Thess. 5:20). This judgmental attitude is the major problem of legalistic, religious people. God is longsuffering, but often those who claim to know Him and belong to Him are just the opposite!

The term "others" in the NASB is literally "the rest," which denotes the Pharisees' judgmental attitude. From their perspective all others were unacceptable and out of the love of God. Only their group (sect) was righteous! In this specific case, this Pharisee even stands off from all the other worshipers. He may have seen himself as even more righteous than other Pharisees.

18:10 "the temple to pray" There were three times of daily prayer in Judaism of the first century. Nine a.m. and three p.m. were the times of the daily sacrifice at the temple (the continual). The religious leaders of Jerusalem added noon as a third time of daily prayer. The setting of this parable would have been at 9 a.m. or 3 p.m.

▣ **"one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector"** The first was noted for his sincere religiosity and commitment to doing God's will. The second was known as a social outcast, friend of Rome, and totally ostracized from the religious community of Israel (cf. Luke 5:30; 7:34; 9:2,7; 15:1).

18:11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself" Here was the man who was praying to God while reviewing his own accomplishments (cf. Luke 18:12). When interpreting parables one looks for the "surprise," the unexpected turn of events, the role reversal. This is the key in understanding the parable (cf. Luke 18:13-14).

The phrase, "these things to himself," which comes after "standing," has several different forms in the Greek manuscript tradition. It very possibly reflects an Aramaic idiom, "taking his stand, prayed" (cf. C. C. Torey, *Our Translated Gospels*, p. 79 and M. Black, *Aramaic Approach*, 3rd ed., p. 103, from Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 168, footnote #1).

So the question for interpreters is, "Does this phrase refer to (1) thinking to himself (NASB, TEV) or (2) standing apart from the tax collector (NRSV)?"

■ **"I thank you that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector"** This man was trusting in his religious practice. We must remember that the prophet Isaiah says that human works of righteousness in connection with a merited salvation are as filthy rags before God (cf. Isa. 64:6). This parable and other parables in this chapter emphasize the need for a personal relationship through a contrite heart (repentance) and faith in the person and finished work of Jesus the Christ. God's grace and Jesus' sacrificial death are the sinner's only hope!

18:12 "I fast twice a week" The Pharisees of Jesus' day fasted (see Special Topic at Luke 5:33) on Monday and Thursday in commemoration of Moses' going up and coming down from Mt. Sinai, receiving the law from God. They went far beyond the OT requirement of one fast day a year (cf. Leviticus 16), the Day of Atonement (cf. Zechariah 7-8). In the interbiblical period the rabbis also set up another annual fast day to commemorate the destruction of the Temple in 586 b.c. by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (cf. Jeremiah 52; Lamentations 1-5).

■ **"I pay tithes of all that I get"** It is not that his tithing was inappropriate. It was the attitude behind the tithe ("of all") that turns this into self-righteousness instead of devotion. This Pharisee depended on what he did, not on God's mercy and grace. He went far beyond the requirement of the law (cf. Deut. 14:22), but he missed God! This is the tragedy of self-righteous legalism! So many "do nots," but so little "love" (cf. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18).

Just a thought or two on tithing as a Christian requirement. Surprisingly the NT does not give us guidelines for regular giving. It does discuss the proper motives for the one-time gift of Paul's Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Corinthians 8-9). Tithing is a Jewish practice to support the temple, the local Levites, and the poor. However, Acts 15 clearly states that Gentile believers are not bound or obligated to a Jewish tithe to the Temple and its personnel.

Many of the sermons I hear on tithing use OT texts (especially Malachi) and try to force tithing through fear of divine retribution or promises of divine blessing (greed). There is a good article on tithing in Frank Stagg's *New Testament Theology*, pp. 290-293. Believers' whole lives ought to be a gift to Christ and His kingdom out of gratitude for a full and free salvation! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHING](#) at Luke 11:42.

18:13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast" Notice the three phrases related to this man's reluctance before God.

1. standing some distance away (perfect active participle)
2. not looking up to heaven (imperfect active indicative with a double negative)
3. beating his breast (imperfect active indicative)

Phrase #3 may be a gesture of repentance or agitation (cf. Luke 23:48) by striking one's heart (the center of the person, cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 7.10.5).

Also note that everything this man does is opposite to the self-righteous Pharisee (especially noted is the "stance": the Pharisee took his stance away from the crowd of worshipers and apparently closer to the altar, while the tax collector took his stand away from the crowd and farther away from the altar).

This is the biblical foundation for our cultural tradition of bowing our heads and closing our eyes in prayer, however, the Jewish posture for prayer was the hands lifted, the eyes open with the face lifted to

heaven. The key in prayer is not the position of the body, but of the heart!

■ **"God, be merciful to me"** This is an aorist passive imperative. The word "merciful" (*hilaskomai*, found only here in Luke's writings) is from the same root as the term "mercy seat" or the "place of atonement" (in the Septuagint, *hilastērion*) in the sacrificial system of Israel (cf. Heb. 9:5). In the Septuagint this Greek verb is used to translate the Hebrew *salach* (BDB 699), which is exclusively used of God's forgiveness towards sinners (cf. Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 135). Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, p. 154, says in Syriac it means, "make an atonement for me." Remember they are in a public worship setting at the time of the sacrifice of a lamb (twice daily) for Israel. This sinner cries out from his heart, "let that blood be for me!"

■ **"the sinner"** This parable describes two Jews: one a Pharisee who thinks he is right with God because of all he does and a tax collector who knows that he is estranged from God. He feels himself "chief of sinners" (use of the definite article). Is it not ironic that the second went away right with God and the first went away estranged from God (cf. Rom. 10:2-4). What a culturally shocking role reversal!

18:14 "went to his house justified" This is a perfect passive participle which refers to believers' position of forgiveness from a merciful God. It was a gift freely given! This is analogous to Paul's justification by faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Galatians 3; Rom. 3:21-31; 4:5). The Pharisee was a moral man, but he was also a spiritually lost man because he trusted in himself and did not think he needed God's mercy and forgiveness. This is the Jewish religionist Isaiah is talking about in Isa. 6:9-10 and 29:13.

For "justified" see Special Topic: Righteousness at Luke 1:6.

■ **"everyone who exalts himself will be humbled"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 57:15 (cf. Isa. 66:2; Ps. 34:18; 51:17). This was first introduced in Luke 14:11 (cf. Matt. 23:12). What a shocking role reversal from the OT perspective of Deuteronomy 27-29! The New Covenant depreciates human performance (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

■ **"but he who humbles himself will be exalted"** The word "exalted" (*hupsoō*) is used of Pharisees in Luke 16:15. It is used in connection with the humble in Luke 1:52; 14:11 (cf. Matt. 23:12). This does not mean exalted among others in the society, but refers to one's relationship with God. God raises the humble into intimacy with Himself.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 18:15-17

15And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they *began* rebuking them. **16**But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **17**Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

18:15ff We have been in an extended literary context from 9:51-18:14 which has no direct parallel in the other Synoptic Gospels. At verse 15 Luke returns to the Markan chronology.

■ **"they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them"** We must remember that in the Jewish traditions of this day these children were not thought to be saved by the prayer of the rabbi, but blessed for a happy, healthy, and prosperous life. They were thought to be saved because they were a part of national Israel. Therefore, this context has nothing to do with the salvation of children. We are dealing with the concept of rabbinical blessings for little ones.

In this context, we clearly see the heart of Jesus.

1. Jesus really does care for little children
2. this is not a passage on children only, but primarily a passage on child-like faith (cf. Matt. 18:3) that adults must have to be saved

3. Jesus always shows love to the neglected and ostracized groups of society like children, women, widows, and notorious sinners

This passage is similar to Matthew 18 with new believers being identified as little ones who believe in Jesus (cf. Matt. 18:6).

■ **"babies"** The Greek term *brephos* can mean

1. an unborn child (cf. Luke 1:41,44)
2. a newly born baby (cf. Luke 2:12,16; Acts 7:19)
3. older children (cf. Luke 18:15; 2 Tim. 3:15)

The Matthew (cf. Luke 19:13-15) and Mark (cf. Luke 10:13-16) parallels use the Greek term "children" (*paidia*), which also denotes a child of any age (cf. Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 298).

The whole purpose of Jesus' analogy is that the children must be old enough to understand and exercise trust and faith in the gospel (i.e., childlike faith). For Jews this age of accountability was 13 years of age for boys (*bar mitzvah*) and 12 years for girls (*bat mitzvah*).

18:16 This verse contains two imperatives.

1. "permit" – aorist active (cf. Matt. 5:40)
2. "do not hinder" – present active with negative particle, which usually means to stop an act in process.

This verse does not imply that the Kingdom belongs to children, but to those who have childlike trust and faith in Jesus (cf. Matt. 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-31).

18:17 "truly" This is literally "Amen." See Special Topic at Luke 4:24.

■ **"whoever does not receive the kingdom of God"** There are several items that attract my attention.

1. "whoever" – the gospel is for all but must be accepted, received, believed.
2. "receive" – this is a negative contrast to John 1:12. The two verses use different words, but the theological concept is the same.
3. "the kingdom of God" – this is a way of referring to the gospel of Jesus. Notice John 1:12 says "receive Him." One's entrance into the kingdom of God depends completely and totally on one's faith/trust/belief in the gospel of Jesus, which is Jesus Himself. The simple and boundless trust of a child characterizes true faith.
4. the kingdom must be entered – cf, Luke 13:24; 18:24,25; Matt. 18:3; Mark 10:15; Acts 14:22.

■ **"will not enter it at all"** This is the strong double negative, which means "never, no never under any circumstances." Simple, childlike trust is crucial, not just desirable. Believers must lean completely on God's character and Jesus' provision, not on their own merits or performance as a means of being accepted by God into the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Rom. 3:21-31). This is so difficult for self-righteous, legalistic, religious people of all ages and cultures.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 18:18-27

¹⁸A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁹And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. ²⁰You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" ²¹And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." ²²When Jesus heard *this*, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²³But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. ²⁴And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich

man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

18:18 "A ruler" It is uncertain exactly what this title (*archōn*) means, though in John 3:1 it refers to Nicodemus being a member of the Sanhedrin (cf. Luke 23:13,35; 24:20). It may refer to the person who was in charge of the local synagogue (cf. Luke 8:41; 14:1). It obviously refers to a well respected leader, possibly a judge (cf. Luke 12:58).

■ **"Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life"** This is exactly the same question that the Scribe asked in Luke 10:25 with an emphasis on personal performance. This is exactly the opposite of Luke 18:17. Eternal life and the Kingdom of God are parallel. See note on eternal life at Luke 18:30.

18:19 "Why do you call Me good" We must remember that this is not a theological passage dealing with the person of Jesus Christ. Many try to use this as a proof-text that Jesus did not consider Himself to be divine. This question and statement of Jesus reflects this man's understanding about his ability to be right with God based on his own efforts. This passage is similar to Matt. 19:16, which reads "teacher, what good things shall I do to obtain eternal life."

18:20 The Ten Commandments are listed in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. They basically break into two aspects: (1) human's view of and relationship to God and (2) human's view of and relationship with Covenant brothers and sisters. This list is out of order from the Masoretic Text of both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 as they relate to the proper relationship between Covenant people.

18:21 "And he said, 'All these things I have kept from my youth'" This man was not lying. He is asserting that he had lived up to all the religious requirements and traditions of his day since his *bar mitzvah* at age 13. Paul asserts this very same truth in Phil. 3:6.

We know from Rom. 1:18 through 3:23 that all men have sinned. We must remember that only the Spirit of God reveals this truth to the human heart.

This is the first required truth of the gospel. No one needs a savior until they recognize their need. Self-righteousness is a cruel and deceptive taskmaster. The gospel is only "good news" when one recognizes the bad news of Genesis 3 and human rebellion. No human will boast before God (cf. Eph. 2:8-9).

18:22 "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess" This is an aorist active imperative. Jesus recognized this man's priority structure. The parallel in Mark 10:21 and some ancient uncial manuscripts of Luke (A and W) tell that Jesus had great care and love for this man, but he would not lower the standard of the gospel to allow him to receive eternal life. This is not a universal requirement for all humans (cf. Zaccheus, Luke 19). But it is a recurring statement (cf. Luke 18:28 and 12:33-34). Jesus realized that this man's heart was not fully turned to God. Anything in our lives that keeps us from fully trusting God is an idol and must be dealt with (cf. Matt. 6:24).

It is possible that Jesus was calling this man to be a disciple like the Twelve (cf. Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21). This man could have been a significant Christian leader, but the pull of riches (cf. Luke 8:14) paralyzed the possibilities! Jesus used this very command ("come, follow Me") to call others:

1. Levi (Matthew), Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27; Matt. 9:9
2. Peter and Andrew, Matt. 4:19
3. Philip, John 1:43

However, it must also be said that this is a call to discipleship for all followers, not just the Twelve (cf. Matt. 8:22; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23,59; John 10:27; 12:26; 21:22). The gospel is

1. the welcoming of a person (Jesus)
2. believing truth about that person (the gospel, the NT)
3. living a life like that person (Christlikeness)

■ **"distribute it to the poor"** This is an aorist active imperative. Jesus cares for the poor. He always had

time for them. The issue here is not the poor as a social problem, but this man's priority structure (cf. Matt. 6:24). Remember the Jews of this day saw wealth as a gift from God for righteous living (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). Paul uses this very illustration in 1 Cor. 13:3.

■ **"treasure in heaven"** This reminds one of Matt. 6:19-21. What one considers "treasure" reveals that person's value structure.

■ **"come, follow Me"** "Come" is an adverb used in the sense of an imperative (cf. Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21). "Follow Me" is a present active imperative which emphasizes an ongoing following. Notice how Jesus switched the question from "doing good" to "following Him." He, not human performance, is the key to eternal life.

The NT emphasis is not on an initial decision, although that is certainly important, but on continuing faith and discipleship. The NT emphasizes relationship even before doctrinal content and lifestyle. These three criteria form the triad of assurance in the NT (cf. Mark 2:14; 8:34; 10:21; Matt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Luke 5:17; 9:23,59; 18:22; John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 21:22).

18:24 "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God" The disciples' reaction recorded in Luke 18:26 shows us how surprised they were that wealth was not a sign of God's blessing. Notice that the singular verbs and pronouns starting in Luke 18:18 now become plurals (general statement). Jesus is asserting here that those who have worldly things and positions tend to trust in their own resources and not in God (cf. Matt. 19:23-30; Mark 10:23-31). Jesus is addressing the problem of wealth and salvation using this ruler as an example.

18:25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" There have been several theories to describe this statement.

1. the term "needle's eye" refers to a small gate in the wall of Jerusalem only a pedestrian could walk through
2. the term "camel" (*kamēlon*) has been mistranslated and is really the term "rope" (*kamilon*)
3. this is Oriental exaggeration to make a point (cf. Luke 6:41)
4. this was a common proverb for the impossible

I believe either # 3 or #4 is correct. Number 1 has no historical corroboration (see Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 25) and #2 is first found in one late uncial Greek manuscript (MS S) and a few minuscule manuscripts (i.e., #13, 59, 124, 130, 437, 472, 543). The UBS⁴ gives "camel" and "A" rating (certain).

Matthew and Mark record this same teaching and use the Greek term *rhaphis* (needle) from *rhaptō*, to sew, but Luke, the physician, uses *belonē*, which was used of a needle to sew up wounds (a medical term).

18:26 "Then who can be saved" This is the issue! It was especially the issue of traditional Judaism which interpreted wealth and social position as evidence of God's blessing and acceptance (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). This parable directly addresses this false assumption, as do Job and Psalm 73. In this context, however, obedience and faith in Jesus is the key to eternal life, not human performance of Mosaic laws, personal wealth, or social status.

18:27 This may be an allusion to an OT characterization of YHWH (cf. Gen. 18:14; Job 42:4; Jer. 32:17,27; Zech. 8:6; Matt. 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 1:37).

God loves rich people. Abraham (and all the Patriarchs), David (and all the godly Jewish kings), Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea are good biblical examples. The key is where their faith and trust are put, in possessions or in God? See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH](#) at Luke 12:21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 18:28-30

²⁸Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own *homes* and followed You." ²⁹And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or

children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,³⁰ who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

18:28 Peter and all the Apostles were shocked at Jesus' response to this moral, sincere, prosperous, Jewish leader. They wanted to reaffirm that they had left all (cf. Luke 5:11).

18:29 "Truly" See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN](#) at Luke 4:24.

▣ **"there is no one who has left"** See Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:29-30, where the lists of things left differ.

18:30 The rewards of the kingdom are of the spirit/Spirit. There is a peace and joy now and in the future and there will be a face-to-face fellowship with the Triune God.

▣ **"not"** This is a strong double negative, which emphasizes that they will surely receive their future reward. The family one leaves will multiply into the fullness of God's family.

▣ **"the age to come"** See Special Topic at Luke 9:2.

▣ **"eternal life"** This is a characteristic of John's Gospel (cf. John 3:15; 4:36; 5:39; 6:54,68; 10:28; 12:25; 17:2-3), but it is also mentioned a few times in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt. 19:16; 25:46; Mark 10:17,30; Luke 10:25; 18:11). It seems to reflect the Hebrew of Dan. 12:12 ("everlasting [*olam*, BDB 761] life").

In Greek there are three terms for life (*bios* and *psuchē* – earthly life and *zoē* – spiritual life). This is not chronological life, but life in fellowship with God, life as it was meant to be!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 18:31-34

³¹Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³²For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, ³³and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." ³⁴But the disciples understood none of these things, and *the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.*

18:31 "Then He took the twelve aside and said to them" This is another of the predictions of Jesus' death (cf. Luke 9:22,44; 17:25). There are allusions to Jesus' death in Jerusalem mentioned in Luke 5:35; 12:50; and 13:32-33.

▣ **"and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished"** This refers to OT prophecies about the suffering, betrayal, death, and resurrection of the Messiah. (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; 41:9; 118; Isa. 53; Zech. 9:9; 11:12-13). For "Son of Man" see Special Topic at Luke 17:22.

18:32 This prophecy is fulfilled in Luke 22:63,65; 23:11.

18:33 "the third day" In Jewish reckoning of time any part of a day was counted as a full day. Jesus died before 6 p.m. on Friday, therefore, that was one day. He was in the grave all of the Sabbath; that was day two. He arose sometime before sunrise on Sunday (remember Jews start their day at 6 p.m.); that was day three.

18:34 Notice the three parallel phrases. It is so encouraging to me to know the disciples also did not fully understand Jesus' teachings and their meanings even though they lived with Him and saw His miracles (cf. Luke 2:50; 9:45; 18:34).

■ **"the meaning of this statement was hidden from them"** This is a periphrastic perfect passive. Many of Jesus' teachings did not make sense to the Apostles until after the resurrection (cf. John 12:16) and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost (cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15). They could not yet see the fullness of the gospel message because it was so different from what they had been taught and were expecting.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 18:35-43

³⁵As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. ³⁶Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. ³⁷They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. ³⁸And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, ⁴¹"What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" ⁴²And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

18:35 "As Jesus was approaching Jericho" The Synoptic Gospels have several variations of this same account: (1) Matthew has two blind men (cf. Matt. 20:30) or (2) Mark called this man Bartimaeus (cf. Mark 10:46). The seeming contradiction in location, entering (Luke 18:35) or leaving (Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46) Jericho, seems to be due to the fact that there were two Jerichos, the old city and the new one built by Herod the Great.

■ **"a blind man"** The Gospels record the healing of many blind people. It was an OT prophecy that the Messiah would heal the blind (cf. Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7,15). Physical blindness was a metaphor of spiritual blindness (cf. Isa. 42:18-19; 59:9-10; John 9).

18:37 "Jesus of Nazareth" See [SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE](#) at Luke 4:34. The fifth century uncial Greek manuscript Bezae (D) has Nazarene (cf. Luke 4:34; 24:19).

18:38 "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" This had definite Messianic overtones related to 2 Sam. 7 (cf. Luke 1:27,32; 2:4; Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; 22:42).

18:39 "telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more" This is an example of persistence mentioned in Luke 18:1-8.

18:41 "Lord" The context implies that this is more than just a polite title. This blind man had called Jesus "Son of David." He had heard about Jesus and he acted on what he had heard.

18:42 "your faith has made you well" This phrase contains two key gospel terms:

1. faith (*pistis*) – this man believed that Jesus could and would help him and he acted.
2. well (*sōzō*) – this is the term usually translated "save." In the OT it referred to physical deliverance, as it does here. It also denotes spiritual salvation, which is surely the implication of the context (cf. Luke 7:50; 8:48; 17:19).

This encounter reveals the Messianic aspect of Jesus' ministry and the faith of this blind beggar. This blind man, who had nothing, received by faith, everything (physical and spiritual), while the rich, young ruler, who had everything, lost all that was ultimately important.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of

the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the main theological thrust of the parable in Luke 18:2-8?
2. What is the parable of the Pharisee and the sinner meant to convey to us in our day?
3. Does the NT discuss the salvation of children?
4. What is the major truth of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:18-30?
5. Is Luke 18:19 a NT evidence that Jesus did not consider Himself to be God?
6. Why did the disciples not understand Jesus' words about His crucifixion and death when He told them so often about these things?

LUKE 19

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jesus and Zaccheus	Jesus Comes to Zaccheus' Home	Zaccheus	Jesus and Zaccheus	Zaccheus
19:1-10	19:1-10	19:1-10	19:1-5 19:6-7 19:8 19:9-10	19:1-10
The Parable of the Ten Pounds	The Parable of the Minas	Parable of the Pounds	The Parable of the Gold Coins	Parable of the Pounds
19:11-27	19:11-27	19:11-27	19:11-14 19:15-27	19:11-14 19:15-26 19:27
The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem	The Triumphal Entry	Palm Sunday	The Triumphant Approach to Jerusalem	The Messiah Enters Jerusalem
19:28-36	19:28-40	19:28 19:29-40	19:28-31 19:32-33 19:34-36	19:28-34 19:35-38
19:37-40			19:37-38 19:39 19:40	Jesus Defends His Disciples for Acclaiming Him 19:39-40
19:41-44	Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem		Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem	Lament for Jerusalem
19:41-44	19:41-44	19:41-44	19:41-44	19:41-44
The Cleansing of the Temple	Jesus Cleanses the Temple	Cleansing the Temple	Jesus Goes to the Temple	The Expulsion of the Dealers from the Temple
19:45-46	19:45-46	19:45-46	19:45-46	19:45-46 Jesus Teaches in the Temple
19:47-48	19:47-48	19:47-48	19:47-48	19:47-48

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 19:1-10

¹He entered Jericho and was passing through. ²And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. ³Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." ⁶And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. ⁷When they saw it, they all *began* to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." ⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

19:1 "Jericho" Jericho is one of the most ancient cities in the world. It is located about nineteen miles northeast of Jerusalem on the western side of the Jordan River close to the mouth of the Dead Sea. It was noted for its balsam wood and date palms (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 15.4.2). It was once Anthony's gift to Cleopatra. There were apparently an old town and a new town, which helped explain the apparent discrepancy in the Synoptics between "entering" (Luke 18:35; 19:1) and "leaving" (Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46).

▣ **"was passing through"** Luke uses this term often. It is a compound of *dia* and *erchomai*. Here it is an imperfect middle (deponent) indicative, which denotes the beginning of an action. This same tense can emphasize repeated action in past time, but this meaning does not make sense in this context. Context, not lexicons or Greek grammar, is the key to authorial intent. Words and forms have meaning only in a specific literary context.

Here are some examples of how Luke uses this term.

1. "to proceed," Luke 2:15 (cf. Acts 9:38)
2. "to pierce through," Luke 3:35
3. "to pass through," Luke 4:30
4. "to spread abroad a rumor," Luke 5:15

5. "to pass over," Luke 8:22
6. "to pass along," Luke 9:4
7. "to travel through a country," Luke 9:6

19:2 "Zaccheus" This is a Hebrew term meaning "pure" or "innocent" (cf. BDB 269). He will fulfill his name in this encounter with Jesus.

■ **"he was a chief tax collector"** The term *architelōnēs* is very unusual and is not found in the Septuagint, Koine Papyri, or Greek literature, but it seems to mean that he was a tax commissioner over the district of Jericho. He would have purchased this position from the Roman authorities. The local Jews hated and ostracized those who worked for Rome because they often, if not always, overtaxed them. This is how they made their salaries.

■ **"and he was rich"** Although he had wealth, he was not happy. He seems to be a perfect example of the truth found in Luke 18:24-27. Zaccheus is a literary foil to the rich, young ruler of Luke 18. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH](#) at Luke 12:21.

19:3 "was trying to see who Jesus was" This imperfect tense here means continual action in past time. The Holy Spirit had already done His work drawing this man.

■ **"for he was small in stature"** This term usually means "age" (cf. Luke 2:52; John 9:21,23; Heb. 11:11), but in the NT it can also mean "height" (cf. Luke 12:25; and possibly 2:52 and Eph. 4:13; Matt. 6:27). In this context the phrase can refer to the height or stature of Zaccheus or Jesus, but most probably of Zaccheus.

19:4 "he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree" This is highly unusual for an Oriental of great wealth. His pride was gone. He had heard that Jesus accepted and fellowshiped with tax collectors. One was even one of His close associates (i.e., Levi, Matthew).

■ **"sycamore"** This is not the same as the sycamore tree in America. This tree is of the nettle family, which also includes the mulberry and fig. In Greek the term *sukomorea* is made up of "fig" (*sukon*) and "mulberry" (*moron*). It was a large tree with low branches, which made it easy to climb (cf. United Bible Societies, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, pp. 179-182).

19:5 "He looked up and said to him, 'Zaccheus, hurry and come down'" This is an aorist active participle (used in the sense of an imperative) combined with an aorist active imperative which means "come down quickly." I wonder how Jesus knew his name. Some commentators use John 1:47-48 as a parallel of Jesus' supernatural knowledge.

■ **"I must stay at your house"** Jesus had a divine appointment with this man (use of *dei*). I am so glad Jesus loved outcasts, both rich and poor, male and female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile!

19:6 Zaccheus was surprised but thrilled! The NET Bible (p. 1864 footnote 29) mentions that "joy as a response to what God was doing" is characteristic of Luke's Gospel (cf. Luke 1:14; 2:10; 10:20; 13:17; 15:5,32; 19:37; 24:41,52).

19:7 "When they saw it, they all began to grumble" This is another imperfect tense. The root word for "grumble" is from the buzzing of bees (cf. Luke 5:30). It was used in the Septuagint to describe the griping (murmuring) of Israel (cf. Exod. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; Num. 14:2). It is found only twice in the NT, both in Luke's Gospel (cf. Luke 15:2; 19:7). The local Jews felt that Jesus' fellowship with sinners (those unable or unwilling to observe the Oral Traditions) made him ceremonially unclean and theologically suspect (i.e., 5:30-32; 7:37-50; 15:1-2).

19:8 "Zaccheus stopped and said" Zaccheus must have heard the murmuring! This is his public statement of confession, repentance, and restitution as a sign that a brand new relationship of love and

forgiveness had been established with God through this encounter with Jesus, the Messiah.

■ **"half of my possessions I will give to the poor"** This was a large amount of money. Being right with God opens one's eyes to the needs of the poor!

Some think this refers to his regular actions, like Cornelius (cf. Acts 10:2), but in context it seems that it refers to his accumulated wealth. This man is an antithesis to the rich man in Luke 18.

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true. He was publicly admitting that he had defrauded the people.

■ **"I will give back four times as much"** He was using the OT standard from Exod. 22:1 and the example in 2 Sam. 12:6 as restitution for a violent robbery. This was a much larger sum than Lev. 6:5 and Num. 5:7 required, where only an added one fifth was required as restitution. His restitution was a proof of a changed heart, not a means to it. This statement, combined with the previous promise, meant he was not a wealthy man anymore. What a contrast to Luke 18!

19:9 "And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house'" A new relationship with God was evidenced by this man's changed attitude and actions, which impacted his whole family (cf. Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15,31-33; 18:8). This salvation was a present reality (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2), as well as a future consummation.

The phrase "to this house" implies that the other members of the extended family and servants would be affected by Zaccheus' conversion. Household evangelism is seen several times in Acts (cf. Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15,31-34; 18:8). Western individualism is not the only biblical model.

■ **"because he, too, is a son of Abraham"** Apparently he was already a racial Jew, but now through faith in Jesus, he had become a true descendant of Abraham by faith (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 3:22; 4:11-12; 10:12; Gal. 3:9,26,28,29; 4:5,12; 5:6; 6:15). His lineage did not bring salvation, but his faith, evidenced by his public confession and restitution, surely did!

19:10 "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" This may be an allusion to the Septuagint of Ezek. 34:16 and it certainly relates to Luke 1:68-79. It is the theological emphasis of Luke 15's parables. It is also similar to the central summary statement of the Gospel of Mark (cf. Mark 10:45 and 1 Tim. 1:15). Theologically Jesus came for several reasons:

1. to reveal the Father
2. to die for sin
3. to give converted humans an example to follow

In this context the redemptive theme is emphasized. Both verbals "seek" and "save" are aorist active infinitives.

For "Son of Man" see Special Topic at Luke 5:24.

The word "lost" is a perfect active participle of *apollumi*, which means to destroy. Here it is used as a metaphor of permanent spiritual loss (see Matt. 10:6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTRUCTION (APOLLUMI)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 19:11-27

¹¹While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. ¹²So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. ¹³"And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business *with this* until I come *back*.' ¹⁴But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' ¹⁵When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be

called to him so that he might know what business they had done. ¹⁶The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' ¹⁷And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' ¹⁹And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' ²⁰Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; ²¹for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.' ²²He said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? ²³Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?' ²⁴Then he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' ²⁵And they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas *already*.' ²⁶I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ²⁷But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."

19:11 "a parable" See the Introduction to Luke 8 for the hermeneutical principles for interpreting parables.

▣ Jesus gives two reasons for telling this parable at this time and place:

1. He was approaching Jerusalem
2. the crowd was expecting an immediate coming of the Kingdom

Many commentators assert that Luke's Gospel accentuates a delayed Second Coming. This parable is one evidence (cf. Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings*, pp. 54-55).

▣ **"the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately"** The Jews only expected one climactic coming of God in history through the Messiah and the setting up of the Age of Righteousness with Jews in charge! Many thought this would happen when Jesus came to Jerusalem at Passover. See Special Topics "The Kingdom of God" at Luke 4:21 and "This Age and the Age to Come" at Luke 2:17.

19:12 This is similar to Matt. 25:14-30. Obviously Jesus used the same themes and teachings in different settings for different purposes.

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "a nobleman"

NKJV "a certain nobleman"

TEV "there was once a man"

This parable is introduced with *tis*, which is normally translated "a certain." Many of Luke's parables are introduced with this textual marker (cf. Luke 7:41; 10:30; 14:16; 15:11; 16:1,19; 19:12).

▣ **"A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and *then* return"** Many historians see this as an allusion to Herod the Great's death and his son Archelaus's attempted succession (cf. Luke 19:14, which is an unusual footnote). This historical incident is recorded in Josephus' *Antiq.* 17.

19:13 "he called ten of his slaves" Although he called ten, only three are mentioned specifically. The term *doulos* would denote a household servant.

▣ **"and gave them ten minas"** This is the Greek term *maneh* (Semitic loan word *mena*), which equals

one hundred *drachmas*, (one sixth of a talent). A *drachma* is equivalent to a *denarius*, which was the day's wage for a laborer or soldier. Therefore, this was less than one third of a year's wage, not a large sum at all. It may reflect this master's stinginess or frugality. See Special Topic: Coins in Use in Palestine of Jesus' Day at Luke 15:8.

NASB, NRSV "do business *with this* until I come *back*"
NKJV "do business till I come"
TEV "See what you can earn with this while I am gone"
NJB "Trade with these, until I get back"

This is an aorist middle (deponent) imperative ("do business") followed by a present middle (deponent) indicative ("while I am gone"). In John 14:3 it is used of the return of Jesus. The master was testing the skills and trustworthiness of his servants. He gave them some responsibility! He will call them to account at an unspecified future date (cf. Luke 19:15-20).

19:17

NASB "you are to be in authority over ten cities"
NKJV "have authority over ten cities"
NRSV "take charge of ten cities"
TEV "I will put you in charge of ten cities"
NJB "you shall have the government of ten cities"

This is a periphrastic present active imperative, which denotes continuing authority.

19:20 "handkerchief" Possibly there is an Aramaic confusion between the word "ground" (see parallel in Matt. 25:25) and "handkerchief." The custom of the day would have this man burying the money in the ground for safekeeping. However, this term is used of a cloth in John 11:44.

19:21 "I was afraid of you" This is an Imperfect middle (deponent) indicative, which denotes repeated action in past time. Paralyzing fear is not a motive for effective service.

NASB, NJB "you are an exacting man"
NKJV "you are an austere man"
NRSV "you are a harsh man"
TEV "you are a hard man"

This Greek word is used in the Septuagint of II Macc. 14:30 for "harsh," "rough," or "sour behavior." It is used in the Koine Papyri for an exacting, strict, penny-pincher and letter-of-the-law type of personality.

This word is just part of the parable. It in no way describes Christ at judgment (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

19:22 Some translations make this verse a question (NASB, NRSV, NJB, NIV), but others see it as an affirmation (NKJV, TEV, NAB).

19:24-26 Remember this is a near eastern parable, which often uses hyperbole. The details of the story cannot be allegorized. These overstatements are usually part of the surprising twist which denotes the main point of the parable. Possibly this is analogous to 8:18.

The central paradox of the gospel is that salvation is free in the finished work of the Messiah, but the resulting reality is a cost-everything service (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10). See Special Topic: Degrees of Rewards and Punishments at Luke 10:12.

19:25 The NKJV and NRSV put this verse in brackets because some ancient Greek texts omit it (MSS D, W, several lectionaries, as well as some Old Latin, Syrian, and Coptic translations. The UBS⁴ translation committee rates its inclusion as "certain"!

19:26 One wonders how far to push the details of this (and every) parable. Is it possible to identify

1. the nobleman as Jesus (Luke 19:12)
2. the slaves (Luke 19:13) as disciples
3. the citizens (Luke 19:14)

Is so then Luke 19:26 presents the interesting question, "Is the slave punished but still in the family (cf. Luke 8:18; Matt. 13:12; 25:29; Mark 4:25; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Jude 23)? The Parable of the Soils (Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8) strongly suggests that some initially respond, but do not remain. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY \(APHISTĒMI\)](#) at Luke 6:46.

Although the speculation is interesting, usually parables have one main truth or at least one truth connected to each main character. Often the details are just part of the story. See Introduction to Luke 8.

19:27 "But bring these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence" This statement refers to Luke 19:14. Exactly how the people who rejected the master's reign relate to the slave who did not act, is uncertain. Possibly two groups are judged:

1. those who reject the master's reign
2. those who refuse to act in the service of the master

The introduction in Luke 19:11 relates this to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people and their leaders will reject Jesus and be rejected for different reasons, related to #1. Zaccheus was fully accepted and his actions proved it, which related to #2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 19:28

²⁸After He had said these things, He was going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

19:28 This paragraph division matches NRSV. This continues Luke's theme of Jesus' travels to Jerusalem, begun in Luke 9:51 and here concluded in His triumphal entry.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 19:29-40

²⁹When He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, "Go into the village ahead of *you*; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*. ³¹If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say, 'The Lord has need of it.'" ³²So those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴They said, "The Lord has need of it." ³⁵They brought it to Jesus, and they threw their coats on the colt and put Jesus *on it*. ³⁶As He was going, they were spreading their coats on the road. ³⁷As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, ³⁸ shouting: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." ⁴⁰But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"

19:29 "Bethphage" The Talmud says this was a suburb of Jerusalem. The exact location is uncertain. Its name meant "house of unripened figs" (cf. Matt. 21:1; Mark 11:1).

■ **"Bethany"** This name means "house of dates" (cf. Matt. 21:17; Mark 11:1). This village was about two miles away from Jerusalem on the opposite side of the ridge of which the Mount of Olives was a part. When Jesus was in Jerusalem, He normally stayed in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, which was located in Bethany.

19:30 "you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat" This is a prophetic (typological) fulfillment of Zech. 9:9 (cf. Matt. 21:2). It must be remembered that the donkey (mule, cf. 2 Sam. 18:9; 1 Kgs. 1:33) was a royal mount of the kings of Israel. Near eastern asses were large, stately animals (United Bible Societies, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, 2nd ed., pp. 5-7). This was a symbol of Jesus' kingship, not simply His being a man of peace. The reason it was a colt that no one had ridden is because the king had his own donkey that no one else rode (cf. 1 Kgs. 1:33). Jesus had either made previous arrangements (cf. Luke 19:31, 33-34) for this animal or he was using His supernatural knowledge.

19:31 "if" This is a third class conditional sentence, which denotes potential action.

19:36 "they were spreading their coats on the road" This was a sign of kingship (cf. 2 Kgs. 9:13). Luke does not mention the palm branches here. This event is characterized as "the triumphal entry into Jerusalem" (cf. Matt. 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; John 12:12-15).

19:37 "near the descent of the Mount of Olives" M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 1, p. 208, makes the topological comment that on this pilgrim road approaching Jerusalem one can see the city briefly (Luke 19:37), but then it is hidden again for a period. Verse 41 describes the panoramic view of the final descent when the white, limestone temple comes into full view.

▣ **"disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen"** "The whole crowd of disciples" refers to

1. the disciples (cf. Luke 19:39)
2. those who traveled with them
3. pilgrims from Galilee who Jesus joined on the way to Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:39)

"All the miracles which they had seen" refers to Jesus' previous actions from 9:51 through this context, which happened on the road to Jerusalem.

19:38 "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord" This is a quote from Ps. 118:26, but is modified:

1. "the King" replaces "the one who" (cf. Luke 13:35)
2. it omits Mark's "hosanna" (cf. Mark 11:9-10 because Gentiles would not know this term)

This quote (and Mark's) does not fit the MT (Masoretic Text) or the LXX (Septuagint). This is part of the Hallel (praise) psalms (Psalm 113-118) that were traditionally

1. quoted to pilgrims entering Jerusalem during the Passover season
2. chanted while the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the temple
3. chanted on the first day of Passover (and the other major feast days)
4. quoted before meals during Passover week (Psalm 113-114) and after meals (Psalm 115-118)

I believe much that is being said here was done every year, but the fact that the people of Jerusalem and the pilgrims applied the text specifically to Jesus of Nazareth shows that they understood the uniqueness of His person and work. This was not just another Passover!

▣ **"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest"** This phrase is not part of Ps. 118:26. It was part of the angel's message to the shepherds (cf. Luke 2:14). The promised peace is about to have a surprising redemptive cost (Calvary, cf. Isaiah 53).

19:39 "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said" This refers to

1. the Pharisees who welcomed pilgrims to Jerusalem
2. the Pharisees who were part of the pilgrims who were traveling from Galilee through the Perea area to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast
3. the Pharisees planted in the crowd trying to find some way to charge Jesus with blasphemy (cf. Luke 13:31; 14:1,3; 15:2; 16:14; 17:20; 19:39)

Jesus' answer clearly asserts His sense of Messianic fulfillment in this statement (cf. Luke 19:40).

19:40 "if" This is a First class conditional sentence (using *ean*, cf. Acts 8:31).

■ **"the stones will cry out"** This is possibly a proverb of immanent divine judgment (cf. Hab. 2:11). It could relate to nature's convulsions at God's approach (i.e., visitation, cf. Luke 19:44).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 19:41-44

⁴¹When He approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴²saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.

⁴³For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

19:41 "He saw the city and wept over it" Here we see Jesus expressing human emotions over the tragedy of His rejection by His own people (cf. Luke 13:34-35). The OT conditional promises have been nullified; only judgment remains!

19:42 "if" This is an incomplete second class conditional sentence (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol. 2, p. 246). The Jewish leadership and most of the population of Jerusalem ("even you") did not know the significance of Jesus' coming.

NASB, NRSV "the things which make for peace"
NKJV "the things *that make for your peace*"
TEV "what is needed for peace"
NJB "the way to peace"

This is a broken, incomplete sentence. Jesus' emotions over Jerusalem's coming judgment overwhelms Him! This spiritual peace, peace with God (this is a word play on "Jerusalem," BDB 436, "possession of peace") comes only through faith in Christ. Jesus brought this peace if they would have only listened to Him and responded (cf. Isa. 48:18). Jesus was not the kind of Messiah they expected, so they rejected Him and by so doing, sealed their physical (destruction of Jerusalem) and spiritual (personal and corporate lostness) doom.

■ **"but now they have been hidden from your eyes"** This is an aorist passive indicative. Luke mentioned this in Luke 9:45; 10:21; 18:34. It either denotes a divine blinding (cf. Rom. 11:7,25) or an idiom expressing rejection.

19:43-44 This seems to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem (in five descriptive phrases of OT siege warfare, cf. Jeremiah 6) under the Roman General Titus in a.d. 70, as well as possibly foreshadowing the events of eschatological judgment (cf. Luke 21; Psalm 2; Isa. 29:1-4; Ezekiel 38-39; Dan. 9:24-27; Zechariah 13-14; Rev. 20:7-10).

The Bible is clear that a period of persecution precedes the Second Coming. However, some commentators believe that a.d.70 completely fulfills this prediction. They are called preterists. A good example of this position is John Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*.

Other commentators expect a future literal fulfillment affecting the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. They are called dispensational premillennialists. Two good books are *Dispensationalism Today* by Charles C. Ryrie (reformed dispensationalism) and *Progressive Dispensationalism* by Blaising and Bock (progressive dispensationalism). There are also many who are historical premillennialists, like George E. Ladd, who hold to a similar end-time agenda.

This may be a multiple fulfillment prophecy, but I think the NT universalizes the OT prophecies whereby

geographical and/or racial Israel is no longer the key to the gospel. The OT prophecies have been fulfilled and now include all people.

19:43 "the days will come" This was an idiom used of (1) the eschatological coming of the bridegroom (cf. Luke 5:35) and (2) the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Luke 23:29). This idiom is used in the Septuagint of God's judgment on (a) Eli and his family (cf. 1 Sam. 2:31) and (b) Hezekiah's arrogant actions turning into prophecy of Judah's and the temple's destruction by Babylon (cf. 2 Kgs. 20:17).

19:44 "Because you did not recognize" This refers to Luke 19:42 (second class conditional). The Jews should have seen evidence in Jesus' words and actions that fulfilled OT prophecy. Their cherished traditions blinded them to the truth, however. May God have mercy on all of the fallen race of Adam!

Although Jesus never specifically mentions "the remnant" concept from the OT prophets, in effect, His disciples and followers were this believing prophetic remnant from Israel (cf. "little flock" of Luke 12:32). Even in the OT Israel as a whole was never "right" with YHWH. The "lost" of Luke 19:10 surely includes Israel!

■ **"the time of your visitation"** From the OT this time of visitation could be for blessing or judgment (cf. Isa. 10:3; 23:17; 24:22; 29:6, *episkopē* in the LXX). In Luke 1:68,78 and 1 Pet. 2:12 it is a visitation of blessing for believers, but judgment for unbelievers (i.e., the Second Coming). It must be remembered that God's love and grace spurned turns to God's wrath of accountability and judgment (cf. the parable of Luke 19:11-27).

NASB	"and they will level you to the ground and your children within you"
NKJV	"and level you, and your children with you"
NRSV	"they will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you"
TEV	"they will completely destroy you and the people within your walls"
NJB	"they will crush you and the children inside your walls to the ground"

The death of children may be an allusion to Ps. 137:8-9, where the very same verb is used in the Septuagint. The verb literally means "to level" (cf. Isa. 3:26), but came to mean metaphorically "to dash to the ground" (cf. Hos. 10:14; Nah. 3:10). This verb occurs only here in the NT. As salvation affected Zaccheus' family (cf. Luke 19:9), so too, is judgment a corporate experience (i.e., all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, cf. Luke 19:44-45).

I often ponder this corporate aspect of biblical faith, since I have grown up in a western, individual-focused culture. However, the Bible speaks of judgment to the third and fourth generations (cf. Deut. 5:9), but covenant loyalty to a thousand generations (cf. Deut. 5:10; 7:9)! This has helped me in my confidence that God will work with my children and their children (but this does not eliminate personal choice and consequences).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 19:45-46

⁴⁵Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, ⁴⁶saying to them, "It is written, 'And My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a robbers' den."

19:45 "Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling" This seems to be a prophetic fulfillment of Mal. 3:1-2 ("suddenly" is combined with "judgment"). John 2:13ff records a cleansing of the Temple earlier in Jesus' ministry, while the Synoptics record a cleansing in the last week of His ministry. Because of the thematic organization and freedom of the four Gospel writers, it is uncertain whether there were only one or two cleansings of the temple. The Sadducees owned the commercial rights on the Mount of Olives and in the Court of the Gentiles. They were cheating the people (1) with their exorbitant charges to exchange common coins into the Tyrian shekel and (2) their quick disqualifications of sacrificial animals brought from home. The sacrificial animals available through these merchants were very expensive.

This act of Jesus

1. reveals His authority
2. reveals the corruption in God's house
3. seals His death by the Jewish leaders (Sadducees, Herodians, and Pharisees, cf. Luke 19:47)

19:46 "It is written" This is an idiom for Scripture. Exactly why Luke did not quote the entire passage (cf. Isa. 56:7), which continues (in both MT and LXX), "unto all nations" is uncertain, because it would seem to fit his recurrent theme of Luke of a universal love of God through Jesus for all humans (of which Zaccheus is an immediate example).

▣ **"but you have made it a robber's den"** Jesus is combining Isa. 57:6 with Jer. 7:11 ("a den of robbers"). Jeremiah 7 is the prophet's famous temple sermon addressed to those who are trusting in the temple instead of YHWH.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 19:47-48

⁴⁷And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, ⁴⁸and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.

19:47 "He was teaching daily in the temple" This is a periphrastic imperfect. Jesus taught regularly in public during this last week of His life. Part of the Temple area was dedicated to teaching. It was known as the Portico of Solomon and it surrounded the Court of the Women, therefore, all visitors to the Temple (Jewish men and women, as well as Gentiles) could hear Him.

19:48 This verse is the culmination of the hostility which began in Luke 6:11 and 11:53-54. It is quite sad, the leaders refused to listen to Jesus because they were threatened by His popularity. However, His popularity never lasted because the crowd heard the call to total commitment and service that was required and they were unwilling to pay the cost. The leaders wanted a different gospel and the people an easier gospel!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Compare the attitude of Zaccheus in Luke 19:1-10 with the attitude of the rich young ruler in Luke 19:18-23.
2. What is the central theological truth of the parable found in Luke 19:12-27?
3. What is the significance of the Triumphal Entry?
4. Why did Jesus cleanse the Temple? Why did the religious leaders allow Him to cleanse the Temple? How many times did He cleanse the Temple?

LUKE 20

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Authority of Jesus Questioned	Jesus' Authority Questioned	On Jesus' Authority	The Question About Jesus' Authority	The Jews Question Jesus' Authority
20:1-8	20:1-8	20:1-8	20:1-2 20:3-4 20:5-7 20:8	20:1-8
The Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants	The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers	Parable of the Vineyard	The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard	Parable of the Wicked Tenants
20:9-19	20:9-19	20:9-19	20:9-15a 20:15b-16a 20:16b 20:17-18 The Question About Paying Taxes 20:19-22	20:9-15a 20:15b-18 20:19
Paying Taxes to Caesar	The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar?	Paying Taxes to Caesar		On Tribute to Caesar
20:20-26	20:20-26	20:20-26	20:23-24a 20:24b 20:25 20:26	20:20-25 20:26
The Question About the Resurrection	The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection?	Questions About the Resurrection	The Question About Rising From Death	The Resurrection of the Dead
20:27-40	20:27-40	20:27-33 20:34-40	20:27-33 20:34-38 20:39-40	20:27-33 20:34-38 20:39-40
The Question About David's Son	Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord?	David's Son	The Question About the Messiah	Christ Not Only Son but Also Lord of David
20:41-44	20:41-44	20:41-44	20:41-44	20:41-44

The Denouncing of the Scribes	Beware of the Scribes	On Pride and Humility	Jesus Warns Against the Teachers of the Law	The Scribes Condemned by Jesus
20:45-47	20:45-47	20:45-47	20:45-47	20:45-47

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 20:1-47

This chapter is a series of confrontations.

A. Religious leaders attack Jesus

1. the chief priest, scribes, and elders (i.e., the Sanhedrin) ask the crucial question about the source of Jesus' authority, Luke 20:1-8
2. the Sanhedrin sends spies to try to catch Him by asking controversial, political questions meant to provide accusations which could be presented to the Roman authorities, Luke 20:19-26
3. the Sadducees ask a theological question related to the resurrection, Luke 20:27-40

B. Jesus challenges the attackers

1. He responds to the Sanhedrin's question
 - a. with a question, Luke 20:3-8
 - b. with a parable of God's rejection of Israel and her leadership, Luke 20:9-18
2. He responds to those trying to catch Him in a controversial political issue by a powerful, practical answer relating to human responsibility to God and government, Luke 20:23-25
3. He responds to the Sadducees' tricky, ridiculous question about Leverite (brother-in-law) marriage by asking them a question, Luke 20:41-44
4. He responds to all of them by a stern warning to the crowd, Luke 20:45-47

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 20:1-8

¹On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, ²and they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?" ³Jesus answered and said to them, "I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me: ⁴Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" ⁵They reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did you not believe

him?' ⁶But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet." ⁷So they answered that they did not know where *it came from*. ⁸And Jesus said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

20:1 This opening phrase shows that Jesus repeatedly and regularly taught in public. He imparted truth to whomever would come, listen, and receive. Christianity is open to all. There are no required academic degrees or special callings. Whosoever will come to God's banquet of truth may eat (cf. Isa. 55:1-13). Be careful of special teachers, speakers, and preachers who claim secret knowledge or special insight! There are no gurus or illuminati in biblical Christianity!

■ **"the chief priests and the scribes"** This is the official designation for the Sanhedrin, which was the supreme court of the Jews made up of seventy leaders in Jerusalem. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SANHEDRIN](#) at Luke 9:22.

NASB, NKJV "confronted *Him*"
NRSV, TEV "came"
NJB "came up"

Luke uses the Greek word *ephistēmi* often in his writings, but it is found in the rest of the NT only in Paul's writings. It has several connotations:

1. to approach suddenly, Luke 2:9; 21:34; 24:4; Acts 12:7; 23:27
2. to assault, Luke 20:1 (and possibly Luke 10:40); Acts 4:1; 6:12; 17:5
3. to appear, Acts 10:17; 11:11; 23:11

Remember that context, not a pre-set definition, determines meaning. Words have semantic ranges and only a context (sentence, paragraph) can denote which connotation is meant by the original author.

These religious leaders (the Sanhedrin was controlled by Sadducees) were concerned with both Jesus' popularity and His cleansing of the temple (cf. Luke 19:45-46). Jesus confronted their authority (the temple) with His own authority (He was the new temple of God, cf. Matt. 26:41; 27:40; Mark 14:58).

20:2 "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority" This question of authority (*exousia*) is a central issue that all humans must think through

1. about God (world religions)
2. about the Bible (holy books)
3. about Jesus of Nazareth (holy persons)

Humans are incurably religious creatures, but who speaks the truth?

[SPECIAL TOPIC: AUTHORITY \(EXOUSIA\)](#)

20:3 "tell Me: 'Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men'" Jesus' counter question asks them about the source of John's authority to baptize Jews (cf. John 1:19-25). John the Baptist had previously witnessed to Jesus' person and authority (cf. Luke 7:18-23; John 1:29). If they answered the question affirmatively, they would have their answer about Jesus' authority. Neither John or Jesus were official scribes or teachers. Yet both clearly exhibited God's power and authority, which the people recognized and affirmed. The question of authority is not only a theological issue, but a practical matter of motives, actions, and results. Jesus' authority was clearly revealed in His life, teachings, and actions.

20:5 "if we say. . ." This is a third class conditional sentence, which denotes potential action (so is Luke 20:6). Self-interest, not truth, was the main issue in their deliberation.

20:6 "all the people will stone us" Although this verb (future active indicative) does not appear in the Septuagint, this is the OT response to blasphemy (cf. Lev. 24:14-23; Num. 15:35-36; Deut. 13:1-5; 21:21). Speaking the truth was important. Lying or false statements had serious consequences, especially for

those who claimed to speak for God.

■ **"for they are convinced that John was a prophet"** The term "convinced" is a periphrastic perfect passive. The people had a settled conviction that John the Baptist was a prophet (cf. Matt. 21:26). He was the last OT prophet fulfilling the prophecies about Elijah from Mal. 4:5.

20:7 They sidestepped the question. They had an opinion, but they would not publicly put themselves in jeopardy. Honesty was mitigated by self-interest. Jesus refused to respond to these hypocrites (cf. Luke 20:8). They did not want truth; they were not seeking information, but looking for an opportunity to condemn and attack Him for their self interest!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 20:9-18

⁹And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time. ¹⁰At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him *some* of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed. ¹²And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out. ¹³The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' ¹⁴But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.' ¹⁵So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!" ¹⁷But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner *stone*'? ¹⁸Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

20:9 This is paralleled in Mark 12:1-12 and Matthew 21:33-46.

■ **"And He began to tell the people this parable"** See the introduction to Luke 8 for helpful guidelines for interpreting parables. This parable refers to either

1. the nation of Israel (cf. Isaiah 5)
2. the Jewish leadership (cf. Luke 20:19)

This is the strongest rejection of first century Judaism in the NT. Rejection of Jesus is rejection of God (cf. 1 John 5:10-12). This is a hard, shocking, culturally unacceptable (post-modernity), exclusivistic teaching, but true (if the NT is inspired)!

■ **"a man planted a vineyard"** In the Markan parallel (Mark 12:1-11) Mark (who records and organizes Peter's sermons in Rome) introduces the parable with a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 5:1-2. The grapevine was one of the symbols for the nation of Israel (as was the fig tree in Matt. 21:18-22 and Mark 11:12-14,20-25, but not in Luke).

It is hard to determine whether God rejected

1. Israel's illegal, non-Aaronic high priests
2. her self-righteous legalism
3. the unbelief of the entire nation

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this verse. Some manuscripts (MSS A and W, as well as the Syrian and Armenian versions and the Diatessaron) add *tis* (a certain man). Luke often uses *tis* to introduce parables (cf. Luke 7:41; 10:30; 12:16; 14:16; 15:11; 16:1,19; 19:12). It is missing in MSS κ , B, L, and the Vulgate and Coptic versions, as well as the Greek texts used by Origen and Augustine. The UBS⁴ includes

it in brackets and gives its inclusion a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding).

▣ **"for a long time"** This is a literary idiom unique to Luke's writings (cf. Luke 8:27; 23:8; Acts 8:11; 14:3; 27:9).

20:10 This parable reflects the culturally expected landowner/tenant farmer relationship of first century Palestine. The landowner received a portion of the yield.

▣ **"beat him and sent him away empty handed"** Here is the "surprise" or unexpected twist of the parable (cf. Luke 20:11-12,15). This repeated response by the tenant farmers would have shocked everyone!

20:12 "wounded" We get the English word "trauma" from this Greek word. Only Luke the physician uses it in the NT (cf. Luke 10:34; 20:12; Acts 19:16).

20:13,15 "my beloved son. . .they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him" These two statements seem to relate specifically to the life of Jesus of Nazareth at the hands of the religious leaders (i.e., My Beloved Son, cf. Luke 3:22; 9:35; Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mark 9:7)! Jesus was killed outside the walls of Jerusalem.

20:16 "give the vineyard to others" This word seems to refer to Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11; John 10:16).

▣ In Mark's parallel Jesus asks the crowd a question (cf. Mark 12:9). Their answer seals their own doom!

NASB	"May it never be!"
NKJV	"Certainly not!"
NRSV	"Heaven forbid!"
TEV	"Surely not!"
NJB, REB	"God forbid!"
NIV	"May this never be!"
NET Bible	"May this never happen!"

This is literally "May it not be" (negated aorist middle [deponent] optative), so common in Paul (esp. Romans), but used only here in the Gospels. Luke must have heard it often in Paul's teaching/preaching.

There are two ways to interpret this:

1. the Jewish leaders knew Jesus was talking directly to them (cf. Matt. 21:45)
2. this refers to the spontaneous outburst of the crowd, who in Mark 12:9 are shocked by the actions of the wicked tenants, not the landlord giving his vineyard to other tenants

They answered with an idiom which is an aorist middle (deponent) optative (a wish or prayer). This phrase is found several times in the Septuagint (cf. Gen. 44:17; Jos. 22:29; 24:26; 1 Kgs. 20:3). This is the only place it appears in the Gospels. Paul uses this same rare form often (cf. Rom. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11; 1 Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Jesus' parable totally shocked these religious leaders. This judgment and transfer of the OT promises from Israel to others was too much for them to hear!

20:17 "What then is this that is written" This verse is a quote from the Septuagint of Ps. 118:22, which is part of the Hallel Psalms, quoted during Passover. The emphasis of this passage is on the one (Jesus) they deemed unworthy who had become chief and central leader and Savior. This OT quote foreshadowed that the Messiah would be rejected by Israel's leaders.

▣ **"the stone"** See Special Topic following.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: CORNERSTONE](#)

20:18 "Everyone who falls on that stone" Notice that the person's own choices and actions destroy himself/herself. This is an obvious Messianic reference. Rejecting Jesus results in being rejected by God!

■ **"will be broken to pieces"** This is a future passive indicative of a word used several times in the Septuagint in judgment contexts (cf. Jdgs. 5:26; 9:53; Ps. 110:5; and Micah 3:3).

■ **"but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust"** Unbelief has eternal consequences (cf. Isa. 8:14-15; Dan. 2:34-35). The "everyone" and "whomever" express the truth that judgment is for any and all who reject God's representative, the Messiah, regardless of position, nationality, or rank.

■ **"like dust"** This is the word used of winnowing grain so as to remove the husk which is scattered to the winds. This is also a judgment concept from the Septuagint (cf. Isa. 17:13; 30:22,24; 41:16; Jer. 30:27; Amos 9:9).

Verse 18 would be crystal clear to the Jewish leaders who heard it. Complete, total, and final judgment is coming to you!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 20:19-26

¹⁹The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them. ²⁰So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they *could* deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor. ²¹They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. ²²Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ²³But He detected their trickery and said to them, ²⁴"Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." ²⁵And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." ²⁶And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

20:19 "The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour" They clearly understood Jesus' words of condemnation. This parable's meaning was not at all hidden from them (cf. Matt. 21:45). This parable and the cleansing of the temple sealed Jesus' death.

■ **"and they feared the people"** They were afraid of either (1) the people's wrath (cf. Luke 20:6; 22:2) or (2) Rome's reaction to a riot (cf. Luke 20:20). In this context #1 is best.

■ **"for they understood that He spoke this parable against them"** It is obvious that the religious leaders recognized that the previous parable was specifically addressed to them (cf. Matt. 21:45).

20:20 "they watched Him" The term means to watch closely for an opportunity (cf. Luke 6:7; 14:1). We learn from Matt. 22:15-16 and Mark 12:13 of this unlikely alliance between the Pharisees and the Herodians.

■ **"spies"** This was "someone hired to lie in wait" or "ambush" (cf. LXX Jos. 8:9; Ezek. 35:5; I Macc. 10:52). It was an OT idiom related to premeditated murder.

■ **"pretended to be righteous"** This is a theatrical word for "play acting" or hypocrisy (cf. LXX Job 34:30; 36:13; II Macc. 5:25; 6:21,24,25).

■ **"to the rule and authority of the governor"** The term "governor" referred to the Roman ruler (cf. Matt. 27:2; Luke 2:2; 3:1). This means that these spies had to come up with a political charge, not a dispute over

the Mosaic Law.

The Sanhedrin did not have the official authority to enact the death penalty. From time to time they did participate in mob violence to remove people who threatened them, like Stephen in Acts 7.

Jesus was accused of blasphemy and should have been stoned. However, based on the curse of Deut. 21:23, where the scribes of Jesus' day believed that being crucified meant being cursed by God, they wanted Jesus, this Messianic pretender, to be crucified!

I think this is one reason Paul had such a problem with Jesus being the promised Messiah, but after his personal encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road (Acts 9), he saw that Jesus became the "curse" for us (cf. Gal. 3:13).

For "authority" see Special Topic at Luke 1:2.

20:21 "You are not partial to any" This is literally "lift the face." This originally meant no judicial favoritism by a Hebrew judge lifting a person's face to see who the accused was before pronouncing judgment.

They are trying to use flattery to trick Jesus into making a compromising statement about Roman taxation.

■ **"the way of God"** Truth is personified as someone following an appropriate path (cf. Ps. 119:105; Pro. 6:23; also note Ps. 16:11; 139:24). The first title for the church in Acts was "the Way" (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22).

God's truth is not hidden or hard to find. It is clearly defined lifestyle. The problem is human obedience!

20:22 "Is it lawful" This implies "is it lawful under the commands of God?" They were asking a political question under the guise of a religious question.

■ **"taxes"** Both Matthew (Matt. 22:27) and Mark (Mark 12:14) have "poll tax" (*kēnsos*) This was an annual personal tax on males between fourteen and sixty five years of age and women between twelve and sixty five (cf. James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, p. 143). It was one *denarius* and it went into the Emperor's treasury.

Luke has *phoros* (Luke 20:22; 23:2; also Paul in Rom. 13:6,7), usually translated "tribute." Roman taxes were the major bone of contention with the Zealots. The Jewish leaders were hoping to catch Jesus on the horns of the dilemma between the people (Zealots and popular opinion) and Rome.

20:23 "He detected their trickery" See the parallel in Matt. 22:18.

20:24 "Show Me a denarius" This was a Roman silver coin imprinted with the image of Tiberius Caesar, who reigned from a.d. 14-27. On one side was his image with the caption "Tiberius Caesar Augustus the Son of Divine Augustus." On the opposite side was the statement "Highest Priest." This coin represented Roman power and rule. It also asserted deity to the Caesar.

20:25 "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"

Jesus asserted that humans do owe allegiance (*apodidōmi*, meaning to give back what is due, to discharge an obligation) to the political authority under which they live (an aorist active imperative, cf. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Titus 3:1). However, He also asserts that when the claims of government enter the area of God's authority, believers must reject civil authority and receive whatever consequences there may be (cf. John's Revelation).

It is amazing to me how much of the modern discussion of the political concept of the separation of church and state has been built on this passage that has little to do with that issue. Most of our American political concerns about this issue come from historical precedents, not Scripture.

20:26 Later this same group of spies lied and perverted Jesus' statements (cf. Luke 23:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 20:27-33

²⁷ Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection),

28and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he is childless, his brother should marry the wife and raise up children to his brother. **29**Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless; **30**and the second **31**and the third married her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. **32**Finally the woman died also. **33**In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

20:27 "the Sadducees" These were the wealthy aristocrats who supported the status quo because of their place of power. They controlled the high priesthood, which one family purchased from the Romans. Josephus said that they rejected the Oral Tradition so popular with the Pharisees and affirmed only the writings of Moses (i.e., Genesis - Deuteronomy). They also rejected any concept of the afterlife (cf. Acts 23:6-8) that was popular among the Pharisees (cf. Josephus' *Wars of the Jews* 2.8.14; *The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.1.4, which means they did not take seriously Job 14:14; 19:25-27; Ps. 16:9-11; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; or Dan. 12:1-2. This is the only mention of this particular political religious group in the Gospel of Luke). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SADDUCEES

20:28 "Moses wrote for us that" This refers to Deut. 25:5-10 in the Septuagint, commonly called the "Leverite marriage." The term "Leverite" comes from the Latin word *levir*, which means "brother-in-law," not "from the Tribe of Levi." The issue at stake was inheritance (cf. Num. 27:6-11; Ruth 4:1-2). Josephus records that it was still practiced in Palestine in Jesus' day (cf. *Antiq.* 4.8.23).

▣ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which denotes potential action.

20:33 This question assumes that the afterlife will mimic earthly, physical life.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 20:34-40

34Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, **35**but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; **36**for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. **37**But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the *passage about the burning bush*, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. **38**Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him." **39**Some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." **40**For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

20:34 "the sons of this age" "Sons of" is a Semitic idiom of description. See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at Luke 9:2.

▣ **"the resurrection from the dead"** This was a tenet of Pharisaic theology based on Job 14:7-15; 19:25-27; Dan. 12:1-2. However, they viewed it as just a continuation of the present life. Jesus clearly implies that the new age is different from the social structures of this age. Marriage was a crucial structure of Eden before the Fall of Genesis 3. God's command to be fruitful and multiply was a recurrent theme (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7).

20:35 "those who are considered worthy to attain to that age" Jesus is answering the Sadducees and does so within Jewish (Pharisaic) theology. The phrase "considered worthy" is used in the Septuagint

in II Macc. 13:12; III Macc. 3:21; 4:11; IV Macc. 18:3 and also in Greek literature for those "deemed worthy." This is not Jesus affirming a works-righteousness, but an attempt to address these religious leaders. The NT teaches that one is only "worthy" in Christ (cf. Acts 13:46).

■ **"neither marry nor are given in marriage"** The social structures connected to procreation, so common of this world (age), will not continue into the spiritual, eternal realm. Sex will not be needed for societal stability or offspring. The family unit will not survive death, but intimate family fellowship in God's extended family will!

20:36 "they are like the angels" Notice that the context is emphasizing, not sexlessness, but the state of immortality (cf. Luke 20:36a). I tentatively believe some angels once had a capacity for cohabitation, or at least some did, based on Gen. 6:1-4; Jude 6; and the Book of I Enoch. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "the sons of God" in Genesis 6

■ **"are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection"** As the angels (sons of God, cf. LXX of Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6) are seen as sharing God's realm, so too, now are a select number of worthy humans (resurrected believers). This is somewhat ironic or sarcastic since the Sadducees denied the elaborate angelology of the Pharisees (as does Jesus, but He does affirm their existence).

The Bible also speaks of a resurrection of the unworthy (cf. Dan. 12:2; Acts 5:29; 24:15). One group is raised to judgment and one group to eternal bliss in fellowship with God.

20:37 "where he calls the Lord" This is a quote from Exod. 3:6, which is the very significant passage on the Covenant name for God, YHWH. It is from the verb "to be." See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Luke 1:68.

20:38 "He is not the God of the dead but of the living" The patriarchs of Luke 20:37 are long since dead, but they still are present with God, which shows the continuing covenant relationship of YHWH and this chosen family even after death.

■ **"all live to Him"** All life on this planet derives its existence from God. He is the origin of life and the sustainer of life (cf. Rom. 14:8).

Physical life is connected to *Elohim* (cf. Genesis 1) in the OT, but spiritual life is connected to YHWH, the covenant God of Israel (i.e., the Patriarchs). The only life that moves from this age to the next is that of those who know God's mercy through faith, only those who have a personal relationship with the redeemer God through Christ. In the OT it was the faithful remnant. In the NT it is those who receive God's Messiah by faith. These are the "worthy ones" who become "the sons of God" of the new age of righteousness by resurrection.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES](#) at Luke 13:23.

20:39 "Some of the scribes answered and said" These must have been Pharisees because they rejoiced in Jesus' routing of the Sadducees' theological argument.

20:40 This verse refers to the Pharisees of Luke 20:19-26 and the Sadducees of Luke 20:27-39. It is a strong double negative. Nobody dared ask Jesus any more theological questions (cf. Luke 20:41-44).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 20:41-44

⁴¹Then He said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is David's son? ⁴²For David himself says in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, ⁴³Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" ⁴⁴Therefore David calls Him 'Lord,' and how is He his son?"

20:41 Jesus now asks them a Bible question!

■ **"the Christ is David's son"** This is asserted in 2 Samuel 7 and Isaiah 11 (cf. Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3). Jesus seems to interject this Psalm because of their misunderstanding of the purpose of the Messiah (see Special Topic at Luke 2:11). As the Son of David, they expected Him to be a military leader, which He will be when He returns. He came the first time as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Zechariah 9; John 3:17-18).

20:42 "For David himself says in the book of Psalms" This is a quote from the Septuagint of Ps. 110:1. In this verse both terms for "Lord" appear. The first "Lord" translates YHWH; the second "Lord" translates *Adon* (owner, master, husband, lord). This second "lord" refers to the Messiah who comes after David. See Special Topic at Luke 1:68.

■ **"Sit at My right hand"** This is an anthropomorphic phrase (see Special Topic at Luke 1:51), which means we use human words and worldly concepts to describe God who is an eternal, Spirit presence through the universe and not affected by time or space.

"Sit" denotes an Oriental palace, a throne and denotes a majestic ruler. God does not have a throne (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:27). It would be too limiting.

God does not have a right hand, although God can take physical form (cf. Gen. 3:8); He can speak (cf. Gen. 3:9); He is a Spirit. Humanly speaking the right hand is an idiom of our strongest arm (most humans are right handed), therefore, it denotes power, authority, and pre-eminence .

Be careful of thinking that to be true, the Bible must be literal. The Bible describes spiritual reality in veiled ways (cf. 1 Cor. 13:9-12) because of our sin. God accommodates Himself to truthfully communicate to His creatures, but we must be content with limited knowledge in metaphorical language. God is described in the Bible by negation, analogy, and metaphor. Even the concept of God as Father is metaphor. God is not a male (or, for that matter, a female)!

20:44 The thrust of Jesus' question seems to be

1. the pre-existence (deity) of the Messiah (see Special Topic at Luke 2:11)
2. the human, Davidic descent of the Messiah (cf. Luke 1:32-33; 3:31)

No one expected the Messiah to be incarnate deity. They were expecting a divinely empowered human, like the Judges or Kings of Israel.

This very issue of the full humanity and deity of the Messiah becomes the theological issue of the Gnostic false teachers (cf. Colossians, Ephesians, 1 John, the Pastorals). 1 John 4:1-3 even asserts that to deny either aspect makes one an antichrist!

There are hints of this truth in the OT, especially Dan. 7:13, where a son of man (human being) comes before the Ancient of Days (YHWH) and receives the eternal kingdom. This dual aspect of "son of man" may be why Jesus used this title for Himself. Psalm 110 and Dan. 7:13 are linked in Jesus' response to the high priest in Luke 22:69 and Mark 14:62. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF MAN](#) at Luke 5:24.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 20:45-47

⁴⁵And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples, ⁴⁶"Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, ⁴⁷who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

20:46 "Beware of the scribes" This is a present active imperative of a compound Greek word from *prou* (for) and *echo* (I). Here it is followed by *apo*, which denotes "guard against" (cf. Matt. 6:1; 7:13).

Spiritual leaders (for "scribes" see Special Topic at Luke 5:21) must always be on guard for self-righteous, arrogant spirits. These were very sincere and highly motivated religious men, but they totally missed God because of their preconceived notions and self-centered attitudes (cf. Luke 6:39-40; Matt. 15:14; 23:16,24).

Jesus delineates some of their inappropriate actions:

1. They wear long religious robes to show everyone who they are, Luke 20:46.
2. They love to be greeted with respectful greeting and titles in public, Luke 20:46.
3. They want the best seats in the synagogue (i.e., on the raised platform near the scrolls), Luke 20:46.
4. They want the best seats at banquets next to the host at the head table, Luke 20:46.
5. They legally, but unethically, trick widows out of their homes and inheritances, Luke 20:47.
6. They pray long prayers so all will notice their wisdom and piety, Luke 20:47.

This sounds more like my day and its religious ethics than I feel comfortable admitting!

20:47 "These will receive greater condemnation" I personally believe in degrees of both heaven and hell based on knowledge and actions. Some of the Scriptures which seem to imply this are Matt. 11:22,24; Luke 12:47-48. See Special Topic: Degrees of Rewards and Punishments at Luke 10:12.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was the issue of the authority behind John's baptism so crucial to the question the Sanhedrin asked Jesus?
2. What is the central truth of the parable in Luke 20:9-16? To whom does it refer?
3. Why has so much been made of Luke 20:25 in America?
4. What implication does Luke 20:36 have for our view of heaven and sexuality?
5. Are there degrees of heaven and hell?

LUKE 21

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Widow's Offering 21:1-4	The Widow's Two Mites 21:1-4	The Widow's Offering 21:1-4	The Widow's Offering 21:1-4	The Widow's Mite 21:1-4
The Destruction of the Temple foretold 21:5-6	Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple 21:5-6	Destruction of the Temple Foretold 21:5-6	Jesus Speaks of the Destruction of the Temple 21:5-6	Discourse on the Destruction of Jerusalem: Introduction 21:5-7
Signs and Persecutions 21:7-19	Signs of the Times and the End of the Age 21:7-19	On the End of the Age 21:7-8 21:9-11 21:12-19	Troubles and Persecutions 21:7 21:8-9 21:10-19	The Warning Signs 21:8-11 21:12-19
Destruction of Jerusalem Foretold 21:20-24	The Destruction of Jerusalem 21:20-24	21:20-24	Jesus Speaks of the Destruction of Jerusalem 21:20-24	The Siege 21:20-23 The Disaster and the Age of the Gentiles 21:24
The Coming of the Son of Man 21:25-28	The Coming of the Son of man 21:25-28	21:25-28	The Coming of the Son of Man 21:25-28	Cosmic Disasters and the Glorious Appearing of the Son of Man 21:25-28
The Lesson of the Fig Tree 21:29-33	The Parable of the Fig Tree 21:29-33	21:29-33	The Lesson of the Fig Tree 21:29-31 21:32-33	The Time of His Coming 21:29-33
Exhortation to Watch 21:34-36	The Importance of Watching 21:34-38	21:34-36	The Need to Watch 21:34-36	Be on the Alert 21:34-36 The Last Days of Jesus
21:37-38		21:37-38	21:37-38	21:37-38

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:1-4

¹And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. ²And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. ³And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; ⁴for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

21:1-4 This is paralleled in Mark 12:41-44.

21:1 "the treasury" This is a compound word of "treasure" and "guard" (cf. LXX 2 Kgs. 23:11; Esth. 3:9; Ezra 5:17; 6:1; 7:20). Jewish tradition (*Shekalim* 6 [fourth tractate in *Mo'ed*]; Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 5.5.2; 6.5.2; *Antiq.* 19.6.2; and Alfred Edersheim, *Temple*, pp. 48-49) asserts that there were thirteen trumpet-shaped, metal boxes located in the Court of the Women, where Jesus regularly taught (cf. Luke 20:1). Each one of them was designated for a different charitable purpose (cf. John 8:20). Archaeology has never confirmed the existence of these metal containers.

21:2 "a poor widow" Luke chooses from Jesus' words and actions to cast the religious and social outcasts of His day in a positive light (esp. women). Here a poor widow set the standard of sacrificial giving that all disciples should emulate.

■ **"two small copper coins"** This refers to two copper Jewish coins called *lepton*. This term means "the thin one." This is the only Jewish coin mentioned in the NT. See Special Topic at Luke 15:8. Two *lepta* equal one *quadrant*; four *quadrants* equal one *assarion*; 16 *assarions* equal one *denarius*, which was a day's wage for a soldier or laborer.

Commentators often mentioned that someone could not give one *lepta* (rabbinical tradition), but this is a misunderstanding of the Jewish Talmud.

21:3 "Truly" This is the Greek term *alēthōs* (cf. Luke 9:27; 12:44), which is used synonymously with *amēn* in Luke 21:32. The parallel in Mark 12:43 has *amēn*. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN](#) at Luke 4:24.

21:4

NASB	"into the offering"
NKJV	"in offerings for God"
NRSV	"have contributed"
TEV	"offered their gifts"
NJB	"put in money"

Literally this is "put into the gifts" (cf. MSS κ , B, and L), but several other uncial manuscripts (cf. MSS A, D, W) and most ancient versions add "of God" to clarify the context for Gentiles. The UBS⁴ committee rated the shorter text as "B" (almost certain).

▣ **"out of their surplus"** This same principle of spiritual giving is found in 2 Cor. 8:12. It is surprising that the NT does not discuss regular giving principles. 2 Corinthians 8-9 deals with the Gentile churches' one-time gift to the mother church in Jerusalem. Tithing is an OT principle (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHING](#) at Luke 11:42).

▣ **"put in all that she had to live on"** This woman trusted in God's daily provision (cf. Matt. 6:33). Luke records many of Jesus' teachings about worldly possessions and wealth (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH](#) at Luke 12:21). Giving is a spiritual thermometer. It reveals our motives and priorities.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:5-6

⁵And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, ⁶"As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."

21:5 "And while some were talking about the temple" In Mark 13 (and Matthew 24) it is the inner circle of disciples who mention the beautiful temple building as they all sat on the Mount of Olives viewing Jerusalem and the temple across the Kidron Valley, but Luke puts the discussion of the beauty of Herod's Temple in the Court of the Women in the temple itself. This Temple was not completely finished until a.d. 63, seven years before it was destroyed by Titus' army. This remodeled and enlarged national shrine became the object of Jewish religion, as it had in the OT (cf. Jeremiah 7). The same discussion is found in Mark 13:1 and Matt. 24:1-2.

▣ **"beautiful stones"** Herod's temple was built with huge polished limestones (i.e., *mezzeh*), which were 25 x 8 x 12 cubits (a cubit is 18-21", see Special Topic at Luke 12:25). Josephus records this information in *Antiq.* 15.11.3.

NASB	"votive gifts"
NKJV	"donations"
NRSV	"gifts dedicated to God"
TEV	"gifts offered to God"
NJB	"votive offerings"

This is the Greek term *anathēma*, which is used only here in the NT. In the Septuagint it can refer to

1. a votive offering (cf. II Macc. 9:16)
2. an accursed thing (i.e., something given to God and thereby becomes holy and cannot be used by human beings, cf. Deut. 7:26)

One example of this was Herod's lavish gift of a huge golden grapevine that hung on the Temple's wall. The grapes were as tall as a man (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 15.2.3). This grapevine was a symbol of national Israel (cf. Ps. 80:8; Isa. 5:1-7).

21:6 "there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down" This is a prediction of extensive destruction. It exactly describes the Roman destruction of Jerusalem under Titus in a.d. 70. The only stones left were the foundation stones of Solomon's Temple that are today known as the "Wailing Wall." This total destruction was prophesied in Micah 3:12 and Jer. 26:18.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:7-9

⁷They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And

what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" ⁸And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near'. Do not go after them. ⁹"When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately."

21:7 "They questioned Him" From Mark 13:3 we know that "they" refers to Peter, James, John, and Andrew. They seem to have asked three questions.

1. when will the Temple be destroyed
2. what will be the sign of the coming destruction
3. when will this age end and the new age begin (recorded only in Matt. 24:3)

Luke focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem, while Matthew and Mark focus on the end of the age. Jesus seems to merge these two topics in this teaching moment. Synoptic scholars have often mentioned that Luke seems to choose from Jesus' teachings to emphasize a delayed second coming.

The OT prophets took the crises of their days and projected them into an eschatological setting. Luke chooses to focus on an immediate, temporal judgment event (the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple), while Matthew and Mark focus on the end of the age (Second Coming, Judgment Day).

21:8 "See to it that you are not misled" This is a Present active imperative and an aorist passive subjunctive. It refers to the many Messianic imposters between the death of Jesus and the Roman War of a.d. 60-70. It was this nationalistic religious fanaticism that led to the total destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 6.54).

■ **"misled"** This is the Greek verb *planaō*, from which the English word "planet" (i.e., the wanderers) is derived. It refers to the unusual orbit of the planets compared to the constellations (stars). It is usually translated "error," but came to be used metaphorically of deceiving or leading astray (cf. Matt. 24:4,5,11,24).

■ **"I am He"** This reflects Jesus' use of the OT covenant name for God (cf. Exod. 3:14; see Special Topic at Luke 1:68) as a designation of Himself (cf. John 8:24,58; 13:19; 18:5). Here it means many false prophets would claim to be the Jewish Messiah of Deut. 18:18-19 (cf. Acts 3:20-23).

■ **"The time is near"** This is the message of the pseudo-Messiahs. This is another example of the delayed Second Coming emphasis in Luke. This refers to the time period between Jesus' death and the destruction of Jerusalem.

■ **"do not go after them"** This is an aorist passive (deponent) subjunctive used in the sense of an imperative (Mark 13:7 is a present imperative). It has the negative particle, which usually denotes stopping an act in progress. These false messiahs had a large and zealous following.

21:9-11 These are precursor signs that are observable in every age. They designate the kind of world we live in, not uniquely the world immediately before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (cf. John L. Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*, pp. 25,28).

21:9 "do not be terrified" This is another aorist passive subjunctive used in the sense of an imperative. It is also an idiom from the Septuagint.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:10-11

¹⁰Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, ¹¹and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

21:10 "these things must take place first" The Markan parallel calls these precursor events "the beginning of the birth pangs of the new age" (cf. Mark 13:7-8). Both Mark and Luke have the word *dei* (must), which means necessity. God's children need to know and trust that all things are working out according to His plan!

The reason these bad events seem so magnified today is not their increased occurrences, but the immediacy of modern communication. We know of disasters and wars which happen in far away places almost immediately.

21:11

NASB	"terrors"
NKJV	"fearful sights"
NRSV	"dreadful portents"
NJB	"terrifying events"

This form of the word "fear" is found only here in the NT, but it is also found in the LXX of Isa. 19:17.

■ **"great signs from heaven"** The author uses OT apocalyptic language to describe these events (cf. Mark 13:25). Peter says that the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32, which also uses apocalyptic language, was fulfilled at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2), which shows it was not meant to be understood literally (cf. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*).

There are several slightly different versions of the phrase in the Greek manuscript tradition. The variations do not alter the sense of the phrase in context. There is no way to determine which of the five variants is original.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:12-19

12"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. **13**It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. **14**So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; **15**for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. **16**But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, **17**and you will be hated by all because of My name. **18**Yet not a hair of your head will perish. **19**By your endurance you will gain your lives.

21:12 There have been many examples both in Acts and in church history of this kind of persecution of believers. Notice the different types of persecution (i.e., "lay hands on," a LXX idiom).

1. synagogues – beatings for violation of Mosaic Law or judicial decision (cf. Deut. 25:1-3; Matt. 19:17; 23:34; Mark 13:9; Acts 6:9-10)
2. local governmental authorities (i.e., the different sons of Herod)
3. Roman authorities (Proconsuls or Procurators)
 - a. regional
 - b. in Rome

The NASB Study Bible (footnote Luke 21:12, p. 1503) asserts that the synagogue was also used as a place of confinement until trial.

21:13 Persecution can lead to proclamation opportunities (e.g., Paul in prison in Rome). It is surprising that Luke does not retain Mark's wording at this point because it fits Luke's purpose in writing his Gospel so well (i.e., Mark 13:10, "and the Gospel must be preached to all the nations")!

21:14-15 This does not refer to regular sermon preparation and Bible lessons, but to specific testimony in the face of persecution and trials before governmental authorities (cf. Luke 12:11-12).

21:16 "you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends" Faith in Christ will divide families and lifelong friends (cf. Matt. 10:21; Mark 13:12).

21:17 "you will be hated by all because of My name" This is a Periphrastic future passive. The presence of "all" shows it is a hyperbole (exaggeration). Christians will be hated because of their identification with Jesus of Nazareth. The early church was accused of (1) atheism; (2) treason; (3) incest; and (4) cannibalism, which were all related to a misunderstanding of Christian doctrines, terminologies, and worship procedures. Persecution for Christ's sake is a NT evidence of believer's salvation and effective Christian living.

21:18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish" This is a strong double negative. Verse 18 seems to contradict Luke 21:16. However, it must be understood that the main thrust here is (1) God is in control of history (2) physical death is not ultimate for believers.

Jesus used this same OT idiom of protection (cf. 1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kgs. 1:52) in previous sermons (cf. Luke 12:7; Matt. 10:30).

▣ **"perish"** This is the Greek term *apollumi*. See Special Topic at Luke 19:10.

Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 276, points out that there are several places where this term cannot be translated annihilation, "but such injury as makes the object practically useless for its original purpose."

1. the waste of ointment, Matt. 26:8
2. destruction of old wine skins, Matt. 9:17
3. destruction of hair, Luke 21:18
4. destruction of food, John 6:27
5. destruction of gold, 1 Pet. 1:7
6. destruction of the world, 2 Peter. 3:6
7. destruction of the physical body, Matt. 2:13; 8:25; 12:14; 21:41; 22:7; 26:52; 27:20; Rom. 2:12; 14:15; and 1 Cor. 8:11

This never refers to the annihilation of the person, but the end of bodily existence. It is also commonly used in a moral sense. "All men are regarded as morally destroyed, i.e., they have failed to carry out the intention for which the race was called into being" (p. 276). God's response to this problem was Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:15-16 and 2 Pet. 3:9). Those who reject the gospel are now subject to a further destruction, which does involve body and spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:10). For the opposite opinion see Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*.

21:19 This same emphasis on perseverance is found in Luke 21:36. True faith is a faith that lasts! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE](#) at Luke 8:13.

There is a Greek manuscript variant in the verb.

1. Aorist middle (deponent) imperative (cf. MSS κ , D, L, W)
2. Future middle indicative (cf. MSS A, B, and most ancient versions)

The UBS⁴ chooses #1, but "with difficulty" ("C" rating). The UBS³ gave #1 a D rating, "with great difficulty."

▣ **"your lives"** This is the Greek word *psuchē* (souls), which reflects the Hebrew word *nephesh* (BDB 659, i.e., physical life). Because of verse 16 this must refer to one's spiritual life. Christians will be killed but they have eternal life (cf. Matt. 10:28). See the word play between the two meanings at Mark 8:35-37.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:20-24

20"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. **21**Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;

22because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

23Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there

will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; ²⁴and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

21:20 "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies" Vespasian was Nero's general who subdued Palestine, but at Nero's death he had to return to Rome where three Emperors (Galba, Ortho, and Vitello) followed in less than one year. Vespasian became Emperor and his son, Titus, finally destroyed the city and the Temple in a.d. 70 after a five month siege of Jerusalem beginning in April when the city was flooded with pilgrims.

21:21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains" This is a present active imperative. Tradition (Eusebius, *Eccl. His.* 3.5.2-3) asserts that when the Christians saw the Roman armies coming, they heeded this prophetic message and fled to the Trans-Jordan region of the Decapolis to a city named Pella and most of them were spared the horrors of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

21:23 This obviously refers to the destruction of Jerusalem only, not to the Second Coming. The problem was the rapid flight that was necessary.

Jesus answers the questions of the disciples, but merges the fall of Jerusalem and the Second Coming. Notice also the synonymous parallelism which is so common in OT wisdom literature. Verses 23 and 24a form three double parallel lines.

21:24 "and they will fall by the edge of the sword" Josephus tells us that 1,100,000 were killed and 97,000 were taken prisoner (*Wars of the Jews*, 6.9.3). Josephus often exaggerated his numbers, but the terror and horror of this event is accurate.

▣ **"and will be led captive into all the nations"** The captured Jews were sold as slaves throughout the Roman Empire (as were all defeated peoples). Two-thirds of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves.

▣ **"until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"** There are several theories related to this phrase (cf. Luke 20:16; Mark 13:10; Rom. 11:12,25).

1. Gentiles as God's instrument of judgment on Israel
2. the Gentiles in political control of Palestine
3. the believing Gentiles receiving Israel's OT blessing and mandate of evangelism
4. the Good News being preached even to the Gentiles

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:25-28

²⁵**"There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."**

21:25-26 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars" Again this is an example of OT apocalyptic language concerning God's breaking into history. Because of Peter's use of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2, this should not be taken literally. See note at verse 11.

21:25 "and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves" Apocalyptic literature has much in common with OT wisdom literature. In this text there is a good example of synonymous parallelism. The metaphor of the sea for the nations comes from Daniel (cf. Luke

7:2-3).

21:26 "coming upon the world" This phrase is unique to Luke. It refers to the known inhabited world.

▣ **"for the powers of the heavens will be shaken"** This reflects several passages in Isaiah 13:10,13; 24:22; 34:4; 51:6. This imagery has two orientations.

1. If this were an astral deities context it would refer to their weakness and judgment.
2. If this were a visitation of YHWH context (and it is) then it refers to creation's convulsions at the approach of its creator.

21:27 "Then they will see" This seems to refer to all mankind. This seems to preclude a secret rapture.

▣ **"the Son of Man coming in a cloud"** "Son of Man" (see special Topic at Luke 5:24) is Jesus' self-chosen title. It apparently comes from Ezek. 2:1 and Dan. 7:13, where it combines humanity and deity (cf. Matt. 17:5). The presence of a cloud fits OT and NT allusions to a cloud being the transportation of deity. It is present at many of the major events of the end-time (cf. Matt. 24:30; 26:64; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 1:7).

[SPECIAL TOPIC: COMING ON THE CLOUDS](#)

21:28 "But when these things begin to take place" These prophecies of Mark 13, Matthew 24, and Luke 21 are meant to encourage

1. those believers living between Jesus' death and the destruction of Jerusalem
2. those believers who suffer persecution in every age
3. those last generation Christians who will face the wrath of the Antichrist and his followers (cf. 2 Thessalonoans 2 and Revelation)

These prophecies may become strikingly literal for the last generation of persecuted believers, but it is impossible to speculate about which, how, and when. Jesus revealed these things to encourage us, not to divide us.

▣ **"straighten up and lift up your heads"** These are both aorist active imperatives. Believers' courage in the face of persecution and death is a powerful witness to the unbelievers who tremble in fear (cf. Luke 21:25-26).

▣ **"because your redemption is drawing near"** Verses 29-36 are built on the promise of Luke 21:28. It shows that Christians amid the sufferings of the end-time still have great confidence.

▣ **"redemption"** This means "purchased release" (found only here in the Gospels). It is the common OT term for God's gracious acts toward His people. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM](#) at Luke 1:68.

▣ **"is drawing near"** This same word is used in Matt. 24:32-33. The parable used in Matt. 24:32-35 and Mark 13:28-32 is also in Luke 21:29-33.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:29-33

²⁹Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

21:29 "He told them a parable" This is also recorded in Matt. 24:32-35 and Mark 13:28-31. The little phrase "and all the trees" is unique to Luke and widens the warning to the whole world. Although believers cannot know the specific time of Jesus' coming, they can know the general time (cf. Luke 21:30-31).

21:31 "the kingdom of God" This refers to the eschatological kingdom. See Special Topic at Luke 4:21.

NASB	"recognize"
NKJV, NJB	"know"
NRSV	"you know"
TEV	"you will know"

The inflected form of "know" can be a

1. present active imperative (NASB, NKJV, NJB)
2. present active indicative (NRSV, TEV)

■ **"is near"** Believers cannot know the exact time of Jesus' return, even He did not know (cf. Matt. 24:36). They will be surprised by it (cf. Matt. 24:44), but they can know the general season (Matt. 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31) and be prepared for it.

The concept of the soon return has been a problem for interpreters because of the 2,000-year gap. See the Special Topic below from Rev. 1:1.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SOON RETURN

21:32 "Truly I say to you" This is literally, "amen." It is parallel to the idiom found in Luke 21:3. See Special Topic at Luke 4:24.

■ **"this generation will not pass away until all things take place"** This is a strong double negative. There has been much discussion about the interpretation of this verse. There are two major theories.

1. this refers specifically to the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70
2. this phrase is used in its OT sense of a people (cf. Deut. 32:5,20)

Both are true and both fit this context.

21:33 This is another strong double negative. It is a powerful affirmation of the eternity of God's promises (cf. Isa. 40:8; 55:11) and is repeated in Luke 16:17 and Matt. 5:18. Believers can trust these unconditional truths.

1. God's character
2. God's promises
3. God's Son
4. God's presence
5. God's purposes

Notice the emphasis of the similar wording of Matt. 5:18, which speaks of the fact that the OT has now been superceded by the words of Jesus (cf. Luke 21:21-48)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:34-36

³⁴"Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; ³⁵for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. ³⁶But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

21:34 "Be on guard" This is a present active imperative. It is a recurrent warning (cf. Luke 12:40,45 Mark 4:19; Matt. 24:42-44) and is the major thrust of Jesus' eschatological teachings:

1. be ready
2. be watching
3. be active in My service

■ **"hearts"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART](#) at Luke 1:51. In this context "yourselves" and "hearts" are parallel.

■ **"weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life"** This is addressed to the Apostles. The Christian life is a tension-filled pilgrimage. Many believers have damaged their witness and effective ministry by the temptations and cares of this age. Salvation is not the end of the struggle; sometimes it is the beginning.

The parallel of the soils in Mark 4 and Matthew 13 is a shocking witness to the need for fruit bearing and perseverance, not just initial response (germination). Salvation is an ongoing relationship (cf. Matt. 10:32; Mark 13:13), not only a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy! Daily choices reveal the heart and the true self. Faithfulness and perseverance are evidence of a free salvation. See Special Topic: The Need to Persevere at Luke 8:31.

■ **"and that day will come on you suddenly like a trap"** "That day" is an OT idiom for God's visitation for blessing or judgment. See Special Topic below from the Eighth Century Prophets.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THAT DAY](#)

21:35 This may be an allusion to Isa. 24:17 in the Septuagint. If so, then the verse division slightly changes.

The Second Coming ("that day," Luke 21:34) will impact all human beings living and dead. All will give an account to God of the gift of life (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15).

For those who know God in Christ, it is a day of resurrection, reunion, and rejoicing. But, for those who have not responded to the gospel, it is a day of gloom, doom, rejection, and permanent judgment (separation).

21:36 "keep on the alert at all times" This is a present active imperative denoting constant attention (cf. Mark 13:33; Eph. 6:18). This verse reminds me of Eph. 6:19. There is a daily price to be paid!

Paul uses a form of this term to describe his suffering for Christ and the gospel in 2 Cor. 6:5 and 11:27.

■ **"praying"** This is a present middle (deponent) participle used in the sense of an imperative. Luke uses this term often in the sense of

1. beseech or pray, Luke 5:12; 8:38; 10:2; 21:36; 22:32; Acts 4:31; 8:22,24; 10:2
2. beg, Luke 8:28; 9:38,40; Acts 21:39; 26:3
3. please tell, Acts 8:34

All of these senses are found in the Septuagint.

NASB, NRSV "that you may have strength to escape"

NKJV "that you may be counted worthy to escape"

TEV "that you will have the strength to go safely through"

NJB "for the strength to survive"

This is a purpose clause (*hina*) with an aorist active subjunctive (a note of contingency) and an aorist active infinitive. Some believers will be caught unaware and unprepared when the events of the end-time begin to rapidly unfold. They will have to face Christ ashamed and will receive no reward (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase.

1. *kataxiōthēte* (aorist passive subjunctive), "may be judged/counted worthy" (cf. MSS A, C, D)
2. *katischusēte* (aorist active subjunctive), "may have strength" (cf. MSS κ , B, L, W and in UBS⁴)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 21:37-38

³⁷Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. ³⁸And all the people would get up early in the

morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

21:37 "during the day He was teaching in the temple" Jesus did not hide or decrease His public ministry (cf. Luke 20:1).

▣ **"spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet"** This refers to the fact that Jesus camped out on the Mount of Olives several nights and did not spend every night with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany. This place was well known to Judas and will be the site of Jesus' arrest.

21:38 This shows Jesus' popularity with both the pilgrims attending the Passover and the local townspeople. This popularity was one of several reasons that caused the religious leaders to fear Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What spiritual truth about stewardship was Jesus communicating in Luke 21:1-4?
2. Why were the Jews so proud of the Temple?
3. Why is the discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem mixed with end-time events of the End of the Age?
4. What does the phrase in verse 25, "the times of the Gentiles," mean?
5. What is the major emphasis of Jesus' teachings concerning His Second Coming?
6. Do Luke 21:34-36 refer to believers? If so what is the implication?

LUKE 22

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Plot to Kill Jesus 22:1-6	The Plot to Kill Jesus 22:1-6	Jesus' Death (22:1-23:56) 22:1-2	The Plot Against Jesus 22:1-2	The Conspiracy Against Jesus: Judas Betrays Him 22:1-2
		22:3-6	Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus 22:3-6	22:3-6
The Preparation of the Passover 22:7-13	Jesus and His Disciples Prepare the Passover 22:7-13	The Last Supper 22:7-13	Jesus Prepares to Eat the Passover Meal 22:7-8	Preparation for the Passover Supper 22:7-13
			22:9 22:10-12 22:13	
The Institution of the Lord's Supper 22:14-23	Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper 22:14-23	22:14-23	The Lord's Supper 22:14-16 22:17-18	The Supper 22:14-16 22:17-18
			22:19-20 22:21-22 22:23	The Institution of the Eucharist 22:19-20 The Treachery of Judas Foretold 22:21-23
The Dispute About Greatness 22:24-30	The Disciples Argue About Greatness 22:24-30	22:24-27	The Argument About Greatness 22:24-27	Who is Greatest? 22:24-27
		22:28-30	22:28-30	The Reward Promised to the Apostles 22:28-30
Peter's Denial Foretold 22:31-34	Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial 22:31-34	22:31-34	Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial 22:31-32 22:33	Peter's Denial and Repentance Foretold 22:31-34

			22:34	
Purse, Bag, and Sword	Wallet, Bag, and Sword		Purse, Bag, and Sword	A Time of Crisis
22:35-38	22:35-38	22:35-38	22:35a	22:35-38
			22:35b	
			22:36-37	
			22:38a	
			22:38b	
The Prayer on the Mount of Olives	The Prayer in the Garden	Gethsemane	Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives	The Mount of Olives
22:39-46	22:39-46	22:39-46	22:39-40	22:39-40
			22:41-44	22:41-44
			22:45-46	22:45-46
The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus	Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane		The Arrest of Jesus	The Arrest
22:47-53	22:47-53	22:47-53	22:47-48	22:47-51
			22:49-50	
			22:51	
			22:52-53	22:52-53
Peter's Denial of Jesus	Peter Denies Jesus and Weeps Bitterly		Peter Denies Jesus	Peter's Denial
22:54-62	22:54-62	22:54-62	22:54-56	22:54-62
			22:57	
			22:58a	
			22:58b	
			22:59	
			22:60a	
			22:60b-62	
The Mocking and Beating of Jesus	Jesus Mocked and Beaten		Jesus Is Mocked and Beaten	Jesus Mocked by the Guards
22:63-65	22:63-65	22:63-65	22:63-65	22:63-65
Jesus Before the Council	Jesus Faces the Sanhedrin		Jesus Before the Council	Jesus Before the Sanhedrin
22:66-71	22:66-71	22:66-71	22:66-67a	22:66-23:1
			22:67b-69	
			22:70a	
			22:70b	

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. 1 Corinthians 11:20ff is the first written account of the Last Supper. It was recorded by Paul. Luke, in many ways, mirrors Paul's presentation.
- B. The only account of the dialog during the Lord's Supper is John 13-17, though no reference to the actual meal is included.
- C. There are two great textual difficulties related to this chapter, Luke 22:17-20 and Luke 22:43-44. See the notes below.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:1-2

¹Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. ²The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people.

22:1 "the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover" These two feasts are discussed in Exodus 12 (Passover, Luke 22:1-14,21-36 and Unleavened Bread, Luke 22:15-20). Originally they were separate feasts, but were later combined into one eight-day feast (cf. Num. 28:16-31) beginning on the 14th of Nisan (March-April). The Passover Feast commemorates the Death Angel passing over the Jewish slaves' homes in Egypt and the deliverance of God's people from the Egyptians as promised in Gen. 15:12-21.

22:2 "The chief priests and the scribes" This refers to the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of the Jews in Jerusalem. See Special Topic: Sanhedrin at Luke 9:22.

▣ **"how they might put Him to death"** The religious leaders felt that Jesus

1. was heretical
2. could cause problems with Rome (cf. Matt. 26:5)
3. made them to feel jealous

The Gospel of John mentions several plots to kill Jesus (cf. John 7:30,44; 8:59; 10:31,39; 11:53).

■ **"death"** This word for death (*anairēō*) is used in the NT almost exclusively by Luke for someone being put to death (cf. Luke 22:2; 23:32; Acts 2:23; 5:33,36; 7:28; 9:23,24,29; 10:39; 12:2; 13:28; 16:27; 22:20; 23:15,21,27; 25:3; 26:10). It is also used this way in the Septuagint (cf. Gen. 4:15; Exod. 15:9; 2 Sam. 10:18).

The other Synoptic Gospels use the terms *apollumi* or *apokteinō* for these murderous plots by these Jerusalem leaders.

Luke, being the only Gentile writer of the NT, had a different vocabulary from the other Gospel writers whose primary language was Aramaic. Luke is heavily influenced by the terminology and vocabulary of the Greek translation of the NT, the Septuagint.

■ **"for they were afraid of the people"** This is a recurrent theme (cf. Matt. 21:26,44; Mark 11:18,32; 12:12; Luke 20:19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:3-6

³And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. ⁴And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. ⁵They were glad and agreed to give him money. ⁶So he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd.

22:3 "And Satan entered into Judas" Luke mentions Satan often (cf. Luke 4:13; 10:18; 13:16; and 22:3,31). Judas had heard, fellowshiped with, and observed the Lord Jesus at close range for several years, but apparently he still had no personal relationship with Him by faith (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). Peter undergoes the same intensity of temptation as does Judas, but with drastically different results. Much discussion has taken place over the motives of Judas' treachery: (1) it was primarily monetary (cf. John 12:6); (2) it was primarily political (cf. William Klassen, *Judas Betrayer of Friend of Jesus?*); (3) it was spiritual (cf. John 13:27).

On the subject of Satanic influence or demon possession, there are several good resources (listed in the order of those I trust).

1. Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology, Demons in the World Today*
2. Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*
3. Kurt Koch, *Christian Counseling and Occultism, Demonology Past and Present*
4. C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*
5. John P. Newport, *Demons, Demons, Demons*
6. John Warwick Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers*

Also see my Special Topics at Luke 4:2 (Satan) and 4:33 (The Demonic).

Be careful of cultural myths and superstitions. Satan affects Peter in Matt. 16:23 to tempt Jesus in the very same way—to avoid His substitutionary death. Satan is consistent. He is trying any way possible to stop Jesus' redemptive work on our behalf.

1. Satan' temptation of Jesus, Luke 4; Matthew 4
2. Peter, Matthew 16
3. Judas and the Sanhedrin, here

Jesus even describes Judas as a devil in John 6:70. The Bible does not discuss the subject of demon possession and influence as it relates to believers. But, believers are obviously affected by personal choices and personal evil!

■ **"Iscariot"**

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISCARIOT

■ **"belonging to the number of the twelve"** These were the special disciples whom Jesus chose to intimately reveal Himself to and train to become the "new Israel." A really good book on Jesus' training

methodology is Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. These men became known as "the Twelve." See Special Topic at Luke 6:13.

22:4 "officers" This refers to the Temple police. One of the divisions of the Levites was charged with guarding, maintaining order, and inflicting punishment on the Temple mount. The priests guarded the temple itself, but the temple police (we learn from Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* (Loeb 7, 1.156) were assigned to

1. opening and closing the outer doors of the temple area
2. guarding the opening between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women
3. patrolling the commercial area known as the Court of the Gentiles

At night there were twenty-one guards posted around the temple area's perimeter (M. M. dd. 1.1).

They were under the control of the Sanhedrin, which usually met in the temple. They are usually referred to

1. as officials or attendants, John 7:32,45,46; 18:18
2. at Jesus' arrest, John 18:3,12
3. at the night trials, John 18:18,36
 - a. at Peter's denial, Matt. 26:58; Mark 14:54,65; John 18:18
 - b. at Jesus' sentencing by Pilate, John 19:6
4. in Acts 4:1; 5:22-26; 21:30

22:5 "they were glad" They rejoiced because now they could arrest Jesus quietly and discreetly in private without the pilgrims or townspeople knowing anything about it (cf. Luke 22:6).

■ **"and agreed to give him money"** We learn from Matt. 26:15 that it was thirty pieces of silver, which fulfills the prophecy of Zech. 1:12.

22:6 "and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him" The night of the Passover observance would have been an opportune time because everyone was home with their family groups on this special holy evening.

■ **"apart from the crowd"** We must remember that Jesus was a very popular person in Galilee and during this festival hundreds and hundreds of people from Galilee were in Jerusalem. This is the very reason the High Priest had decided to wait in Mark 14:2, but when one of His own offered to betray Him, they changed their minds.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:7-13

⁷Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it." ⁹They said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" ¹⁰And He said to them, "When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' ¹²And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there." ¹³And they left and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

22:7 "Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed" There is a chronological difference between the Synoptic Gospels (Passover) and John (the day of preparation, cf. Exod. 12:6; John 13:1; 18:28) on exactly what day the Lord's Supper took place. Remember that Jewish days start at dusk because of Genesis 1. The day of Jesus' crucifixion is uniform in all four Gospels as being Friday. If one retraces the lunar calendar back to Jesus' day in a.d. 30, the 14th of

Nisan (cf. Lev. 23:5-6) fell on a Thursday, the 15th of Nisan on a Friday, which fits exactly.

22:8 "And Jesus sent Peter and John" Only Luke names these two preparers. Usually James is included with this inner circle of Apostles, but not here.

■ **"Go and prepare"** This is a good example of an idiomatic use of a participle before an imperative, where both are used as imperatives (cf. Matt. 28:19).

This preparation would have been done on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan. The meal would be eaten that night (the 15th of Nisan).

22:9 "Where do You want us to prepare it" The disciples did not know the exact location, possibly because Jesus did not want Judas' betrayal to interrupt the meal.

22:10 "a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water" Woman usually carried water in pitchers, men sometimes carried it in animal skins. This is another of many examples in the Gospels that can be interpreted as (1) the supernatural knowledge of Jesus or (2) a pre-arranged setting. The people of Jerusalem and surrounding areas opened their homes during these festival occasions for pilgrims.

22:11 "And you shall say to the owner of the house" This may have been John Mark's home, which became the disciples' meeting place in Jerusalem known as the upper room (cf. Acts 12:12).

■ **"the guest room"** See note at Luke 2:7, where it is translated "inn."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:14-23

14When the hour had come, He reclined *at the table*, and the apostles with Him. **15**And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; **16**for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." **17**And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; **18**for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." **19**And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." **20**And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. **21**But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. **22**For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" **23**And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing.

22:14 "When the hour had come" This would be twilight on the beginning of the 15th of Nisan.

■ **"He reclined at the table"** Remember the Lord's Supper was done as all Jewish meals, by reclining on the left elbow around a horseshoe-shaped, low table.

22:15 This verse has two wordplays.

1. "with desire (*epithumia*) I desired (*epethumēsa*)," which is a common idiom in the Septuagint for "strongly desired"

2. "passover" (*pascha*) and "suffer" (*paschō*)

Jesus had forewarned them several times (cf. Luke 9:22-27; Mark 8:31-9:1; Matt. 16:21-28; 17:9,12,22-23; 20:18-19) of His upcoming suffering in Jerusalem at the instigation of the Jewish authorities and the cruel Roman justice (crucifixion).

22:16 "I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God" This is a strong double negative, which refers to the Passover meal. It seems to be a reference to the Messianic banquet (cf. Luke 22:18,30; 14:15; Matt. 8:11; 26:29; Rev. 19:9).

This metaphor of intimate fellowship is hard to interpret. It obviously refers to table fellowship, which was so important in ancient Israel and the Near East. However, is it to be understood literally? Resurrected bodies do not need physical food. It is this type of idiomatic language about the afterlife that caused the Pharisees to think of it in such earthly, physical terms (Islam also). Humans have many questions about the afterlife, but the Bible speaks of it in symbol, idiom, analogy, and metaphor. Perhaps 1 Cor. 2:9, which is a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17, is best!

▣ **"kingdom of God"** See Special Topic at Luke 4:21.

22:17-20 There is a manuscript variant in these verses. The long text (Luke 22:17-20) is recorded in the NASB, NRSV, NJB, NKJV, TEV. It is not in Manuscript D, on which the King James Version is normally based, but it is in the other four, most ancient witnesses (MSS P⁷⁵, κ , A, B) and is quoted by Justin Martyr around a.d. 150.

In the short text (Luke 22:17-19a), the wine comes before the bread, which follows the order of 1 Cor. 10:16 (and the *Didache* 9:1-3). If the longer text is followed, then the order is reversed which is found in Matthew, Mark, and 1 Cor. 11:23-27.

There are two good discussions of this textual problem:

1. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 173-177
2. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 198-209

This textual problem does not affect any Christian doctrine (because of the parallels in Matthew and Mark), but only a proper reading of Luke and his purposes and idiosyncrasies as an author. At the stage of textual criticism there is no way to determine the reading of the autograph copy (original handwritten copy) of Luke. Both forms were known to second century Christians.

22:17 "a cup" There are four cups of blessing during the Seder service. I believe that Jesus used the third cup of blessing as the point of departure from the national meal of Israel to the new meal of the church.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PASSOVER (ORDER OF SERVICE)

22:18 "the fruit of the vine" See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM

22:19 "some bread" Notice that the lamb is not mentioned. This meal has a completely new relevance for the church and is not linked inseparably to an annual Feast of national Israel. It symbolized a new deliverance (exodus) from sin (i.e., the new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34).

▣ **"This is My body"** There have been four major understandings of this meal in the church:

1. Roman Catholic trans-substantiation, which means that this is in reality the body of Christ
2. Martin Luther's con-substantiation, which is slightly less literal than number 1
3. John Calvin's spiritual presence, which is slightly less literal than numbers 1 and 2
4. Zwingli's symbolic understanding

The interpretation that the elements actually become the body and blood of Christ comes from John 6:43-58 which, however, in context, it records the feeding of the five thousand and the Jews expectation that the Messiah would feed them as Moses did, not the Lord's Supper.

▣ **"do this in remembrance of Me"** This is a Present active imperative. The phrase is unique to Luke's Gospel. The word *anamnēsis* occurs twice in Paul's account of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11:24,25. Luke may have gotten his terminology from Paul's churches. This is probably why there are several non-Lukan forms and words in Luke 22:19b-20.

22:20

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB "poured out"

NKJV "shed"

SPECIAL TOPIC: POURED OUT

■ **"the new covenant in My blood"** This new covenant is described in Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek. 36:22-36, and Zech. 9:11. It was horrid for Jews to think of drinking blood (cf. Lev. 17:14). It is obvious that Jesus is referring to His sacrificial death and not of literally drinking His blood!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LORD'S SUPPER IN JOHN 6

22:21 "the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table" In Luke, Judas participates in the entire Lord's Supper. In John 13:21-30 he leaves before the Supper is begun. In Matthew and Mark he takes part in half of the Supper. We must continue to remember that the Gospels are not modern histories, but evangelistic tracts! Judas' betrayal is a fulfillment of Ps. 41:9 (cf. John 13:18).

22:22 "the Son of Man is going as it has been determined" For "Son of Man" see Special Topic at Luke 5:24.

The verb is a perfect passive participle of *horizō*, which means a boundary or limit. We get the English word "horizon" from this Greek term. Jesus' sacrificial death is part of the pre-determined plan of God (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 52:13-53:12; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 10:42; 13:29; 17:26,31). Jesus's death was not an afterthought or plan B! Jesus came to die (cf. Mark 10:45; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21)!

■ **"but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed"** It is the Gospel of John that mentions Judas' treachery early and often (cf. John 6:70; 12:4; 13:2,26,27; 17:12; 18:2-5).

22:23 This verse shows the confusion and uncertainty of the Twelve. They had been with Jesus for several years. They had heard His teachings, seen His miracles, and functioned as His representatives, yet they did not understand! They were not even sure which one of them was the betrayer!

Passages like this are an encouragement to me in my doubts, confusions, and fear. Christianity is a life of faith, trust, hope, fear, and uncertainty; get used to it! The wonder of wonders is that through it all there is peace, joy, contentment, and assurance!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:24-27

²⁴And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. ²⁵And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' ²⁶But *it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves."*

22:24 "And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest" Every time Jesus related His death, the disciples began to argue over who would be His successor (cf. Matt. 18:1-5; 20:24-28; Mark 9:33-37; 10:41-45; Luke 9:46-48). The Greek word for "dispute" implies one ready to argue. The context of John 13 involves this same issue. The larger context is the dialogue in the "guest room" during the Lord's Supper, John 13-17. They still had in their minds an earthly kingdom, a Jewish kingdom (cf. Acts 1:6). They were arguing over which one of them would take Jesus' place as leader.

22:25-27 Jesus uses several words denoting powerful men: "kings," "those who have authority,"

"benefactors" (used of Syrian kings). These all refer to people in power. Christ's leaders must be servant leaders. Jesus demonstrated this for them as He washed their feet in John 13:3-5 and supremely when He died on the cross. God's leaders must be Kingdom people, Great Commission people!

The fall involved selfishness; faith in Jesus promotes and provides selflessness (cf. Gal. 2:20). We are saved to serve; we live to serve! It is all about Jesus, not all about us (cf. Luke 9:48).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

22:27 The second question of Luke 22:27 expects a "yes" answer. This is a typical biblical "role reversal" statement. God's ways are not our ways (cf. Isa. 55:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:28-30

28"You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; **29**and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you **30**that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

22:28

NASB

"those who have stood by Me in My trials"

NKJV

"those who have continued with Me in My trials"

NRSV

"those who have stood by Me in my trials"

TEV

"you have stayed with me all through my trials"

NJB

"you are the men who have stood by me faithfully in my trials"

This is a Perfect active participle. Jesus must be referring to the events and struggles of their years together in ministry on the road. The large crowds came and went, but this core of followers remained. This group also included several women who traveled with them (cf. Luke 8:1-3) and some of the hundred and twenty in the upper room on Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:13-15).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN WHO TRAVELED WITH JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

22:29-30 Jesus knew who He was and why He came (cf. John 15:1-7). He has the authority (cf. Matt. 28:18) to appoint His followers a place that was given to Him by the Father (places of honor at the head table).

22:30 "and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" The exact time, purpose, and people to be ruled is uncertain (cf. Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:11-12; Rev. 3:21). This phrase surely links the OT Israel and the NT church in an inseparable embrace.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REIGNING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:31-34

31"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; **32**but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." **33**But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" **34**And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

22:31 "Simon, Simon" The doubling of a name was a way of gently chiding (cf. Luke 6:46; 10:41; 22:31; Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). Notice Jesus calls him Simon and not Peter (rock). He will be anything but a rock in the next few hours.

NASB

"Satan has demanded *permission* to sift all of you like wheat"

NKJV	"Satan has asked for you, that he may sift <i>you</i> as wheat"
NRSV	"Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat"
TEV	"Satan has received permission to test all of you, to separate the good from the bad, as a farmer separates the wheat from the chaff"
NJB	"Satan has got his wish to sift all of you like wheat"

The "you" is plural. This means all of the disciples. This sounds much like Job 1:12; 2:6. Satan must ask God's permission before he acts. The TEV and NJB catch the connotation of the verb *exaiteō* (here an aorist middle indicative) as it was used in the papyri (Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 221).

Sifting was a process of (1) shaking grain through a strainer to remove dirt and small stones and other impurities before preparing it to eat or (2) separating the grain from the chaff by winnowing. Here it is metaphorical of a time of testing/separation.

22:32 "but I have prayed for you" The pronoun *egō* is fronted, implying "I myself." Jesus prayed specifically for Peter. Jesus prayed for His disciples then and now in John 17. Jesus continues to pray for all believers (cf. Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). This same verb is used in Luke 21:36 for believers praying and keeping watch.

■ **"that your faith may not fail"** This is a sobering thought (see Special Topic at Luke 6:46). Peter will deny any knowledge of Jesus three times, with an oath! But Peter repents and reestablishes his relationship by faith (Judas does not).

If the strong leader of the Apostolic group is open to Satanic attack and failure, why not the rest of Jesus' followers (past and present)?

■ **"when once you have turned again"** Even in the midst of temptation, Jesus strengthens Peter by this statement. I believe John 21 is Peter's official reinstatement as leader of the Apostolic group after his denial. Amazingly, he will preach the first Christian sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2!

22:33 This verse clearly shows the struggle of the will. Peter truly wanted to follow and serve his Lord, but there is a terrible conflict in the fallen human heart (cf. Eph. 6:10-19). Self, self-interest, and self-preservation become ultimate issues (cf. Rom. 7). Peter was willing to die for Jesus at the arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, but not at the fire outside the high priest's home (cf. Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38).

22:34 "the rooster will not crow" The time of the crowing (before 3 a.m.) and the number of crowings (cf. Mark. 14:30) are examples of Jesus' supernatural knowledge.

■ **"that you know Me"** The verb "know" is a perfect active infinitive denoting a past act come to a settled state of being. The Hebrew connotation of "know" is not facts about, but intimate personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Peter was asserting that he had never had a personal relationship with Jesus!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:35-38

³⁵And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." ³⁶And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. ³⁷For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was numbered with transgressors'; for that which refers to Me has *its* fulfillment." ³⁸They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

22:35 "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals" This relates to the mission trips of the Twelve and the Seventy (cf. Luke 9:3; 10:4). This reminds them of a ministry time when they had to totally depend on God for sustenance, protection, and provision.

▣ **"you did not lack anything did you"** This question expects a "no" answer.

22:36 "and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one" Peter apparently took this literally as did the other disciples (see Luke 22:38). This is probably the background of Peter's cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant. I do not believe Jesus was speaking literally, but figuratively of the struggle ahead.

There is a paradox between divine provision and human preparation. Both are needed. It is part of the faith covenant relationship with God. Believers are not blessed or effective because of their efforts, but because they are blessed they freely give themselves to the spiritual tasks assigned by God.

This verse, which contains three aorist active imperatives, shows that not all commands are to be taken literally. Human language has a complex relationship to specific historical settings and literary contexts. Part of the image of God in mankind is our linguistic abilities.

22:37 "that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me" This refers to OT prophecy (here Isa. 53:12). The verb "is written" is a Perfect passive participle, which is an idiom for inspired OT Scripture. Jesus' life, teachings, and actions had OT prophetic implications.

The OT and NT authors believed God was intimately involved in His creation. He reveals Himself to humans in Scripture. One of the powerful ways He substantiates the validity and authority of His revelation (Bible) is predictive prophecy. Many of the OT prophecies are typological fulfillments (something happens to Israel or her leaders that later also occur in Jesus' life, cf. Psalm 22; Hos. 11:1) and others like this one specifically record future events unique to the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 53; Micah 5:2). No other "holy book" of world religions has predictive prophecy. It clearly shows the supernatural nature of the Bible and God's control and knowledge of history.

NASB	"for that which refers to Me has <i>its</i> fulfillment"
NKJV	"for the things concerning Me have an end"
NRSV	"and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled"
TEV	"what was written about me is coming true"
NJB	"Yes, what it says about me is even now reaching its fulfillment"

This could refer to (1) prophetic Scripture about the Messiah or (2) Jesus' life work of accomplishing the redemptive will and plan of God, about to be finished. His hour has come. Charles B. Williams, *The New Testament In the Language of the People* has "yes that saying about me has its fulfillment," which makes Luke 22:37 Hebrew synonymous parallelism.

▣ **"He was numbered with transgressors"** This is a quote from a Servant Song of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (cf. Luke 53:12). It is the most specific OT prophecy of the Messiah's rejection and subsequent death. The Messiah will suffer (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

22:38 "It is enough" This either refers to the fact that (1) there are enough swords or (2) this is enough of this kind of talk (cf. TEV footnote).

Both A. T. Robertson (*Word Pictures*) and Joseph A. Fitzmyer (*Anchor Bible*, vol. 28A) assume that Jesus is speaking metaphorically and that the Apostles have taken Him literally. Since He cannot communicate to them because of their world view/mind set, He terminates the discussion. They take this approach because it sounds so out of character for Jesus to advocate buying swords for a physical battle between His disciples and a large group of soldiers.

F. F. Bruce, *Questions and Answers*, says:

"Our Lord speaks here with a certain sad irony: since the Son of Man is about to be numbered with transgressors (more particularly, with bandits like the two who were crucified with Him), why should His followers not dress accordingly and wear swords as well as other articles which they had formerly been forbidden to take with them? Taking Him up literally, the disciples revealed that they had two swords with them. But He, realizing that they had not understood Him, dismissed the matter: "Enough!" He said, "that will do." He certainly did not wish them to use the swords for defending Him

(as the sequel makes plain), and two swords would have been inadequate for their own self-defense" (p. 63).

This is basically the understanding found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 486-487.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:39-46

³⁹And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. ⁴⁰When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." ⁴¹And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, ⁴²saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." ⁴³Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

⁴⁵When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, ⁴⁶and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

22:39 "as was His custom to the Mount of Olives" Apparently Jesus used this place often for prayer. There is also the possibility that this was His camp site while in Jerusalem.

The Mount of Olives is really a ridge to the east of Jerusalem running about 2.5 miles. It is about 300-400' higher than the city. This makes it a beautiful place to overlook the holy city and the temple. Jesus apparently camped out here while in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 21:37).

22:40 "When He arrived at the place" Luke never mentions the garden of Gethsemane as Mark (cf. Luke 14:32) and Matthew (cf. Luke 26:36) do.

▣ **"Pray that you may not enter into temptation"** "Pray" is a present middle (deponent) imperative, which denotes an ongoing command. Jesus faced His hour of trial through His constant fellowship with the Father in prayer. Luke, of all the Gospels, emphasizes Jesus' prayer life.

The term "temptation" is the noun form of the verb *peirazō*. See Special Topic at Luke 4:2.

22:41 Jesus came to Gethsemane with all His Apostles (except Judas) to pray. Apparently He left the larger group as well as the inner circle of disciples, Peter, James, and John. He then left them and went a short distance away and began to pray (imperfect middle [deponent] indicative), which denotes the beginning of an action in past time or the recurrence of an action (cf. Matt. 26:39,42,44).

▣ **"knelt down"** Matthew and Mark have Jesus prostrate on the ground (cf. Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:35). Luke has Jesus kneeling. The normal position of Jewish prayer was standing with the eyes and hands lifted to heaven. This experience was not normal in any sense!

22:42 "Father" See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER

▣ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which implies Jesus' request was possible. This phrase is repeated in all three Synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt. 26:39 and Mark 14:35).

▣ **"remove this cup from Me"** We are on extremely holy ground here as Jesus' human nature struggles with the Father's will.

This was an OT metaphor for one's destiny (cf. Ps. 16:5; 23:5; Jer. 51:2; Matt. 20:22). It was usually used in a judgmental (i.e., negative) sense (cf. Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 51:17,22; Jer. 25:15-16,27-28; 49:12; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 23:31-33; Hab. 2:16). This idiom is often associated with drunkenness, which is another OT metaphor for judgment (cf. Job 21:20; Isa. 29:9; 63:6; Jer. 25:15-16,27-28). Jesus wants out! Fear is not

sin. He faced fear with faith; so must we!

■ **"yet not My will, but Yours be done"** In this context the true humanity and faith of Jesus shines forth! Though His human nature cries out for deliverance, His heart is set on fulfilling the Father's eternal plan of substitutionary atonement (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:11-3:13).

The "to be" verb is a Present middle (deponent) imperative. The temptation was to bypass the cross! This was exactly Satan's temptation in the wilderness in Luke 4 (see James S. Stewart, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, pp. 39-46).

22:43-44 These verses are found in the ancient manuscript Greek uncial κ , κ^2 , D, K, L, X, and Delta. They are also found in the quotations of Justin, Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Eusebius, and Jerome. However, they are omitted in MSS P⁶⁹ [probably] ⁷⁵, κ^1 , A, B, N, T, and W, as well as the manuscripts used by Clement of Alexandria and Origen. The UBS⁴ ranks their omission as "certain" (A).

Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 187-194, assumes these verses are an early second century addition to refute docetic (Gnostic) Christologies who denied Christ's humanity and suffering. The church's conflict with Christological heresies was the possible source of many of the early manuscript changes.

The UBS⁴, NASB, and NRSV bracket these verses, while NKJV, TEV, and NIV have a footnote which says, "some ancient manuscripts omit verses 43 and 44." This information is unique to Luke's Gospel.

22:45 "sleeping from sorrow" Only Luke adds this note to explain why the disciples could not stay awake.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:47-53

47While He was still speaking, behold, a crowd *came*, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him. **48**But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" **49**When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" **50**And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. **51**But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him. **52**Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? **53**While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours."

22:47 "a crowd" Luke often mentions the crowd of people who followed Jesus to hear His teaching and observe His miracles. It is ironic that now in this verse and 23:4 they are enemies, but in Luke 23:48 (the cross) the crowd who came to watch, grieves and disperses.

■ **"and he approached Jesus to kiss Him"** This was a typical greeting of a student for his rabbi (cf. Mark 14:45). It was a sign of affection (cf. Luke 22:48), but here it was a way of pointing to Jesus so that He could be arrested (cf. Mark 14:44; Matt. 26:49).

22:50 John 18:10 names the disciple (Peter) and the High Priest's slave (Malchus).

22:51

NASB	"Stop, no more of this"
NKJV	"Permit even this"
NRSV	"No more of this"
TEV	"Enough of this"
NJB	"that is enough"

This is a present active imperative. This has three possible meanings.

1. if He is addressing the disciples, it means allow this to happen to Me
2. if He is addressing the crowd, it means we will put up no more struggle
3. the NASB (1970) footnote relates this phrase to Jesus' healing of the severed ear, also implying no more violence

■ **"and He touched his ear and healed him"** Matthew, Mark, and John all mention that Peter cut off the High Priest's slave's ear. Only Luke records the healing. It is uncertain whether Jesus (1) stopped the bleeding or (2) restored the ear. Luke the physician is interested in this.

I wonder whether Malchus became a believer. This must have been a very dramatic moment for all of these men sent to arrest Jesus!

22:52 "chief priests" The reason for the plural is that since the Romans occupied Palestine, the High Priesthood had been a political plumb purchased by a family. It is doubtful that the High Priest himself came to the garden, but probably his representatives from the Sanhedrin (elders).

■ **"with swords and clubs"** The Romans would have had swords and the Temple police (officers, see note at Luke 22:4) would have had the clubs.

22:53 This verse relates to the temple police and the representatives of the Sanhedrin. It is a penetrating question and accusation. As Jesus had His prophetic "hour" (definite article, cf. Matt. 26:45; Mark 14:35,41), so too, did these forces and pawns of evil (authority of darkness). Jesus' arrest, trials, death, and resurrection were all part of God's plan of redemption.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:54-62

⁵⁴Having arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. ⁵⁶And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." ⁵⁷But he denied *it*, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." ⁵⁸A little later, another saw him and said, "You are *one of them too!*" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" ⁵⁹After about an hour had passed, another man *began* to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." ⁶⁰But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. ⁶¹The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

22:54 "they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest" Possibly Annas and Caiaphas lived in one large home (cf. Matt. 26:57-58; John 18:13,15,24). The order of trials seems to be (1) before Annas; (2) before Caiaphas; (3) before the entire Sanhedrin; (4) before Pilate; (5) before Herod; and (6) again before Pilate.

■ **"but Peter was following at a distance"** The Gethsemane arrest caused most of the disciples to flee in fear of arrest. However, John may have known people in the High Priest's family, for apparently he was present at the trials before the Jewish leaders. Peter, too, did not completely desert Jesus, but followed at a distance. He could not stay with Jesus, but he could not leave either (cf. Matt. 26:58; Mark 14:54).

22:55 "they had kindled a fire" This seems to refer to (1) the Temple Police or (2) servants of the high priests.

22:56 "a servant-girl" There is a great variety among the Gospels on the who and the when of Peter's accusers. It is obvious that several around the fire recognized him and challenged him.

22:57 "I do not know Him" The interpretive key to this phrase is not the verb, but the Hebrew connotation of "know." Peter is denying any personal relationship with Jesus of Nazareth.

22:58 Here Peter denies he was part of Jesus' group of disciples.

22:59 "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too" This refers to Peter's accent. The pronouncement of gutturals in Aramaic was different between Jerusalem and Galilee. Peter denies even his accent!

22:61 "The Lord turned and looked at Peter" This was not done in anger, but in sorrow and compassion. Possibly Jesus was being moved from Annas' chambers to Caiaphas' chambers within the same house. This fulfilled Jesus' prophecy in Luke 22:34. This starts Peter's sorrowful repentance (cf. Luke 22:62; Matt. 26:75)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:63-65

⁶³Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him, ⁶⁴and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, "Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?" ⁶⁵And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming.

22:63 "the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him" Jesus was beaten by the Jewish guards, Herod's guards, and the Roman guards. These beatings may be a fulfillment of Isa. 53:2.

22:64-65 These Roman soldiers took out their anger and frustration against the exclusivism and continuing rebellion of the Jewish population on Jesus. He became the object of their ridicule!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 22:66-71

⁶⁶When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council *chamber*, saying, ⁶⁷"If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; ⁶⁸and if I ask a question, you will not answer. ⁶⁹But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." ⁷¹Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

22:66 "When it was day" If the night trial occurred on Thursday (Nisan 14), then this occurred on the Friday morning (Nisan 14). Jesus will be crucified by noon (Nisan 14, cf. Luke 23:44) and buried before the beginning of the Sabbath at twilight on Friday (Nisan 15, cf. Luke 23:54).

The timing and order of these trials vary from Gospel to Gospel. We must remember these are not western histories or biographies, but salvation tracts targeted to certain people groups. The variety does not diminish the inspiration or trustworthiness of the events themselves!

▣ **"the Council of elders of the people assembled"** This was done by the Sanhedrin (See Special Topic at Luke 9:22) to give a semblance of legality to the illegal nighttime trial.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: Illegalities of the Sanhedrin's Night Trial, Matt. 26:57-68](#)

22:67 "If" The first "if" in this verse is a First class conditional. It usually denotes the reality of a statement,

but here it is used sarcastically, which shows how literary context affects grammatical form. There are no hard and fast rules. Context, context, context is crucial!

NASB, NKJV

NJB "the Christ"

NRSV, TEV "the Messiah"

Here is a good example of Aramaic speakers being recorded in Greek. They are asking Jesus if He is the promised Anointed One of God—the Messiah!

- ▣ **"tell us"** This is an aorist active imperative. They want a clear "yes" or "no."
- ▣ **"if"** The second "if" in this verse is a third class conditional, which denotes potential action.
- ▣ **"you will not believe"** The Sanhedrin did not want information about Jesus. They wanted to condemn Him. Remember this encounter was after two lengthy night trials before Annas and Caiaphas (Luke 22:54). Whatever Jesus said, their minds and hearts were already hardened. No faith response was possible. The unpardonable sin had occurred. See Special Topic at Luke 11:19.

This verse (as does Luke 22:68) has the grammatical form of the strongest negation in Koine Greek.

1. the double negative, *ou + mē*
2. Aorist subjunctive

22:68 "if" This is another third class conditional sentence. Jesus had tried, on many occasions, to enter into a dialog with the Jerusalem leadership, but they would not or could not answer His questions. Jesus knew them well!

- ▣ **"not"** This is a strong double negative with the aorist subjunctive, which is emphatic negation!

22:69 "the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God" This is an incomplete sentence which is a reference to Ps. 110:1, a specifically Messianic text, related to "the" special descendant of David linked to the coming Messiah.

The phrase "at God's right hand" is an anthropomorphic phrase speaking of God as if He were a man. In reality God is Spirit and has no body and, therefore, no need of a physical throne or hand (see Special Topic at Luke 1:51). Jesus answered their question in unmistakable OT prophetic terms!

22:70 "and they all said" Notice the plural. Those present spoke with one voice!

- ▣ **"Are You the Son of God, then"** We learn from Mark 14:55-59 that the false witnesses had failed in their accusations. At this point the Sanhedrin tried to get Jesus to incriminate Himself. This was illegal in Jewish Law. The phrase "Son of God" is used in the OT for the nation of Israel, the king of Israel, and the Messiah. It definitely had Messianic connotations. See Special Topic at Luke 1:35.

NASB "Yes, I am"

NKJV "You *rightly* say that I am"

NRSV, TEV,

NET "you say that I am"

NJB, REB "it is you who say I am"

NIV "you are right in saying I am"

Jesus, in a round-about way, affirms that He is the Messiah (cf. Mark 14:62). He knew they would take this title in such a way as to accuse him before Rome.

Moffat's translation at this point is very helpful to catch the subtle connotation of this phrase. "That is your word, not mine, I would not put it like that, but since you have, I cannot deny it" (cf. Matt. 26:64).

A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In the New Testament*, vol. 2, p. 277, makes the pertinent analysis that

Jesus admits to being

1. the Christ (Messiah), Luke 22:67
2. the Son of Man at God's right hand, Luke 22:69
3. the Son of God, Luke 22:70

All of these phrases are used in a parallel way.

22:71 This verse shows the purpose of their questioning. They wanted Him to admit to what they considered blasphemy. They were attempting to justify their attitudes and actions!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What does it mean that Satan entered Judas?
2. Is Judas responsible for his acts since they were predestined?
3. Why did Judas betray Jesus?
4. How is the Lord's Supper related to the Passover meal?
5. Why do the Gospels differ as to the day the Lord's Supper was instituted?
6. Why are the Gospel account of Peter's denial so different?
7. Why did the Sanhedrin reject Jesus' Messiahship?

LUKE 23

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jesus Brought Before Pilate 23:1-5	Jesus Handed Over to Pontius Pilate 23:1-5	Jesus Before Pilate 23:1-5	Jesus Before Pilate 23:1-2 23:3a 23:3b 23:4 23:5	Jesus Before Pilate 23:2-7
Jesus Before Herod 23:6-11	Jesus Faces Herod 23:6-12	Jesus Before Herod Antipas 23:6-12	Jesus Before Herod 23:6-12	Jesus Before Herod 23:8-12
Jesus Sentenced to Die 23:13-25	Taking the Place of Barabbas 23:13-25	Jesus Before Pilate 23:13-17 23:18-25	Jesus Is Sentenced to Death 23:13-17 23:18-19 23:20-21 23:22 23:23-25	Jesus Before Pilate Again 23:13-19 23:20-23 23:24-25
The Crucifixion 23:26-31 23:32-38	The King On A Cross 23:26-43	The Crucifixion 23:26-31 23:32-38	Jesus Is Crucified 23:26 23:27-31 23:32-34a 23:34b-35 23:36-37 23:38	The Way to Calvary 23:26-32 The Crucifixion 23:33-34 The Crucified Christ is Mocked 23:35-38 The Good Thief
23:39-43		23:39-43	23:39	23:39-43

			23:40-42	
			23:43	
The Death of Jesus	Jesus Dies on the Cross		The Death of Jesus	The Death of Jesus
23:44-49	23:44-49	23:44-49	23:44-46	23:44-46
				After the Death
			23:47	23:47-48
			23:48-49	23:49
The Burial of Jesus	Jesus Buried in Joseph's Tomb		The Burial of Jesus	The Burial
23:50-56a	23:50-56	23:50-56a	23:50-54	23:50-54
			23:55-56a	23:55
		23:56b	23:56b	23:56

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:1-5

¹Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate. ²And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." ³So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "*It is as you say.*" ⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." ⁵But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

23:1 The NJB puts this verse as the conclusion of the paragraph beginning in Luke 22:66. This is because "the whole body" refers to the Sanhedrin (cf. Matt. 26:59), who met early in the morning in an attempt to legitimize their judicial proceedings of the night before.

23:2 "they began to accuse Him, saying" Although Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin for

blasphemy, the charges they brought before Pilate relate to sedition:

1. corrupting the nation
2. forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar
3. claiming to be a king himself (the Jewish Messiah, see Special Topic at Luke 2:11)

23:3 "Pilate asked Him, saying 'Are You the King of the Jews?' And He answered him and said, 'It is as you say'" Jesus answered in the affirmative, but with qualifications (in a sense similar to His answer to the High Priests in Luke 22:70). Pilate (see Special Topic at Luke 3:1) would have understood this as a "no" to the political charge of sedition. One of the main purposes of Luke and John is to show that Jesus and His followers are no threat to Roman authority (cf. Matt. 26:25; John 18:36-37).

23:4

NASB	"I find no guilt in this man"
NKJV	"I find no fault in this Man"
NRSV	"I find no basis for an accusation against this man"
TEV	"I find no reason to condemn this man"
NJB	"I find no case against this man"

Luke emphasizes this truth over and over, as does John, that Jesus was not treasonous and that Pilate understood this (cf. Luke 23:14,15,22; John 18:38; 19:4,6).

23:5

NASB	"but they kept on insisting"
NKJV	"but they were the more fierce"
NRSV	"but they were insistent"
TEV	"but they insisted even more strongly"
NJB	"but they persisted"

This is an imperfect active indicative. The Greek term *epischuō* appears only here in the NT, but is used twice in the Septuagint (cf. 1 Macc. 6:6; Sir. 29:1) in the same sense. The other Gospel writers use the term *katēgoreō* (cf. Matt. 27:12; Mark 15:3; John 18:29; even Luke in Luke 23:10). Luke often uses his own vocabulary even when following Mark's Gospel. The doctrine of inspiration must include the Holy Spirit's using the vocabulary of the individual NT authors. Their words are directed by God, but not dictated. The NT authors were not typewriters.

NASB, NKJV,	
NRSV	"He stirs up the people"
TEV	"he is starting a riot among the people"
NJB	"He is inflaming the people"

Here Luke uses the same verb as Mark (15:11). This word is not found in the Septuagint.

■ **"starting from Galilee"** The Jewish authorities added this to further condemn Jesus as a traitor to Rome. Galilee was a hotbed of seditious activity. However, Pilate used this as an opportunity to pass the judicial responsibility to Herod (cf. Luke 23:6-7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:6-7

⁶When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

23:6 This is a first class conditional sentence. Pilate assumed Jesus was from Galilee.

23:7 "Herod's jurisdiction" This refers to Herod Antipas. See Special Topic: Herod the Great and His Family at Luke 3:1.

▣ **"who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time"** Passover was one of the three major annual Jewish feasts (cf. Lev. 23). All Jewish males were expected to attend. Certainly all Jewish leaders would be present.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:8-12

⁸Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. ⁹And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. ¹⁰And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. ¹¹And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. ¹²Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

23:8 "Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus" Only Luke records the trial before Herod. Herod was very interested in Jesus (cf. Matt. 14:1-2; Luke 9:9). Luke's source of information may have been Manaen, who grew up with Herod (cf. Acts 13:1).

▣ **"to see some sign performed by Him"** Herod was curious about Jesus. He had heard of His miracles. Herein is the problem of the miraculous. It can lead to mere curiosity and amazement, but not to personal faith and repentance as the appropriate response to the gospel message. Satan can and will perform miracles (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Rev. 13:13; 16:14; 20:20). The OT warns of these false prophets in Deut. 13:1-3!

23:9 "but He answered him nothing" This may be a fulfillment of Isa. 53:7b and e. Jesus did not initially reply to

1. the Sanhedrin (cf. Matt. 26:63), but later did briefly (cf. Matt. 26:63-64)
2. Pilate (cf. Matt. 27:12,14; Mark 15:5; John 19:9), but later did (cf. John 18:34,36-37; 19:11)
3. Herod (cf. Luke 23:9) Jesus did not reply at all.

23:10 The Sanhedrin accompanied Jesus to Herod and vehemently accused Him. The adverb "vehemently" (*eutonōs*) is used only in Luke's writings (cf. Luke 23:10; Acts 18:28), but is in the Septuagint (cf. Jos. 6:8). They may have expanded their charges before Herod to include blasphemy. Herod would have been sensitive to order and stability in the temple.

23:11 This is an example of the kinds of historical problems commentators face in trying to merge the four accounts of Jesus' life. Luke records that Herod's soldiers mocked Jesus as King, but Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20, and John 19:1-5 record that it was the Roman soldiers. Herein enter the interpretive options:

1. both groups of soldiers mocked Jesus
2. only Herod's soldiers did
3. only the Roman soldiers did

We must remember that the Gospels are not western histories, but eastern evangelistic tracts. The event is crucial, but the details must remain uncertain. Gospel writers had the authority under inspiration to arrange, adapt, and select events from Jesus' life. They did not have the authority to invent words, actions, and events! Soldiers mocked Jesus! Who, when, and why must remain ambiguous.

NASB, NKJV "a gorgeous robe"
NRSV "an elegant robe"

TEV
NJB

"a fine robe"
"a rich cloak"

The Greek term *lampros* basically means "bright" (cf. Rev. 19:8) or "shining," possibly "gaudy." James uses this word for a rich man's clothes (James 2:2,3). Mark 15:17 and John 19:2 describe the robe as purple (color of royalty); Matthew 27:28 as scarlet (a soldier's cloak). They were mocking Him as a supposed king!

23:12 This friendship between Pilate and Herod is unique to Luke, modern historians have no idea about what this involves.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:13-17

¹³Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. ¹⁵No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. ¹⁶Therefore I will punish Him and release Him." ¹⁷ [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.]

23:13 This is surprising since the Sanhedrin brought Jesus to Pilate (cf. Luke 23:1) and accompanied Him to Herod (cf. Luke 23:10). Possibly Pilate took some time to conduct other business before returning to the trial of Jesus.

23:15 "has been done by Him" This is a periphrastic perfect passive. Jesus had not done anything during His life worthy of crucifixion. Here Luke emphasizes that the highest Roman official rejects the Jewish charges against Jesus!

23:16 "Therefore I will punish Him and release Him" This was a common procedure in Roman law. This punishment was mild compared to the severe flogging that occurred before crucifixion. It is from the root *país* (child) and was used of discipline in 2 Cor. 11:32 and Heb. 12:6,7,10, but has a harsher connotation in 2 Cor. 6:9.

There are many factors involved in Pilate's actions, but the most significant ones were

1. he acknowledged Jesus' innocence
2. he understood the Sanhedrin's manipulation and threats (cf. John 19:12)
3. his own wife had warned him (cf. Matt. 27:19-20)
4. he was afraid of a riot during the Feast days (cf. Luke 23:18)
5. Pilate was very superstitious himself (cf. John 19:7-8)

23:17 Verse 17 is omitted from manuscripts P⁷⁵, A, B, K, L, T, 070, or 0124, and the Old Latin, Vulgate, and Coptic versions, but is in the uncial manuscripts κ, D (after Luke 23:19), W, and 063. This information is included in Matt. 27:15; Mark 15:6; and John 18:39. The NASB and NKJV include the text with brackets. The NRSV, TEV, and NJB omit the verse and put it in a footnote. The UBS⁴ rates its omission as "A" (certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:18-25

¹⁸But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!" ¹⁹(He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, ²¹but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!" ²²And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt *demanding* death; therefore I will punish

Him and release Him." ²³But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices *began* to prevail. ²⁴And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. ²⁵And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

23:18 "they cried out all together" This "they" includes the Sanhedrin and a mob (cf. Luke 23:13). The makeup of this mob is not specified, but it surely did not include the many pilgrims from Galilee and Perea, Jesus' supporters from Jerusalem, or some members of the leadership (like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea). It is quite possible that the supporters of Barabbas (zealots) had been informed and recruited for this very purpose or that the family and friends of the Sadducean leadership had gathered their supporters.

■ **"Away with this man"** This imperative form is found only in Luke's Gospel. It is a present active imperative of the term *airō*, which basically means to lift up. Here it is used in its metaphorical sense of "take away and kill" (cf. John 19:15). It has this sense in the Septuagint (cf. I Macc. 16:19; Esther 4:1). This metaphorical usage may have come from the Hebrew idiom "to lift the hand against" (cf. Job 15:25).

■ **"and release for us Barabbas"** This is an aorist active imperative. Apparently it was a common Roman practice to release (but unknown in historical documents) one prisoner at the Passover to gain Jewish favor (cf. Matt. 27:15; Mark 15:6; John 18:39). It is ironic that the man released was guilty of the very same crime for which Jesus is being accused (cf. Luke 23:19, which may be a comment from Luke's source, cf. TEV).

23:20 This is an amazing verse. Why did Pilate want to release Jesus?

1. his sense of Roman justice
2. his animosity for the Jewish leadership
3. his personal superstition or his wife's warning
4. his desire not to cause a riot at Passover

23:21 "Crucify, crucify Him" These are both present active imperatives. This shout of condemnation by the mob is recorded in all four Gospels.

1. Matthew 27:22,23, aorist passive imperative
2. Mark 15:13,14, aorist active imperative
3. Luke 23:21 (twice), present active imperative
4. Luke 23:24, aorist passive infinitive
5. John 19:6 (twice), aorist active imperative

The Gospels do not dwell on the physical aspect of Jesus' death (cf. Ps. 22:16). This form of death was developed in Mesopotamia and was taken over by the Greeks and Romans. It was meant to be an extended, excruciating death taking several days. Its purpose was to humiliate and cause fear as a deterrent to rebellion against Rome. A thorough article is in the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, pp. 1040-42.

23:22 "a third time" Luke repeats Pilate's statements of Jesus' innocence three times for emphasis! Jesus was not seditious!

23:23 "But they were insistent" This is an imperfect middle (deponent) indicative, which denotes repeated action. The Jewish authorities in essence blackmailed Pilate (cf. John 19:12).

23:25 "but he delivered Jesus to their will" This same term is used in the Septuagint in Isa. 53:12, "was delivered up."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:26

²⁶When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

23:26 "Simon of Cyrene" This was apparently a Jew of the Diaspora. There were many Jews from Cyrene (North Africa) in Jerusalem as the presence of their own Synagogue suggests (cf. Acts 2:10; 6:9; 11:20; 13:1). I doubt that this was a black man. Cyrene was founded by Greek traders (seventh century b.c.) and many Greek-speaking Jews migrated to this city. He seems to have been a Jew attending the feast days. He might have later become a very well-known person in the church (cf. Luke 15:21; possibly Rom. 16:13).

- **"coming in from the country"** He was probably staying in the suburbs because there was no place in Jerusalem for most of the pilgrims to stay. The surrounding suburbs opened their homes to these annual pilgrims.
- **"and placed on him the cross"** We are not certain of the exact shape of the cross (a little "t," a capital "T," or an "X") nor are we certain what part of the cross was carried by condemned prisoners of the first century. Jesus was so badly beaten (cf. Isa. 52:14; 53:3; Luke 22:63; 23:11; Matt. 20:19; Mark 10:34; 15:15; John 19:1) that He was unable to fulfill this aspect of the crucifixion. The Roman soldiers had the option to solicit civilian aid at any point for any reason.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:27-31

²⁷And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. ²⁸But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' ³¹For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

25:27-31 This account is found only in Luke, who took special note of Jesus' conversations with women.

23:27 "And following Him was a large crowd of the people" This probably refers to the pilgrims who were just awakening and realizing what had taken place in the early morning hours.

- **"women who were mourning and lamenting Him"** This seems to refer to the women of Jerusalem, not to the women who accompanied the disciples (cf. Luke 23:49,55-56; 18:13) because Jesus calls them "daughters of Jerusalem" (cf. Luke 23:28).

23:28 "stop weeping for Me" This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually denotes stopping an act in process.

- **"but weep for yourselves and for your children"** This is a present active imperative. It probably refers to the predicted fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). Because of the mob's self-curse in Matt. 27:25, it may refer to the spiritual and eschatological consequences of unbelief.

23:29 "'For behold, the days are coming'" This refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 by Titus, but it may also foreshadow the eschatological Second Coming of Jesus in judgment.

- **"Blessed are the barren"** This was strong irony for these Jewish women, for whom barrenness was seen as a curse from God.

23:30 This is a quote from Hos. 10:8 addressed to rebellious Israel or perhaps an allusion to Isa. 2:19, which is a context of judgment. This OT text is also quoted in Rev. 6:16.

23:31 This apparently is a common proverb that in essence means "if they (i.e., Roman authorities) can treat me like this when I am innocent, then what will they do to you?"

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his/her literary purposes.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:32

³²Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

23:32 "Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him"

This is a fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:33-38

³³When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. ³⁴But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. ³⁵And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." ³⁶The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" ³⁸Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

23:33

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB,

NIV

"The Skull"

NKJV

"Calvary"

In Greek and English this is called "the cranium"; in Aramaic, "Golgotha"; in Latin, "calvaria." The exact location and topological description of this site is uncertain. The term does not refer to the full skull, but just the forehead. It seems to be a low, bald hill located on at least one or possibly two major roads entering Jerusalem. Remember the purpose of capital punishment was the deterrence of further rebellion.

■ **"there they crucified Him"** The accounts of the crucifixion are not meant to solicit our sympathy, for the horror of Calvary was not in the physical pain, but in the spiritual rebellion of humanity that made it necessary (cf. Gen. 3:15; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21).

23:34 The first part of Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing," is found in the Greek manuscripts κ^* ², A, C, D², L, and 0250. It is also found in the Greek manuscripts used by Marcion, the Diatessaron, Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Eusebius, Chrysostoma, Jerome (Vulgate), and Augustine. It is omitted in P⁷⁵, κ^1 , B, D*, W, and 070. The UBS⁴ (1993) rates its omission as "A" (certain). The UBS³ (1975) rates its omission as "C" (difficulty in deciding). There is no parallel in the other Gospels. It is similar to Stephen's last words in Acts 7:60, which may be an allusion to these words of Jesus.

■ **"And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves"** This was the reward for the Roman soldiers. All of the condemned criminal's belongings belonged to those who crucified them. It

seems to fulfill the prophecy of Ps. 22:18 (cf. Matt. 27:35; John 19:24).

23:35 "even the rulers were sneering at Him" This also seems to be a fulfillment of Psalm 22:6-8.

▣ **"He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One"** We must remember that crucifixion, as viewed by First Century Judaism, was a curse from God (cf. Deut. 21:33). This is exactly why the Sanhedrin wanted Him crucified as a Messianic pretender.

▣ **"if"** This is a First class conditional sentence, which is normally a way of asserting the truth of an assertion, but here it is used in sarcasm! All first class conditional sentences are not true to reality, but true from the author's perspective or, as here, for the speakers' (the rulers) purposes (mockery).

23:36 "offering Him sour wine" Jesus originally refused the drugged wine from the soldiers (cf. Matt. 27:34; Mark 15:23), but later He accepted the sour cheap wine (*oxos*, cf. John 19:29). This was not a gesture of compassion from the soldiers, but a way to extend the agony of crucifixion and thereby amplify its deterrent effect. This is a fulfillment from the LXX of Ps. 69:21, which also used *oxos*. I believe Jesus was so thirsty that He could not speak His last words for us to hear and, therefore, accepted the liquid. This is recorded in all four Gospels.

23:37 "if" This is another first class conditional used in mockery (cf. Luke 23:35).

23:38 "Now there was also an inscription above Him, 'THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS'" John tells us it was in three languages (cf. John 19:20). Apparently Pilate did this to goad the Jewish leaders (cf. John 19:19-21). Usually the crime for which the person was being crucified was displayed above the head on the cross.

Some early Greek manuscripts add "written in three languages," after "above Him" which comes from John 19:20. This phrase is omitted in P⁷⁵, κ¹, B, L, and 070. The UBS⁴ committee rank its omission as "A" (certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:39-43

³⁹One of the criminals who hanged *there* was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed *are suffering* justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" ⁴³And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

23:39 The mockery continues (imperfect active indicative).

▣ **"Are You not the Christ"** This question grammatically expects a "yes" answer, but it is mockery.

23:40 "But the other answered, and rebuking him said" Both Matt. 27:44 and Mark 15:32 have both thieves insulting Jesus, however, in Luke one of them repented (cf. Luke 23:40-41) and turned to Jesus for help (cf. Luke 23:42). The beautiful thing is that Jesus responded as He always did and always does!

23:42 This dying criminal, with probably little knowledge of the gospel, was freely accepted and forgiven. Oh the reach of the mercy and grace of God!

23:43 "today" If this is to be taken literally and Jesus did not ascend to heaven (cf. Acts 1:9) for some forty days (cf. Acts 1:3), then this cannot refer to heaven in this context, but to the righteous part of *hades* (see note below).

It is surely possible that it was figurative and thereby has nothing to do with *hades* (see [SPECIAL](#)

[TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?](#) at Luke 3:17).

For me the most precious part of Jesus' statement is "you shall be with Me"! Jesus' presence is what makes paradise, paradise!

■ **"Paradise"** This is a Persian loan word for a nobleman's walled garden used in the Septuagint (of Gen. 2:8; 13:10) for the Garden of Eden. The rabbis usually used this term for one of the divisions of *Hades* or *Sheol*, where the righteous abide (i.e., Abraham's bosom, cf. Luke 16:22,23; I Levi 18:10-11; Ps. Sol. 14:3; I Enoch 17-19; 60:7,8,23; 61:12). Paul uses this in the sense of heaven in 2 Cor. 12:3 (also see Rev. 2:7). It is my opinion that Jesus went to *Hades* after His death on the cross (cf. 1 Pet. 3:19; 4:16) and some thirty to forty hours later, He arose from the dead. When He ascended forty days later, He took all of those in the righteous part of *Sheol* with Him (cf. Eph. 4:7-10). Now Paul can say in 2 Cor. 5:6,8, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:44-49

⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last. ⁴⁷Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he *began* praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." ⁴⁸And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, *began* to return, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

23:44 "It was now about the sixth hour" There is some confusion over whether this is Roman time or Greek time. Here is my comment from Mark 15:1:

Mark, like all Jewish writings, does not focus on specific times. It is probable that the Jews of Jesus' day divided the night and day into twelve hours each (cf. John 11:9), with three four-hour segments. The twenty-four hour day comes from Babylon. The Greeks and Jews borrowed it from them. The sundial was divided into twelve segments.

In chapter 15 Mark has several time markers:

1. sunrise, Mark 15:1 (around 6 a.m. depending on the time of the year)
2. third hour, Mark 15:25 (around 9 a.m.)
3. sixth hour, Mark 15:33 (around noon)
4. ninth hour, Mark 15:34 (around 3 p.m.)
5. evening, Mark 15:42 (sunset, around 6 p.m.)

■ **"and darkness fell over the whole land"** This is one of the OT judgment signs, either in a covenantal sense (cf. Exod. 10:21; Deut. 28:28-29) or an apocalyptic sense (cf. Joel 2:2; Amos 8:9-10; Zeph. 1:15). This is a symbol of God the Father taking His presence away from His Son, who bore the sin of all humanity. This is what Jesus feared most in Gethsemane (expressed by "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" in Mark 15:34). Jesus became a sin offering and bore the sin of all the world (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). He experienced personal separation from the Father. Darkness was a symbol of God the Father turning away from His Son.

23:45 "the sun being obscured" We get the English word "eclipse" from this Greek word, but it was technically not an eclipse, rather an act of God. There are several Greek manuscript variants of the unusual phrase, but none change the obvious meaning of the text.

■ **"the veil of the temple was torn in two"** Mark 15:38 tells us that it was torn from top to bottom (God's action). The way to intimacy with God had been fully opened for all. A Talmudic tradition says the "doors of the Temple opened automatically" during the crucifixion. Here is a quote from my commentary on Mark

15:38 (see www.freebiblecommentary.org):

"There were two curtains to the inner shrine of the Temple, one in the Holy Place and a second before the Holy of Holies. If the second was ripped no one would have seen it except the priests, unless the first one was regularly pulled back and tied to the sides. These curtains are described in Exod. 26:31-37. In Jesus' day, in Herod's remodeled Temple, this curtain was 60' by 30' and about 4" thick! If the outer one was ripped all worshipers in the different outer courts would have seen it. This seems to show that the way to intimate fellowship with God has been reestablished by Christ's death (cf. Gen. 3:15; Exod. 26:31-35). In Matt. 27:51-53 other miracles are recorded as attesting signs."

23:46 "Jesus, crying out with a loud voice" This is paralleled in

1. Matt. 27:50, but His words are not given
2. Mark 15:37, but His words are not given
3. John 19:30, where Jesus says, "It is finished"

■ **"into Your hands I commit My spirit"** This is a quote from Ps. 31:5. The term "spirit" refers to the human person.

See Special Topic: Spirit (*pneuma*) in the NT at Luke 1:80.

■ **"He breathed His last"** The last exhalation was seen as the departing of the spirit (expiring). The same Hebrew word (*ruah*, BDB 924) denoted (1) breath; (2) spirit; and (3) wind. Therefore, this is a Semitic idiom for death (cf. TEV).

23:47 "when the centurion saw what had happened, he *began* praising God saying, 'Certainly this man was innocent'" Matthew (27:54) and Mark (15:39) have "a son of God." Plummer catches the essence of this phrase when he translates "he was a good man and quite right in calling God His Father." This is not a sign that this Roman guard was saved, but he recognized that Jesus was an extraordinary man and died in a very unusual manner. The NET Bible (p. 1882) has an interesting comment, "Here is a fourth figure who said that Jesus was innocent in this chapter (Pilate, Herod, a criminal, and now a centurion)." Here is my commentary from Matt. 27:54:

"There is no Article with son. This implied that although this soldier was surely impressed by all that happened he was not converted. He asserts Jesus was "a son of God," not Lord. However in the parallel in Luke 23:47 he is proclaiming Jesus as righteous or innocent. The irony is that this Roman soldier saw what the Jewish leaders did not (cf. Matt. 27:19; John 1:11).

This is literally "this man was a son of God." The image of God in mankind has been restored! Intimate fellowship is again possible. However the absence of the article does not automatically mean it is not definite (cf. Matt. 4:3,6; 14:33; 27:43; and Luke 4:3,9). This was a hardened Roman soldier. He had seen many men die (cf. Matt. 27:54). This may be "the focal passage" of Mark because this Gospel was specifically written to Romans. It has many Latin words and very few OT quotes. Also Jewish customs and Aramaic phrases are translated and explained. Here is a Roman centurion professing faith in a crucified Jewish insurrectionist!

It is possibly purposeful that passers by, chief priests, and even fellow prisoners mock Jesus, but the Roman centurion responds in affirmation and awe!"

23:49 "all the crowd" This is obviously hyperbolic because the Jewish leaders were not grieved over Jesus' death.

■ **"beating their breasts"** This was a sign of grief and/or repentance (cf. Luke 18:13, see [SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES](#) at Luke 10:13). Many of the crowd who stayed to the very end were Jesus' supporters and friends (but no apostles except John, cf. John 19:20-27). The women who traveled with Jesus were also there (cf. Mark 15:40-41, see Special Topic at Luke 22:28).

There are several later Greek manuscript additions which intensify the grief. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 182.

23:49 "and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee" It is possible that this large group of

women was the financial base for Jesus and the disciples during His teaching ministry. See Special Topic: The Women Who Followed Jesus at Luke 8:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:50-56a

⁵⁰And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man ⁵¹(he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; ⁵²this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. ⁵⁴It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. ⁵⁵Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. ⁵⁶Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes.

23:50 "And a man named Joseph" He seems to have been a secret disciple, along with Nicodemus (cf. Matt. 27:57; John 12:42). However, after Jesus' death he went publicly to ask Pilate for Jesus' body (cf. John 19:38). It was dangerous to be identified as a friend of a crucified insurrectionist.

As an orthodox Jew of his day, Joseph would have made himself ceremonially unclean to observe the Passover Sabbath by:

1. going into a Gentile house
2. touching a dead body

However, he may have been attempting to remove the curse of Deut. 21:22-23. Usually the Romans let the bodies of the crucified remain unburied at the place of death, but because the Jews were so squeamish about unburied bodies, the Romans allowed them to bury their dead.

■ **"a member of the Council"** See Special Topic: The Sanhedrin at Luke 9:22.

■ **"a good and righteous man"** Joseph had become a believer (cf. Matt. 27:57), but this phrase is a Hebrew idiom of his standing within Judaism. This does not imply his sinlessness, but that, like Noah (cf. Job 1:1), they had responded positively to all they understood of God's will and way. Nicodemus would have been seen in this same way (cf. John 3:1).

23:51 "(he had not consented to their plan and action)" This is a comment from the author and his research (cf. Luke 1:1-4).

■ **"Arimathea"** The term means "height" and is apparently another name for the city of *Ramah* (BDB 928), which was located five miles northeast of Jerusalem.

■ **"who was waiting for the kingdom of God"** This is an imperfect middle (deponent) indicative. See Special Topic at Luke 4:21.

23:52 "this man went to Pilate" This would have made him ceremonially unclean to participate in the high Sabbath of Passover week. This would also have identified him with Jesus, a crucified insurrectionist. This was a bold and decisive act.

■ **"asked for the body of Jesus"** Normally the Romans left the bodies on the cross to decay, as a deterrent to rebellion. These bodies were the property of Rome. They were usually not given back to the families for proper burial, which was especially important to Jews. This was a special, unusual request. It was granted because of the Jewish sensibilities about dead bodies ceremonially polluting the land during the Passover season.

23:53 "wrapped it in a linen cloth" Nicodemus was also there (cf. John 19:39-40). They quickly prepared Jesus' body (i.e., because of the rapid approach of the Sabbath at 6 p.m.) according to Jewish

tradition. The Jews did not practice embalming as the Egyptians did, but they had a set procedure involving linen wraps and spices.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BURIAL PRACTICES

■ **"in a tomb cut into the rock"** This is another fulfillment of predictive prophecy (cf. Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:66).

Jesus was not buried in the ground, but in Joseph's family crypt. It was hollowed out of a rock cliff and would have included several burial slabs. There were many of these in the Jerusalem area.

■ **"where no one had even lain"** This phrase has three negatives! The verb is a periphrastic imperfect passive. The tomb was prepared, but had never held a corpse (cf. John 19:41).

23:54 "It was the preparation day" In Jesus' day Passover was an eight-day feast (Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover, cf. Exodus 12); thus, it had two Sabbaths. This term can also refer to the normal preparations for a Sabbath or the special preparations for the Passover meal.

■ **"and the Sabbath was about to begin"** Let me quote from my commentary on Mark 15:42, "where the evening had already come":

"Mark is the only Gospel that mentions this. Exodus 12:6 has "evenings" as if there were two: (1) 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. and (2) 6:00 p.m. and later. Context implies it must have been after 3:00 p.m. (the time of the evening sacrifice), but before 6:00 p.m. (the start of the Passover Sabbath, which would have been the 15th of Nisan)."

23:55 "the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed" See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS](#) at Luke 8:3.

23:56 "they returned and prepared spices and perfumes" Although these women had seen Joseph and Nicodemus prepare and place the body of Jesus in a tomb, apparently because of the time limitations (i.e., between 3 - 6 p.m.) something of the normal Jewish burial procedures (possibly the aromatic candles or some particular spices) may have been left out, and these women were going to properly finish the traditional procedures.

See Special Topic: Burial Spices at Luke 24:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 23:56b

^{56b}And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

23:56b "the commandment" This refers to Exod. 20:8-11 or Deut. 5:12-15. These were still Jewish people who respected and obeyed the Mosaic Law.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is it so significant that Pilate repeated over and over that Jesus was innocent?
2. Why would Jesus not speak to Herod?
3. Who made up the crowd that asked for Barabbas?
4. Was Simon of Cyrene a Jew or a black man?
5. What does the term "Calvary" mean?
6. What does the term "paradise" refer to?

7. Was the Roman guard saved in Luke 23:47?

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LUKE 24

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Resurrection of Jesus 23:56b-24:12	He Is Risen 24:1-12	The First Easter 24:1-12	The Resurrection 24:1-7 24:8-12	The Empty Tomb. The Angel's Message 24:1-8 The Apostles Refuse to Believe the Women 24:9-11 Peter at the Tomb 24:12
The Walk to Emmaus 24:13-27	The Road to Emmaus 24:13-27	On the Road to Emmaus 24:13-27	The Walk to Emmaus 24:13-17a 24:17b-18 24:19a 24:19b-24 24:25-27	The Road to Emmaus 24:13-17 24:18-24 24:25-27
24:28-35	24:28-35	24:28-35	24:28-32 24:33-34 24:35	24:28-32 24:33-35
Appearance to the Disciples 24:36-43	Jesus Appears to His Disciples 24:36-43	Commissioning of the Disciples 24:36-43	Jesus Appears to His Disciples 24:36 24:37-39 24:40-43	Jesus Appears to the Apostles 24:36-43 Last Instructions to the Apostles
24:44-49	24:44-49	24:44-49	24:44 24:45-49	24:44-48 24:49
The Ascension of Jesus 24:50-53	The Ascension 24:50-53	24:50-53	Jesus is Taken Up to Heaven 24:50-53	The Ascension 24:50-53

READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The details of the post-resurrection events differ among the four Gospels. This exemplifies the genuineness of the eyewitness accounts and also the evangelistic purposes of each Gospel to a select target group. See Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp.127-148.
- B. Remember the Gospel writers were not writing a history in the western, modern sense, but recording selected facts to better present the Christian message. Their purpose is not historical record, but primarily theological truth (cf. John 20:3-31). The Bible's primary purpose is to bring us to a personal confrontation with a holy God through His crucified Son.
- C. Luke's sources about the post-resurrection period is different from the other Gospels. In Luke the forty day period between Jesus' appearance in the upper room and His ascension from the Mount of Olives are structured as if they all happened in one day (Easter Sunday)!
- D. There are several Greek manuscript variations in this chapter. Luke contains most of the shorter readings found in the western family (MSS D and W) of Greek manuscripts when compared to the Alexandrian family (MSS κ and B). Here is a list of the shorter readings (from A. T. Robertson, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, pp. 226-227).
 1. Luke 5:39
 2. Luke 10:41-42
 3. Luke 12:19,21,39
 4. Luke 22:19b,20,62
 5. Luke 24:3,6,9,12,36,40,52,53

Notice how many of these shorter (possibly original) readings are in Luke 24!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 24:1-12

¹But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; ⁵and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, "Why do you seek the

living One among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." ⁸And they remembered His words, ⁹and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. ¹¹But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

24:1 "the first day of the week" This first workday ran from Saturday at twilight to Sunday at twilight. This is a Hebrew idiom going back to Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31, where evening is always mentioned first. This was the very day that the first fruits were offered in the Temple. Jesus appears to the disciples several weeks in a row on Sunday night. This sets the precedent for Sunday as a special meeting day for believers to commemorate the Lord's resurrection (cf. John 20:19,20; Luke 24:36ff; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

■ **"early dawn"** This is literally "at deep dawn." John's Gospel says it was still dark (cf. John 20:1). It seems the women left the places they were staying while in Jerusalem before dawn, but arrived at the tomb after sunrise.

■ **"they"** These women are named in Luke 24:10 and Mark 16:1. See Special Topic: Women Who Followed Jesus at Luke 8:3.

■ **"the tomb"** We get the English word "memorial" from this Greek word.

■ **"bringing the spices"** These were to anoint the body (cf. Mark 16:1). Apparently they did not know of Joseph and Nicodemus' activity or their hurried preparations had been incomplete.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: BURIAL SPICES](#)

24:2 "the stone rolled away" This is a perfect passive participle. The type of tomb in which Jesus had been laid had a groove in front of the rock wall face into which a round stone was placed to seal the tomb. This was a very large and heavy stone (cf. Mark 16:4), which these women could not have moved. Matthew 28:2 states that an earthquake, apparently caused by an angel, knocked the stone away from the door of the tomb. The stone's removal was not to let Jesus out, but to let us in!

24:3 This verse is an important witness to the humanity of Jesus, which was challenged by an early heretical movement later called Gnosticism (see definition in the glossary appendix). These women fully expected to find Jesus' physical body.

NASB, NKJV,

TEV "the body of the Lord"

NJB, REB "Jesus"

NRSV "the body"

The shorter reading (i.e., "the body") occurs in MSS D and some Old Latin MSS. However, this is the only place in Luke's Gospel where Jesus is called "the Lord Jesus," although the title is common in Acts.

Some later minuscules (i.e., 579 from the 13th century; 1071 from the 12th century; 1241 from the 12th century and lectionary 1016 from the 12th century) have "the body of Jesus."

The longer form occurs in MSS P⁷⁵, κ , A, B, C, L, W, 070, and most versions. The UBS⁴ rates it as "B" (almost certain).

24:4 "two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing" This refers to angels (cf. Luke 24:23; Acts 1:10; John 20:12).

Angels are always depicted as males except in Zech. 5:9. The participle "dazzling" is used by Luke only here and in Luke 17:24, where it refers to the transfiguration event. Luke uses the related term "lightning" several times also (cf. Luke 10:18; 11:36; 17:24). Matthew uses this term to describe the angel (cf. Matt. 28:3).

This is a good example of the variety between the four Gospels.

1. Mark 16:5 has "a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe"
2. Matthew 28:2-3 has "an angel of the Lord descended from heaven. . .his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow"
3. John 20:12 has "two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet"

Our western mindset asks questions such as

1. which one is historically accurate
2. which one is true to reality

These kinds of questions turn the Gospels into western, cause-and-effect, sequential histories, but they are not. They are evangelistic tracts, written for different people groups. The Gospel writers under inspiration had the right to

1. select
2. arrange
3. adapt

Jesus' words and deeds for theological purposes. Do not let the details block the big picture and big purpose!

24:5 "bowed their faces to the ground" This was a sign of respect and awe (cf. Mark 16:8).

▣ **"the living One among the dead"** "The living One" is an article with a present active participle. Jesus cannot be found in a tomb (among the dead ones) because He has been raised! This phrase is unique to Luke.

24:6 "He is not here, but He has risen" The resurrection is the central pillar of the Christian faith (cf. 1 Corinthians 15). This shows God's approval of Jesus' life and sacrifice. This is a recurrent theme of Peter (cf. Acts 2:24-28,32, 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 1 Pet. 1:13, 3:18,21), and Paul (Acts 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 4:24, 8:11; 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:14). This is confirmation of the Father's acceptance of the Son's substitutionary death (cf. 1 Corinthians 15). Theologically all three persons of the Trinity were active in Christ's resurrection: the Father (Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34; 17:31); the Spirit (Rom. 8:11); and the Son (John 2:19-22; 10:17-18).

This phrase, though disputed by Westcott and Hort, is found in MSS P⁷⁵, κ , A, B, C³ (C^{*} has the same phrase without "but"), L, and 070. It is only omitted in MS D and several Old Latin MSS. This same angelic comment is found in Matt. 28:6 and Mark 16:6.

See Special Topic: The *Kerugma* of the Early Church at Luke 24:27.

▣ **"Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee"** This refers to Jesus' predictions about His death (cf. Luke 9:21-22,44; 17:25; 18:31-34). This is a good example of the similarities and differences between the Synoptic Gospels. Matthew has the angel telling them to tell the Apostles to meet Him on a mountain in Galilee (cf. Matt. 26:32; 28:7,10), while Luke has the angel telling them to remember Jesus' words spoken in Galilee.

1. Did the angel say both things?
2. Did one of the Gospel writers or their sources hear it differently?
3. Did one of the Gospel writers or their sources deliberately modify the angel's message?

These questions are unanswerable. However, believers assert that the Holy Spirit led the Gospel writers, so we must allow these divergent accounts to exist side-by-side and affirm their inspiration!

24:7 "the Son of Man" This term was not used in rabbinical Judaism. Its significance comes from Ezek. 2:1 (human person) and Dan. 7:13 (divine person), where it combines deity and humanity (cf. 1 John 4:1-3). This was Jesus' self-chosen title. See Special Topic at Luke 17:22.

■ **"must"** This is the Greek term *dei*, which means "a moral necessity." It is used three times in this chapter.

1. Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, Luke 24:7.
2. Necessary for the Christ to suffer, Luke 24:26.
3. All things which are written about Me. . . must be fulfilled, Luke 24:44.

These texts speak of God's pre-determined redemptive plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29).

■ **"the third day"** I think Jesus was only in the tomb about 30 to 38 hours. Jewish time reckoning is different from ours. This phrase has a precarious OT background, only possibly Hosea 6:2 or more probably Jonah 1:17 (cf. Matt. 12:39; 1 Cor. 15:4).

24:8 "they. . .the eleven and all the rest" There were many besides the women and the Apostles who had heard Jesus' teachings and experienced these post-resurrection events (cf. Luke 24:33,36; Matt. 28:17; 1 Cor. 15:5; Acts 1:15).

24:10 This list of women is slightly different from the one in Mark 16:1. This entire verse is omitted by several ancient Greek manuscripts (cf. MSS A, D, W, and the old Latin, and two Syriac versions). The UBS⁴ rates its inclusion as "B" (almost certain). See Special Topic at Luke 8:3.

■ **"Mary Magdalene"** Jesus appeared to this woman first (cf. Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). She is always listed first in the names of the women who traveled with Jesus.

■ **"Joanna"** The only other NT reference to Joanna is 8:3.

■ **"Mary the mother of James"** She was the mother of James the Less and Joseph (cf. Mark. 15:40; Matt. 27:56).

■ **"the other women"** This includes Salome, James and John's mother (cf. Mark. 15:40; Matt. 27:56). See Special Topic at Luke 8:3.

24:11

NASB, TEV	"nonsense"
NKJV	"like idle tales"
NRSV	"an idle tale"
NJB	"pure nonsense"

The term *lēros* is found only once in the Septuagint (IV Macc. 5:11) and only here in the NT. This is a medical term for hysteria or fever-caused hallucinations.

24:11 "they would not believe them" This is an imperfect active indicative. These women told them several times, but the Apostles did not believe. It is so surprising that the Sanhedrin took Jesus' predictions about His resurrection seriously (posted a guard), but the Apostles were totally surprised. This negative comment is evidence of an accurate account.

24:12 This is present in all major Greek manuscripts (P⁷⁵, κ, A, B, L, W. 070, 079) except D and several Old Latin MSS. The UBS⁴ rates its inclusion as "B" (almost certain), but Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 212-217, agrees with Westcott and Hort that its exclusion is the original text (cf. RSV, NEB, REB). This text is very similar to John 20:3,5,6,10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 24:13-27

¹³And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and *began* traveling with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. ¹⁷And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" ¹⁹And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. ²¹But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. ²²But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." ²⁵And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

24:13 "two of them" The Bible does not say exactly who these two were, but possibly it was Cleopas (cf. Luke 24:18) and his wife or two believers leaving the Passover feast.

▣ **"that very day"** This must have been Resurrection Sunday (cf. Luke 24:22). This was the first work day after Passover and the day on which the first fruits of the barley harvest were offered at the Temple. Jesus was the first fruits from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20,23).

▣ **"Emmaus"** The site is uncertain, but there are several possibilities.

1. About twenty miles west of Jerusalem on the Jaffa road. This is where Judas Maccabaeus attacked and burned the Seleucid General Gorgias' camp in 166 b.c. (1 Macc. 3:40,57; 4:1-15).
2. About seven miles northwest of Jerusalem where the Crusaders found an ancient Roman fort called "Castellum Emmaus."
3. About four miles to the west of Jerusalem where the Roman Emperor Vespasian located 800 soldiers (Josephus, *Wars* 7.6.6).
4. About nine miles west of Jerusalem where a Crusader church was built over the ruins of a Roman fort.

(Information taken from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, pp. 291-301).

▣ **"seven miles from Jerusalem"** This is really 60 Roman stadia. The city must be close enough to Jerusalem for these two to walk to it and then return to Jerusalem in one day.

There is a Greek variant related to the distance:

1. "60 stadia" is found in P⁷⁵, A, B, D, K², L, W, 070 (UBS⁴ gives this a "B" rating, meaning "almost certain."
2. "160 stadia" is found in κ, K^{*}, 079, and some patristic writers (cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 28a, p. 1561).

24:15 "Jesus" Luke uses the name "Jesus" several times without the article (cf. Luke 4:1; 8:41; 9:36,50; 18:37,40; 22:48; 23:28). This, therefore, is not a grammatical way of highlighting Jesus' first resurrection appearance.

24:16 "their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him" This is an imperfect passive indicative. The passive implies the activity of God (see note at Luke 24:31). Jesus' physical appearance was altered to some extent. Several followers did not immediately recognize Him (cf. John 20:11; Matt. 28:16-17; John 21:1-7).

1. Mary of Magdala, John 20:11
2. several apostles, John 21:1-7
3. 500 brothers, Matt. 28:16-17

24:17 "looking sad" This could mean "stern," "gloomy" (cf. Matt. 6:16), or "dejected." They could not believe that someone had not heard about the events of the last week in Jerusalem. It was the talk of the town (cf. Luke 24:18).

24:18 "visiting" During the three main annual feasts, Jerusalem swelled to three times its normal population due to pilgrims from the Diaspora. They thought Jesus was just another pilgrim.

24:19 "What things" Jesus, by asking them questions, was forcing them to articulate the events of the past few days and testify to Him (cf. Luke 24:19-24).

■ **"Jesus the Nazarene"** There are two spellings of the term:

1. *Nazarēnou*, P⁷⁵, κ, B, L, 070, 079, 0124, and some Old Latin and Vulgate versions.
2. *Nazōraiou*, A, D, K, P, W, X, 063, and some old Latin, Coptic, and Armenian versions. This same form is in Luke 18:37.

The UBS⁴ gives #1 a "B" rating (almost certain). See Special Topic at Luke 4:34.

■ **"a prophet mighty in deed and word"** This was honorific (cf. Luke 7:16,39; 9:8,19). Within Judaism for one to be inspired, as a writer of Scripture, one had to be a prophet. The term here refers not to a predictor, but a powerful forth-teller of YHWH's message. However, this one was not just one prophet in a series. He was the prophet of Deut. 18:15,18. They had not fully grasped the implications of the person and work of Christ.

■ **"and all the people"** This is a typical hyperbole (e.g., Luke 18:43). Eastern literature (and speech) is much more figurative and exaggerated. This is one reason westerners tend to misunderstand the NT.

24:20 "the chief priests and our rulers" This same phrase is in Luke 23:13. The Jewish leadership was responsible for Jesus' death. The Sanhedrin did not have this power under Roman occupation (cf. Luke 9:22). They had to trump up a charge that the Romans would deem worthy of death! Also, they wanted Him crucified because of the rabbinical curse attached to crucifixion in Deut. 21:23. This is the very charge made by Peter in his first sermon in Acts.

24:21 "were hoping" This is an imperfect active indicative, which implies they were no longer "hoping."

■ **"it was He who was going to redeem Israel"** They still had a nationalistic, militaristic mindset (cf. Acts 1:6-7). The Jews only expected one coming of the Messiah and that coming was to benefit and restore Israel to power and preeminence.

■ **"redeem"** This is a term from the slave market which meant "to buy back" (cf. Mark 10:45). See Special Topic at Luke 1:68.

■ **"third day"** The Jews had a tradition that the spirit stayed near the body for three days, but beyond this

period no resuscitation was possible (cf. John 11:6 and 39).

24:24 "Some of those who were with us" From John's Gospel we know this was John and Peter (cf. John 20:3-10 and possibly Peter only from Luke 24:12).

24:25 The early sermons in Acts often allude to the OT prophecies about the Messiah (Gen. 3:15; Deut. 18:15; 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 16:10,22,118; Isaiah 53). I think it was Jesus Himself who informed these two disciples, who relayed the information to the Apostles in the upper room (cf. Luke 24:27). This post-resurrection appearance becomes a crucial interpretive event for the early church (as does Luke 24:45). It is surprising that this encounter is unique to the Gospel of Luke.

▣ **"O foolish men and slow of heart"** This is a rebuke of these disciples' lack of OT knowledge. What would Jesus say to His church today about their level of Bible knowledge? Doubt, fear, and confusion are the practical result of willful Bible ignorance! We have not because we read not! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR FOOLISH PEOPLE](#) at Luke 11:40.

24:26 "it was necessary for the Christ to suffer" Jesus had told His disciples this repeatedly (cf. Luke 9:22; 17:25; 24:26,46). This is what surprised the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23), however, it had been predicted in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zech. 10:12; Matt. 16:2). First century Judaism did not emphasize these verses at all.

▣ **"and to enter into His glory"** This pattern of suffering preceding glory becomes a principle of spiritual maturity (cf. Rom. 8:17; Heb. 5:8).

24:27 This verse and Luke 24:45 give us insight into the *Kerygma* of Acts. See Special Topic below.

[SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KERYGMA OF THE EARLY CHURCH](#)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 24:28-35

28And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. **29**But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is *getting* toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. **30**When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. **31**Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. **32**They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" **33**And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, **34**saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." **35**They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

24:28-30 This is a very detailed eyewitness account. Luke probably interviewed these two.

24:31 "Then their eyes were opened" This is an aorist passive indicative, which is a reversal of the imperfect passive indicative of Luke 24:16. From Luke 24:35 we learn that they recognized Jesus' characteristic way of blessing the food.

Luke uses this term "opened" (*dianoigō*) three times in this context:

1. their eyes were opened, Luke 24:31
2. their understanding of OT Scripture increased, Luke 24:32
3. the Apostles' minds are opened to Scripture, Luke 24:45

The Bible is divine revelation, not human discovery. Spiritual truth is a gift from God to blinded, sinful

humanity.

■ **"and He vanished from their sight"** This may be an allusion to 2 Kgs. 6:17 (LXX *dianoigō*). The exact mechanism of this is as mysterious as Jesus suddenly appearing in the Upper Room in Luke 24:36 or Philip's experience in the desert (cf. Acts 8:39). The spiritual realm is multi-dimensional, not spacial-temporal.

24:32 "Were not our hearts burning within us" This is a periphrastic imperfect passive (A. T. Robertson calls it a middle voice). It was one exciting Bible study (cf. Ps. 19:7-14)! It (*kaiō*) is used metaphorically in the LXX of Deut. 32:22, but in a judgment sense.

24:33 "and those who were with them" (cf. Luke 24:33,36; Acts 1:15)

24:34 "saying" This must refer to the eleven speaking to the two new arrivals (cf. NJB).

■ **"has appeared to Simon"** Jesus appeared to the one who had denied Him. We have no biblical account of this meeting.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS' POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

24:35 "began to relate" This is another of many imperfects in this context, which can mean the beginning of something or the repeating of something in past time. They rehearse in detail what happened. They now affirmed the women's testimony of Luke 24:22-23.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 24:36-43

³⁶While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. ³⁷But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. ³⁸And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; ⁴³and He took it and ate *it* before them.

24:36 Some ancient Greek manuscripts (P⁷⁵, κ, A, B, K, L, and many later ones) add "Peace to you" (cf. John 20:19,26). The UBS⁴ rates its inclusion as "B" (almost certain). It is omitted in MS D and some Old Latin MSS. This is a typical Hebrew greeting (cf. Luke 10:5). In many ways the Gospels of John and Luke share similar accounts of the Passion and its aftermath

24:37 "they were startled and frightened" These disciples had heard Jesus predict His suffering and death several times, but somehow they did not take it seriously. Now they were surprised by His resurrection.

■ **"and thought they were seeing a spirit"** In the Matthew (14:26) and Mark (6:49) parallels the word *phantasma*, from which we get the English word "phantom," is used. Luke is using the term *pneuma* in a specialized sense (cf. 1 Pet. 3:19). When he records Jesus' words in Luke 23:46 he uses the term in the more normal sense of a personal aspect, which is not dependant on a physical form (cf. Luke 24:39). See Special Topic: Spirit (*pneuma*) in the NT at Luke 23:46.

24:38 This is a mild reprimand in the form of two rhetorical questions. Doubts and fears are common to humanity, especially in the presence of the spiritual realm. However, they can become stepping stones to great faith and assurance.

The first question is a periphrastic perfect passive, the second a present active indicative. The verbal forms in this context are difficult to translate because they deal with a past event described in dialogue.

1. the two on the road to Emmaus
2. the two and Jesus
3. the two and those in the upper room.

24:39 "See My hands and My feet" In the other Gospels this occurs in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, but in John the eating of fish occurs in Galilee. Jesus wanted to assure them of His bodily resurrection. He retained the marks of crucifixion because they are His badge of honor. Psalm 22:16 and here are the only texts which mention His feet being pierced. John 20:27 mentions only His hands and side.

- **"that it is I Myself"** This is a very emphatic statement—*ego* (I), *eimi* (I Am), *autos* (Myself).
- **"touch Me"** This is an aorist active imperative (as is "and see"). The early church used verses 39-43 to refute Gnosticism, which was a depreciation of the physical realm (cf. 1 John 1:1-3). See Special Topic on Gnosticism at Luke 2:40.

24:40 This is another of the disputed shorter readings found in MSS D and some Old Latin manuscripts but present in the vast majority of older uncial manuscripts and P⁷⁵. UBS⁴ rates its inclusion as "B" (almost certain).

24:42 "a piece of a broiled fish" Some uncial manuscripts from the eighth through eleventh centuries added a phrase about "honeycomb" (cf. NKJV). The early church incorporated both milk and honey in their celebration of the Eucharist and baptism. The UBS⁴ gives its exclusion a "B" rating (almost certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 24:44-53

⁴⁴Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; ⁴⁷and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." ⁵⁰And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them. ⁵²And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple, praising God.

24:44-49 This account is found only in Luke.

24:44 "which are written about Me" This seems to be a summary statement of Jesus' 40 day post-resurrection appearances (cf. Luke 24:25-26).

- **"Moses. . . Prophets. . . Psalms"** These represent the three divisions of the Hebrew Canon: Law, Prophets, and Writings. This context says something of the Christocentric unity of the Old Testament (see E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*).
- **"must be fulfilled"** Jesus is found in the OT in symbol, type, and direct prophecy (cf. Matt. 5:17ff).

24:45 "He opened their minds" See note at Luke 24:31. Humanity cannot understand spiritual truths

unaided by God. This is the task usually assigned to the Spirit (cf. John 14:16; 16:8-15), but sometime attributed to Jesus (cf. Acts 16:14).

24:46 "Thus it is written" This is a perfect passive indicative, which was a Hebrew idiom for asserting the inspiration of Scripture (cf. Luke 24:44).

▣ **"the Christ would suffer"** "The Christ" is the Greek translation of "the Messiah" (see Special Topic at Luke 2:11). This truth was the stumbling block for the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2), but crucial for sacrificial redemption.

▣ **"rise again from the dead"** Verses 46-47 are Luke's Great Commission. The grammatical feature is the use of three aorist infinitives that describe Jesus' mission.

1. He came to suffer, Luke 24:46 (cf. Luke 24:26)

2. He came to be raised from the dead, Luke 24:46 (cf. Luke 24:7)

3. He came that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed, Luke 24:47 (cf. Acts 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18)

See Special Topic at Luke 9:22.

▣ **"the third day"** This was a predicted event (cf. Hosea 6:2; Jonah 1:17; Matt. 12:40; 16:4; 1 Cor. 15:4). It probably relates to Jonah 1:17.

24:47 This is the key purpose of Jesus' mission. It fully reflects the heart, character, and purpose of God since Genesis 3. To miss this verse is to miss the main thrust of Christianity. Believers must keep the main thing the main thing (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). All else is secondary to this task of worldwide gospel proclamation. Evangelism is not an option, but a mandate!

▣ **"repentance"** In Greek the term speaks of "a change of mind." In Hebrew it speaks of "a change of action." Both are involved. This is the negative aspect of salvation, as faith is the positive aspect (cf. Mark 1:15; 6:12; Matt. 4:12; 11:20; Luke 13:3,5; Acts 20:21). See Special Topic at Luke 3:3.

▣ **"forgiveness of sins"** This theme is highlighted in Zacharias' prophecy (cf. Luke 1:67-79). It is the meaning of Jesus' name (YHWH saves, cf. Matt. 1:21). Notice that "baptism" is not mentioned here (cf. Luke 11:4). This verse has often been called "Luke's Great Commission" (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

▣ **"in His name"** Jesus' "name" is a Semitic idiom for

1. His power

2. His person

3. His authority

4. His character.

So it means both content and manner! Not only what we proclaim, but the lives of those who proclaim are crucial! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD](#) at Luke 9:48.

▣ **"to all the nations"** This universal element must have surprised these Jewish believers. This very thing is predicted in Matt. 28:14; 28:19; Mark 13:10. Also note Isa. 2:2-4; 51:4-5; 56:7; and see Special Topic at Luke 2:10.

24:48 Here is the Apostolic mandate (cf. John 15:27)! Luke accentuates this in Acts (cf. Acts 1:8,22; 2:32; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39,41; 13:31).

24:49 "I am sending" The Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. This verse shows Jesus' authority in executing the Father's will.

▣ **"the promise of My Father"** This refers to the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14-16; 20:22; Acts 1:4). Every

promise Jesus made to the Apostles in the Upper Room at the Last Supper was fulfilled on Resurrection Sunday!

■ **"stay in the city"** These were mostly Galilean people. They would not have stayed in hostile Jerusalem otherwise (cf. Acts 1:4).

■ **"clothed with power"** Here this refers to the Pentecostal coming of the Spirit. It is an Aorist middle subjunctive.

It is a common biblical metaphor for the spiritual life (cf. Job 29:14; Ps. 132:9; Isa. 59:17; 61:10; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10,12). The spiritual life is as much a gift and empowering from God as is salvation, but it must be received and implemented (i.e., conditional covenant). It is not automatic! It is God's will! He is God's gift!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: LUKE 24:50-53

⁵⁰And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple praising God.

24:50 "Bethany" Lazarus' home was about one and one half miles from Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives which was the extension of the same ridge.

■ **"lifted up His hands"** This was the normal position of Jewish prayer, but here it is probably a priestly gesture (cf. Lev. 9:22).

■ **"blessed them"** The prayer is not recorded (but Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 is).

24:51 "was carried up into heaven" The other Gospels tell us "in a cloud," which was the transportation of deity (cf. Dan. 7:13).

This phrase is omitted in MSS κ^* , D, and some Old Latin and Syrian versions. However, the phrase which mentions the ascension is referred to in Acts 1:2. It is present in P⁷⁵, κ^2 , A, B, D, K, L, W, and X. The UBS⁴ ranks its inclusion as "B" (almost certain).

Jesus' ascension is His return to pre-existent glory (cf. John 17:5). He is honored for His accomplished task. See Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 796-797. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ASCENSION](#) at Luke 9:51.

24:52 "after worshiping Him" This is another phrase present in all of the ancient Greek texts except D and some Old Latin manuscripts. This chapter has the largest number of these so-called "Western non-interpolations" by Westcott and Hort (Luke 24:24:3,6,9,12,36,40,52,53). These textual critics believed that the Alexandrian family of Greek manuscripts (i.e., MSS P^{46,66,72,75}, κ , B, A, C, Q, T, 0220) was closer to the original than the other families of manuscripts except in twenty-seven shorter readings found in the Western family (i.e., MSS P^{37,38,48,69}, 0171, O).

■ **"with great joy"** Luke's Gospel emphasizes "joy" (cf. Luke 1:14; 2:10; 8:13; 10:17; 15:7,10; 24:41,52). This is so different from their reaction in Luke 24:37-38.

24:53 "in the temple" These were still Jewish people. Their meeting place was not place large enough to accommodate the believing disciples.

The liturgical "Amen" is added by MSS A, B, C², but is not present in MSS P⁷⁵, κ , C^{*}, D, L, W. The UBS⁴ gives its exclusion an "A" rating (certain).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus appear to His followers so often after His resurrection?
2. Were the disciples expecting a resurrection?
3. Why did they not recognize Jesus immediately? Will we recognize one another?
4. Why did Jesus offer so many proofs to them of His physical body's reality?
5. Why are there differing accounts of the resurrection in an inspired Bible?
6. Why did Jesus appear to them for forty days?
7. Are angels still active in our world today?

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 b.c..) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 b.c.-a.d. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."

1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing

1. It occurred = aorist
2. It occurred and the results abide = perfect
3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = pluperfect
4. It is occurring = present
5. It was occurring = imperfect
6. It will occur = future

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. aorist - "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. perfect - "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. present - "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. future - "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express

himself in a certain tense. The standard "no frills" tense was the aorist. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the indicative mood. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. perfect tense. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the aorist and present tenses. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act (example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, "you have been and continue to be saved").
2. pluperfect tense. This was like the perfect except the abiding results have ceased. Example: John 18:16 "Peter was standing at the door outside."
3. present tense. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: I John 3:6 & 9, "Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning." "Everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin."
4. imperfect tense. In this tense the relationship to the present tense is analogous to the relationship between the perfect and the pluperfect. The imperfect speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: Matt. 3:5, "then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him" or "then all Jerusalem began to go out to him."
5. future tense. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: Matt. 5:4-9, "Blessed are . . . they will . . ."

II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.
- B. Active voice was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.
- C. The passive voice means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
 1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
 2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22).
 3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the instrumental case.
 4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the instrumental case alone.
- D. The middle voice means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
 1. reflexive - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: Matt. 27:5 "hanged himself."
 2. intensive - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: II Cor. 11:14 "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."
 3. reciprocal - the interplay of two subjects. Example: Matt. 26:4 "they counseled with one another."

III. MOOD (or "MODE")

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author's own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (indicative) and that which indicated potentiality (subjunctive, imperative and optative).
- B. The indicative mood was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author's mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The subjunctive mood expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened, but the

chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the future indicative. The difference was that the subjunctive expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms "could," "would," "may," or "might."

- D. The optative mood expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the subjunctive. The optative expressed possibility under certain conditions. The optative was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul's famous phrase, "May it never be" (KJV, "God forbid"), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.
- E. The imperative mood emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the imperative in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the present and aorist tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize participles as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as verbal adjectives. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The aorist active indicative was the normal or "unmarked" way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
 1. The nominative case was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs "to be" or "become."
 2. The genitive case was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, "What kind?" It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "of."
 3. The ablative case used the same inflected form as the genitive, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "from."
 4. The dative case was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition "to."
 5. The locative case was the same inflected form as the dative, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions "in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside."

6. The instrumental case was the same inflected form as the dative and locative cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, "by" or "with."
7. The accusative case was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, "How far?" or "To what extent?"
8. The vocative case was used for direct address.

VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.

B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).

1. Time connectors

- a. *epei, epeidē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - "when"
- b. *heōs* - "while"
- c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - "whenever"
- d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) - "until"
- e. *priv* (infin.) - "before"
- f. *hōs* - "since," "when," "as"

2. Logical connectors

a. Purpose

- (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - "in order that," "that"
- (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
- (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"

b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)

- (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - "in order that," "thus"
- (2) *hiva* (subj.) - "so that"
- (3) *ara* - "so"

c. Causal or reason

- (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - "for," "because"
- (2) *dioti, hotiy* - "because"
- (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* - "since"
- (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - "because"

d. Inferential

- (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* - "therefore"
- (2) *dio* (strongest inferential conjunction) - "on which account," "wherefore," "therefore"
- (3) *oun* - "therefore," "so," "then," "consequently"
- (4) *toinoun* - "accordingly"

e. Adversative or contrast

- (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - "but," "except"
- (2) *de* - "but," "however," "yet," "on the other hand"
- (3) *kai* - "but"
- (4) *mentoi, oun* - "however"
- (5) *plēn* - "never-the-less" (mostly in Luke)
- (6) *oun* - "however"

f. Comparison

- (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
- (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)

- (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
- (4) *ē* - "than"
- g. Continuative or series
 - (1) *de* - "and," "now"
 - (2) *kai* - "and"
 - (3) *tei* - "and"
 - (4) *hina, oun* - "that"
 - (5) *oun* - "then" (in John)

3. Emphatic usages

- a. *alla* - "certainty," "yea," "in fact"
- b. *ara* - "indeed," "certainly," "really"
- c. *gar* - "but really," "certainly," "indeed"
- d. *de* - "indeed"
- e. *ean* - "even"
- f. *kai* - "even," "indeed," "really"
- g. *mentoi* - "indeed"
- h. *oun* - "really," "by all means"

VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A conditional sentence is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The first class conditional sentence expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an "if." In several contexts it could be translated "since" (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all first classes are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The second class conditional sentence is often called "contrary to fact." It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
 - 1. "If He were really a prophet which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not" (Luke 7:39)
 - 2. "If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not" (John 5:46)
 - 3. "If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am" (Gal. 1:10)
- D. The third class speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the "if" clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The fourth class is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete fourth class conditional sentence in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial fourth class is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial fourth class in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The present imperative with *mē* particle often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: "stop storing up your riches on earth. . ." (Matt. 6:19); "stop worrying about your life. . ." (Matt. 6:25); "stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . ." (Rom. 6:13); "you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . ." (Eph. 4:30); and "stop getting drunk on wine. . ." (5:18).

- B. The aorist subjunctive with *mē* particle has the emphasis of "do not even begin or start an act." Some examples: "Do not even begin to suppose that. . ." (Matt. 5:17); "never start to worry. . ." (Matt. 6:31); "you must never be ashamed. . ." (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The double negative with the subjunctive mood is a very emphatic negation. "Never, no never" or "not under any circumstance." Some examples: "he will never, no never experience death" (John 8:51); "I will never, no, never. . ." (I Cor. 8:13).

IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the definite article "the" had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of "a pointer," a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
 - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
 - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;
 - 3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); "God is light" (I John 1:5); "God is love" (4:8,16).
- B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English "a" or "an." The absence of the definite article could mean
 - 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
 - 2. a focus on the category of something
- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the aorist active indicative was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice, or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the aorist active indicative was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. (Example: Rom. 6:10 [twice]).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
 - 1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
 - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader
 - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader
 - c. what the author felt deeply about
 - 2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
 - a. for linking verbs
 - (1) verb
 - (2) subject
 - (3) complement
 - b. for transitive verbs
 - (1) verb
 - (2) subject
 - (3) object
 - (4) indirect object
 - (5) prepositional phrase
 - c. for noun phrases
 - (1) noun
 - (2) modifier
 - (3) prepositional phrase
 - 3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
 - a. "right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship." The phrase "right hand of

- fellowship" is split and fronted to show its significance (Gal. 2:9).
 - b. "with Christ" was placed first. His death was central (Gal. 2:20).
 - c. "It was bit by bit and in many different ways" (Heb. 1:1) was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.
- D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb's inflected form. Example: "I, myself, will surely be with you. . ." (Matt. 28:20).
 2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton ("not bound"). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
 - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
 - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
 - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
 - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
 3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
 4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
 - a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects, like "sleep" for death (John 11:11-14) or "feet" for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
 - b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God's name, like "Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:2) or "a voice from heaven" (Matt. 3:17).
 - c. figures of speech
 - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24)
 - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36)
 - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55)
 - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
 - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11)
 - (6) sound plays between words
 - (a) "church"
 - (i) "church" (Eph. 3:21)
 - (ii) "calling" (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (iii)"called" (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (b) "free"
 - (i) "free woman" (Gal. 4:31)
 - (ii)"freedom" (Gal. 5:1)
 - (iii)"free" (Gal. 5:1)
 - d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
 - (1) figurative use of "food" (John 4:31-34)
 - (2) figurative use of "Temple" (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61)
 - (3) Hebrew idiom of compassion, "hate" (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13)
 - (4) "All" versus "many." Compare Isa. 53:6 ("all") with 53:11 & 12 ("many"). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
 5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: "The Lord Jesus Christ."
 6. The special use of *autos*
 - a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated "same."
 - b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun-"himself," "herself," or "itself."
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
 2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a "word-for-word" translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV)

with a "dynamic equivalent" (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.

3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).

4. The use of a very literal translation

a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901

b. *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
 - A. Old Testament
 - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of "lower criticism" also called "textual criticism."
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

I. The textual sources of our English Bible

A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in a.d. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century a.d. and were finished in the ninth century a.d. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 b.c.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from "Letter of Aristeas." The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman b.c. period (200 b.c. to a.d. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the "Essenes." The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
 - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, "As many shall be amazed at him."
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, "Just as many were astonished over you."
 - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
 - (a) LXX, "so will many nations marvel at him"
 - (b) MT, "so he sprinkles many nations"
 - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, "then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . ."
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, "and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . ."
 - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
 - (1) LXX & DSS, "after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied"
 - (2) MT, "he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied"

B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century a.d., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are

housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century a.d., but most are from the third and fourth centuries a.d. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.

3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter \aleph (*aleph*) or (01), found at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century a.d. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as "A" or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as "B" or (03), found in the Vatican's library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century a.d. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as "C" or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as "D" or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called "The Western Text." It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
 - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
 - (1) P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶ (about a.d. 200), which record the Gospels
 - (2) P⁴⁶ (about a.d. 225), which records Paul's letters
 - (3) P⁷² (about a.d. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
 - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about a.d. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
 - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
 - (6) other MSS which show this text type are \aleph , C, L, W, 33
 - b. Western text from North Africa
 - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
 - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
 - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
 - (4) Codex D "Bezae" follow this text type
 - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
 - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
 - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria's church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
 - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
 - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
 - d. the fourth possible type is "Caesarean" from Palestine
 - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
 - (2) some witnesses to it are P⁴⁵ and W

II. The problems and theories of "lower criticism" or "textual criticism."

A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
 - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
 - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
 - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
 - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the

misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.

- c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.

2. intentional

- a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
- b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
- c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
- d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
- e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants

- a. J. Harold Greenlee's book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68:

"No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original."

- b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said: "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted. . . .When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it..."

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central..."

III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

GLOSSARY

Adoptionism. This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

Alexandrian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century a.d. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, *Has The Church Misread The Bible?* (Academic, 1987)

Alexandrinus. This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated "A," and the manuscript designated "B" (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

Allegory. This is a type of Biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one's culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible's historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

Analytical lexicon. This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

Analogy of Scripture. This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

Ambiguity. This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

Anthropomorphic. Meaning "having characteristics associated with human beings," this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use.

Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

Antiochian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria in the third century a.d. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

Antithetical. This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Pro. 10:1, 15:1).

Apocalyptic literature. This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God's special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matthew 24; Mark 13; II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation.

Apologist (Apologetics). This is from the Greek root for "legal defense." This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

A priori. This is basically synonymous with the term "presupposition." It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

Arianism. Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria Egypt in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (a.d. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in a.d. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

Aristotle. He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

Autographs. This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

Bezae. This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century a.d. It is designated by "D." It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the "Textus Receptus," the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

Bias. This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.

Biblical Authority. This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.

Canon. This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Christocentric. This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

Commentary. This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a Biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.

Concordance. This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark's *Howto Use New Testament Greek Study Aids*, pp. 54-55).

Dead Sea Scrolls. This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early b.c. era. They are designated by the abbreviation "DSS."

Deductive. This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).

Dialectical. This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination-free will; security-perseverance; faith-works; decision-discipleship; Christian freedom-Christian responsibility.

Diaspora. This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

Dynamic equivalent. This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word, to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher's Introduction to the TEV.

Eclectic. This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

Eisegesis. This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a "leading out" of the original author's intent, this term implies a "leading in" of a foreign idea or opinion.

Etymology. This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

Exegesis. This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means "to lead out" (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author's intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

Genre. This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

Gnosticism. Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the Gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (*kosmos*); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The Gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.

Hermeneutics. This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

Higher Criticism. This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

Idiom. This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: "that was awfully good," or "you just kill me." The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

Illumination. This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for

mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Inductive. This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

Interlinear. This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an "analytical lexicon," will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

Inspiration. This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure

Language of description. This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

Legalism. This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

Literal. This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

Literary genre. This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

Literary unit. This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

Lower criticism. See "textual criticism."

Manuscript. This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by "MS" (singular) or "MSS" (plural).

Masoretic Text. This refers to the ninth century a.d. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by "MT."

Metonymy. This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, "the kettle is boiling" actually means "the water within the kettle is boiling."

Muratorian Fragments. This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before a.d. 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had "practically" set the canon before the major

church councils of the fourth century.

Natural revelation. This is one category of God's self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God's specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the "old earth" movement among Christian scientists (e.g. the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God's truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God; it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

Nestorianism. Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius' main concern was the title "mother of God," given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

Original author. This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

Papyri. This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

Parallel passages. They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

Paraphrase. This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take serious the original text, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

Paragraph. This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.

Parochialism. This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.

Paradox. This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting it from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.

Plato. He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato's "forms/ideas" with the spiritual realm.

Presupposition. This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.

Proof-texting. This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.

Rabbinical Judaism. This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 b.c.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this "religion of the scribes" was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the scribal form, dominated by the Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).

Revelation. This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Semantic field. This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.

Septuagint. This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 **b.c.** (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century b.c.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is "LXX."

Sinaiticus. This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called "*aleph*" [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

Spiritualizing. This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

Synonymous. This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

Syntax. This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

Synthetical. This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called "climatic" (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

Systematic theology. This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian

theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

Talmud. This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

Textual criticism. This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called "lower criticism."

Textus Receptus. This designation developed into Elzevir's edition of the Greek NT in 1633 a.d. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says "the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus." The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A.T. Robertson also says "the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text" (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus' third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of a.d. 1611.

Torah. This is the Hebrew term for "teaching." It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.

Typological. This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

Vaticanus. This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found in the Vatican's library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital "B."

Vulgate. This is the name of Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or "common" translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the a.d. 380's.

Wisdom literature. This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life's tragedies.

World picture and worldview. These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term "world picture" refers to "the how" of creation while "worldview" relates to "the Who." These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Genesis 1-2 deals primarily with the

Who, not the how, of creation.

YHWH. This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Exod. 3:14. It is the causative form of the Hebrew term "to be." The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adonai*, "lord." This is how this covenant name is translated in English.

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DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.
2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.
3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.
4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.
5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.
6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.
7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.
8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.
9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.