**Luke Commentary**

**Luke Chapter 1**

Luk 1:1

**“compile an orderly account.”** For why there are four Gospels, see commentary on Mark 1:1, “the good news of Jesus Christ.”

Luk 1:3

**“most excellent Theophilus.”** We know very little about this man, except what a few words can tell us. The address, “most excellent Theophilus,” tells us that this man was of some rank and respect, not just a commoner. The title, “excellent” was also used of Felix and Festus, who were the governors of Judea (Acts 23:26; 26:25). Furthermore, the title was used of Romans, so the man was most certainly a Gentile, and the Gospel of Luke has much in it that would appeal to Gentiles, whereas Matthew has much vocabulary and expression that would appeal to Jews. Given that, it is especially noteworthy that when Luke penned Acts, also addressed to the same man, he did not use the title “excellent” like he did in the Gospel of Luke. Instead, Luke simply wrote, “The first account I made, O Theophilus….” Luke first wrote to Theophilus to tell him about Jesus, and “so that you can come to fully know the certainty of the things about which you have been told” (Luke 1:4). Apparently this worked, because the shift from “most excellent Theophilus” to “O Theophilus” is a good indication that between the time of writing Luke and Acts, Theophilus believed in Jesus and got born again.

Luk 1:5

**“In the days of Herod.”** Although this gives us a basic time of the birth of John, since Herod reigned from 37 BC to 1 BC[[1]](#footnote-12895) (although most historians say 4 BC), it is saying more than just that historical fact. Herod was a cruel and hated king, and the “days of Herod” were dark days for the Judeans. John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were a burst of light into this darkness. No wonder the prophet, speaking of the coming of the Messiah, said, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. Those living in the land of the shadow of death, on them the light has shined” (Isa. 9:2). Had God wanted to, He could have given us the exact year of Herod, and other leaders as well (cf. Luke 3:1).

The record of the events surrounding the birth of Christ occurs in Matthew and Luke, and the two Gospels interweave when it comes to the chronology of the events. To read about the birth of Christ in chronological order, it is: Luke 1:5-80; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-38; Matt. 2:1-22. Then Matt. 2:23 and Luke 2:39-40 are both summary statements about Jesus growing up in Nazareth.

**“named Zechariah.”** The Hebrew and Aramaic in the Old Testament and time of Christ did not have a vowel following the “Z,” so some versions have Zechariah, while some have “Zachariah.” Although “Zachariah” is traditional and is in the King James Version, the pronunciation of the name as “Zechariah” is more likely and thus is the choice of most of the modern versions. “Zechariah” means “Yahweh remembers,” which would generally refer to Yahweh remembering His covenant, not Yahweh remembering Zechariah. “Elizabeth” means “Elohim is an oath,” that is, “Elohim is faithful.”

**“*priestly* division of Abijah.”** 1 Chronicles 24:1-19 recounts how King David organized the priests, the sons of Aaron, into 24 divisions. The eighth division was the division or “course” of Abijah (1 Chron. 24:10). Each division was on duty twice a year for a one-week period, and also served at the three major feasts of the year: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. After the Babylonian Captivity, only four divisions returned (Ezra 2:36-39), but these four were divided into 24 divisions, given the names of the original 24, and then continued on with their duties according to the traditional timing.[[2]](#footnote-20592) The eighth division of Abijah that Zechariah was serving could have been the first of his two services in 4 BC, the last week of May, 4 BC that year, or it could have been the later of the two times of service, which would have been in November; the Bible does not make that clear. However, because Luke 1:8 says that this event happened while Zechariah was serving in his division’s turn, we know it was not during one of the three great feasts but was either in May or November. We must keep in mind that the Jewish lunar year was 11 days shorter than the modern solar year, so the dates of the division of Abijah could vary by almost a month over a course of three or more years.

To serve as a priest of the course of Abijah was a tremendous privilege because May was generally a wonderful month in Israel, not too hot or too cold, while November could be rainy but not too cold. To be born into a priestly family whose priestly course came up for service every August and February meant serving in the hottest hot month and almost the coldest cold month in Israel’s weather calendar. Serving at that time would not be nearly as pleasant as serving in the course of Abijah.

**“he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron.”** Zechariah was a priest, and that he was married to a priest’s daughter was considered a double blessing for him. Also, since John the Baptist was the son of a priest, John himself was also a priest, although there is no indication in the text that he ever stepped into that role and participated in any Temple service.

Luk 1:6

**“And they were both righteous before God.”** Scripture includes this character reference about Zechariah and Elizabeth to point out that they were godly people because Elizabeth was barren, and often that would indicate sin in her life.

**“before God.”** This phrase is an idiom where doing something “before the Lord” means to do something in service to him, to act as his servant. This can be seen when Elijah says, “As Yahweh the God of Israel lives before whom I stand, there will not be dew or rain these years except by my word” (1 Kings 17:1; cf. 1 Kings 18:15; 2 Kings 3:14; 5:16). Elijah is saying he stands in service to God. (For more examples see: Gen. 7:1; 17:1; 24:40; 37:10; Luke 1:6, 8, 15, 75; Acts 4:19; 8:21; 1 Tim. 5:4; Heb. 13:21).

Luk 1:7

**“they both were advanced in their days.”** The Levites could only work from 20 to 50, but the priests could work as long as they were able. It is almost certain that both Elizabeth and Zechariah were over 60, and they may have both been over 70. According to the Mishna, 60 was the time a person was considered aged, an elder. *Mishna, Pirkei Avot: Ethics of the Fathers*, chap. 5, para. 24: He used to say: At five years old a person should study the Scriptures, at ten years for the Mishnah, at 13 for the commandments, at 15 for the Talmud, at 18 for the bridechamber, at 20 for one’s life pursuit, at 30 for authority, at 40 for discernment, at 50 for counsel, at 60 to be an elder, at 70 for gray hairs, at 80 for special strength (Psalm 90:10), at 90 for decrepitude, and at a 100 a man is as one who has already died and has ceased from the affairs of this world. ([www.myjewishlearning.com/article/pirkei-avot-ethics-of-the-fathers-5/](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/pirkei-avot-ethics-of-the-fathers-chapter-5/), paragraph 24. Note: the paragraphs of the Mishna differ from website to website). Their advanced age makes it quite certain that they both died before John started his ministry. In fact, it is likely that they both died while John was in his teen years or perhaps early 20s.

Zechariah’s advanced age would not have kept him from working in the Temple as a priest. The times of service differed for the priests and Levites. When the Levites first started their service under Moses, they were counted for their duty from age 30 to 50, a period of 20 years (Num. 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, and 4:47). However, Numbers 8:24-26, also written during the wilderness wanderings, says the Levites served from age 25 to 50. Although it is possible that the number 20 was very temporary and revised up to 25, it is more likely that the Levites started an apprenticeship before they took over the full responsibility of their duties. King David revised the ages, and the Levites started ministering at age 20 (1 Chron. 23:24-26; cf. 2 Chron. 31:17; Ezra 3:8).

However, priests differed from Levites. When it came to the priests, “There was not any fixed age for entering on the office of the high-priest, any more than on that of an ordinary priest.”[[3]](#footnote-16746) The High Priest, for example, started when the High Priest before him died, no matter how old he was, and ministered as High Priest until he died. The Law never specified when the priests started their office, but when the Talmud was written, it said age 20.

If Zechariah and Elizabeth were in their mid-60s when John was born (John’s birth was likely 2 or 3 BC), they would have seen a lot of turmoil in their days. They would have been born during the last days of the Hasmonean dynasty before the Roman army led by Pompeii conquered Israel in 63 BC. The Romans allowed the Hasmoneans to continue to rule Israel (the Hasmoneans were in power over parts of Israel from 164 BC to 37 BC), but only under the authority of the Roman governor of Syria. That was resented by the Jews and there were revolts against Rome that were never successful. Added to that was the fact that in 40 BC the Parthians from the east attacked Israel and sacked Jerusalem and were not ousted from Israel and Jerusalem until 38 BC by a combined force of Herod and the Romans. In 37 BC the Romans installed Herod the Great as king over Israel (he had been appointed king in 40 BC but did not control the country). Herod was a cruel ruler and was disliked by the religious Jews. In 20 BC he began the construction of the Temple, which was completed in AD 46, long after his death (the year of Herod’s death is disputed and is dated by various historians as early as 5 BC and as late as AD 1). In any case, much of Zechariah’s ministry as a priest would have occurred in troubled times and also in a work zone while the Temple was being built.

**“barren.”** In a culture in which children were considered the blessing of the Lord, and the death rate was so high that each couple had to have 5 children to keep the population number stable, being barren was considered a curse. In fact, the situation highlights the godly character of Zechariah, who was no doubt under pressure to divorce Elizabeth. There were people who considered it a religious duty to divorce a barren wife.[[4]](#footnote-15202) No wonder Elizabeth said she had “disgrace among people” (Luke 1:25).

For a wife to be barren was considered a curse. The reason for that was that in the Law of Moses one of the blessings for obedience was children (Exod. 23:26; Deut. 7:13-14; 28:4, 11), and one of the curses of the Law was a barren womb (Deut. 28:18). So if a woman did not have children, even if those who were close to her knew she was godly, the overall feeling about her among the people was that she was a sinner and was cursed. Also, culturally, the men were never suspected of contributing to a woman’s being barren; if she was, then the people thought there was something wrong with her.

Being barren was also economically challenging. Any older person knows how helpful it is to have youthful strength and energy in the home, and beyond that, in a time when there were no social services to help the aged, being older without family support was more than difficult; it could be a death sentence.

Luk 1:8

**“in his division’s turn.”** This would have most likely been in late May or November (see commentary on Luke 1:5, “*priestly* division of Abijah”).

**“before God.”** See commentary on Luke 1:6.

Luk 1:9

**“he went into the sanctuary of the Lord.”** In this case, the context lets us know that the “sanctuary” was the holy place, the first room of the Temple, which in Herod’s Temple had ten menorahs, ten tables with the Bread of the Presence, and the altar of incense. As the verse says, he went in to burn the incense on the golden altar of incense.

**“lot.”** The priest who got the privilege of burning incense on the golden altar in the Temple was chosen by the casting of lots. The honor was so great that a person was only allowed to do it one time in his life, and after that, he was called “rich.”[[5]](#footnote-22951) At the time of Christ there were many thousands of priests and Levites, far more than necessary to do the required work of the Temple except perhaps during the feasts, so often jobs were assigned by casting lots. “There were many more priests and Levites than necessary (perhaps eighteen thousand) for any given function in the Temple.”[[6]](#footnote-12526)

We see God’s invisible hand in the lot falling to Zechariah. It made sure that he would be alone in the Temple. No other priest would be in there at that time, so the angel could speak with him alone.

**“to burn the incense offering.”** The inside of Herod’s Temple would have followed the pattern of Solomon’s Temple, not Moses’ Tabernacle. So it would have had ten menorahs, not one, five on each side, and ten tables of the Bread of the Presence, not just one (2 Chron. 4:7-8). But, just as in Solomon’s Temple, there would have only been one golden altar of incense, but the entrance to the Holy of Holies would have been through doors, as in Solomon’s Temple, not curtains as in the Tabernacle (1 Kings 6:31). The incense was to be a special incense (Exod. 30:34-38), and it was to be burned two times a day, in the morning when the menorah lamps were put out, and then in the evening when the menorah lamps were lit for the night (Exod. 30:7-8).

Luk 1:10

**“of the People.”** No Gentiles were allowed just outside the sanctuary, in what was called the court of men and women. The use of the Greek word *laos* for “people” here in Luke 1:10 refers specifically to the Jews. See commentary on Luke 2:10; “the people.”

**“at the hour of incense.”** The incense was to be burned on the altar of incense that was in front of the doors leading to the Holy of Holies in the Temple. According to Jewish custom, the incense was burned before the morning sacrifice and after the evening sacrifice (cf. Exod. 30:7-8) The evening sacrifice was killed at about 3 p.m. (cf. Acts 3:1) and the incense was burned after that. The Bible does not say whether Zechariah was chosen to burn the morning incense or the evening incense, and that detail did not seem important enough to God to include in the text. The Jews were very religious people and there likely would have been a multitude of Jews at both the morning and evening times of lighting the lamps and burning incense, which then were also hours of prayer.

Luk 1:11

**“an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing.”** We later learn that this angel is Gabriel (Luke 1:19). Gabriel did not walk into the Temple from outside, but materialized right where he stood, going from invisible to visible on the right side of the altar.

**“on the right side of the altar of incense.”** The right side (or right hand) was the side of blessing, something that shows up a number of times in Scripture (cf. Matt. 25:33; Prov. 3:16). The Temple faced east, so the right side of the altar of incense was the south side. In the Temple, God was the priority and He faced east, so the “side” that something was on was determined by Him, not by the worshiper looking west at Him. To God looking east, the angel was on the right side of the altar of incense, while to Zechariah looking west, the angel was on its left side. Looking toward the east was the general orientation of the biblical world, and that fact shows up in descriptions of the Temple in books such as Psalms and Ezekiel (cf. Ps. 110:1; Ezek. 40-48). When Stephen was being stoned, God showed him a revelation vision of God with Jesus standing at God’s right hand (Acts 7:55-56).

Luk 1:12

**“was startled when he saw *him.*”** Zechariah was startled and frightened when he saw him because he would have been alone in the holy place in the Temple—no one else would have been there at that time, yet this “man” appeared, which frightened Zechariah.

**“fear fell on him.”** This is an idiom meaning that he became afraid.

Luk 1:13

**“Do not be afraid, Zechariah.”** This is a consistent message from God to people, and often when angels appear, people are frightened, and the angel then says not to be afraid (cf. Judg. 6:23; Luke 1:30). Fear is self-centered and keeps people from being all they can be for the Lord. That angels comfort people and tell them not to be afraid when they appear to people is one of the clues that lets us know that what appeared to Job’s friend Eliphaz was a demon (Job 4:12-21). It frightened him and gave him false information, which are both things that demons do.

**“your prayer.”** What the angel said borders on the ironic. “Prayer” is singular in the Greek, but certainly Zechariah and Elizabeth had prayed many prayers for Elizabeth to have a child. In fact, it is quite certain that prayer to have a baby would have been a high priority for them in the years past. But the angel lumps all those prayers together and refers to them as a “prayer,” focusing on the singularity of their desire and request.

The irony is that by this time, because of their old age, it is quite certain that Elizabeth and Zechariah had stopped praying for a child. In fact, it was due to their old age that Zechariah asked the angel for a sign that they would even have a child (Luke 1:7, 18). Zechariah would not have asked for such a sign if Elizabeth was of childbearing age. Thus, as Sarah at age 90 continued the genealogy to Christ by the miracle birth of Isaac, now Elizabeth would bear the forerunner of the Messiah by a miracle birth.

This record in Luke shows us that there are righteous prayers that remain alive in the mind of God and have an effect years after they are spoken. So it was that years after Elizabeth and Zechariah fervently prayed for a child, those prayers were answered. This record about Zechariah and Elizabeth is one of many miracles associated with the birth of the Messiah, and one of the many records that speak of the importance and effectiveness of prayer.

**“your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son.”** The wording clearly indicates that John will be the natural child of Zechariah and Elizabeth. The timing of the conception is miraculous, but the conception is not. This will be Zechariah’s son.

**“John.”** The name means, “Yahweh is gracious” or “Yahweh has shown favor.” The Hebrew is **“Yochanan” (יוֹחָנָן),** which is transliterated into English as **“Johanan.”** a name that occurs over 25 times in the Old Testament. The Greek translation is Iōannēs, which comes into English as “John.” So although “John” was not a name of any of Zechariah’s ancestors, it was a fairly common Hebrew name.

Luk 1:15

**“in the sight of the Lord.”** Biblical custom. The literal is “before the Lord” (ESV). The “Lord” in this verse is God, as per the Old Testament usage. This is an idiom where “before me” means “in my sight.” Just like “thou shalt have no other gods before me,” meaning I do not want to see any other gods in your life (Deut. 5:7, literally, “before my face”). For a sampling of OT examples of this custom see: Genesis 19:27; Exodus 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16; 25:2; 1 Samuel 2:17; 3:1; Psalm 21:6; 42:2; Lamentations 1:22. For other New Testament examples see: Luke 1:75; Ephesians 1:4.

There is so much in this little phrase: “great in the sight of the Lord.” John’s life is mostly unknown, and his ministry was quite short. He died in prison as a result of having made enemies because he dared to speak the truth. So many people take pride in being great in the eyes of the world, but in the end, that greatness will mean nothing. John’s light is still burning, although his life ended 2,000 years ago. Every Christian should strive to be great in the sight of the Lord.

**“he must not ever drink wine or beer.”** The prohibition of drinking alcoholic drinks was part of the Nazirite vow of Numbers 6:1-21. It therefore seems that John the Baptist was a Nazirite from birth, although the Scripture never explicitly says so, or says anything about his hair never being cut. But the angel’s warning about not drinking wine or beer is stringent enough to be good evidence that John was a Nazirite. An angel gave the same warning to Samson’s parents (Judg. 13:3, 14) and Samson was a Nazirite (Judg. 13:7).

The Greek word translated “beer” is *sikera* (#4608 σίκερα). It was not a distilled beverage, like our whisky, rum, vodka, etc., today. Distilled liquor was unknown in the ancient world. It was a fermented drink, hence our translation as “beer.” The Akkadian word was *sikaru*, barley beer, from whence the Hebrew word *shekhar* almost certainly came, and the Greek word is obviously related.

Because “beer” does not occur in most translations of the Bible (although that is changing in some of the more modern versions; cf. HCSB, NET), it is worth saying something about it. *Biblical Archaeological Review* (Sept./Oct. 2010, Vo. 36, no. 5), has a very informative article by Michael Homan, titled, “Did the Ancient Israelites Drink Beer?” Homan writes:

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, beer was in many ways a super-food. By producing and drinking beer, one could dramatically multiply the calories in harvested grains while consuming needed vitamins; that alcohol was also effective at killing bacteria found in tainted water supplies. Given the difficulty of producing food in the ancient world, beer gave you a lot of nutritional bang for your buck.

…Nobody disputes the importance of beer in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, where it was the national drink. Beer was used to pay laborers and the fathers of brides. It was used medicinally for stomach ailments, coughs, constipation; an ancient Egyptian prescription calls for a beer enema. Hammurabi’s Law Code regulates the price and strength of beer. Many ancient temples had their own brewers. …Moreover, beer did not keep well, so it was made for immediate consumption.

The article goes on to discuss how beer was not made like we do it today with hops or carbonation, and that it was often made from a mixture of things, including mixed grains instead of just one grain, and it could be sweetened with many different things, such as grapes, figs, honey, and fruit, and also spices were sometimes added.

The Greek word refers to a fermented drink that was almost certainly some kind of beer, whether barley beer, date beer, mixed-ingredients beer, etc. In contrast, it does not refer to distilled liquor, which is what the English “strong drink” implies, so we did not use that term in the REV.

**“filled with holy spirit.”** This holy spirit was the gift of God that He gave to some believers before Pentecost. For example, God put spirit upon elders who served with Moses so they could help him (Num. 11:17, 25-30).

The fact that John was filled with holy spirit from his mother’s womb means that there is a lot about John that we do not know, because God did not give him the gift of holy spirit just so it could sit dormant for years before he started his ministry. It is a testimony to John’s quiet servant’s service to God that so little is written about him in the Bible. Basically, nothing is said about him until he starts his ministry, and even then very little is written. No doubt many books could have been written, but his role was to prepare the way for the Messiah, and point the spotlight on him, and he did an excellent job of that. John is the perfect example of someone who knows the role they are to play for God and who plays that role perfectly, knowing that there is a future coming when everyone will be rewarded for their obedience and faithfulness to God, no matter how unimportant they may have looked to others in this life.

[For more information on the holy spirit and uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” Also see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 1:16

**“And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.”** The Bible does not say how long John was ministering and baptizing before he baptized Jesus and Jesus started his ministry, but it seems it would have been at least a number of months to perhaps even a few years, because the task of traveling around Israel and turning the people back to God was momentous (see commentary on Luke 3:3).

Luk 1:17

**“to turn the hearts of fathers to their children.”** The phrase “the spirit and power of Elijah” was well known from Malachi 4:5, and the phrase “**to turn the hearts of fathers to their children”** is a quotation taken from Malachi 4:6.

When the angel appeared to Zechariah and said that the boy would be “great in the sight of the Lord” (Luke 1:15), that was wonderful but not overly revealing as to who the child would really be. But all that changed in Luke 1:16-17. The angel started describing John’s calling and ministry in Old Testament terms that Zechariah, a well-educated and knowledgeable priest, would have known. The angel started using vocabulary and phrases from the Old Testament that revealed that John would be the forerunner to the Messiah.

The prophecies of the coming Messiah had been given for 4,000 years, starting with Genesis 3:15. Much later in the Old Testament, Scripture foretold there would be a messenger before the Messiah who would prepare the way for him (cf. Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1). In order to appreciate how important this forerunner was, we must remember that at that time no one knew there would be two “comings” of the Messiah: one when he died and one when he conquered. Everyone thought that when the Messiah came he would conquer the earth and set up his kingdom. This was why when Jesus told the apostles that he would die, Peter said that would not happen to him (Matt. 16:22), and why the people said the Christ would live forever (John 12:34). Thus, for the angel to indicate that John would be the forerunner to the Messiah meant to Zechariah that the Messiah, and the wonderful kingdom he would set up on earth, were coming very soon.

The angel’s reference to the “spirit and power of Elijah” was a reference to Malachi 4:5, and thus was more evidence that John would come right before the Messiah. The Jews knew that Elijah was to come before the Messiah (Matt. 17:10), so they asked John if he were Elijah, to which he answered “No” (John 1:21). While that seems surprising at first, the reason that John said “no” was not because he was not the Elijah of Malachi 4:5, but because the people of the time so badly misunderstood Malachi’s prophecy about Elijah that John did not fulfill their incorrect expectations.

The rabbis believed there would be “a return of Elijah in person to prepare the Messianic kingdom” and they thought that perhaps in John “this rabbinic expectation was fulfilled and that the Baptist actually was Elijah returned to life. In this sense, the Baptist utters his denial…‘I am not.’”[[7]](#footnote-13170) So the Jews were looking for the real Elijah to be raised from the dead, and John was not that Elijah; he was not Elijah raised from the dead. However, John was the person meant in Malachi 4:5 and represented as “Elijah” by the figure of speech antonomasia (“name change,” see commentary on Matt. 17:10). Furthermore, Jesus understood that John was “Elijah” (Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13), and Zechariah would have understood that too at some level, and understood, and no doubt was astounded to learn, that his son would be the “Elijah” of Malachi and the forerunner to the Messiah.

It is likely that this powerful and unexpected revelation, that John would be the promised forerunner to the Messiah, was at least in part why Zechariah asked the angel for a sign that these things would happen (Luke 1:18).

**“their children.”** In the text there is no word for “their,” however, the possessive is implied (cf. NIV84, “to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children”).

**“good sense.”** The Greek is *phronēsis* (#5428 φρόνησις). This is not the Greek, *sophia*, wisdom, but rather “a word for practical intelligence.”[[8]](#footnote-16055)

**“to make ready a people who are entirely prepared for the Lord.”** The translation “entirely prepared” is due to the prefix *kata* on *kataskeuazō* (#2680 κατασκευάζω), which in this context seems to intensify it from just “prepared” to “entirely prepared” or “really prepared.” John did a good job of preparing those who listened to him for the coming of the Messiah and the coming of the Day of Judgment.

Luk 1:18

**“*sign*.”** Literally, Zechariah says, “according to what will I know it?” This is to be understood as asking for a sign. As Lenski writes, “it asks for a norm or sign in accord with which the promise will be fulfilled.”[[9]](#footnote-14366) This is the same phrasing that Abraham uses in Genesis 15:8. Interestingly, Scripture says that “Jews ask for signs” (1 Cor. 1:22), as was the case with Abraham, Gideon, and Hezekiah when they were promised things from the Lord. The difference with Zechariah was that he asked out of some measure of unbelief—as verse 20 makes clear—while these others asked from a desire to strengthen the faith they had.[[10]](#footnote-16670) However, Zechariah’s unbelief can certainly be understood to some extent. The angel told him in terms that were clear to him that the Messiah that believers had been awaiting for some 4,000 years was about to come and his son would be the messenger and forerunner of the Messiah who had been prophesied about in the Old Testament. That could be hard to believe, even if the message did come from an angel. After all, the Bible had said the Messiah was coming soon in other places but it had been hundreds of years (cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Isa. 13:6; 29:17-18; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Ezek. 30:3). Zechariah would no doubt have known those prophecies and realized that just because the Bible said the Day of Yahweh was near did not mean “near” in the sense of going to happen right away. Add to that, Zechariah knew it would take a miracle for his wife to give birth, and that would have contributed to his doubt in this situation. So he asked for a sign.

Luk 1:19

**“Gabriel.”** Means, “God is my strength.” The first occurrence is Daniel 8:16.

**“who stands in the presence of God.”** To get to be in the presence of God, indicating close by God, showed that Gabriel was an important and powerful angel among the spirit beings. Not every spirit got to be that close to God.

Luk 1:20

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“you will be silent and not able to speak.”** Although at first blush this may seem harsh, it was really a blessing in disguise. Although no doubt inconvenient at times, that Zechariah could not speak was not painful and was enough of a blemish that he would not have been allowed to minister as a priest, but, as per the Law of Moses, he could still live off the priestly income (Lev. 21:21-24). Zechariah and Elizabeth would have had an immense amount of adjusting to do to prepare for a baby, and this “blemish” allowed Zechariah the time to dedicate himself to the changes that would have to be made to properly prepare not just for the birth of a baby, but prepare for the birth of the forerunner of the Messiah.

**“because you did not believe my words.”** Although Zechariah did not instantly believe what the angel said, we can understand this. Zechariah and Elizabeth were old, and had prayed for many years for children. Now an angel shows up at an astounding time—the one time in his life that Zechariah will be able to offer incense on the golden altar—and tells him Elizabeth will give birth to a son, but not just any son, the forerunner to the Messiah himself. We can understand why Zechariah would find that hard to immediately grasp, angel or no angel. In any case, not being able to speak turned out to be more a blessing than a hardship, and it certainly did demonstrate the power of God in a person’s life.

**“proper time.”***Kairos* (#2540 καιρός) can mean *time* in the sense of “proper, right, or appropriate time.”[[11]](#footnote-15309) Much like a parent might say to a 15-year-old, “you’ll be ready to date when it is time,” or “when it’s time, we’ll know.” In these cases, “time” means, the *right time*, the *appropriate time*. The Greek word for “time” was also used in this sense.

Luk 1:24

**“she kept herself in seclusion for five months.”** The Bible does not say why she did this, nor is the reason entirely clear. The word “seclusion” includes the idea that she kept herself totally secluded. Whatever her reason or reasons, it seems that some of them were to give herself time to adjust to the idea of having a son after all these years, and to have time to praise the Lord.

Luk 1:25

**“my disgrace among people.”** Culturally, it was considered a disgrace for a woman not to be able to have children (see commentary on Luke 1:7, “barren”).

Luk 1:26

**“Now in the sixth month.”** That is, in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy.

**“a city of Galilee named Nazareth.”** The reason Luke says “a city named” Nazareth, is because the town was such that few people would have heard of it. No other extra-biblical work such as the Talmud or the writings of Josephus mention Nazareth. When Luke mentions well-known cities he just says the name, for example, “Damascus” (Acts 9:19), or “Iconium” (Acts 14:1). Here he much more fully describes Nazareth so people will understand more about it, and he calls it “a city of Galilee named Nazareth.” Modern excavations continue in Nazareth, but at this time the evidence seems to show that it was a very small village indeed, “scarcely more than 100 or 150 inhabitants.”[[12]](#footnote-31165) The small size of the village would contribute to Mary’s being “troubled” when the angel greeted her. She would have almost certainly known every person in the village, and so the greeting of this stranger caught her off guard and troubled her.

Luk 1:27

**“who was betrothed.”** The perfect participle in the Greek text (more literally, “having been betrothed”) tells us that this betrothal had taken place in the past, but how far in the past is unstated and thus unknown. In the Jewish world at this time a betrothal was as binding as a marriage and had to be dissolved by divorce. Once a woman was betrothed to a man, he only had to come and take her to himself and consummate the marriage by sexual intercourse, and this explains why a betrothed woman could be called a “wife” (Matt. 1:20).

**“of the house of David.”** Although the placement of this prepositional phrase seems to describe Joseph, prepositional phrases often are placed where they are for other reasons, such as the Author wanted something else emphasized first. Given that, it is possible that this phrase describes Mary, not Joseph. For example, R. C. H. Lenski, trying to defend his position that “of the house of David” refers to Mary and not Joseph, states, “It is rather superficial to think that the main person to be introduced is Joseph, and that we must know about his Davidic descent. The main person is this maiden [Mary], and Joseph is introduced only as the man to whom she is betrothed, and it is about her descent that we must know.”[[13]](#footnote-22671) In any case, we know that Jesus was a descendant of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3), and the only way Jesus could be a descendant of David would be if Mary was a descendant of David. If Mary was not a descendant of David, and Jesus’ father, God, was certainly not a descendant of David, then Jesus himself was not a descendant of David. In truth, both Mary and Joseph were descendants in the “house of David.”

Luk 1:28

**“And going into where she was.”** The angel went into the house where Mary was; so when we ask where Mary was when the angel Gabriel spoke with her, it was almost certainly in a house. The Greek text has the verb *eiserchomai* (#1525 εἰσέρχομαι), which means “to move into a space, enter”;[[14]](#footnote-30108) “literally, in a local sense *go* or *come into, enter,*”[[15]](#footnote-30359) It is often translated “enter.”

The Greek is more literally, “and going in to her” or “and entering in to her,” but that translation, though literal and clear to a native Greek reader, is confusing in English. The older English of the KJV is less confusing, “the angel came in unto her.” Part of the problem caused by a literal translation is the fact that often when a man “went into” a woman it meant he had sex with her (cf. Gen. 29:23; Judg. 16:1; 2 Sam. 12:24; etc.), but that is not the meaning here in Luke. The NASB tries to get around the problem by moving the phrase “to her” and saying, “And coming in, he said to her.” While that translation gets around the problem of the angel “coming into her” it is not the accurate translation of the Greek; the pronoun “her” goes with “going in” not “said.” Many other versions get around the problem by just saying something like “he came to her” (ESV), and while that is true, it is not the fullness of the Greek text; the angel entered the place where Mary was. The REV expands the translation for clarity, saying that the angel went into where Mary was.

The logical place where Mary was would have been in the house where she lived. This would have been a perfect spot for a conversation. Towns in the ancient Near East were very compact and built close together for support and safety, and a meeting outside between Mary and an angel would have surely been seen. In the house, the angel and Mary could have had a private conversation. The Bible does not say where the other women of the house were at the time because that is not important to the story. The Bible only gives us the salient points and summary of the conversation. The actual conversation would have been quite a bit longer. What the angel was telling Mary was both important and startling.

**“Greetings.”** The Greek is *chairō* (#5463 χαίρω) and in this context was a standard greeting of the Greeks just as we today say “Hi!” “Hail” persists in some versions, but is outdated and not used as a greeting today. Therefore, “Greetings,” as we have, makes the meaning clear.

**“The Lord is with you.”** This means much more than just that God was with Mary as He is with all of us, helping and blessing us behind the scenes. It means that God will be with Mary, supporting and defending her. An angel had said the same thing to Gideon before he began to stand against idolatry in Israel and to fight the Midianite invaders (Judg. 6:12). No doubt in the months to come Mary would draw strength from this statement because although Yahweh would be supporting Mary, she still had to stand in the tension of the event and walk out her calling before God.

The KJV adds to this verse, “blessed art thou among women.” However, this phrase was not in the original text.[[16]](#footnote-16704)

Luk 1:29

**“But she was greatly perplexed at the saying.”** We can tell from the conversation between Mary and the angel that Mary knew right away she was speaking to an angel. One way we can tell is that Mary listened to the angel and spoke to him in a way that she would not have spoken to a normal man. In fact, if a man entered her home suddenly and without being invited, especially considering the fact that she was betrothed, she would have reacted very strongly and likely would have screamed and/or ran for help. Also, she did not question the angel when he said she would be the mother of the Messiah, but that statement would have been hardly believable coming from a man. Nazareth was a small town, and if there was a prophet in the town, which is unlikely, she would have known the person. But a strange prophet walking into her house when she was alone would have simply been a stranger—and a danger—to her. When the angel told her she was going to be the mother of the Messiah, that was possible to her and she believed the angel. But she did question how that could be since she was not having sex with a man, and the angel answered her question.

**“began to deliberate.”** The Greek is *dialogizomai* (#1260 διαλογίζομαι), a compound word from the Greek preposition *dia*, “through” and the root word *logos*, in this context, “reason.” It means to bring together different reasons, to count the reasons, “to think or reason carefully, esp. about the implications of something, *consider, ponder, reason*”;[[17]](#footnote-19625) “to bring together different reasons, to reckon up the reasons, to reason, revolve in one’s mind, deliberate.”[[18]](#footnote-27459) That Mary “began” to deliberate comes from the context and the verb being imperfect (cf. NET, Rotherham).[[19]](#footnote-24058)

Mary had a quick mind, and as soon as the angel greeted her the way he did, she began to deliberate within herself what he meant. There was a lot to ponder in the greeting “favored one” and that God would be with her. Although some English translations use the word “wonder,” Mary’s thoughts were almost certainly more concrete than just “wondering.” She knew from what she had been taught that an angel appearing to her meant something very significant, and she began to deliberate about it, to “cast in her mind” (KJV) what he could possibly be saying. This also speaks to Mary’s humility. She no doubt knew she was a descendant of David, but was not arrogant or prideful to the end that she thought she was somehow important enough that an angel would bring a message from God to her.

Luk 1:30

**“Do not be afraid.”** The angel’s command indicates that Mary had some fear, which would be normal and understandable. Lenski translates the command, “Stop being afraid,” which is likely what the text is saying.[[20]](#footnote-11836) It is not like Mary was not afraid when she saw the angel but then became afraid when he began to talk; she would have had some fear from when the angel first walked into where she was.

Luk 1:31

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“conceive in your womb.”** The translation is correct, even though the Greek phrase *sullēmpsē en gastri* (συλλήμψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ) can also be understood as an idiom and translated “become pregnant in your womb.” Genuine conception did occur in Mary. We know from many verses of Scripture that Mary had to contribute the egg and God fertilized the egg. There is no indication in Scripture that when Jesus was said to be of the line of David, it just meant he was adopted into that line. To fulfill the prophecies Jesus had to be born as a true descendant of David. Mary was not a surrogate mother, she was a real mother who made a real genetic contribution to Jesus Christ.

The prophecies were that Jesus was going to be a true lineal descendant of David. He was known as the “Son of David,” a title he recognized of himself, because he was a true descendant of David. Also, Psalm 132:11 says, “Yahweh has sworn to David a truth from which he will not turn back: ‘I will set upon your throne *one* from the fruit of your body.’” To fulfill that prophecy Jesus Christ had to be a genuine descendant of David, and he was not David’s descendant if he was God. Jesus Christ is the Son of his Father, God, and his mother, Mary. Romans 1:3 is one of the many New Testament verses that speaks of Jesus being of the line of David. Most commentators ignore this clear truth in the Bible in order to maintain the tradition of the Trinity.

[For more on Jesus not being God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more on the Holy Spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

**“and give birth to a son.”** Mary was likely 14-15 years old when she was impregnated by God. It was very typical for girls to be married at 13-15 years old, with 15 or 16 being on the older side, and 12-13 being considered on the younger side. Although there were cultural reasons that girls were married that young, one reason that certainly factored in was the number of women who died in childbirth or died young of other causes. Historians estimate that at the time of Christ, the average lifespan of a woman was in the early 30s, some scholars would say 32, whereas the average life expectance of a woman today is 82. That meant that it was important for the strength of the family, the clan, and the society, that girls started having babies quite early so they could have lots of them. A girl who was married at 25 might only have a few years to give birth and start a family. Also, without birth control, girls regularly gave birth to large families (Mary herself had at least seven children; cf. Matt. 13:55-56). However, the downside to having lots of babies was the increased risk of dying in childbirth or from complications after childbirth, including infections, because there was no effective way to treat infections in the biblical period. So for the strength of the family and clan, women generally married very early by our modern standards.

Also, the rabbis encouraged people to have their children (especially the girls) marry early, close to puberty, to avoid sexual immorality.[[21]](#footnote-22696)

**“and you will call his name Jesus.”** For more on the name “Jesus,” see commentary on Matthew 1:21.

Luk 1:32

**“He will be great.”** Mary’s baby, the promised Messiah, “will be great.” This is an unqualified statement: Jesus will be great, period. In contrast, John the Baptist was foretold to be “great in the sight of the Lord [God]” (Luke 1:15). The Messiah would be great in every sense of the word, and would eventually rule the earth as king.

[For more on the coming Kingdom of Christ on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“will be called the Son of the Most High.”** In the Bible, the Messiah was called the “Son of God,” although the term “son of God” was used of other created beings of God, including Adam (Luke 3:38). Nevertheless, Jesus was the only begotten son of God.

**“and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.”** The importance of this statement cannot be overemphasized. God promised David that his “throne” (that is, his kingdom and the rulership of it) would last forever (2 Sam. 7:13, 16). For many years, kings sitting on the throne of David came and went, but the “throne” continued. It was promised that it would last forever (Isa. 9:7), and once the Messiah sits on David’s throne it will last forever because the Messiah will live forever as king over the earth (see commentary on 2 Sam. 7:13).

We might well ask, “Why didn’t the angel simply say that Jesus was the Messiah? The answer is that the Hebrew word sometimes translated as “messiah” is actually more accurately translated as “anointed.” The word is *mashiach* (#04899 מָשִׁיחַ), and it is translated as “anointed” many times in the Bible. *Mashiach* is an adjective, so it can be translated as “anointed one,” the “one” being the implied noun that the adjective is modifying. Jesus Christ was the Anointed One, but there were other “anointed ones” as well. For example, King Saul was a “messiah,” an anointed one (1 Sam. 12:3, 5), and so was David (2 Sam. 19:21), and so was Solomon (2 Chron. 6:42), and even the Persian king Cyrus was a “messiah,” an anointed one (Isa. 45:1).

Just because someone was “an anointed one” did not mean they were the “anointed one” that people were looking for who would rule the earth and bring justice to everyone. So the angel could have called Jesus “the anointed one,” but then he would have had to further explain what he meant.

Luk 1:33

**“he will reign over the house of Jacob forever,”** This verse is a good example that just because something in Scripture is said to last forever, doesn’t mean it starts immediately. Likewise, even though we have eternal life (John 3:15-16, 36), it does not mean it comes into effect immediately; because if the Lord tarries we will still die and need to be resurrected into that eternal life: “Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40, NIV).

Saying, “the house of Jacob” points back to Jacob and all 12 of his sons, so the Messiah was not just a king over the Judeans, but over all Israel, and then by extension over the whole world.

Luk 1:34

**“How will this be.”** Mary’s question is legitimate. In fact, it seems as if the angel intentionally did not include the part about the virgin birth in what he first told Mary about giving birth to the Messiah so that his message could be in two parts. For Mary to take in that she would be the mother of the Messiah would have been plenty to ponder, but then to come to realize that she would be pregnant as a virgin…how would she explain that to anyone?

It shows the quick mind of Mary, and her self-confidence, that she would ask the angel how she would get pregnant. Many people would freeze up in the presence of an angel and not be able to think of anything to say, but Mary grasped the situation and what the angel was telling her, and asked how she could give birth without being married.

**“I do not know a man.”** Mary believed from the Old Testament text that the Messiah would be a man who was born of a woman, and now the angel said that woman would be her. Since the virgin birth was not set forth clearly in the Old Testament (see commentary on Isa. 7:14), Mary assumed that she would have to be married and having sex with a man in order to conceive the Messiah, thus her statement, “I do not know [sexually] a man.” As it turned out, the angel revealed that God would contribute the sperm (via creation) that impregnated Mary. Although many Christians believe that Jesus Christ was “incarnated” into the flesh, in other words, placed in Mary as a complete baby at some form of development, the Bible never says that and that is not what happened. The Bible makes the case that Mary was the true mother of Jesus Christ, not just a surrogate mother for God. Jesus could not have been a true descendant of David if there were no actual genetic link to the line of David. Furthermore, what would be the point of the genealogy in Matthew? If God simply had Mary “carry” Jesus, then his only genealogy is 100% from God, not at all from David. In fact, that Jesus Christ is an actual descendant of David is one of the pieces of evidence that he is not God. The link between Mary and Jesus in Matthew 1:16 would not be a genetic link at all. God is not a descendant of David, and a descendant of David cannot be God.

[For more on why Mary was not expecting a virgin birth, see commentaries on Matt. 1:23 and Isa. 7:14. For more on the word “know” being an idiom for sexual intercourse, see commentary on Matt. 1:25. For more on Jesus Christ being the Son of God and not “God the Son,” see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

Luk 1:35

**“The Holy Spirit.”** “The Holy Spirit” (capital “H,” capital “S”) is a name used for God when His power is in operation. In a very Hebraic way, this verse equates the Holy Spirit with “the power of the Most High.” The angel was speaking to Mary, a young Hebrew woman, in terms she could understand. It was common in the Hebrew language to say something and then repeat it in different words so the meaning would be clear. This occurs throughout the Hebrew Old Testament, and can especially be seen in books such as Proverbs in which something is stated and then restated using different words.

Since Mary told the angel she was not having sexual relations with a man, and knew she would then have to be impregnated by God, she would naturally understand “the Holy Spirit” to be the name of God which emphasized His invisible power in operation. God has many names in the Bible, and “the Holy Spirit” is one of them. It is easy to tell that in this case “the Holy Spirit” is a name of God because Jesus is called “the Son of God” and “the Son of the Father” (2 John 1:3), but he is never called “the Son of the Holy Spirit.” Mary understood that “the Holy Spirit” was another name for God, and thus she told her cousin Elizabeth that she rejoiced in God, and that “the Mighty One” (another name for God) had done great things for her (Luke 1:47-49).

[For more information on “the Holy Spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

**“the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for that reason the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”** It is very important to read this phrase and see it for what it is—a huge change in what people would eventually think about the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time of Christ no one was expecting a virgin birth, not even Mary herself (cf. Luke 1:34). The reason was simple, the Old Testament did not clearly predict one. The word that many English versions translate as “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 is a word that more commonly means “young woman,” and the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 says, “the young woman is pregnant” (see commentary on Isa. 7:14 and Matt. 1:23. For the translation “young woman,” cf. BBE, CJB, JPS, NAB, NET, NJB, NRSV, RSV, TNK, and Moffatt Bible). Everyone was expecting a man from the line of David to marry and have a son and at some time that son would turn out to be the promised Messiah.

Everyone knew that the Old Testament referred to the Messiah as the son of God (cf. Ps. 2:7), but in that culture, a person did not have to be a biological son to be called a “son.” The word “son” was used of someone in a special relationship with another person, or someone who was beloved, or a disciple of someone else. Many Scriptures testify to this (cf. Josh. 7:19; 1 Sam. 3:16; 4:16; 24:16; 26:17; 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13; 22:10; Isa. 43:6). Given the special relationship between the Messiah and God, it was not at all unusual that the Messiah would be called a “son” of God. But now there was new light! The angel told Mary that God really would be the father of her child. In other words, the angel told Mary that God would impregnate her, and so the child she would bear would literally be the “only begotten” Son of God. What the angel said has come to pass. He told Mary that Jesus would be called the Son of God because Mary had been impregnated by God Himself, and that has now come to pass. Most people think of Jesus Christ as the Son of God because he was divinely conceived.

Luk 1:36

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 1:37

**“For nothing will be impossible with God.”** Zechariah and Elizabeth are being paralleled with Abraham and Sarah. Here we have a direct allusion to Genesis 18:14, “Is anything impossible for the LORD? At the appointed time I will come back to you, and in about a year she [Sarah] will have a son” (HCSB). Earlier in the chapter, we saw how Zechariah employed the same question as Abraham (see commentary on Luke 1:18, “sign”), and now this phrase originally regarding Sarah is applied to Elizabeth, who is barren and past fertile years. Like Sarah, she too will miraculously have a child. In Genesis, the phrase was put as a question (expecting a negative answer), “Is anything impossible with the LORD?” (μὴ ἀδυνατεῖ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ῥῆμα). Here in Luke, it is as though the angel replies, answering in the future tense, “Nothing will be impossible with God” (οὐκ ἀδυνατήσει παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πᾶν ῥῆμα). This allusion would have been a great faith booster for Mary, who was about to have a child without sexual intercourse with a man.

Only the ASV prefers the translation, “For no word from God shall be void of power.” This is grammatically possible, and perhaps implied as a double meaning. Rather than simply “word,” the Greek word *rhēma* (#4487 ῥῆμα) also means “thing, object, matter, event.”[[22]](#footnote-13930) Luke uses *rhēma* to mean “thing” elsewhere (cf. Luke 1:65; 2:15; 2:19; 2:51; Acts 5:32; 10:37).

Luk 1:38

**“Behold”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20. Although most usually translated “Look!” in the REV, in this context that may make it seem like Mary was rude to the angel, which was certainly not the case.

**“*I am* the servant of the Lord.”** The Greek word “servant” can also be translated “slave,” and in Mary’s mind that is most likely what she was saying. She acknowledged that she was the slave of God, and as His creation and willing servant, she was His to do with as He liked. This is true humble submission to the will of God.

Luk 1:39

**“Mary got up and went.”** Mary would not have gone alone, but the Bible never says who escorted her. Nevertheless, a young teenage girl would never go alone on a multi-day journey from Galilee to Judea, and she would not have traveled with only other women. She would have had at least one male escort. This was normal in the biblical world so the Bible does not mention it, nor does the Bible say what the escort did after they arrived at Zechariah’s house; we may be curious about it, but it is not important to the record so it is not mentioned.

**“with haste.”** The Greek can also mean “went eagerly,” with earnestness and zeal. Mary did not just hurry to Elizabeth’s house, she was eager and excited. She knew how old Elizabeth was and would have known that God had not only done a miracle in her, but in Elizabeth too.

**“to a city of Judah.”** It is interesting that the Bible does not name the city of Judah, because it certainly could have. Perhaps this is to not shift the focus from Bethlehem where Jesus was born to the city where John was born. After all, the material about John is background and context for the birth of the Messiah. It is very likely, however, that the city was one of the nine cities in the tribal area of Judah assigned as cities of priests by Joshua: Hebron, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Holon, Debir, Ain, Juttah, and Beth-shemesh (Josh. 21:13-16). However, there is a possibility, given the destructions and deportations that occurred in the Old Testament, such as the Babylonian Captivity, that some priests from Judah settled in another town in Judah from the ones Joshua assigned. In the final analysis, we do not know what city Zechariah lived in and John was born in. However, Christian tradition dating from at least the fourth century AD places the birth of John in the ancient village of Beth-hakerem (“House of the Vineyard) now called Ein Karem (“Spring of the Vineyard), however, that is only tradition.

It is noteworthy that Mary knew the town of her relatives Zechariah and Elizabeth. Family ties were very strong in the biblical world.

The Greek word translated *Judah* comes from *Iouda* (#2448 Ἰουδά). A number of versions have “Judah” (NASB, ESV, HCSB, ASV, NET, NAB), and a few versions say “Judea” (NIV, YLT). But *Judea* is incorrect from the Greek, as Lenski writes, “When Luke refers to the province he writes Ἱουδαία [not Ἰουδα] (10 times in the Gospel, 12 times in the Acts).”[[23]](#footnote-23624) “Judea” is the territory ruled over by Herod, while “Judah” refers to the ancient area of the tribe of Judah. Lenski also makes the point there may have been a city we know nothing about called “Judea,” which could be the case but is less likely.

Luk 1:41

**“the baby leaped in her womb.”** At this time, John was not close to full term for a baby. It seems that it would have likely been late in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy that Mary would have arrived at her house. A full term for a baby is now considered to be 280 days. A lunar month—the biblical month—is generally 29 or 30 days, depending on the moon. If Elizabeth was in her sixth month when the angel met with Mary, and Mary left quickly to be with Elizabeth, then Mary might have gotten to Elizabeth’s home around the end of Elizabeth’s sixth month (180 days pregnant). So, although this is approximate, Elizabeth could have had around 100 more days after Mary arrived before John was born. Since Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months, about 90 days give or take a little (Luke 1:56), then Mary likely left Elizabeth about two weeks before Elizabeth gave birth.

**“filled with holy spirit.”** Here in Luke 1:41, there is no definite article, so the translation “holy spirit” works in this context. This holy spirit is the gift of God. In this context, “filled with holy spirit” refers to receiving revelation from God, and this becomes clear when we read the complete sentence: “And Elizabeth was filled with holy spirit and cried out with a loud voice and said….” This same meaning occurs in Luke 1:67; Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9.

[For more information on the holy spirit and uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” and also see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 1:43

**“And how is this *happening* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”** This statement may seem somewhat strange to Western ears, but it makes perfect sense in the biblical culture. The culture of the ancient world was very class-conscious, with the king at the top, his lords and officials next, wealthy influential people next, and so forth, down to the poor and disadvantaged people who were considered the least in the culture. The most powerful man in the kingdom was the king, but the most powerful woman in the kingdom was the mother of the king, not the queen. Many kings had more than one wife, and furthermore, since any slave was the sexual property of the master, it was common for a king to have sex with his slaves as well as his wife or wives. So, while a king would typically have many wives and/or sexual partners, he only had one mother who therefore had special access to him and was the most powerful woman in the empire. In Isaiah 47:5, Babylon is referred to as the “queen mother” because it was the most powerful kingdom in the biblical world at that time. Elizabeth would have believed from her culture that when the Messiah ruled the earth as king, his mother would be the most powerful woman in the world. So when she realized that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah she was understandably awed that this soon-to-be incredibly powerful woman would come to visit her, and especially so since she had been—and still was—considered cursed by God by most people due to her being barren.

We today think of Zechariah and Elizabeth as being very important people because of the part they played in biblical history, but they were not considered important while they were alive. Zechariah would have been thought of as just one of the thousands of priests and Levites, and Elizabeth would have likely even been shunned by the women of her culture. We can be quite sure that the royal family of King Herod never even spoke to Zechariah or Elizabeth, yet now the mother of the future world ruler was there under their roof. The blessings of God, unseen by the unbelieving world, pour down upon the faithful.

Of course, Elizabeth was not barren when Mary visited. When Mary visited, Mary knew both that Elizabeth was pregnant with a baby boy and that she herself was pregnant with the Messiah. But in contrast, Elizabeth would probably not have known that Mary knew she was pregnant because Elizabeth had been in hiding (Luke 1:24), and Mary learned about Elizabeth’s pregnancy from an angel (Luke 1:36). Furthermore, Elizabeth would not have known that Mary herself was pregnant with the Messiah. What Elizabeth said in Luke 1:42-45 was a prophecy and a direct result of her being filled with holy spirit (Luke 1:41), not because she had any natural knowledge that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah.

Elizabeth certainly knew that she would give birth to the forerunner of the Messiah, but not much was known from the Old Testament prophecies about him or his work; he was not specifically prophesied to have any special rank in the kingdom of the Messiah. He would obviously have some importance in the preparation for the coming of the Messiah, but nothing is said about what he would do after that. Also, due to their old age and what the Bible says about John living in the wilderness before he started his ministry, it seems quite certain that both Zechariah and Elizabeth would have died quite a while before John started his ministry, likely when John was in his late teens or early 20s. So Zechariah and Elizabeth never got to see the manner in which John fulfilled his ministry.

Luk 1:44

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 1:45

**“from the Lord.”** The phrase “from the Lord” could also be translated “by the Lord.” In either case, the preposition *para* (#3844 παρά) is to be understood in the sense of expressing the source. These were words that originated in and were spoken *from* the Lord.

Luk 1:46

**“My soul magnifies the Lord.”** Similar to Psalm 34:2a. The “soul” here refers to Mary herself including her emotions, feelings, attitudes, and even thoughts. Mary is magnifying the Lord with all that is within her.

[See Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

Luk 1:47

**“my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”** This is a powerful verse because it shows Mary’s deep trust in God. On the surface she seemed to have many problems at this time, chief among them being that she was pregnant before having sex with her husband in a culture that was scandalized by that. Even Joseph had thought about divorcing her. Only a few people knew of her divine conception, and since no one was expecting a virgin birth she could not have convinced them of it anyway. In spite of her difficult circumstances, she rejoiced in God and thus has set a wonderful example for us and how we should rejoice even in our difficult circumstances.

There are Trinitarians who believe that because this verse calls God “Savior,” and Jesus is also called “Savior,” Jesus must be God in the flesh. However, that belief is not correct. There are many references to God the Father being called “Savior.” That makes perfect sense because He is the *author* of the plan of salvation and is also very active in our salvation. For example, God, the Father, is called “Savior” in Isaiah 43:11; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 3:4; Jude 25. In contrast, Jesus Christ is called “Savior” because he is the *agent* who carried out God’s plan, and without whom it could not have come to pass.

The term “savior” is used of many people in the Bible. This is hard to see in the English versions because when the word “savior” is used of people, the translators almost always translated it as “deliverer.” This in and of itself shows that modern translators have a Trinitarian bias. The only reason to translate a word as “Savior” when it applies to God or Christ, but as “deliverer” when it applies to men, is to make the term seem unique to God and Jesus when in fact it is not. This is a good example of how the actual meaning of Scripture can be obscured if the translators are not careful when they translate the text.

God’s gracious provision of “saviors” who help God’s people is not recognized when the same word is translated “Savior” for God and Christ but “deliverer” for others. Also lost is the testimony in Scripture that God works through people to bring His power to bear. Of course, the fact that there are other “saviors” does not take away from Jesus Christ, who is the only one who could and did save us from our sins and eternal death.

If all the great men and women who were “saviors” were openly portrayed as such in the English versions, the grace and mercy God demonstrates in saving His people by “saviors” He has raised up would be openly displayed. Furthermore, we believe no reader would confuse the true God with the people He was working through. A good example that shows God raising up “saviors” to rescue Israel throughout history occurs in Nehemiah in a prayer of confession and thanksgiving to God. The Israelites prayed, “But when they [Israel] were oppressed they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers [saviors], who rescued them from the hand of their enemies” (Neh. 9:27 NIV84). Some other examples of men designated as “savior” are in 2 Kings 13:5; Isaiah 19:20 and Obadiah 21. It is incorrect to say that because Christ and God are both called “Savior,” they are one and the same, just as it would be incorrect to say that the “saviors” God raised up throughout history were also God in the flesh or even the same individual as Jesus Christ.

[For more information on Jesus being the fully human Son of God and not being “God the Son,” see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more on “the Holy Spirit” being one of the designations for God the Father and “the holy spirit” being the gift of God’s nature, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” For more specific information about the designation “savior,” see Andrews Norton, *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians*, pp. 304, 305. Also, Don Snedeker, *Our Heavenly Father Has No Equals*, pp. 378-380.]

Luk 1:48

**“because he has looked upon.”** In this sentence, “looked upon” is used in an idiomatic or “pregnant” sense, because it means much more than just “look at,” it means to see and do something about it.

The words for “look at” or “see” (a common Hebrew word for “see” is *ra’ah* (#07200 רָאָה)) are sometimes used in an idiomatic or “pregnant” sense that means “to look with favor upon,” “to accept,” “to notice and do something about.” Examples of this idiom occur in both the Old and New Testaments, and include: Genesis 29:32, Exodus 4:31; 1 Samuel 1:11; 9:16; 2 Samuel 16:12; Job 40:12; Psalm 9:13; 10:11; 31:7; Habakkuk 1:13; and Luke 1:48. In contrast, to “not see” something was to ignore it, to not pay attention to it, to not care about it or look at it with any favor. Thus, when Joseph ran the prison in Egypt, the jailer did “not see” anything under Joseph’s authority; he paid no attention to it (Gen. 39:23).

Sometimes the idiom of “see” goes a step beyond just “look upon with favor” or “accept,” and means, “to choose for oneself,” “to provide for oneself,” or “to choose” (cf. Gen. 22:8 [God will ‘see’ a lamb for Himself]; Gen. 41:33; Deut. 33:21; 1 Sam. 16:1; 2 Kings 10:3; Esther 2:9 [the girls were “chosen” or “selected” to be with Esther]).

The word “see” is also used the way we use it in English as “to visit” someone, to “go see them” (cf. 2 Sam. 13:5; 2 Kings 8:29; 9:16; Ps. 41:6; 2 Chron. 22:6).

It is also used as “to know” or “to understand,” and can be just a mental knowing or a knowing through experience. If the emphasis is on experience, it might even be translated “experience.” This is similar to the way we use it in English when we say, “I see what you mean,” or “I am going to see for myself,” which often means experience it myself (cf. Ps. 16:10; 27:13; 34:13; 60:5; 71:20; 89:48 (Heb. 11:5); Ps. 90:15; Jer. 5:12; 20:12; Lam. 3:1).

[For more information on the idiomatic uses of “see,” see commentary on John 1:18 and Rom. 8:29, “foreknew.”]

**“the low status of his servant.”** God does look upon the lowly and humble (Ps. 138:6). However, in this context, Mary is not using “low” (or “humble” in some translations) to reflect her state of mind. She was using it to comment upon her position in society, her status in the society in which she lived. We would normally think that the only begotten Son of God would be born to a wealthy and powerful family, but that is clearly not what happened. Mary and Joseph were poor, and Joseph was an ordinary worker. But God looks on the heart, and the hearts of Joseph and Mary were perfect for God to work with as the parents of His only begotten Son.

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 1:49

**“because the Mighty One has done great things for me…”** Almost 1,000 years earlier, King David had noted the same thing, that God had done great things (Ps. 71:19), and here Mary rejoices that God has done great things for her (Luke 1:49).

**“holy is his name.”** The Psalmist says, “his name is holy and awesome!” (Ps. 111:9).

Luk 1:50

**“his mercy is on those who fear him.”** God refers to his love and mercy extending for generations in Exodus 20:6 and Psalm 103:17.

Luk 1:52

**“mighty.”** The word translated “mighty” here in Luke 1:52 is *dunastēs* (#1413 δυνάστης). It denotes “rulers, officials, or potentates” (cf. Acts 8:27; 1 Tim. 6:15).

Luk 1:53

**“the hungry.”** Similar to Psalm 107:9.

Luk 1:54

**“He helped his servant Israel.”** “The middle voice of *antilambano* means to take hold of something or somebody and in that way to help, and, like the verbs of touch, it is constructed in the genitive.”[[24]](#footnote-25403) Here in Luke 1:54, “Israel” is used as a collective singular, speaking of all the people of Israel as if they were one person.

**“remembering *his* mercy.”** Figure of speech, metonymy.[[25]](#footnote-16424) “Mercy” is put for the act of mercy, being merciful. God “took hold of Israel his servant to help them,” in order to remember to be merciful to Abraham and his seed. In other words, God helped Israel in order to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham and his seed, a promise that they did not deserve, which is the point of saying that God remembered “mercy.”

[See Word Study: “Metonymy.”]

Luk 1:58

**“neighbors and relatives.”** The neighbors are mentioned first because they lived close by and got the news first. The relatives of Zechariah and Elizabeth lived in various places, for example, Mary lived in Nazareth.

Luk 1:59

**“on the eighth day that they came to circumcise the child.”** Male babies were circumcised the eighth day (Gen. 17:12) and we now know there are good medical reasons for that. Also, in the Jewish culture, that was when a male baby was officially named.

Luk 1:60

**“No!”** The Greek is very assertive. It is a noteworthy human interest sidelight that women in labor and women who have recently given birth tend to be very assertive and not reserved or reticent to speak out, even if they usually are. We see that here with Elizabeth as she speaks assertively to a group of “notable men” from the community who had come to the circumcision.

**“He will be called John.”** The name he was to be called as per the angel’s command (Luke 1:13). John means, “Yahweh is gracious” or “Yahweh has shown favor.” Although the Bible does not say how Elizabeth knew the baby was supposed to be named “John,” it is completely logical that Zechariah communicated that to Elizabeth during her pregnancy.

Luk 1:61

**“None of your relatives are called by that name.”** It was customary to name a child after someone in the child’s ancestry, to honor the family. But in this case, God did not want John to be connected to the family. He was separate from the family and did not carry on with the priestly traditions of the family; he did not join the fraternity of priests in Jerusalem or serve in the course of Abijah or at the annual feasts. His elderly parents apparently died when he was a young man and as he grew he lived in the wilderness (Luke 1:80).

“John” was a new name to this family of priests, and indeed, John would help something brand new get started. Life on earth would not be the same when the Messiah came, and John would prepare the people for his coming.

Luk 1:62

**“And they nodded to his father.”** The Greek word translated “nodded” is *enneuō* (#1770 ἐννεύω), and it primarily means to nod to, to signal by a nod of the head, or to signal by a movement of the body like a hand motion. In this context, it would refer to a more subtle nod of the head. Zechariah was unable to speak but he was not deaf. He had heard the conversation between his wife and the relatives and knew the sides of the discussion. When Elizabeth stood firm that the baby was to be called John, a person or persons in the room looked at Zechariah and nodded at him in a way that asked, “What do you say?” At that point Zechariah made it known he wanted a writing tablet and wrote that the baby was to be named John, and immediately upon writing that, he could speak again and began to praise God.

Although the Greek word *enneuō* can be used for a hand motion, in that tense and delicate moment it would have been overbearing for someone in the room to point to Zechariah to get his opinion; that would have been an insult to Elizabeth. A simple glance and nod of the head were all that was needed.

Luk 1:63

**“And he asked.”** He asked by making signs like he was writing.

**“a writing tablet.”** At this time the most common writing tablet was a flat piece of wood covered with wax that was written in with a stylus of some sort. Zechariah no doubt had been using one for months, so there would have been one close by. When the tablet was full, the wax was usually just put in the sun where it softened and the writing went away. Then the wax was allowed to harden again and could be reused for writing.

**“His name is John.”** The name he was to be called as per the angel’s command (Luke 1:13).

Luk 1:64

**“his mouth was opened and his tongue.”** The Greek literally reads, “his mouth was opened and his tongue,” but the verb “opened” only fits with “mouth,” making this sentence the figure of speech zeugma, where one verb controls two nouns, one of which fits and one of which does not. In the figure zeugma, the noun that fits gets more emphasis than the noun that does not fit, although the figure itself catches the reader’s attention and brings emphasis to the text. Thus, God emphasized what happened to Zechariah by the zeugma—Zechariah could talk again![[26]](#footnote-30447)

Luk 1:65

**“And fear came on all who lived around them.”** In this context, the “fear” was more awe than actual fear. However, some people who had been living disobedient lifestyles may have gotten a jolt of godly fear of God’s judgment when they saw the power of God in action in the life of Zechariah.

**“and all these things were talked about.”** “All these things” would have included Zechariah’s being able to talk after nine months of silence, Elizabeth giving birth in her old age, and of course, Zechariah’s prophecy that included that the Messiah was here and John would be a prophet who would go before the Messiah to prepare the way for him (Luke 1:68-79).

**“throughout all the hill country of Judea.”** This would include Bethlehem, which was in the heart of the hill country of Judea. The seemingly miraculous birth of John likely helped prepare the hearts of the people in and around Bethlehem when they heard the news spread by the shepherds that angels had appeared to them and the child born in Bethlehem was the Messiah.

**“all the hill country of Judea”** is quite a bit of territory and shows that when God moves in power, it can affect people far away.

Luk 1:66

**“For indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.”** Luke 1:66 is a summary statement that covers a period of time. There were amazing signs around the birth of John, but as the child grew, there were more things that showed the hand of God was upon him.

Luk 1:67

**“filled with holy spirit.”** The Greek text has no article “the.” This holy spirit was the gift of God that He gave to some believers before Pentecost.

[For more information on the holy spirit and uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” and also see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 1:68

**“visited.”***Episkeptomai* (#1980 ἐπισκέπτομαι) has the sense of “looking favorably upon with an intent to help.” Cf. NET translation, “he has come to help.” The rest of the verse explains the help provided by the Lord, He has “brought about redemption for his people.”

**“brought about redemption.”** Or “brought about a ransoming.” Jesus Christ would ransom the people from death by paying the ransom price by his own death. This utterance is a prophetic aorist, that is, speaking about a future event in the past tense. So although the verbs are technically aorist, the sentence could idiomatically be translated as, “because he will visit us and will bring about redemption for his people.”

Luk 1:69

**“a horn of salvation.”** The “horn” alluded to the power of a horned animal like a bull or ram, and thus a horn of salvation was a strong one who could save. For example, God is referred to as a horn of salvation in 2 Samuel 22:3 and Psalm 18:2. This particular “horn of salvation” comes out of the house of David, that is, is a descendant of David. This “horn of salvation” is the Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus was not born yet, but Mary would almost certainly have been in her fourth month of pregnancy. She conceived, then went to be with Elizabeth for about three months, then there would have been another short period of time before John was born. Zechariah speaks prophetically as if the Messiah was present, and in a very real sense, he was.

**“in the house of his servant David.”** In this context, “house” refers to dynasty, lineage, as it did in 2 Samuel 7:16 when Nathan the prophet spoke to David and said, “Your house and your kingdom will be made sure forever before me.”

Luk 1:70

**“just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets.”** Zechariah understood actual prophecy, that it was God who was giving the words to speak to the prophets and thus God who spoke through the prophets. When a person prophesies through the power and inspiration of God, the prophet still has to cooperate with God. God does not possess and use the prophet as a musician uses an inanimate musical instrument. The prophet must cooperate with God and use his own mouth and voice as God supplies the words to the prophet’s mind.

**“from ancient times.”** For this translation compare NJB and HCSB. The literal reading is “from of ages.” Hence, “from of old” would be a good alternative translation. In this case, “from ancient times” does not go back any further than David, because the prophets foretold that the Messiah would be from the house of David only during and after David’s lifetime (cf. Isa. 11:1).

Luk 1:72

**“our fathers.”** These are the “fathers” of Israel, namely, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—who worked so hard but did not see the promises fulfilled. It is not speaking of the immediate biological fathers, as the next verse makes clear by referring to “Abraham.”

Luk 1:75

**“in his presence.”** Biblical custom. See commentary on Luke 1:15, “in the sight of the Lord.”

Luk 1:76

**“And you, child.”** In the Greek text, Luke 1:76-79 are one sentence; one extended prophecy. Here, Zechariah stops speaking of the Messiah and starts speaking about his son, John.

**“prepare the way for him.”** There was to be someone who would prepare the way before the Lord (cf. Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3. See Matt. 3:3). We now know that person was John the Baptist.

The Greek word that is translated “way” is *hodos* (#3598 ὁδός) in the plural, and the Greek is *hetoimazō hodous autou* (ἑτοιμάζω ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ), which would be more literally translated as, “prepare his roads.” *Hodos* refers to a road, a path, or a way something is done. In this context, the phrase “prepare his roads,” refers to a well-known biblical custom. Inside the city of Rome, or other large cities, and on some major thoroughfares such as the “Appian Way” (Appian Road), the road was paved and maintained by slaves, road crews, and the army. However, for most of the Roman Empire, and certainly for most of the ancient Middle East, roads were just dirt roads, and frankly, most often, not even what we would classify as a “dirt road” today—they were actually just dirt paths. These dirt roads and paths did not specifically belong to anyone unless they were main roads and government maintained or unless they belonged to a landowner if the path went through his specific piece of property. No one really was considered to “own” the roads through wilderness and woods except the kingdom in general, and thus no one kept them repaired or travelable. Over time they became filled with ruts and holes (that were often just mud holes), washed out, overgrown by brush, and overhung by any nearby trees.

Furthermore, since no one really owned the path, nearby farmers would throw stones from their fields onto them, so a road with lots of stones was not uncommon. After a while, the “roads” of the Middle East became very difficult to travel. When royalty or a powerful dignitary was going to travel to a certain place, the call would go out to “prepare the roads.” The ruler would usually send someone out to make sure that work was being done. This is the custom that is referred to in this verse. John the Baptist was sent to “prepare the roads” that Jesus Christ would travel on spiritually. He preached the Good News, confronted sinners, offered baptism for repentance, and raised everyone’s expectation for the Messiah, the laces of whose sandals he was unworthy to unloose.

Luk 1:77

**“by the forgiveness….”** John performed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4). The versions differ, some having “by” (KJV, NASB, RSV, Rotherham, etc.) some “through,” some “in,” and Lenski has “in connection with.” The point is that, in having their sins forgiven, people really have a sense of their salvation, especially before the Church Age. Christ knew this, and often told people their sins were forgiven.

Luk 1:78

**“compassionate mercy.”** The Greek text more literally reads “bowels of compassion,” which makes good sense medically, but not to the average reader today. The bowels are a center of a person’s emotional life, and that is reflected in the biblical text. Colossians 3:12 is directing the Christian to have compassion for people, which it does by using the word “bowels,” a word omitted in most English translations. The Greek text simply has “bowels,” and reads, “put on bowels,” but it is obvious that translation would not communicate to a modern reader and only be confusing. The word “bowels” refers to a feeling, and in this context, the feeling being communicated by “bowels” is compassion or mercy.

[For more on “bowels” see commentary on Phil. 1:8.]

**“the Rising Sun from on high.”** The “rising sun” or “the Rising Sun from on high” is a title of the Lord Jesus Christ. It comes from the word *anatolē* (#395 ἀνατολή), which is used to describe the dawn, “a change in darkness to light.”[[27]](#footnote-19621) This leads naturally into verse 79, where Christ is said to “shine on those who sit in darkness.” The verb form of *anatolē* occurs in the LXX translation of Malachi 4:2, describing the rise of the “Sun of Righteousness,” a similar title for the Messiah. Here, the Rising Sun is said to visit us “from on high,” the same Greek phrase found in 2 Samuel 22:17; Psalm 18:16; 102:19; 144:7; and Luke 24:49. These passages in 2 Samuel and Psalms show that *rescue from one’s enemies* is said to come “from on high”—this theme comes up in Zechariah’s prophecy, especially Luke 1:71 and 1:74.

**“visit.”** See commentary on Luke 1:68, “visited.”

Luk 1:79

**“to shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.”** These words of Zechariah remind us of the prophecy of the Messiah in Isaiah 9:2 and the light he would shine on the people: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. Those living in the land of the shadow of death, on them the light has shined.”

**“into.”** Rather than solely expressing motion “into,” the preposition *eis* (#1519 εἰς) can also have the sense of “in.” Here it includes both the meanings of guiding us “into” the way of peace and also the notion of guiding along, “in,” the road while actually on the path. Christ leads us both ‘into’ and ‘in’ the road of peace.

**Luke Chapter 2**

Luk 2:1

**“Now it came to pass.”** The record of the events surrounding the birth of Christ occurs in Matthew and Luke, and the two Gospels interweave when it comes to the chronology of the events. To read about the birth of Christ in chronological order, it is: Luke 1:5-80; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-38; Matt. 2:1-22. Then Matt. 2:23 and Luke 2:39-40 are both summary statements about Jesus growing up in Nazareth.

**“decree.”** The Greek is *dogma* (#1378 δόγμα), and here it means an imperial declaration which had the force of a law and carried civil penalties for disobedience. For more on *dogma*, see commentary on Acts 16:4.

That Caesar’s decree was issued is a fact of history, but in this section of Luke it reminds us of the worldly and civil powers of this age that have been, and with the birth of Christ will be in a new and more sharply focused way, in conflict with the ways of God.

**“Caesar Augustus.”** The introduction of Caesar Augustus here is more than a historical note to set the basic time period and explain why Joseph went to Bethlehem when he did. Luke 2:1-14 has a lot of information and vocabulary that directly contrasts Augustus to Jesus Christ. The noted New Testament scholar N.T. Wright says, “…the point Luke is making is clear. The birth of this little boy [Jesus] is the beginning of a confrontation between the kingdom of God—in all its apparent weakness, insignificance, and vulnerability—and the kingdoms of the world.”[[28]](#footnote-21941)

Octavius, better known as Caesar Augustus (September 23, 63 BC-August 19, AD 14 ), reigned from 27 BC until his death in AD 14. When Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC, his adopted son Octavius was named as heir. It took many years and battles for Octavius to be recognized as sole emperor, although he himself rejected the normal titles given to rulers and called himself *Princep Civitatis* (roughly, “First Citizen of the State”). His reign ended the Roman Republic and was the first stage of the Roman Empire. In 27 BC the Roman Senate gave Octavius the title “Augustus,” from the Latin word *augere* (“to increase”) and the title is roughly equivalent to “Great,” “Majestic,” “Illustrious,” “Venerable.”

Augustus was a very effective leader. He greatly enlarged the empire; set up client states on the borders of Rome to protect the empire from external invasion; reformed taxation; built a network of roads that connected the empire and better allowed for trade, travel, and the swift movement of the army; established the official bodyguard army known as the Praetorian Guard, created official police and firefighters for the city of Rome, and built and/or refurbished many buildings in Rome, including temples, baths, theaters, and much more. Knowingly or unknowingly, we still recognize Caesar Augustus every year, because in 8 BC the month of August was named after him.

It is in the general context of what Caesar Augustus accomplished that we see in Mark 1:1 and Luke 2:1-14 the conflict between the world and the Word; between the “son of god” (Augustus) and the Son of God (Jesus Christ); and between the worship of “the gods” (the Emperor Cult) and the worship of “God” (the Father of Jesus Christ).

For one thing, Augustus declared that his adopted father, Julius Caesar, had been deified at death and thus was a god, and so Augustus became known as a “son of god.” Also, the reign of Augustus began what historians refer to as the *Pax Romana* (“Peace of Rome”), a period of over 200 years in which there were no large-scale wars within the borders of the Roman Empire (although there were constant border wars as the Romans continued to expand their territory). Thus, Augustus was hailed as one who brought an end to war and thus ushered in peace on earth. Furthermore, due to what Augustus had accomplished, he was referred to as “savior” by the people, and he was also called by the common Roman title, “lord.” Also, the birth of Augustus was said to be the beginning of the “good news” to the people of the world because of what he accomplished. The Priene Calendar Inscription says, “the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings [*euangelion*; “good news”] for the world that came by reason of him” (translation from Wikipedia).[[29]](#footnote-27862) The text of the Priene Calendar Inscription can be found in many sources.

But Luke 2:1-14 shows us that it was angels who brought the true *euangelion*, “Good News” to earth (Luke 2:10), and it was not about the birth of Augustus, it was about the birth of Jesus Christ who was the only begotten Son of God (Luke 2:11; Mark 1:1). Furthermore, Jesus, not Augustus, is the real “Savior” and “Lord” (Luke 2:11), and it is only Jesus Christ who can and will bring genuine peace on earth (Luke 2:14).

The contrast that is set forth between Caesar Augustus and Jesus Christ in Mark and Luke is not nearly as clear to us today as it was at the time of Christ. In Augustus’ day, people were actively proclaiming him “lord” and “savior,” building temples to him and saying he brought peace to earth. We do not experience that today, but it was part of daily life in the time of Christ, and thus the wording of Mark and Luke forced people back then to make a choice—and still today, 2,000 years later, Mark and Luke still call out to people to make a choice. Who is the “Lord”? Who is the “Savior”? Who brings peace and prosperity to earth? And who has the power to give everlasting life? Is it the world? The world wields civil power and it offers peace and prosperity and fun and excitement. It promises much but like its god, the Devil (2 Cor. 4:4), it delivers little or nothing and its end is annihilation.

Jesus Christ is the true Lord and Savior. He lived a humble life of service and self-sacrifice, and he offers that to his followers (Matt. 16:24-25). But he also offers inner peace, a purpose-filled life, and joy. Most of all, he offers everlasting life in a wonderful new body, with wonderful people and him and God all together in a wonderful place. That is the real “Good News.”

**“all the inhabited world.”** In the time of the first century, the Roman Empire was the entire known “world.”

Luk 2:3

**“his own city.”** This is not the city in which the person lived, but the city in which they, or their ancestors, were born.

Luk 2:4

**“Joseph also went up.”** There is no indication that the Roman government demanded people leave their homes immediately after the decree was made and begin the journey to their ancestral homes. People were apparently given many months in which to arrange their lives so they could go to their ancestral homes to register for taxation. But Joseph apparently took the need to travel to Bethlehem to be registered as an opportunity to escape the social pressure and judgment that certainly must have existed in Nazareth, so he took Mary with him and stayed in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus Christ.

**“Bethlehem.”** It is quite common in Christian teaching today to hear that Jesus was born in a small insignificant town in Israel, a “nowhere town” in “nowhere Israel.” That is simply not true. Although biblical Bethlehem was a small town, it was one of the most famous towns in Israel. Besides, it was not at all unusual for a town like Bethlehem, which was close to the western edge of the Judean Wilderness and quite arid, to have a smaller permanent population.

Bethlehem was seven miles south of Jerusalem, and it was still famous as the birthplace of King David and called “the city of David” (Luke 2:4, 11) nearly 1,000 years after David had died. Furthermore, the eyes of Israel remained focused on Bethlehem through the centuries because the prophet Micah foretold the Messiah would be born there (Mic. 5:2). In addition, a major trade route went south from Jerusalem through Bethlehem and then continued south to the famous city of Hebron, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived and where David had been anointed king by the tribe of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4). The trade route then continued on south to Beer-sheba, and then southwest to Egypt. So Bethlehem was not some “sleepy little town” that was “out of the way.” It was a famous town on a well-traveled trade route only a couple of hours’ walk from Jerusalem.

In Hebrew, “Bethlehem” means “House of Bread,” and that was true in more ways than one, for not only was the area of Bethlehem a fruitful place to grow grain that was then ground into bread, but as the birthplace of the Messiah, the name “Bethlehem” was typological because Bethlehem was the place where “the Bread of Life” came into the world.

Luk 2:5

“**along with Mary.”** The traditional belief about Joseph and Mary’s trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem, as portrayed in paintings and Christmas cards, is that Joseph walked while Mary rode on a donkey. However, there is no evidence to support that belief, and in fact, the biblical evidence weighs against it. Donkeys were expensive, and while Joseph may have owned one, it is unlikely because Joseph was so poor that he could not afford a lamb as a birth sacrifice after Jesus was born; instead, Mary had to sacrifice two turtledoves (see commentary on Luke 2:24). So it is much more likely that Mary walked along with Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, but whether riding or walking, it is extremely unlikely that Joseph, who loved Mary and knew that she was pregnant with the Messiah, would have made Mary make that journey when she was very pregnant and getting close to giving birth.

The usual journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem would be eastward, down into the Jordan Valley, then south to Jericho, then westward up into Jerusalem, a trip of about 90 miles that took three days. If people went straight south from Nazareth to Jerusalem, traveling the roads through Samaria, which some people did, the trip would have been about 70 miles, but most people avoided Samaria because the Samaritans were known to sometimes harass Jews who were traveling through.

**“was engaged.”** Matthew 1:20 and 1:24 make it clear that by this time, Mary was already Joseph’s wife. Why then does the text emphasize the betrothal here and not the marriage? The answer is that the couple’s union had not yet been consummated; they had not as yet had sexual intercourse (Matt. 1:24-25).

This verse highlights a biblical custom that is hard to see in English. The Greek verb *mnēsteuō* (#3423 μνηστεύω) is in the perfect (past) tense, passive voice. In the ancient Near East, betrothal, the promise of marriage, was usually a contract between the parents of the groom and the parents of the bride. Marriages were arranged, often many years before the couple was of marriageable age. The perfect tense, passive voice verb shows that the betrothal, the engagement, was something that *happened to Mary*, not something she did. She did not “get engaged,” her engagement happened to her. This is a much different picture than modern Western courtship. The problem with the English translation “had been betrothed” (or “had been engaged”) is that is how we say it when someone used to be (“had been”) betrothed, but is no longer betrothed because the engagement was broken off. Thus, it is very hard to translate the truth that is in the Greek text into English without giving the wrong idea. On balance, it seems that communicating that Joseph and Mary were betrothed at the time they traveled to Bethlehem was more important than trying to produce the custom that the engagement had happened to Mary in the past, but risk people thinking they were not still engaged.

**“was pregnant.”** The Greek word is *egkuos* (#1471 ἔγκυος), a compound word from the preposition en, “*in*” and the word *kuō*, the womb. It literally means, “to have in the womb.”[[30]](#footnote-10682) It simply refers to being pregnant, it does not refer to how far along the pregnancy was. Joseph was a wise and loving man, and wisdom and love would dictate that he would not travel with Mary when she was on the verge of giving birth. While it is true that at the time Mary lived, it was difficult to tell exactly when a woman would give birth, if she gave birth on the road, that would be exceedingly difficult for the family; so if she had started early contractions or Braxton-Hicks contractions, it is unlikely Joseph would have traveled with her. Actually, since both Joseph and Mary knew the Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy, and since they had relatives in Bethlehem and were both a “royal” couple who would have been gladly received by many homes, they almost certainly would have allowed plenty of time to be in Bethlehem, at least weeks and very possibly months, before she gave birth.

The King James Version of AD 1611, and a couple of other English versions, translate *egkuos* as “great with child.” However, that is an unwarranted translation, because the Greek word simply means “to have in the womb,” “to be pregnant.” It is likely that the translation in the King James Version was influenced by the Christmas tradition itself, but today, thanks to the work of linguists, historians, and archaeologists, the Greek vocabulary used in the Bible is much better understood than it was 400 years ago, and the modern English versions reflect that fact and just use “pregnant,” or “with child,” which is accurate.

Luk 2:6

**“while they were there.”** The Greek is more literally “in their being there,” but the phrase is well translated as “while they were there,” which is the translation in most English versions. Note that this verse makes it clear that Joseph and Mary had not just arrived that day. The specific Greek phrase occurs in three other verses besides this one, and it does not refer to just arriving or just starting something—it refers to being “in” the middle of something. In Luke 5:12 Jesus was visiting a town when a man came to him to be healed. He had not just arrived at the town, he was “in” it. In Luke 9:18 the disciples came to him “while” he was praying. He had not just started; he was in the midst of prayer. Similarly, in Luke 11:1, Jesus was “in” prayer, and when he had finished, a disciple asked a question.

The traditional Christmas story about the birth of Christ has Joseph and Mary arriving in Bethlehem late in the day or perhaps even at night, desperately seeking lodging because Mary is in, or about to be in, labor, only to find there are no vacancies in the inn. Upon receiving no help from the people of Bethlehem, they find shelter in a stable (some traditions say the stable is in a cave), where Mary gives birth and Jesus is placed in the manger from which the animals eat. However, this understanding of the nativity stems largely from extra-biblical works and tradition imported into the Gospels, rather than a study of the biblical record itself. The actual story of the birth of Christ was that Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem sometime before Jesus was born, likely weeks but perhaps even months before, and were taken into a home there, most likely that of a relative, and Jesus was born in the home in the normal way of village birth.

Much misinformation about the birth of Christ came from a document that was widely circulated in Christian circles in the early centuries of the Christian era. It is referred to by scholars as the *Protevangelium of James*, and it is likely from the third century AD, although it is possible, but not likely, that it dates as early as AD 150.[[31]](#footnote-21662) This is the first document scholars are aware of that refers to Jesus being born close to Mary’s arrival in Bethlehem, although in the *Protevangelium*, Jesus is born in a cave before Joseph and Mary even reach Bethlehem. Other traditions started because the way people lived in Israel at the time of Christ was not known in the West as the traditions formed. So, for example, in the West, mangers are in stables, so the tradition started that Jesus was born in a stable even though the Bible never says that. Many homes at the time of Christ had mangers in the house.

In order to see what really happened when Christ was born, we will need to glean facts from both the Greek text and the culture of the ancient Near East (which, by the way, existed in many parts there until quite recently). Too often the Greek text alone has been used to try to reveal biblical truth. The Greek text alone is not enough to rebuild the truth of the biblical events for a very simple reason: when something in a culture is usual, well-known, normal, or “standard operating procedure,” it is not written about in detail. For example, if I write a letter to a friend about visiting my mother at Christmas, I might say, “I drove to her house.” I would never write: “I went to Mom’s house in my car, which is a large metal and plastic mobility device on wheels, with a gasoline engine that starts when an ignition key is turned and I made it move by pedals on the floor, (etc.).” It would be ridiculous to write that because everyone in today’s culture knows what I mean when I say, “I drove to Mom’s house.” Perhaps 2,000 years from now, if culture has changed so much that only a few historians know what a car is, they might wish we described our driving in more detail, but that is not necessary today. In the same way, things that were part of the everyday culture of the Bible times were not described in detail in their writings. We have to learn about the ordinary things of ancient life by piecing together details from many texts and writings, by using archaeology to study the material a culture left to us, and by studying any cultures that still live the same way they lived in biblical times.

In saying, “while they were there,” the Bible makes it clear that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem for a period of time before Mary gave birth. In fact, they could have been there for weeks or even perhaps a couple of months or more. It seems logical that Joseph would not wait until Mary was uncomfortable in her pregnancy to take her to Bethlehem. The impression that Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem very close to Mary’s time to give birth comes from Luke 2:5 in the King James Version, which says Mary was “great with child,” but that is a mistranslation of the Greek text influenced by the traditional Christmas story. As we saw in Luke 2:5 (and see commentary on Luke 2:5), the Greek text says only that Mary was pregnant and does not say how far into her pregnancy she was. Many good commentaries make the point that Joseph and Mary did not arrive in Bethlehem the night Mary gave birth, but, scholarship does not often have the power to overturn tradition, with its well-entrenched stories, songs, and paintings. But in any case, the Bible makes it clear that Joseph and Mary did not arrive in Bethlehem the night Mary gave birth.

**“the days were fulfilled for her to give birth.”** Luke 2:6 uses the word “days,” which in the New Testament, always refers either to “days” literally or to a period of time. It was “while they were there” that the days of Mary’s pregnancy were fulfilled. R. C. H. Lenski correctly writes that the day of Jesus’ birth “was not the day of Joseph’s and Mary’s arrival….”[[32]](#footnote-25941)

Although the Bible does not tell us how long it was before Mary gave birth that she and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, logic would tell us that it was likely at least several weeks, and may have even been a couple of months or more. Although the text does not exclude the fact that Mary might have made the normally three-day journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem soon before giving birth, it is more likely that Joseph, who loved her and who knew her baby was the Promised Messiah, would not have put her through the ordeal of walking or riding on a donkey for three days in her last days of pregnancy. Besides, the due date of a baby’s birth was not known in the very accurate way it is known in today’s modern times. The Bible speaks about how labor came on a woman unexpectedly in biblical times (1 Thess. 5:3), and it would not have been wise for Joseph to wait until Mary was so close to giving birth that she might have given birth on the road to Bethlehem, something for which they would have been totally unprepared. Instead, Joseph would have traveled to Bethlehem before Mary was on the verge of giving birth, and then, as Luke tells us, Mary gave birth “while they were there.”

Luk 2:7

**“And she gave birth.”** The record of the events surrounding the birth of Christ occurs in Matthew and Luke, and the two Gospels interweave when it comes to the chronology of the events. To read about the birth of Christ in chronological order, it is: Luke 1:5-80; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-38; Matthew 2:1-22. Then Matthew 2:23 and Luke 2:39-40 are both summary statements about Jesus growing up in Nazareth.

**“firstborn son.”** The word “firstborn” (*prōtotokos*, #4416 πρωτότοκος) here foreshadows the birth of Mary’s other children. She had at least six children besides Jesus: James, Joseph, Simon, Judas, and at least two daughters. Jesus was God’s “only begotten” son, but Mary’s “firstborn” son. Mary and her sons, Jesus’ brothers, are mentioned in Matthew 13:55-56 and Luke 8:19.

**“laid him in a manger.”** A huge difference between houses in the ancient Near East and our modern houses was that in biblical times in Israel, if a family owned one or two farm animals, it was common to bring them into the house at night. Farm animals were very expensive, and most families owned only a few, if any, so they were brought into the home at night to keep them from being stolen and to protect them from harm. The woman in Endor who King Saul visited at night had her calf in the house with her: “And the woman had a fat calf in the house” (1 Sam. 28:24 KJV). Of course, if the family were shepherds or herdsmen, they would not bring the whole flock or herd into the house, but would have a family member or a hired guard watch them in the field—which was why the shepherds were in the field watching their flocks on the night Jesus was born.

It was a common practice to raise the floor of the part of the house where the family lived and to keep the animals in an area that was a little lower, even if only a few inches lower.[[33]](#footnote-12788) This lower area would keep the animal waste from coming into where the family lived and slept. Also, Jesus was laid in a manger, which is an open trough, box, or bin where the animal food was placed so the animals could feed easily. In Western society, animals and mangers are in barns or stables, and since Jesus was laid in a manger, it made sense to Europeans that Jesus was born in a stable and so that became a fixed part of the traditional Christmas Story. However, in biblical society in the Middle East, where the animals grazed outside during the day and were brought into the house at night, if a family owned a manger, it would almost always be in the house. The manger would keep the animals calm, just as many modern farm animals have a feeding trough in their stall. The manger would be in the main part of the house, never in the guest room, which is why the text says that Jesus was placed in the manger “because there was no place for them in the guest room” (Luke. 2:7 *Common English Bible*, 2011).

People in the ancient Near East around the time of Christ knew that a manger would be in the house, so the shepherds knew to look for the baby in a house. Nevertheless, not everyone who had an animal would have a manger, and what seems especially unusual was that in Jesus’ case, he was placed in the manger, but the reason that the family placed him there is not stated. It certainly was not to demean him, so it was likely to protect him from busy feet and drafts in the house. The unusual act of putting baby Jesus in the manger became part of the sign that the angel gave to the shepherds, and no doubt confirmed to them that they had found the right baby. If every newborn baby was placed in a manger, then the fact that Jesus was in a manger would not have been much of a sign to the shepherds. We learn from Luke that sometime shortly after Jesus was born, he was safely placed in the manger, which would have been filled with clean hay or straw and would have been a safe place for him.

The angel gave the shepherds the sign that they would find the baby wrapped in swaddling cloth and lying in a manger. That sign helped confirm the angel’s words that this baby was the promised Savior.

**“no space for them in the guest room.”** The very fact that where Joseph and Mary were staying had a guest room shows us that Jesus was born in a private house. Greek is: διότι οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς τόπος ἐν τῷ καταλύματι. [διότι (because) οὐκ (not) ἦν (there was) αὐτοῖς (for them) τόπος (a place, a space) ἐν (in) τῷ (the) καταλύματι (guest room)]. Young’s Literal Translation (1862), which is similar to the REV, reads, “there was not for them a place in the guest-chamber.” Some more modern versions are similar: the CEB (*Common English Bible, 2011*) reads, “there was no place for them in the guestroom” while the NIV2011 reads, “there was no guest room available for them.” The reason the text would say they “laid him in a manger *because* there was no space for them in the guest room” was that the guest room would never have a manger. The main room of the house might have one if the homeowners had animals, but the guest room would never have a manger.

There are a number of reasons why Joseph and Mary could have found a place to stay in Bethlehem even if they arrived there months before Mary gave birth (these reasons are also enumerated by Kenneth Bailey.[[34]](#footnote-32039) First, Joseph was returning to his town of origin. Historical memories are long in the Middle East, and family support is very strong. For example, Paul knew he was a descendant of Benjamin the son of Jacob, but Benjamin had lived more than 1,500 years before Paul. Once Joseph announced that both he and Mary were descendants of families from Bethlehem, many homes would be open to them.

Second, both Joseph and Mary were “royals,” from the royal line of David. David is so famous in Bethlehem that it is called, “the city of David” (Luke 2:4, 11). Being from that famous family would have meant that most homes would open their doors to them.

Third, in every culture, women about to give birth are given special help. As Kenneth Bailey puts it: “Was there no sense of honor in Bethlehem? Surely the community would have sensed its responsibility to help Joseph find adequate shelter for Mary and provide the care she needed. To turn away a descendant of David in the city of David would be an unspeakable shame to the entire village.”[[35]](#footnote-29937) If for some reason Bethlehem was so totally filled with guests and visitors that no one would open their homes to Joseph and Mary, their relatives Zechariah and Elizabeth lived only a short distance away, in the hill country of Judah (Luke 1:39, NASB), and Joseph and Mary could have gone there with only a little effort. In fact, Mary had visited Elizabeth early in her pregnancy (Luke 1:40). So Joseph and Mary could have found adequate housing and care if they needed it.

Another reason we know Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus were being well taken care of is that when the shepherds arrived soon after the birth of Jesus, they saw the young family and their newborn Messiah and then left. God’s people had waited thousands of years for this Messiah, and if the baby Messiah was not in good circumstances when the shepherds saw them, they would have immediately been confused, offended, and outraged, and taken the whole family back to their own homes. The fact that they left Joseph, Mary, and Jesus where they were shows they were satisfied that their Savior was being well taken care of.

Furthermore, the phrase “no room in the inn,” which appears in many Bibles, is a mistranslation of the text. Joseph and Mary were not rejected by a local hotel that had its “no vacancy” sign turned on. The phrase “no room in the inn” is a mistranslation that continues to support a very serious misunderstanding about the birth of Christ. Two Greek words we must understand to properly interpret the biblical account are *topos* (#5117 τόπος; usually translated “room”), and *kataluma* (#2646 κατάλυμα; usually translated “inn”).

The word translated “room” in the traditional phrase “no room in the inn” is *topos*, and it occurs more than 90 times in the New Testament. *Topos* does not refer to “a room,” like we might think of a hotel room today, but simply a place or space in a given area. In the inns and caravansaries of the ancient world, a person did not rent a “room” like we today would rent a hotel room. The guest rented a “space” to sleep, and there was no guarantee who or how many people might end up “sleeping” (or staying up carousing or having sex with a male or female prostitute) in the “space” with you. It is extremely unlikely that Joseph and Mary would have even agreed to go to an inn for her to give birth; they were generally loud places with a rough crowd, and almost any house would have taken in a woman in labor to offer help and support. The word *topos* is used over 90 times in the Greek New Testament, and here in Luke 2:7 is the only place it is translated “room” in many English versions as if it referred to a hotel-type room for Joseph and Mary to stay in.

The Bible says there was no “space” available for Joseph and Mary in the *kataluma*. What is the *kataluma*? It does not refer to a commercial lodge, or inn, but simply means a “lodging place” or “guest room.” BDAG says of *kataluma*: “lodging *place****.*** The sense *inn* is possible in Luke 2:7, but in Luke 10:34, Luke uses *pandocheion*, the more specific term for *inn. Kataluma* is therefore best understood here as lodging or guest-room.” To properly understand the birth narrative of Jesus Christ, it is vital that we understand that the normal Greek word for “inn” is *pandocheion* (#3829 πανδοχεῖον), and it refers to a public house for the reception of strangers (caravansary, khan, inn). *Pandocheion* was not only used by the Greeks, but was used as a loanword for “inn” or a commercial lodging place in Hebrew, Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, and Turkish. *Pandocheion* is the word Luke uses in the parable of the Good Samaritan when he wanted to refer to a public inn (Luke 10:34).

In contrast to the *pandocheion*, the public inn, when the Gospels of Mark and Luke use *kataluma*, it means “guest room” (Mark 14:14; Luke 22:11). When finding a place to eat the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus tells them to say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room [*kataluma*] where I can eat the Passover with my disciples?” (Luke 22:11). So in both Mark and Luke, the *kataluma* is a room in a man’s house. Luke also uses the verb form of *kataluma*, which is *kataluō* (#2647 καταλύω), and means “to find rest or lodging.” In the record of Jesus and Zacchaeus, Jesus goes “to be the guest” at Zacchaeus’ house, not at a public inn (Luke 19:7). So Luke also uses the verb such that “to stay in the *kataluma*” indicates lodging at someone’s house. So the text is telling us that at the birth of Jesus, there was no “space in the guest room,” and we will see that it indicates that they stayed in the main quarters of the house.

Given all the evidence in the Bible and culture, the Bible should not be translated to say there was no room for them in the inn, but rather there was “no space for them in the guest room.” It is noteworthy that *Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible*,[[36]](#footnote-23744) by Robert Young, the same man who produced *Young’s Concordance to the Bible*, translates Luke 2:7 as follows: “…there was not for them a place in the guest-chamber.” When the NIV translation was published in 1984, Luke 2:7, quoted above, read, “there was no room for them in the inn,” but when the NIV was edited and republished in 2011, Luke 2:7 was changed to more correctly read, “because there was no guest room available for them.” So by 2011, the NIV translators recognized that “inn” should have been translated as “guest room.” The NIV apparently left the Greek word *topos* untranslated, or it might have read, “there was no space in the guest room for them.” Similarly, when the original Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) was published in 1999, Luke 2:7 read, “there was no room for them at the lodging place,” but when that Bible was updated in 2017 and published as the Christian Standard Bible (CSB), Luke 2:7 was updated to read, “there was no guest room available for them.”

To understand the birth of Christ, there are also some features of common houses in the Middle East that we must understand. One custom was that it was very common for houses in the Middle East to have a guest room where guests, and even strangers, could stay. Even poor people could have a guest room because it did not have to be furnished or have an adjoining bathroom and shower. People did not generally sleep on beds, but traveled with their own blankets that they slept on at night, so sleeping arrangements were no problem. Tables and chairs were not used in the common homes of first-century Palestinians, and the bathroom was a pot or a place outside. So the average guest room was simply a small, empty room, offering shelter and a place of safety. The guest room provided privacy for the guests as well as the family.

Showing hospitality to strangers has always been a huge part of Eastern life, and the Bible has quite a few records of people showing hospitality to strangers. For example, Lot housed two strangers (Gen. 19:1-4), and the man in Gibeah housed strangers (Judg. 19:19-21). The Shunammite woman wanted to show hospitality to Elisha and had a guest room built on her roof just for him (2 Kings 4:10). Giving hospitality was important enough that it became a command for Christian leaders (1 Tim. 3:2). The Eastern custom of giving hospitality continues in the modern Muslim culture, and thus one of the five pillars of the Muslim faith is to be quick to entertain strangers. The home Joseph and Mary stayed in had a guest room, but it was being used by other guests.

The second thing we must understand is that it was common for people to bring their animals into their houses at night. They did this to keep them from being stolen and to protect them from harm. Usually, the floor of the family dwelling was raised up somewhat, and the animals were in an area that was a little lower.[[37]](#footnote-30318) John Nolland writes: “…it is best to think of an overcrowded Palestinian peasant home: a single-roomed home with an animal stall under the same roof (frequently to be distinguished from the family living quarters by the raised platform floor of the latter).”[[38]](#footnote-17515) That families brought their animals in at night explains why the manger was in the house. The manger would not have been in the guest room.

When Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem, they were taken into one of the local homes, most likely of a relative. However, there was no space available for them in the *kataluma*, the guest room. Therefore, the family made room for Joseph and Mary in their own living quarters, and the baby Jesus was placed in a manger in the home, which would have been filled with clean hay or straw and would have been the perfect size for him.

The fact that the record says there was no room for them in the guest room does not mean that Joseph and Mary had just arrived. Lots of people may have been traveling to Jerusalem for the registration. Many scenarios are possible. One is that the guest room had been occupied for weeks; another is that when other people arrived for the registration or the feast, Joseph and Mary moved from the guest room into the main house because they were closer relatives or to better care for Mary. The Bible is simply letting us know that Jesus was placed in the manger in the house because the family guest room was occupied.

Understanding the birth narrative in this way highlights another important aspect of Eastern hospitality. In the East, guests were given special treatment of all kinds, including behavior that seems very extreme to us. For example, in the record of Lot and the two strangers, Lot would have handed over his own daughters to the mob before surrendering his guests (Gen. 19:8). The people whom Joseph and Mary stayed with would not displace their guests from the guest room, but instead inconvenienced themselves, and gave the young couple space in their own living quarters.

Another thing we need to know is that Mary and Joseph would not have been alone when Jesus was born. Actually, Joseph would not have been there at all. The women of the household, along with the women of the family staying in the guest room, most likely the village midwife, and perhaps even wise and experienced women from the neighborhood, would have been present with Mary when she gave birth. Joseph and the other men of the household would have graciously left the house to the women while Mary gave birth, something that was completely normal for birth in a village in Israel. Someone with a modern Western mindset may say, “Well, the Bible does not say those other women were there.” Of course not. We remind the reader that if something was normal for the culture, it was not usually written about. The details of a woman giving birth are never given in the Bible. No serious Bible student should insist that the women in the Bible who are mentioned giving birth (and there are dozens of them) did not have other women present to help them just because those helpers are not specifically mentioned in the text. That would be absurd. No details of Jesus’ birth are given in the Bible because births were a “normal” part of life, and no first-century reader in Palestine would expect anything different than what usually happens with a village birth. In fact, if the women of the household had not been there to help Mary, that would have been so unusual and seemingly coldhearted that that fact probably would have been written in the Bible.

Thus, what actually happened at the birth of Jesus is considerably different than what is commonly taught in Christian tradition. It is not that Bethlehem was full of cold-hearted townspeople who refused to take special care of a family about to give birth. Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem sometime before she gave birth. The guest room of the people who gave them lodging was full, so the family opened their own home to them and took them into their living quarters. When Mary gave birth, in the late evening or the night some days later, the men left their own home to accommodate her and give her privacy, and no doubt baby Jesus was born in quite usual circumstances, most likely with the village midwife and no doubt helped by the women of the family. Shortly after, the new baby Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes, dedicated to God, and placed in a perfect spot, the manger in the home.

While Mary was in labor and giving birth in the house, the man who owned the house, along with his sons and Joseph, would have been outside or perhaps in the home of a neighbor, giving Mary the privacy she needed during the birth of Jesus. Once Jesus was born, a woman would announce that a baby boy had been born, and there would have been the standard shouting, music, and joyful celebrations that were part of the birth celebration of a baby boy. It is worth noting that in the Eastern culture at the time of the Bible, the birth of a boy was loudly celebrated, while the birth of a baby girl was not celebrated. The reason is simple: the boy brought strength and wealth into the family, while the girl did not. It was usual for a girl to be married by her mid-teens, and she would leave her parents’ house and live with her husband and his family and thus add to his family, not her birth family. If her husband lived in a different village than her parents, then she likely only saw her birth family rarely if ever. Also, any children she bore were part of the husband’s family and clan, not the clan of her parents. Furthermore, at the time of Christ when a girl married, she brought a dowry with her, thus taking physical wealth from her house. (This was a shift from ancient times when the man paid the dowry to the girl’s family; the shift occurred after the Babylonian Captivity.)[[39]](#footnote-23354) Sometime after Jesus was born and the women had made sure that things in the house were back in proper order and Mary was comfortable, the men would have been allowed back in the house to see the baby.

[For information on the Magi and the Christmas story, see commentary on Matt. 2:1. For more information about the shepherds, see commentary on Luke 2:16.]

Luk 2:8

**“shepherds.”** The Bible never specifically says why the angels and the glory of God appeared to the shepherds, but the evidence is that it was to tie the shepherds at the birth of Jesus Christ to the record of King David who was a shepherd and a type of Christ. David was a well-known type of Christ, and the Bible calls the Messiah by the name of “David” in Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25, and Hosea 3:5 (see commentary on Ezek. 34:23). Theologians sometimes refer to Jesus Christ as the “greater David.” David was a shepherd and taken from the flock to lead Israel (1 Sam. 16:11-13), and here in Luke 2:8-18, God announces the birth of the “chief shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4) and the true king of Israel to shepherds.

These shepherds were very likely watching their sheep that night in some of the very same fields where David had watched sheep some one thousand years earlier. After all, since David was a shepherd from Bethlehem and shepherds moved their flocks regularly, there is every reason to believe that David shepherded his flocks in the same fields that the shepherds were standing in on the night of Christ’s birth.

In order to properly understand the shepherds’ role in the record of the birth of Christ, it is important to clear up some misconceptions about them. For one thing, it has occasionally been taught that shepherds were insignificant and mistrusted, so God appeared to them as part of the whole traditional but erroneous “Jesus born into unfortunate circumstances” narrative (cf. commentary on Luke 2:7). In that narrative, angels appearing to poor mistrusted social outcasts showed that insignificant people are significant with God. While it is true that supposedly insignificant people are significant to God, that is not why God announced the birth of His Son to the shepherds. Shepherds were not generally mistrusted in the biblical world, in fact, they were usually well respected.

It is also taught and espoused in song, that besides being mistrusted social outcasts, the shepherds at Jesus’ birth were “poor shepherds” (e.g., “The First Noel”). But shepherds were like any other people in most of the trades in Israel. There were poor shepherds with few sheep and rich shepherds with lots of sheep. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are examples of shepherds with lots of sheep who were certainly wealthy. There was generally no middle class in biblical Israel. A very small percentage of the population was quite wealthy while the majority of the population lived day-to-day with only a little in reserve, and another small part of the population was truly destitute people who survived only because of the help of others. Given that social scenario, there is no reason to assume the shepherds outside Bethlehem were especially poor. In fact, they were likely fairly well off.

It was part of God’s plan that the shepherds would begin to spread the news about the Messiah, because the angel said to them, “I bring you [the shepherds] good news” that would then be “for all the people” (Luke 2:10). The shepherds understood their role on this night of the Savior’s birth and immediately after seeing the baby they began to spread the word about the new Messiah (Luke 2:17-18). This leads us to conclude that the shepherds were men of faith and successful enough to be well respected in the general area. After all, if someone who is known to be untrustworthy and unsuccessful comes to you and tells you a story about an army of angels and the glory of God announcing the long-awaited birth of the Messiah, are you likely to believe them? The fact that God chose the shepherds to be the first evangelists of the Good News supports the conclusion that they were men who were respected and believable. Thus, the biblical and social evidence is that the shepherds were successful men of faith whose testimony was acceptable among the general population in Israel.

Shepherding in Palestine involved a lot of work, planning, and courage. Sheep require constant oversight, care, and guarding. For example, in Israel, the water sources dry up or flood with the seasons, and the pastures are constantly changing. Thus, planning ahead, knowing where to go, and then moving the flock are part of the job, which is why shepherds were usually nomads (cf. Gen. 37:17). Also, the sheep graze on the hillsides right next to farmer’s fields, so the shepherds must constantly watch that the sheep do not move into the growing grain, as that could be very expensive (cf. Exod. 22:5). Also, sheep are in constant danger from wild animals and thieves, which was why the shepherds at the birth of Christ were out at night watching the sheep. Facing down a hungry wolf or thief with just a club was dangerous and took great courage (cf. John 10:11-13). David acquired part of his courage to fight Goliath from his experience guarding his sheep, and in fact, he had to defend them from a lion and a bear (1 Sam. 17:34-37). Also, the sheep sometimes got hurt or even hurt each other (cf. Ezek. 34:21), so the shepherd must also know basic animal first-aid. Other skills a shepherd needed to have would have been knowledge of breeding and successful birthing, how to shear the sheep, and how to keep them safe and unblemished. Also, there is evidence that many of the sheep used as sacrifices in the Temple were cared for in Bethlehem, and although we cannot be sure, it is certainly possible that the sheep the shepherds were watching were being raised to be sacrificed in the Temple. Since the shepherds in Palestine provided some of their lambs as Passover lambs and other sheep for Temple sacrifice, they had to be diligent to keep them unblemished, which was something that non-Jewish shepherds did not have to worry about. Although shepherding involved a lot of sitting-and-watching time, a good shepherd in Palestine was diligent, skilled, and courageous, not lazy.

Given all that, where does the teaching that shepherds were social outcasts and mistrusted in Israel come from? It seems to have come from only a few ancient sources. One was Aristotle, who viewed shepherds as lazy. But while that was Aristotle’s opinion—and perhaps his experience in Greece—anyone who sees the effort and personal risk that responsible shepherding takes in Israel knows that what Aristotle said did not apply in Israel. Aristotle lived in Greece over 300 years before Jesus was born, and he was not speaking about shepherds or shepherding in Palestine.

The other main sources for the idea that shepherds were social outcasts are the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud. The Mishnah is a collection of sayings of the rabbis, written between AD 200 and AD 250. The Babylonian Talmud came much later, around AD 500, and is a collection of rabbinic interpretations of the Mishnah. But we must keep in mind that the Mishnah and Talmud were composed long after the time of Christ and in an environment that was antagonistic to anything that supported Christianity—and one of the biblical records that clearly supported Christianity was the shepherds’ testimony that the Christ had been born.

Furthermore, the Jewish leaders who wrote the Mishna and Babylonian Talmud had other reasons for denigrating shepherds besides anti-Christian sentiment. The tasks involved with shepherding meant breaking many of the “commands” (actually “traditions”) that the Jews had set up as part of their religion. For example, shepherds had to keep tending their sheep on the Sabbath, which did not seem to be “work” to Moses but was eventually considered work by the later religious leaders. Also, if a sheep wandered off on the Sabbath, a shepherd may have had to go more than a Sabbath day’s journey to find it. Those kinds of behaviors irked the religious leaders and caused a bias against shepherds.

Thus, although the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud have a few sentences—and only a few sentences—against shepherds, there is evidence that those statements do not reflect what the average person at the time of Christ thought about them, and there is evidence that shepherds were, in fact, well respected.

There is reliable biblical and extra-biblical evidence that, in general, shepherds were trusted. For example, in both the literature of the ancient Near East and the Greek and Latin literature, the word “shepherd” was often used for political leaders and kings. In fact, “they often appear in Hellenistic bucolic poetry as representatives of an ideal humanity.”[[40]](#footnote-16808) J. M. Creed gives the names of some famous ancient people whose birth and childhood were associated in history and mythology with shepherds, including Romulus and Remus the founders of Rome, Mithras, and Cyrus the Persian.[[41]](#footnote-17649)

As well as the extra-biblical Greek and Latin evidence about shepherds, the Bible also speaks favorably of shepherds. God is referred to as a shepherd (Gen. 48:15; Ps. 23:1; 28:9; 80:1; Isa. 40:10-11), and so is Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus was called a “shepherd” in prophecy before he was born (Gen. 49:24; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24; Zech. 13:7); then he referred to himself as “the good shepherd” during his ministry (John 10:11, 14), and he is still called a shepherd after his death and resurrection (Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4). If shepherds were known as dishonest social outcasts, there would be no reason the New Testament would refer to our Lord Jesus as a shepherd.

Many of the great people of the Bible were shepherds, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the prophet Amos (Amos 1:1). The kings and leaders in Israel were called “shepherds” because of the way they cared for the people (2 Sam. 5:2; 7:7; 1 Kings 22:17; 1 Chron. 11:2; 17:6; 2 Chron. 18:16; Ps. 78:71-72; Jer. 3:15; Zech. 10:2). The prophet Jeremiah referred to himself as God’s shepherd (Jer. 17:16). Also, God said of the Persian king Cyrus: “He is my shepherd and will perform all my pleasure” (Isa. 44:28). But it is doubtful if calling a king or leader a “shepherd” would have been common if shepherds were mistrusted social outcasts. Also, in the prophecies of the future Kingdom of Christ on earth, the Bible says God will set up godly shepherds over the people (Jer. 23:4).

More biblical evidence that shepherds were respected is the fact in the New Testament, the word usually translated as “pastor” (Eph. 4:11) is the word “shepherd” in Greek, and is translated “shepherds” in several English versions (cf. CJB, DBY, ESV, Rotherham, YLT). Would God really designate one of the most respected church positions as “shepherd” if to be a shepherd implied being a mistrusted social outcast? Thus, examining all the evidence supports the conclusion that the shepherds in the record of the birth of Christ were godly men of faith who were looking for the coming of the Messiah, who were successful businessmen, and who faithfully communicated to the community around Bethlehem what they had seen from God.

There are important lessons we can learn from the shepherds. One is that they were obviously waiting for and expecting the Messiah to come, just as we Christians should be. Another is that they understood their God-given commission to spread the Good News about the birth of the Messiah, and they obeyed that commission. Christians also have a God-given commission to spread the news about the Messiah, and we should follow the example of the shepherds and obey that commission.

What happened to the shepherds? The Bible does not say, but it is likely that they had died by the time Jesus started his ministry about 30 years later. There is no indication anyone tried to seek them out to confirm their testimony that the Messiah had been born, nor is there any indication they tried to join the followers of Christ before or after his death.

**“living out in the fields.”** This is a good indication that Jesus was not born at Christmas time. It would generally be too cold in Bethlehem in December to keep the sheep in the fields at night. They would be brought into a sheepfold and some kind of shelter. Many scholars think Jesus was born around September, and Ernest Martin gives some good evidence that it was in September of 3 BC.[[42]](#footnote-12765)

Luk 2:9

**“suddenly stood before them**.” The Greek verb translated “suddenly stood before” is *ephistēmi* (#2186 ἐφίστημι). *Ephistēmi* can mean to “be near or close to,” or it can emphasize the suddenness of an event, or it can combine both meanings, as it does in Luke 2:9, and mean “to suddenly be near.” The meaning of standing “near” is in verses such as Luke 2:38 and Acts 22:20, and the meaning of “suddenly” is in verses such as Luke 21:34, and 1 Thessalonians 5:3. The combined meaning of “suddenly be near” occurs here in Luke 2:9, in Luke 24:4 when the angels appeared to the women at the tomb, and also in Acts 12:7 when the angel appeared to Peter in prison.

For the accuracy of the Christmas story and our understanding of angels it is important to note that the angel was standing on the ground in front of the shepherds, he was not flying or floating above them. The text says the angel was standing before them, not hovering over them. Alexander MacLaren correctly observes, “The angel speaks by the side of the shepherds, not from above.”[[43]](#footnote-15501)

That the angel (and later the army of angels; Luke 2:13) appeared on the ground and not in the air is the way angels generally appear to people in the Bible. For example, we see angels appearing on the ground when the angels came to Sodom and stayed with Lot (Gen. 19:1-3), when one came to Samson’s parents (Judg. 13:3-15), or appeared to Zechariah in the Temple (Luke 1:11), or appeared to Mary (Luke 1:26-38), and in many other places as well (cf. Gen. 16:7-11; 19:1-3; 32:1-2; Exod. 3:2; Num. 22:22-35; Judg. 2:1-5; 6:11-13; 13:3-6; 1 Kings 19:5-7; Dan. 3:24-25, 28; Zech. 1:10-11; 3:3; Matt. 4:11; 28:2-6; Luke 1:11-20, 26-38; John 20:12; Acts 5:19; 10:3-7; 11:13; 12:7-10; Rev. 22:8-9).

Although angels can appear to people while being in mid-air (1 Chron. 21:16), that is not usual and not what happened here in Luke 2:9. It was the sudden presence of the angel and the bright light of God that frightened the shepherds, not the fact that the angel was suspended in the air. Furthermore, the army of angels that suddenly appeared “with the angel” was on the ground also (Luke 2:13), just as they were on the ground when God’s angel army filled the hills around Elisha (2 Kings 6:17).

What an honor and privilege it must have been for those angels to be present at the birth of the Messiah. They had put up with the constant flow of evil coming from the Devil and his demons for thousands of years and were very aware that God’s whole creation was in pain due to the Devil and the consequences of the Fall. Now at last they knew the Messiah was born and that deliverance from evil and the restoration of all things was in sight.

**“the glory of the Lord shone around them.”** In this context, the “glory of the Lord” is the brilliant light that surrounded God. This light is often referred to as a “cloud” because it is bright, you cannot see into it, and it does not seem to have a specific shape but just shines out from God. This brilliant light, which is sometimes depicted as being multi-colored (Ezek. 1:28; Rev. 4:3), this cloud of glorious light that surrounds God, is referred to as “the glory of Yahweh” in many Old Testament verses (e.g., Ezek. 1:27-28, cf. 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:14). For example, it is the cloud of God’s presence that covered Mount Sinai, and Moses went into it, into the presence of God (Exod. 24:19). This “cloud” covered the Tabernacle and was inside it (Exod. 40:35-36) and also filled the Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14), and was so bright that Moses and the priests could not minister in its presence (Exod. 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14). The “cloud” around God was what Ezekiel saw in his vision when God’s presence went into the Temple (Ezek. 10:4; see commentary on Ezek. 1:4). At the Transfiguration, God was in the middle of the cloud of light that overshadowed Peter, James, and John, and that is why the text says that God’s voice came out of the cloud (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). This bright “cloud” of light is why 1 Timothy 6:16 says God lives in “unapproachable light.”

So, when Scripture says something such as “the glory of the God is Israel came from the direction of the east” (Ezek. 43:2), or when it says, “the glory of Yahweh filled the house” (i.e., the Temple; Ezek. 43:5), we are not to think that somehow God’s “glory” can be apart from God. Instead, we are to understand that when God is present, His “glory,” His brilliant light, surrounds Him. Thus, sometimes God’s presence is described only as “the glory of Yahweh” (or “God,” or “the Lord”) because what people see is the light, the “cloud.” In other words, in many contexts, seeing “the glory of God” is seeing God Himself surrounded by unapproachable light.

Thus, Luke tells us that God was present at the birth of His Son, Jesus. God, surrounded by His “glory,” the brilliant light that indicated God’s presence, shined all around the shepherds and understandably they were frightened (Luke 2:13). We all know that God was present at the birth of His Son; God is technically everywhere at once, so of course He was there. But when we realize that God portrayed Himself as being personally present because His glory was present, that makes His presence at the birth of Christ much more “fatherly,” personal, and powerful.

[For more on the bright cloud and the “glory of Yahweh” see commentary on Ezekiel 1:28.]

**“frightened with great fear.”** In the Greek text this phrase is the figure of speech polyptoton; the same root word used with different inflections, in this case, one being a verb and the other a noun.[[44]](#footnote-25425)

[See Word Study: “Polyptoton.”]

Luk 2:10

**“listen.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“the people.”** Often the Greek word *laos* (#2992 λαός) is used to designate specifically the Jewish people. This is the case here; *laos* is to be understood to mean the people of Israel.[[45]](#footnote-19261) If God had wanted to refer to the Gentiles and everyone he could have used the plural, “the peoples” (e.g. Luke 2:31), or “all nations” (*panta ta ethne*: Matt. 28:19). For scriptures where “the people” clearly refers to the Jews, see: Matthew 13:15; Mark 7:6; Luke 1:68; 2:10; John 11:50; 18:14; Acts 3:23; 7:17; 13:17; 13:24; 13:31; 21:28; Hebrews 7:11; 7:27; 9:7; 9:19; 11:25.

Here in Luke 2:10, by extension this announcement is good news to all people everywhere (Luke 2:31-32), and the future “will be” is prophetic to this effect, but here the angel is speaking to the shepherds in a way they would understand, of Israel’s long-awaited Messiah (cf. Luke 1:68).

Luk 2:11

**“was born.”** The Messiah that the Jews expected was “born,” as per the Old Testament prophecy (Isa. 9:6). The Jews were not expecting their Messiah to be God, and the angel did not say anything different than the shepherds expected; they certainly would not have expected God to be born.

[For more on Jesus being fully human, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

**“this day.”** The Jewish day began at sunset; hence the angel was telling them what had happened sometime after sunset that evening. Jesus had been born after sunset.

**“in the city of David.”** The angels could have said, “in Bethlehem,” and been perfectly accurate, so why call Bethlehem, “the city of David” in this instance? The angels were announcing the birth of the long-awaited Messiah, and the mention of David’s name and his ancestral home also brought back to mind all the wonderful Messianic prophecies spoken about the Messiah by David and the prophets. The Psalms of David are full of Messianic prophecies and references to the Messiah, and no doubt many of them would have been the subject of discussion as the shepherds walked (hurriedly walked) from the fields into the town of Bethlehem. The Messiah was so closely connected to King David that he is actually called “David” by the figure of speech antonomasia (see commentary on Ezek. 37:24).

[See Word Study: “Antonomasia.”]

**“the Savior.”** We have translated this with “the,” although the Greek lacks the definite article. As Lenski says, “The relative clause [“who”] makes ‘Savior’ definite.”[[46]](#footnote-30424)

**“Messiah** ***and*** **Lord.”** These words function like adjectives in the Greek, describing the Savior (cf. Lenski). These adjectives are descriptive of the baby, showing that he has both the properties of being the Messiah and the Lord. To translate the phrase as, “who is Messiah the Lord,” misses this point. We use the term Messiah here instead of “Christ” to make it clear what the angels were saying. The angels were expressing that the “Messiah,” the “Anointed One” had been born, and the text needs to make that clear.

Luk 2:12

**“the sign.”** It was not “a” sign, as though there were many signs, but “the” particular sign given the shepherds by the angel. In Luke 2:16, this finds its fulfillment when the shepherds find the baby in “the” manger. The sign involved both the swaddling clothes and the baby being in a manger.

**“you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”** This tells us that the shepherds would arrive at the home where Jesus was born a while after the birth because they would be allowed to come into the house and see the baby, and he would already be wrapped in swaddling clothes and in the manger.

Luk 2:13

**“the heavenly army.”** The Greek word translated “army” is *stratia* (#4756 στρατιά). Robertson writes: “A military term for a band of soldiers common in the ancient Greek.”[[47]](#footnote-15978) There is no good reason to translate *stratia* as “host” in modern versions. In the times of the King James Version (1611), the word “host” often referred to an army, but that use of “host” has almost completely fallen out of use, and very few modern readers would read “host” and think “army.” Nevertheless, many modern versions still use “host” due to tradition, and also due to the theology that “God is in control and the Devil can only do what God allows him to, so God does not need an army. Who would they fight?”

This heavenly army of angels would have almost certainly been standing on the ground on the hillsides where the flocks were—the area around Bethlehem is very hilly. Many paintings and Christmas cards depict this army of angels having wings and hovering in the air, but that is not likely. With the exception of Zechariah 5:9, no angel in the Bible has wings, and they almost exclusively appear standing on the ground and looking as if they were humans. Records of angels appearing like humans or being on the ground occur throughout the Bible (cf. Gen. 18:1; 19:1-10; 28:12; Judg. 6:11-22; 13:3-6, 9-21; Luke 1:28-29; John 20:11-13). Also, when the angel army protected Elisha, they were on the ground all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:17).

It is worth noting that Luke 2:13 does not say something like “a great company of angels,” were at Jesus’ birth, but instead describes them as “a multitude of the heavenly army.” God and His angels had been waging war against the Devil and his angels (cf. Matt. 25:41) for millennia, and the whole creation had been groaning in pain, waiting for the redemption the Messiah would bring (Rom. 8:19-23). Now the Messiah had been born, and as the future commander and chief of all of God’s armies, it was fitting that the angelic army of God would show up at his birth to pay tribute to the newborn Redeemer.

[For more on the war between God and the Devil, see commentary on Luke 4:6. For more on the Devil being the god of this age, see commentary on 2 Cor. 4:4. For more on the names of the Devil that describe his characteristics, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.” For more on Adam and Eve getting the crafty nature of the Devil, see commentary on Rom. 7:17. For more on the future Kingdom of Christ on earth that will not have the Devil present, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on the future restored earth being called “Paradise,” see commentary on Luke 23:43.]

Luk 2:14

**“Glory in the highest *heavens* to God.** Scholars agree that the idea of the verse is that it is the angels and spiritual beings who dwell in the highest places who give glory to God.

The word “highest” is a common Greek word *hupsistos* (#5310 ὕψιστος), and it is an adjective describing the highest place, or the highest rank. As an adjective, it needs a noun to fully complete its sense. We would say, “Glory to God in the highest *places*,” using italics like the KJV, NASB, and ASV, to show that “*places*” is not in the Greek text but added for clarity. “Glory to God in the highest *heavens*” is a good translation. The “highest heaven” in this phrase is contrasted with the earth, a lower place, in the next phrase. Thus, there is glory “in heaven,” and peace “on earth.” The birth of the savior was a cause for the spiritual beings of the highest heavens to glorify God, because the savior is not only the redeemer of mankind, but of the very universe itself, which is under bondage and decaying (Rom. 8:20-23). This same phrase, “in *the* highest *heaven*,” is also used in Luke 19:38.

The phrase “highest heaven” does not imply there is more than one heaven, with one heaven being higher than another, but rather the phrase uses the word “heaven” in its biblical sense: “heaven” is always plural in Hebrew and often plural in Greek. English readers do not get to see that because the translators almost always say “heaven” even when the Hebrew and Greek read “heavens.”

Both the Hebrew and Greek texts indicate that “the heavens” are a vast realm, with higher and lower parts, which is what we see in part when we look up. We know the moon is “lower” than the sun, and the sun is “lower” than the stars, but even so, we consider all of what is above us “heaven.” People in Bible times said, “the heavens.” Thus, the “highest *places*” or “highest *heavens*” refer to the highest places in the heavenly realm and, by extension, to the exalted spiritual beings who dwell in the highest part of heaven. This alludes to the fact that there is a hierarchy among spirits, with some being more powerful or prominent than others, something we see in other places in the Bible as well. This verse is saying that all through the heavens, even to the highest parts, there is glory given to God at the birth of the Messiah.

**“on earth peace among people with whom he is well pleased.”** As we will see in the commentary below, the peace that Christ will bring is for those people who believe in God and Jesus and therefore are those with whom God is well pleased; the peace is not for every person on earth, as some translations wrongly indicate.

The translation of Luke 2:14 differs in different translations of the Bible. For example, if we compare the King James Version with the New American Standard Bible, the KJV reads, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men,” but the NASB reads, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” There is a big difference between the meanings of these two versions. Is God’s peace to some people, or all people? The difference in translation is due to the way this verse was copied from one Greek manuscript to the next at some early date in history. The copying of one manuscript to another is referred to as the “transmission of the text,” and sometimes mistakes were made in copying, just as can happen today when someone copies something. Thankfully, due to the extensive number of early manuscripts available today, computer technology that allows very accurate comparison of the texts, and the hard work of scholars, the true reading of the ancient Greek text can usually be reconstructed, and thus the modern Greek text of the New Testament is very accurate.

The problem in translating Luke 2:14 has to do with the very last word in the Greek text of the verse, which in some manuscripts is *eudokias* (a genitive) and in others *eudokia* (a nominative). Debates raged hot and heavy for centuries as to which reading was original, with scholars on both sides arguing for their point of view. The debate continued through the early 1900s, subsided during the middle of that century, and today the debate is considered settled by textual scholars. This is in part due to a better understanding of the development of the Greek text over time, and in part due to the discovery and coordination of more Greek manuscripts, including a discovery in the *Dead Sea Scrolls* (first discovered in 1947). Thus, the modern versions of the Bible, such as the Amplified Bible, ESV, NIV, NRSV, and more, all say something that parallels the NASB shown above. The reading *eudokias*, which is the genitive case, is clearly the original reading, and the variant, *eudokia*, was created when the “s” was dropped.

The issue of the correct reading of the Greek text being settled, we still must translate the text into English in the best way possible. Along with the glory that the angels of heaven give to God, there is to be peace on earth. But to whom? The Greek phrase is only three words, and is literally translated, “among men of goodwill.” The truth being communicated is that there is peace from God to people with whom He has goodwill. Modern versions try to express this idea, but often with varying degrees of success. Nevertheless, the point is that God’s peace is not to everyone; it is for those people who have turned their hearts to Him. We might quite literally translate the Greek as “among people of *God’s* goodwill,” or as it is put more understandably in the REV, “among people with whom he is well pleased.” This translation fits perfectly with the Old Testament prophecies and predictions of the coming Messiah, who was foretold to be a warrior for God, delivering God’s people while destroying His enemies (cf. Ps. 2:6-12; Isa. 11:4; 63:1-6). Furthermore, in Matthew 10:34, Jesus said, “Do not assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Also, in Luke 12:49-53, he said, “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ...Do you think that I have come to bring peace on the earth? I tell you, no, but rather division, for from now on there will be five in one house, divided three against two, and two against three. They will be divided father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against her mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” As we know from both history and life today, Jesus’ words were true. Ever since Christ came, families, and indeed, the world itself, have been divided over Jesus, with some believing in him and some rejecting him. God’s peace will be with those who believe in him.

The peace that God’s people will enjoy is clearly linked in prophecy to the destruction of those who oppose God. It is undeniable that the lives of godly people would be more peaceful if there were no wicked people on earth. The people of God will enjoy peace in the future in part because Jesus Christ will destroy the wicked and unrepentant. Scripture never says that the ungodly or unsaved have peace with God. Romans 5:1 says, “…we [Christians] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It does not say, “Everyone” has peace with God. The Church Epistles thus echo what the Old Testament and Gospels proclaim: that the peace of God is for those who believe in God. The ungodly experience the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18). When the Messiah comes from heaven, fights the Battle of Armageddon, and conquers the earth, he will kill the wicked. There are a number of verses that express that fact in various ways (cf. Rev. 19:19-21; Isa. 11:4; 63:1-6; Ps. 45:3-5; Matt. 25:41-46). The fact that there will be no wicked people on earth when the Messiah rules it as king is one of the reasons that the next life will be wonderful and called “Paradise.”

Although it has been many centuries since Christ came and there is still not peace on earth, God’s plan of peace on earth will one day be fulfilled. Some day in the future Jesus Christ will come to earth and fight the Battle of Armageddon and conquer the earth, and the prophecies will be fulfilled: his kingdom will fill the earth (Dan. 2:35), and “of his government and of peace there will be no end” (Isa. 9:7 ESV). Thus, it was appropriate that on the day of Christ’s birth some 2,000 years ago, the angelic army of heaven descended to the earth and proclaimed to mankind, “Glory in the highest *heavens* to God, and on earth peace among people with whom he is well pleased” (REV).

Luk 2:15

**“Let’s go straight to Bethlehem.”** The angel never commanded the shepherds to go to Bethlehem. That was assumed because the shepherds were godly men and would have automatically gone to see the Messiah. Similarly, there are things that believers should know to do, and do, without being specifically told.

**“thing.”** From the Greek *rhēma* (#4487 ῥῆμα), which can mean, “a word or message,” or “the event that the word describes, a thing or event.”[[48]](#footnote-30443) Here in verses 15, 17, and 19 it refers not to the words themselves but to the whole event being described by the message. The shepherds wanted to go see the event the angel’s message described, not go see the words. Likewise, in verse 17 the shepherds speak “about” (Greek: *peri* #4012 περί) the *rhēma*, which shows that they were not just making known the message’s content, but “told the whole story,”[[49]](#footnote-11457) they made known “about” the message, i.e., all about the angels, the sign, and having found the child. Lastly, in verse 19, Mary does not just store up the angel’s words about the child in her heart, but ponders the entire event.

**“which the Lord has made known to us.”** The shepherds do not say, “which the angel has made known to us.” This is a good example of the principle of Author-agent in the Bible. The shepherds knew that the angel was an agent of God and spoke for God, so although it was the angel who spoke the words, from the shepherd’s point of view, it was God the Author who made the message known.

Luk 2:16

**“the baby lying in the manger.”** Because Jesus was now in swaddling clothes and in the manger, the arrival of the shepherds would have been some time after the actual birth of Jesus. The women helping Mary would have cleaned things up after the birth, and gotten the mother and baby boy ready for the men to see. The men, outside celebrating the birth of a boy, would have come in to see him, and shortly after, the shepherds would have arrived too. It would not have been hard to find the house in a small village like Bethlehem. Jesus would almost certainly have been the only boy born that night in the village, and it was customary to have a big celebration with music and food when a boy was born. The shepherds could have easily followed the noise to where Jesus was born.

One of the ways we know that Jesus was born in a loving household that was taking good care of him, and not in a stable, was that the shepherds were godly men who had been awaiting the Promised Messiah. Immediately after the angels left them, they “went with haste” to Bethlehem, and after they saw the child they were so excited they told the people of the area about him, and then they went back to their work, “glorifying and praising God.” If those godly shepherds saw that Jesus and the family were not being well cared for, they would have been scandalized and outraged and immediately invited the family to their own homes and treated this promised Messiah like the royalty he was.

The noise of the celebration about Jesus’ birth was customary and would have led the shepherds right to the house where Jesus was born. It was a common custom that when a baby boy was born there was a huge celebration, but when a baby girl was born there was no celebration. That was because boys added to the family and girls took away from it. It was customary that when a young couple married, they lived in the boy’s parents’ home (usually a room was added, or a room built on the roof, and that custom continues today in much of the Middle East). Also, unlike in Europe or in early biblical times, after the Babylonian Captivity it became the custom that it was the girl’s side of the family that paid the dowry.[[50]](#footnote-17980) So while a boy brought another female to help, and grandchildren, and money, into the family, the girl cost the family what it took to raise her, then cost them money to have her married, and then she left the family.

[For more information on the birth of Jesus, see commentary on Luke 2:7. For information on the Magi arriving over a year later, and not being present at the birth of Christ, see commentary on Matt. 2:1.]

Luk 2:17

**“they saw it.”** Literally, this verse reads “having seen, they made known.” Some versions supply “it” (ESV, KJV) or “this” (NRSV, NASB), while other versions supply “him” (NIV, NET) or “them” (HCSB). The difference in translation affects the reader’s understanding of whether the shepherds saw the fulfillment of the sign of the child lying in the manger (“it” or “this”), or they simply saw the child and his parents (“him” or “them”). The context indicates that “it,” meaning the fulfillment of the sign, is what the shepherds saw and this made them go and make it known. Verse 16 employs the definite article “the,” indicating that they found “the” manger, namely, the one just foretold by the angel in Luke 2:12, and having seen *it* they went and made the event known.

We do not know how late at night Jesus was born, but there was always a great celebration among family and friends when a baby boy was born. There is nothing in the text to indicate that the shepherds had to wake the townspeople up in the middle of the night; many people in the village would have been awake and rejoicing that a baby boy from the line of David had been born in the City of David.

**“they made it known.”** The Greek verb translated “made known” is *gnōrizō* (#1107 γνωρίζω), and it means “to make known.” The shepherds, upon seeing the baby Jesus, made known what had happened to them and the message of the angels. The Bible does not say the extent to which the shepherds spread the message they had heard, but Luke 2:18 tells us that “all” who heard it were amazed. Some later Greek manuscripts have the verb *diagnōrizō* (#1232 διαγνωρίζω) instead of *gnōrizō*, and *diagnōrizō* is an intensified form of *gnōrizō* and is the reason that versions such as the King James say that the shepherds “spread abroad” the news. However, study of the Greek text of the New Testament shows that *gnōrizō* is the correct reading, and thus the text is telling us that the shepherds made known the message of the angels, but it does not tell us the extent to which they made the message known.

**“about.”** For the significance of *peri*, see commentary on Luke 2:15, “thing.” The shepherds did not just tell others what the angels said, they told “about the message,” that is, they told the whole story about the angels, the light, what the angels said—the whole picture. However, we should not miss that the emphasis here in the text is “the message,” not the whole event. The Bible does not say, “the shepherds told what happened,” they told about “the message.” While that included how the message was delivered, the great truth is what the message itself contained, which was the Messiah, the Savior of the world had been born. Of course, the shepherds knew it would be years before the baby grew and fulfilled his God-given purpose (which they misunderstood at the time), but even so, they knew their salvation was near, and they may have thought it could perhaps happen even while they were alive (we don’t know the age of the shepherds), and they would have told everyone that the Savior had been born. At that time, no one really knew the Messiah would come twice: once to die and once again to conquer the earth and set up his kingdom on earth.

The message is always more important than the way it is delivered. The angels and the great light were very powerful, but the really important thing was that the Messiah had been born.

**“message.”** From the Greek *rhēma* (#4487 ῥῆμα). See commentary on Luke 2:15, “thing”.

Luk 2:19

**“things.”** From the Greek *rhēma* (#4487 ῥῆμα), see commentary on Luke 2:15, “thing”.

Luk 2:21

**“eight days.”** The eight days required by Genesis 17:12. That Joseph and Mary had Jesus circumcised on the eighth day reminds us that they were both observant Jews. Sometimes the birth of Jesus is so “Christianized” that we forget Joseph and Mary were Jews who kept the Law.

According to the Law, the baby had to be circumcised on the eighth day, which is precisely the day when the clotting factor prothrombin is the highest in a newborn baby. Until the eighth day, levels of Vitamin K, which produces prothrombin, are insufficient, and any surgery before this could produce hemorrhaging. Out of love, our God ordered that the circumcision rite be done precisely on the eighth day, the only time in a baby’s life when prothrombin levels are above 100 percent.

“We should commend the many hundreds of workers who labored at great expense over a number of years to discover that the safest day to perform circumcision is the eighth. Yet, as we congratulate medical science for this recent finding, we can almost hear the leaves of the Bible rustling. They would like to remind us that four thousand years ago, when God initiated circumcision with Abraham... Abraham did not pick the eighth day after many centuries of trial-and-error experiments. Neither he nor any of his company from the ancient city of Ur in the Chaldees ever had been circumcised. It was a day picked by the Creator of vitamin K.”[[51]](#footnote-15549)

Luk 2:22

**“when the days of their *ceremonial* cleansing according to the Law of Moses were completed.”** That period of time was 40 days (Lev. 12:2-4), and that Joseph and Mary kept that Levitical commandment reminds us that they were observant Jews.

After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary stayed in Bethlehem until after the Magi arrived and the angel told Joseph to take his family and go to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15). After Joseph and Mary had been in Egypt a while and Herod was dead, an angel appeared to Joseph and told him to take Mary and baby Jesus and go back to Israel (Matt. 2:19-21). So they left Egypt and went back to Israel and moved back to Nazareth (Matt. 2:23).

Luk 2:23

**“will be called holy to the Lord**.**”** This command to set apart and redeem the firstborn male was from the Mosaic Law (Exod. 13:2, 12; Num. 18:15-16). Every male child was to be redeemed, and the redemption price was five shekels of silver, about two ounces (Num. 18:15-16). In the case of the birth of Jesus, when Joseph and Mary went to the Temple to offer the sacrifices required for Mary’s purification after childbirth—a lamb for a burnt offering and a bird for a sin offering (Lev. 12:6)—they also offered the five shekels of silver as the price of redemption (or “ransom”) of baby Jesus. In the case of Joseph and Mary, they were too poor for a lamb, so they offered birds (Luke 2:24; Lev. 12:8).

Luk 2:24

**“A pair of turtledoves.”** This verse contains important information concerning the timing of the events of the birth of Jesus. According to Leviticus 12:8, a woman was only allowed to bring a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons as a sacrifice after childbirth if she could not afford a lamb. This shows that even more than a month after Jesus was born, the Magi had not arrived in Bethlehem yet, because once they did, Mary and Joseph could have well afforded a lamb as a birth sacrifice. That Joseph and Mary could not afford a lamb was no doubt in part because Joseph did not have a prestigious job, but was a builder (see commentary on Matt. 13:55).

Mary’s cleansing and the presentation of Jesus in the Temple would have been 40 days after the birth of Jesus (Lev. 12:2-4). Mary and Joseph would have made the seven-mile walk with Jesus from Bethlehem to the Temple in Jerusalem to present Jesus only because Bethlehem was so close to the Temple. Women were not expected to travel far after childbirth. After presenting Jesus and making the sacrifices, they went back to Bethlehem, where Joseph had no doubt found work. The Magi arrived on the scene almost two years later, which is why Herod killed the babies in Bethlehem and the surrounding area who were two years old and younger. Had the Magi already come to Bethlehem and been with the shepherds at the manger, as tradition teaches, then the gold, frankincense, and myrrh that they brought would have made Joseph and Mary far too wealthy for her sacrifice of the doves or pigeons to be accepted by God.

After a woman had a child, she had to wait 40 days after a boy was born and 80 days after a girl was born (Lev. 12:1-5). Then she was to present sacrifices to God: a lamb for a burnt offering and a turtledove or pigeon for a sin offering (Lev. 12:6-8).

Some teachers have stated that Joseph and Mary did not bring a lamb as a childbirth offering because Jesus was the lamb, but that belief cannot be substantiated from the Bible. It was only assumed because it was also assumed that the Magi had already come and visited Joseph and Mary, which they had not—the Magi had not arrived yet. Matthew 2:1 makes it clear that the Magi did not even arrive in Jerusalem, much less Bethlehem, until after Jesus was born. Joseph and Mary, of all people, would have kept the Levitical Law, and also, the priests in Jerusalem who accepted the sacrifice would never have accepted it if they thought that Joseph and Mary were cheating God out of His required sacrifice.

Luk 2:25

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“*deeply* religious.”** The Greek is *eulabēs* (#2126 εὐλαβής); see commentary on Acts 10:2; “godly man.”

**“comforting.”** Cf. Young’s literal translation. *Paraklēsis* (#3874 παράκλησις) has a large semantic range including “encouragement, exhortation, appeal, and comfort.” Most translations go with “consolation.” In this situation, however, “comforting” seems to get more at the heart of it. In the harsh reality of Roman control, Simeon was waiting for all that the Messiah would bring: plenty of food, peace, protection from enemies, etc. This would come as great comfort to a hurting nation.

**“holy spirit was upon him.”** The Greek text has no article “the.” This holy spirit was the gift of God that He gave to some believers before Pentecost.

[For more information on the holy spirit and uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” and also see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 2:26

**“revealed to him.”** See commentary on Matthew 2:12.

**“holy spirit.”** The context shows that this refers to the gift of holy spirit rather than the Father who is the Giver. For in the verses before and after, “holy spirit” is clearly referring to the gift. Further, although the Greek has the articles “‘the’ spirit ‘the’ holy” there are instances where having both articles can refer to the gift (Mark 12:36; Luke 3:22; 10:21; John 14:26; Acts 2:33; 5:32; 10:44; 10:47; 11:15; 15:8; 19:6). In this case, “the holy spirit” refers to the holy spirit that was upon him that had just been mentioned in the previous verse.

[For more information on the uses of “holy spirit,” see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

**“see death.”** The phrase “see death” is an idiom for die. God showed Simeon by revelation that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

**“Messiah.”** The Greek word is *christos*, which is usually translated as “Christ” but also means “anointed one” or “messiah.” Here we translated it “Messiah” because Simeon was a Jew looking forward to the comforting of Israel, which would mean, in part, that he was looking forward to the coming Jewish Messiah and Messianic Age.

Luk 2:27

**“And he came by the spirit into the Temple.”** Simeon had to come “by the spirit,” that is, by revelation, into the Temple because there was no other reason for him to be there. It was not a special feast day or Sabbath (Joseph and Mary could not have traveled the seven miles from Bethlehem to Jerusalem on the Sabbath), it was just an ordinary day of the week after Mary had completed 40 days of cleansing. The Bible gives us the reason he was there: he was there because God told him to go there.

Luk 2:29

**“Master.”** The Greek is *despotēs* (#1203 δεσπότης) meaning master or lord, and it refers to someone who has legal control and authority over others, such as subjects or slaves (cf. 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9). Thayer points out that it was “strictly the correlative of “slave” *doulos*, and hence denoted absolute ownership and uncontrolled power.”[[52]](#footnote-20221) It also refers to someone who controls a thing, hence, an “owner.” It is used both as a title for God (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24), and a title for Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4). Whereas *despotēs* denoted absolute power and control, *kurios*, “lord,” has a more general meaning applicable to the various relationships in life, which is why we see *kurios* used even as a term of address equivalent to our polite way of addressing strangers as “Sir” (cf. KJV Matt. 13:27; John 4:11; John 5:7; etc.).

**“according to your word.”** The word spoken of in Luke 2:26, that he would not see death until he had seen the Messiah.

Luk 2:32

The salvation and everlasting life given by the Messiah was not just for the Jews, even though many of them thought that it was. The first prophecy of the Messiah is the one God made to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:15, and that was thousands of years before the Jews existed. About 2,000 years after that first prophecy of the Messiah, God promised Abraham that all the people of earth, not just the Jews, would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3). Then God repeated that promise to Isaac (Gen. 26:4); and to Jacob (Gen. 28:14). Besides those promises, the Old Testament had a number of verses that spoke of Gentiles being included in the Messianic Kingdom, which meant they were granted everlasting life (Ps. 102:15; Isa. 2:2-4; 19:23-25; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4-5; 56:3-7; 60:3; 66:18-21; Ezek. 39:21, 27; Mic. 4:2; Hag. 2:7; Zech. 8:22).

Luk 2:33

**“at the things that were being said.”** This shows us that Simeon said a lot more about the Messiah than is recorded here in Luke.

Luk 2:34

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“appointed.”** The Greek is *keimai* (#2749 κεῖμαι), which has a number of meanings, including, to be set in place, thus to lie, or be set; to be placed on something; to exist or have a place; to occur, appear, or be found; to be appointed or destined. Although some translations go with “destined,” we did not feel that was the correct meaning, and is very close to “predestined.” Jesus was human, and as a human could have failed in his mission. God “appointed” him as Messiah, but Jesus had to rise to the occasion, and walk out his appointment and calling. So does each Christian.

**“to cause.”** The *eis* (#1519 εἰς) in this verse has a causal meaning. Compare NIV and HCSB translations.

**“falling and rising.”** These are translated from the Greek words *ptōsis* (#4431 πτῶσις) and *anastasis* (#386 ἀνάστασις). Louw-Nida translates *ptosis*—usually rendered “falling”—as “to suffer destruction or ruin, with the implication of having formerly held a position of eminence.”[[53]](#footnote-18586) *Anastasis* is used everywhere else in the New Testament, 39 times, to indicate “resurrection.” We were sorely tempted to translate it thus here as well, but did not because the word can also mean “rising,” and is used that way in the LXX. Also, *anastasis* here seems to include a broader sense of “rising” than just resurrection; although we are quick to add that resurrection is clearly implied here by Simeon. Hence, a narrower translation would be “for the *destruction* and *resurrection* of many in Israel.”

The Greek is ambivalent as to whether it is the rise of some and the fall of some, or whether everybody falls and then rises. The greater scope of Scripture points to the former. However, due to the ambiguity of the Greek, there is the implication that many will fall before they rise, as is the case with the apostle Paul who first stumbled because of the Lord, then rose up to seize eternal life.

**“*that will be* continually opposed.”** “Will be” is supplied because it is a prophecy regarding the future. “Continually”[[54]](#footnote-32619) comes from the present tense of the verb, in this case, a durative present indicating continual action (See commentary on 1 John 1:7 for more on this usage of the present). The Greek is *antilegō* (#483 ἀντιλέγω). It has two distinct meanings: to be spoken against, or to be opposed. Both fit here, and thus the Greek gives a fuller sense than can be given in English. Christ will be spoken against, but more than that, he will be opposed in general in every way. Jesus is, and always has been, opposed and spoken against by those who will not submit to God’s rule and His rules. Robertson writes: “Spoken against (*antilegomenon*). Present passive participle, continuous action. It is going on today. Nietzsche [the German philosopher who was known for the phrase, “God is dead”] regarded Jesus Christ as the curse of the race because he spared the weak.”[[55]](#footnote-20943)

There is certainly a sense in which the entire life of Christ was a sign. Jesus Christ himself is a sign that is continually opposed. The sign also can refer to the resurrection of Christ. As Christ told the Pharisees who were asking him for a sign:

Matthew 12:39-40

An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

The sign of Jonah was to be the sign for that generation, and this sign was opposed by the Jews (e.g., Matt. 16:21-22; 27:62-64); it makes sense then that the resurrection of Christ was partly what Simeon was referring to.

If the resurrection was the sign, then this verse indicates Christ was “appointed” beforehand for this, which is why God could not take “this cup” from him in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). Having been appointed for this, Christ was the “Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world” (Rev. 13:8 NIV).

Luk 2:35

**“broadsword.”** An unusual word for “sword,” occurring only here and in the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 6:8; 19:15, 21). The Greek is *rhomphaia* (#4501 ῥομφαία). It has several meanings. It was a large sword, usually two-edged, which was used by non-Greek-speaking peoples, especially the Thracians. We can rightly refer to it as a “broadsword.” Also, *rhomphaia* was used of a long Thracian javelin, and also a kind of long sword usually worn on the right shoulder. The word appears very often in the Septuagint, and was the word used for the sword of Goliath. This long, broad, two-edged sword would pass through Mary’s soul as the life of her son developed. The fact that it can refer to a Thracian spear also points to one of the final acts of violence toward her son when the Roman soldier pierced Christ’s side with a spear.[[56]](#footnote-12469)

**“will pierce through your own soul.”** The reason that Simeon was led to say this to Mary and not to Joseph as well is not stated but can be figured out. By the time Jesus started his ministry Joseph had died, so Joseph never lived to experience the torment and anguish that Mary experienced with Jesus: his rejection by his own brothers, the confusion over his ministry, why he did not deliver Israel from their oppressors, and his horrific suffering and death. Like the apostles and close disciples, it was after Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to his disciples that she came to realize the work that Jesus had to accomplish, but while he was going through it, it was confusing and emotionally devastating.

Mary, like the apostles and others, did not know that Jesus had to die for the sins of humankind, nor did Joseph and Mary know that Joseph would die before Jesus started his ministry, and so there is little doubt that what Simeon said to them would be confusing and give them much to think about for many years until it was clearly fulfilled.

[For more on Joseph dying before Jesus started his ministry, see commentary on John 19:27.]

**“soul.”** The Greek word often translated “soul” is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), and it has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here it refers to the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of Mary. With all that happened to Jesus in his life, she would feel as if she had been pierced by a sword.

[For a more complete explanation of “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

**“so that the reasoning of many hearts will be revealed.”** Many things in life reveal what is in the heart. Here in Luke 2:34-35, the life of Jesus Christ is said to be one of those things. Wise and humble people accept Jesus’ sacrifice for their sins and follow and obey him, while proud and self-willed people reject him. There will be a day of judgment for all people, and at that time people will be held accountable for ignoring and defying God, their Creator. When believers tell unbelievers about Christ, whether with words or by the way they live, they are doing two things. They are giving them a genuine choice and chance to live or die, and they are making the judgment they will receive on Judgment Day very clear: unbelievers had a chance to believe and repent and rejected it. Those two reasons explain why God asks people to speak to others even when He, who knows the hearts, knows they will not believe (e.g. Exod. 4:21; Jer. 7:27).

Luk 2:36

**“a prophetess, Anna.”** That the text tells us that Anna was “a prophetess” indicates that she was openly known as a prophetess. Thus, her reputation would give weight to the words she spoke about baby Jesus.

It is an amazing demonstration of the love God has for His people that He would reveal to both Simeon and Anna that the Christ was in the Temple. The Temple was very segregated, with courts for the men and courts for the women. The only way to get the word effectively to both groups was for God to tell both a respected man and a respected woman that the Christ was there.

**“from when she was a virgin.”** Stating it this way emphasizes the purity of Anna’s life, and simultaneously shows that this was her first husband. She lived with this man seven years, until he died and she became a widow; she did not take another husband, but remained a widow until she was 84 here at the Temple scene. See commentary on Luke 2:37 for controversy regarding Anna’s age.

Luk 2:37

**“as a widow until the age of 84.”** There are differences among commentators and translators as to whether Anna was 84 years old, or was a widow for 84 years on top of her seven years of marriage and the time before she was married. The Greek can be understood either way. It reads literally, “and she a widow up to eighty-four years,” which could mean she *was* a widow for 84 years or she lived *as* a widow up to her eighty-fourth year. On the former view, if she was married at age 14 then she would be 105 (14+7+84=105).[[57]](#footnote-16716) KJV and HCSB go with the interpretation of an older Anna: e.g., “and was a widow for 84 years” (HCSB). However, we have sided with translations such as ESV and NIV, which suppose the younger age. Hendriksen provides a good summary of the arguments and sides with our translation. As he points out, verse 37 portrays Anna as being very active, daily in the Temple performing the service of religious duties, praying, and fasting. This is much more likely to be the case if she were 84 rather than 105.

Luk 2:38

**“to all those who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.”** In Luke 2:38, “Jerusalem” is being put for the city itself and the rest of Israel, as often happens in the Old Testament. In Jerusalem and Israel there were people who believed the prophets and were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem and Israel, and there were people who did not believe the prophets or did not care about religion at all. Anna knew not to waste her time trying to talk about the Messiah to people who did not believe. She spoke to faithful people who were waiting for redemption.

Luk 2:39

**“And when they had completed everything required by the law of the Lord.”** This is one of the very many places where the word “and” does not indicate that the two events connected by the “and” happened in immediate succession; the “and” simply continues the narration. Another thing that had to be completed after the offering for sin was Jesus’ trip to Egypt. When we put the events of the other Gospels together with this verse, we can see that Joseph and Mary stayed in Bethlehem after Jesus was born until they went to Egypt, and they went from there to Nazareth.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4, 11). Joseph and his family still would have been there 40 days later when they had to travel the seven miles (11.2 km) north to Jerusalem to present Jesus in the Temple and offer a sacrifice (Luke 2:21-24; Lev. 12:1-8). They were still in Bethlehem when the Magi arrived 18 months to two years later (Matt. 2:8). There simply is no evidence that they left Bethlehem and went back to Nazareth then went back to Bethlehem again in that time, and no reason for them to have done so. After the Magi left Bethlehem, Joseph took Mary and Jesus and went to Egypt (Matt. 2:14). He stayed there until Herod was dead and then went back to Nazareth (Matt. 2:15, 23).

A major key to the chronology of the birth of Christ is the phrase in this verse, “when they had completed everything required by the law of the Lord.” The word “law” is *nomos* (#3551 νόμος), and it has a very wide semantic range. The meanings of *nomos* include anything established, such as a custom; a law, rule, regulation, principle, precept, or injunction; the Mosaic Law; the entire Old Testament; and the moral instruction given by Christ. The exact meaning of *nomos* in any given context must be determined from that context. In this context, *nomos* refers to the entire Old Testament, and thus “everything required by the law” refers to all the things in the Old Testament spoken about the Christ, whether it was in the Torah (the five books of Moses), the prophets, or the writings. In this context, the Greek phrase *kata ho nomos*, often translated as “according to the law,” refers to the things in the law, or things required by the law (cf. BBE, CEB, CJB, NIV, NJB, NLT, NRSV, and see commentary on Gal. 3:29). Part of what was in the law that had to be fulfilled by the Messiah was that he had to be called out from Egypt (Matt. 2:15; Hos. 11:1). Remembering that, we can see that Luke 2:39 is a kind of summary verse that mentions the trip to Egypt simply by saying they fulfilled everything required by the law.

In summary, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and his parents stayed there for perhaps as long as two years after he was born, then they went to Egypt to escape Herod. They left Egypt when Herod was dead, and settled in Nazareth.

Luk 2:41

**“the feast of the Passover.”** Passover is one of three feasts—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles—that required all adult Jewish males to go to Jerusalem (Exod. 23:14-17; 34:22, 23; Deut. 16:16). The imperfect tense of “went” shows they habitually went; compare Hendriksen’s translation: “His parents were in the habit of going to Jerusalem.” Since only males “of mature age” were required to go, that Mary also attended shows us Mary and Joseph were a devoted couple.[[58]](#footnote-21784)

Luk 2:42

**“according to the custom.”** For an explanation of customary trips to Jerusalem, see commentary on Luke 2:41.

Luk 2:43

**“of the feast.”** There is a question as to whether this phrase belongs in verse 42, “according to the custom of the feast,” or in verse 43, “completed the days of the feast.” The Greek could be read either way; NRSV, NASB, HCSB, KJV, and ASV go with “custom of the feast,” while NIV, ESV, and NET take it to go with verse 43. We believe it should be taken with verse 43 because if left as “custom of the feast” then there is no genitive subject to complete the genitive absolute started in verse 43. Further, it strikes us less likely that they would be said to go to Jerusalem according to the “custom of the feast” when in reality it was the Mosaic Law that dictated customary visits to Jerusalem, not “festival custom” (NAB translation).

Luk 2:44

**“diligently searching.”** The Greek word is *anazēteō* (#327 ἀναζητέω), comprised of the word for seeking, *zēteō* (#2212 ζητέω), with the intensifier *ana*. Louw-Nida translates *anazēteō* as, “to try to learn the location of something by searching for it (presumably somewhat more emphatic or goal-directed than in the case of ζητέω).”[[59]](#footnote-22863) We have brought out the intensified meaning of the Greek by the translation “diligently searching.” This seems especially justified here given the situation of a missing child, and Mary’s admission to being “greatly distressed” in Luke 2:48.

Luk 2:45

**“diligently searching.”** See commentary on Luke 2:44.

Luk 2:48

**“Look here!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“astonished.”** This is a very powerful word; from the Greek *ekplēssō* (#1605 ἐκπλήσσω). It designates an overwhelming astonishment: “to cause to be filled with amazement to the point of being overwhelmed.”[[60]](#footnote-19544) After days of diligently searching for their missing child, Joseph and Mary are flooded with emotions at his discovery.

Luk 2:49

**“Why….”** These are the first recorded words of Jesus.

**“must be.”** Jesus, as the Messiah, “must be” in his Father’s house, where he would learn about his Father.

**“in my Father’s house.”** This is a common Greek idiom, and does not mean “about my Father’s business” which has been popularized by the KJV. The Greek is *en tois tou patros mou* (ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός μου), which literally translates as “in the of Father of me,” The phrase is an idiom; it does not make sense literally, and idiomatically it means “in my Father’s house.” At 12 years old, Jesus knew he was the promised Messiah and the Son of God, and he told his parents that he “must be” in his Father’s house, the Temple. He was surprised that they would think he would be anywhere else. This verse shows a little of the workings of the mind of a 12-year-old who is the sinless Son of God. As a 12-year-old, he was appropriately disconnected from the pain his absence would cause his parents, but as the Son of God he already felt the mission of God working inside him and knew he must be in the Temple, and he was sitting at the feet of the great teachers there listening to them, asking them questions, and learning from them.[[61]](#footnote-23317)

Luk 2:52

**“in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.”** This verse mentions three things that Jesus kept increasing in as he grew and matured: wisdom, stature, and favor with God and people.

As to wisdom, Jesus was a fully human person and he came from the womb with no knowledge or wisdom, and he had to acquire it as he grew, and acquire it he did. He needed to become aware of who he was as the Son of God, what his mission and destiny were, that he would one day rule the world, and that he would have to pay for the sins of mankind by suffering and then ultimately by dying. Joseph and Mary would have been his primary teachers, but there would have been others as well, and then as he continued to grow he would have learned how to read and then learned from the Scripture itself.

As to stature, Jesus was 12 years old in Luke 2, and he would have continued to grow and develop into a strong young man. He would not have been particularly tall or handsome, because Isaiah makes the point that he was not attractive to people because of his good looks, majesty, or beauty (Isa. 53:2).

As to favor with the people around him, as Jesus grew and acquired knowledge, wisdom, and social skills, the people around him would have admired him and shown him favor. As to favor with God, as Jesus grew and matured he would have constantly deepened his relationship with God. His knowledge of God and the Old Testament would have grown and led to godly thinking and character. His prayer life would have deepened, and he would have had an ever-deepening understanding of what he was called to accomplish in life. Also, his knowledge of the Law and the lessons in the Bible, and his obedience to the Law, and commitment to do what was right in God’s eyes would have led to continued nurture and favor from God. Even though Jesus was the Son of God, he had to grow by experience like anyone else does, and God’s favor upon him would have provided more and more varying experiences and opportunities for growth. Jesus never sinned, but making a mistake and learning from it is not a sin, and surely that happened to Jesus just like it did to other young people.

The fact that Jesus “kept increasing…in favor with God” is very good evidence that Jesus Christ was not God or a member of the Trinity, but was what the Bible says he is: the only begotten Son of God, the last Adam, a man approved by God. “God” does not need to increase in favor with God; in fact, he cannot. The members of the Trinity cannot grow in favor with each other. Trinitarians teach that Jesus was “God in the flesh,” a member of the Trinity, but “God,” by definition, has favor with God so this verse does not even make sense if Jesus is God. Trinitarian doctrine is that it is the “human part” of the God Jesus that grew, but that is not what the Bible says. In fact, it does not even say that Jesus grew in favor with the Father, he grew in favor with “God.” Trinitarian doctrine is that Jesus was 100% God and 100% human, and had both natures in his one flesh body, and the human part grew. But that is never stated in the Bible; it is manufactured to support the doctrine of the Trinity. Furthermore, if the “two natures” theory was correct, the God part of Jesus would have known about the human part, and the human part known about the God part, so how could the human part grow? It would have had immediate and constant access to the God part, and would have had no need and even ostensibly no ability to grow. God does not grow in knowledge or “favor with God.”

Luke 2:52 is simple and straightforward. Jesus was a fully human being, fathered by God and born of the virgin Mary, and so when he was born he was as helpless, innocent, and ignorant as any other human baby, and over time he grew in his wisdom, his stature, and in favor with both God and other people.

[For more on Jesus not being God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

**“man.”** The word is plural in Greek and refers to all humankind, both men and women (cf. Acts 24:16).

**Luke Chapter 3**

Luk 3:1

**“Pontius Pilate.”** Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from AD 26-36.

[For more on Pilate, see commentary on Matt. 27:2.]

Luk 3:2

**“the word of God came to John.”** The text does not tell us how long John had been preaching before Jesus started his ministry. Luke 3:1-2 could be taken as a simple chronological reference, that John started to minister when Tiberius was emperor, Pontius Pilate was governor, Herod Antipas, Philip, and Lysanias were tetrarchs, and Annas and Caiaphas were sharing the power of the High Priesthood. However, there is quite likely a deeper meaning as well. The above-mentioned men were the world’s power structure over the people of God in the tribal area of Israel that God gave to Israel in Joshua’s time. As we know from history, those top men were interested in themselves and their own power and prestige, and knew or cared little about God and the things of God. That, however, did not keep God from working powerfully. God works in spite of the world’s unhelpfulness. God’s word came to John, who began to rock the Jewish world from the inside out, and soon after it would come to the Messiah himself, who would change the world.

Too often Christians are daunted or stymied by the fact that there does not seem to be enough power, money, influence, or exposure to get the work of the Lord done. But that is an illusion and a lie. Jesus showed us the power of weakness by dying on the cross, which seemed like such a huge defeat but was the world’s greatest victory. Then, some years later, Jesus had to remind Paul that his strength was made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). God’s victory is not over territory or over unwilling souls, but is won person by person, bit by bit, as people turn to Him and love, worship, and obey Him. God has an army of people on earth who are His fellow workers. That army needs to see through God’s eyes, that the little things that win the hearts and souls of people and turn them from darkness to light are what really matter to God. Little things that often don’t seem to make a big impact, like being faithful in prayer, faithful to stand up and speak up for what is right and righteous, and faithful to be witnesses of what God has done in one’s life; these things are huge to God, and still rock the world in spite of the evil power structure that is in place.

Luk 3:3

**“and he went into the whole region around the Jordan.”** John baptized in the Jordan but he may have baptized people in other streams and such that led to the Jordan. It does seem that he stayed close to the Jordan, however.

The Bible does not tell us how long John had been publicly ministering and baptizing before Jesus was baptized and started his ministry. It seems logical, however, that it would have been at least a number of months. The prophecy in Malachi 4:6 about John was, “He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and strike the earth with a curse.” The angel alluded to that prophecy when he spoke with John’s father, Zechariah, in the Temple. The angel told Zechariah, “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and *turn* the disobedient to the good sense of the righteous, to make ready a people who are entirely prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:16-17). By the time of John and Jesus, the people of Israel were so confused doctrinally that it seems it would have taken some time for John to travel the country and turn the people back to God and get them prepared for the Messiah to come.

John was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:26), and for a period of time, both John and Jesus were ministering separately and were both baptizing people (John 3:22-23). Then John was thrown in prison and executed.

**“baptism *as a sign* of repentance.”** See commentary on Mark 1:4.

Luk 3:4

**“Make the road ready for the Lord! Make the paths straight for him!”** Luke 3:4 makes a reference to the custom of making a road ready by clearing and leveling it.

[For more on the custom of clearing a road for a coming dignitary, see commentary on Mark 1:3.]

**“A voice of one calling out in the desert, ‘Make the road ready for the Lord! Make the paths straight for him!’”** This quotation in Luke, which comes from Isaiah 40:3-5 (and the quotation in Matt. 3:3 and Mark 1:3) is from the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament. The vast majority of scholars believe that the New Testament was written in Greek, and there are many reasons for that. A primary one is textual. There are simply no extant manuscripts of the NT in Hebrew, and the manuscripts in Aramaic (Syriac) do not seem to be the autographs from which the Greek texts came. Similarly, however, the Greek of the New Testament is so markedly stylistically different from book to book that it does not seem possible that there is an underlying Aramaic text. Although there are some stylistic differences in Aramaic writings, the Aramaic texts we have today would not have led to the stylistic differences that we see in the different books of the Greek New Testament.

There is research that indicates that Hebrew was spoken in the first century more than was believed in the past, and this has led a few scholars to conclude that the original texts of the New Testament were written in Hebrew or Aramaic. The argument is that the texts were written by Jews for Jews, and thus would have not been written in Greek but in a native Jewish tongue. However, that misses the point. The focus of the New Testament documents was the Christian Church. They were not written in Israel and they were not written exclusively to the Jews.

There were many Jews, especially in the diaspora, who spoke Greek. When Stephen addressed the Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 7 (likely less than ten years after the death of Christ), he was speaking Greek and quoting from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. Stephen’s dispute had begun with, among others, Jews from Alexandria, Egypt, which is where the Septuagint was written (Acts 6:9). When he was brought before the Sanhedrin, he quoted from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew Bible. One way we know that is while the Hebrew Bible says Jacob’s family who went to Egypt was 70 people, the Septuagint text says 75, and Stephen said 75 (Acts 7:14).

By the time much of the NT was written, God had already moved away from the Jews and was ministering to the Gentiles. It was not so much that God wanted to abandon the Jews and minister to the Gentiles, but when He began to include the Gentiles, and wanted His People to do the same, they resisted. Many Jews resisted God’s Messiah (Rom. 10:1-4), but it seems even the majority of the Jews who believed in the Messiah wanted to bring them under the Law, rather than accept that God had a new program of grace for all people and had moved away from “the yoke of bondage.” We know from the New Testament that Paul was continuously persecuted by Christian Jews.

So the claim that the NT was written by Jews for Jews is not correct. In fact, it seems that the only book of the New Testament that was written in Israel was James. Even Peter wrote from Babylon (or Rome). By the time Paul visited Jerusalem, the year he was arrested, none of the original apostles were listed as being there (Acts 21:17ff). Although we do not know the reason the original apostles likely left Jerusalem, they may have left with the persecution of Acts 12, and not come back, perhaps in part because the Christian Jews in Jerusalem were rejecting the revelation of the New Testament.

James, who was leading the church at Jerusalem at that time, was not the apostle James, but James the brother of Jesus. It is worth noting that James did not believe that his half-brother Jesus was the Messiah until sometime after the resurrection. He did not believe by the Feast of Tabernacles, less than a year before Jesus’ death (John 7:5), and the evidence is that he still did not believe when Jesus was dying on the cross, which is why Jesus told John to take care of Jesus’ mother Mary (John 19:27). It seems that after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his family and convinced them he was alive, because “his brothers” were with the disciples in Acts 1:14. However, there is no mention of James until Acts 12:17, during the persecution of Herod Agrippa, when the apostles apparently were forced to leave Jerusalem. Apparently, in their absence, James took over as an elder in the church and by Acts 15 seems to be the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

As we can see from Acts (and Galatians), the Christian Jews in Jerusalem completely ignored the revelation that Paul got that was codified in the books of Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians (see commentary on Gal. 2:2). The fact that Paul was ministering to Jews and Gentiles living outside of Israel, is good evidence that he would have written in Greek. Similarly, by the time the Four Gospels were written, the majority of the Church was centered outside of Israel, and that goes for the writing of Hebrews, Peter, Jude, and the writings of John as well. Thus, it makes sense that the original texts were in Greek, and that is also perhaps why many of the New Testament quotations of the Old Testament are from the Septuagint, as we see here in Luke 3:4.

Luk 3:7

**“So he *began* saying to the multitudes that went out to be baptized by him.”** This event is also recorded in Matthew 3:7-10, and that record lets us know that although the “multitudes” were coming to John and he was speaking to them, part of what he said was to, and specifically applied to, the Jewish leaders, which were the Pharisees and Sadducees mentioned in Matthew 3:7 (see commentary on Matt. 3:7).

**“You offspring of vipers!”** The phrase, “You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come” appears in the same context in Matthew 3:7 and Luke 3:7. Jesus also called the religious leaders a generation of vipers (Matt. 12:34; 23:33).

**“wrath.”** This is the wrath associated with the Day of the Lord (see commentary on Matt. 3:7 and Rev. 6:17).

Luk 3:8

**“Come now.”** For this translation compare Anchor Bible Commentary (Joseph Fitzmyer).[[62]](#footnote-26264) The NASB, HCSB, and KJV translate the *oun* (#3767 οὖν) as “therefore.” But “therefore” normally indicates the *practical application* of that which came before, which makes no sense in this context; rather, this is a continuation of the narrative, a logical connection, not properly the practical application. “Come now” captures this sense well.

**“these stones.”** The Jews claimed that salvation was in large part due to their being descendants of Abraham, and John was repudiating that belief (see commentary on Matt. 3:9).

Luk 3:9

**“trees”** is the figure of speech hypocatastasis[[63]](#footnote-31450) and in this context “trees” are people, and in fact, the word “trees” is often used for the powerful people in the society (Judg. 9:8-15; Song 2:3; 7:8; Isa. 56:3; Ezek. 17:22-24; Dan. 4:10, 20-22; Zech. 4:3-14; 11:1-3; Rom. 11:16-24). In this context, John the Baptist is talking to the religious leaders of the Jews, who certainly considered themselves to be high and mighty, and the pillars of the community, so John’s reference to “trees” is certainly warranted. There are times when a tree is used for a nation (Ezek. 31:2-9), but that is not the case in this context, because nations are judged by God by what happens in and to them, but only people are judged in the future Judgment.

[For more on the religious leaders at John’s baptism, see commentary on Matt. 3:7. For an explanation of the figure of speech hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2.]

**“will be cut down.”** The Greek is the present perfect form of the verb *ekkoptō* **(**#1581 ἐκκόπτω), and “is cut down” is a very literal translation in this context, which involves “trees.” This verse can be confusing because the present tense of the verb “is cut down,” makes it seem like the cutting is being done now, when in fact the cutting is actually future, at God’s Judgment. This is clear even from the first part of the verse which notes that the cutting has not begun, but the axe has been placed down near the root of the trees in preparation for the cutting.

Translators recognize the confusion that the “is” can cause, and thus some versions actually transpose the present tense to a future tense in their translations, using “will be cut down” (HCSB, NIV, NJB, Moffatt, REV). Although the present tense verb is used, the cutting will be done in the future. This is the idiom some scholars refer to as the “prophetic present,” and it takes an event that is future but certain to happen and coming soon, and treats it as if it is present. The present tense verb being used for an event that is future is also referred to as the *futuristic present.*[[64]](#footnote-31896) Writing in the prophetic present typically emphasizes either the certainty and inevitability of something happening in the future, or the fact that the event will occur very soon. Other examples of the prophetic present include Matthew 3:10; 17:11; Mark 9:31; 1 Corinthians 15:26; 16:5; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 11. The prophetic present idiom is closely related to the prophetic perfect idiom (see commentary on Eph. 2:6, “prophetic perfect”).

**“and thrown into the fire.”** John is giving these leaders a very serious warning. God expects people to have faith in Him, obey Him, and do good works, and those who do not are in danger of being thrown into Gehenna, the Lake of Fire, which is the “second death” and is everlasting death (Rev. 20:14-15).

[For more on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Luk 3:14

**“extort money from anyone by threats.”** The Greek is *diaseiō* (#1286 διασείω). Robertson writes: “Here only in the N.T., but [it is] in the LXX [the Septuagint] and is common in ancient Greek. It means to shake (seismic disturbance, earthquake) thoroughly (*dia*) and so thoroughly to terrify, to extort money or property by intimidating... It was a process of blackmail to which Socrates refers (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, ii. 9, 1).”[[65]](#footnote-26939) This was a constant temptation to soldiers. Might does not make right with God, as we see throughout the Bible.

Luk 3:16

**“I am not *even* worthy to untie the strap of his sandals!”** That John would compare himself to Jesus in this way is very important in showing the humble and obedient heart of John, who was God’s loyal servant. John’s comparison occurs in all four Gospels (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16, and John 1:27). Matthew is slightly different but the heart is the same.

**“holy spirit or *with* fire.”** In this context, “holy spirit **or** *with* fire” is a better way to translate the text than “holy spirit **and** fire,” because, as we will see, in this context, the “fire” is the fire of God’s judgment.

There has been a long debate among theologians about what the “fire” in the phrase “holy spirit and fire” refers to. Some say it refers to God’s judgment. Those theologians point out that each person will either be saved and be baptized with holy spirit or they will remain unsaved and be “baptized” with fire—thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:12-15). Other theologians assert that the “fire” refers to the fire of God’s presence and spiritual cleansing. Those theologians say that in the same way that Peter speaks of the “fiery ordeal” (or “trial by fire”) that believers go through (1 Pet. 4:12), so it is that every believer goes through a fire of spiritual cleansing as they mature in the Lord.

In Scripture, “fire” can refer to something good or to something bad; either the presence and acceptance of God, or the judgment of God. For example, in Exodus 3:2, when God appeared to Moses in a burning bush, the fire represented the presence of God, and we find that meaning throughout the Bible (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 13:21; 19:18; 1 Kings 18:38; 1 Chron. 21:26; 2 Chron. 7:1; Acts 2:3). But we also see fire being used as the fire of God’s judgment throughout the Bible (Gen. 19:24; Exod. 9:23; Lev. 10:2; Num. 11:1; 16:35; 2 Kings 1:14; Rev. 11:5; 20:9, 14). The point is that when we see fire in Scripture, we have to learn from the context whether it represents the presence and acceptance of God or the judgment of God.

In the context of what John the Baptist was saying, the “fire” that the Messiah will baptize some people with is the fire of judgment. To understand what John the Baptist said, we need to examine all three of the Gospel records in which John says the Messiah will baptize with holy spirit (Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:4-8; Luke 3:2-18).

Matthew records that John the Baptist was speaking to a group of Sadducees and Pharisees, and they almost always opposed God and Jesus. John knew that at least a large part of their group was unsaved and headed for destruction in the Lake of Fire, so he spoke very directly and sternly to them to warn them of their fate. In Matthew 3:7, he called them “offspring of vipers,” and asked them, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” John was directly warning those religious leaders about the wrath that would come upon them on the Day of Judgment. He instructed them to produce fruit—godly actions—to demonstrate repentance (Matt. 3:8).

John also warned those Sadducees and Pharisees not to think of themselves as saved just because their ancestor was Abraham; which may seem strange to us today but was a common belief among the Jews (Matt. 3:9). Like many people in their culture, they may have thought that they did not need to repent since they were Jews and were elected by God to be in the covenant. However, John addressed that point and said that they should not remain stubborn and unrepentant, thinking that simply because they are children of Abraham that God will accept them. So the “take-home message” of Matthew 3:7-9 from John to the Pharisees and Sadducees was that they were the offspring of vipers and needed to repent.

John intensified his message to the Pharisees and Sadducees in the next three verses, Matthew 3:10-12. In all three of those verses, John spoke about fire, and the content of the verses shows that the “fire” is the fire of Judgment, which for those Jews would be the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:12-15). In Matthew 3:10, John made a statement that might be unclear to us, but was crystal clear to the religious leaders standing in front of him. He said, “The axe is already laid down at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” In the biblical culture, a “tree” was often used to represent people, especially leaders. By the figure of speech hypocatastasis, John called the religious leaders “trees,” and said if they did not bring forth good fruit, they would be burned! It is not likely that the religious leaders misunderstood what John was saying.

The Old Testament has many references in which people are called trees or compared to trees or plants (cf. Ps. 37:35; 52:8; 92:12; Song 7:8; Isa. 56:3; Jer. 11:19; Ezek. 17:5, 24; 20:47; 31:3, 9). A very well-known example is in Daniel 4:7-22, where Nebuchadnezzar is represented as a huge tree that provides shelter and shade for birds and animals, but then is cut down. Also, Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, told a story about how the trees wanted to set a king over themselves and asked the olive tree and fig tree to reign over them (Judg. 9:7-13). Jesus referred to people as plants when he said, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

Matthew 3:11 continues John’s warning to the stubborn religious leaders. He told them that he baptized with water and thus gave people a chance to repent, but the one coming after him—the Messiah—would baptize with either holy spirit or fire. Although in most English translations John the Baptist is recorded as saying that the coming Messiah would baptize “you” (the Sadducees and Pharisees) with “holy spirit and fire,” that does not make sense in this context. The Messiah was not going to baptize those unsaved “offspring of vipers” with holy spirit. The word “and” in the phrase “holy spirit and fire” is the Greek word *kai*, and it can be quite flexible in its usage. It usually means “and,” but in different contexts, it can mean “and yet,” “but,” “neither,” “and then,” “then,” “and so,” “so,” “indeed,” “nevertheless,” “also,” “likewise,” and it can also, in some circumstances mean “or.”

Examples of *kai* meaning “or” in the Bible include: “whether short or long” (Acts 26:29 ESV); “a woman who is no longer married or has never been married” (1 Cor. 7:34 NLT); “two or three witnesses” (2 Cor. 13:1 ESV); “no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female” (Gal. 3:28 HCSB); and “the mark on their foreheads or their hands” (Rev. 20:4 ESV). We should also remember that John the Baptist would have almost certainly been speaking Hebrew or Aramaic to the religious leaders, and in both those languages, the word for “and,” “but,” and “or” can be the same word, with the meaning coming from the context. Thus, what the Greek records as a *kai*, usually “and,” could have been more clearly an “or” when spoken by John the Baptist.

It is possible, but does not make as clear a translation in English, that because the “you” in the phrase “baptize you with holy spirit and fire” is plural, it could refer to the whole group, not an individual (although it is common for a group of individuals to be addressed in the plural). In that case, the meaning would be that the Messiah would baptize the group with holy spirit and fire, with some of them getting the holy spirit and some getting the fire. But given that the *kai* can be “or,” and wanting the English translation to communicate the truth of the situation as clearly as possible, the translation “holy spirit or fire” is to be preferred because, in the end, each individual in the group will either be baptized with holy spirit or fire.

As we study the context of “baptize you with the holy spirit or fire” we see that John is pointing out to the religious leaders the two possible ends of their behavior: they would either be saved and get to enter the Kingdom and be baptized with holy spirit, “or” they would remain unsaved, and on Judgment Day they would be cast into the flames of Gehenna and be “baptized with fire,” and be burned up.

In Matthew 3:12, John continued his warning to the Sadducees and Pharisees that they were in danger of dying in the Lake of Fire. He portrayed the Messiah as a farmer landowner who had just harvested his crop of grain. He stands with his winnowing fork in his hand, ready to sift all the grain (people) into two basic categories: wheat (saved) and chaff (unsaved). The wheat will be cared for (gathered into the barn), while the chaff will be burned up.

So Matthew 3:10 and 3:12 are very similar. Fruitful trees and good grain are valued and cared for, while fruitless trees and chaff are burned up. Thus, Matthew 3:10-12 are three back-to-back illustrations of the two possible ends for the religious leaders (indeed, for all people): get saved, which will result in entering the Kingdom and being baptized with holy spirit, or remain unsaved and be destroyed in the fire.

The Gospel of Luke is like Matthew in that it records John saying that the Messiah will baptize with holy spirit or fire. Luke adds some information that is not in Matthew or Mark and also omits some of the information given in those other Gospels. By comparing Luke with Matthew, we can tell that Luke includes the Sadducees and Pharisees in the crowd John the Baptist was speaking to. For example, like Matthew, Luke 3:7 records John saying, “You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Luke also records John warning the people not to think they will be saved because they have Abraham as their ancestor (Luke 3:8). However, Luke also specifically mentions tax collectors and soldiers, and both groups were notorious sinners. So it is appropriate for Luke, like Matthew, to speak specifically about the fire of judgment.

In Luke, John the Baptist gives the same three examples of God’s fire of judgment that the Gospel of Matthew records: fruitless trees being cut down and burned (Luke 3:9); the Messiah baptizing with holy spirit or with fire (Luke 3:16); and the “wheat” (righteous people) being gathered into barns while the “chaff” (unrighteous people) is burned (Luke 3:9).

Another Gospel we need to study, the Gospel of Mark, is conspicuously different from Matthew and Luke because in the Gospel of Mark, John the Baptist never says the Messiah will baptize in “holy spirit or fire.” Mark only records John saying that the Messiah will baptize with holy spirit; he omits the part about fire. In Mark, John the Baptist says, “I baptized you with water, but he [the Messiah] will baptize you with holy spirit” (Mark 1:8). In fact, the Gospel of Mark omits all three verses that mention fire. It never records John speaking about the fruitless trees being burned in the fire, the chaff being burned in the fire, or the Messiah baptizing with fire.

Why would Mark leave out the three verses about fire and only record John saying the Messiah would baptize with holy spirit? While Matthew focused on the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the Gospel of Luke focused on sinners such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, tax collectors, and soldiers, the Gospel of Mark has a different focus; it focuses on the humble and righteous people in the crowd—those people who come out to John, confess their sins, and get baptized. In Mark, there are no Pharisees or Sadducees mentioned—the “offspring of vipers” are absent. Thus, in contrast to Matthew and Luke, which focus on the God rejecters and people known for their sinful behavior, Mark focuses on the people who are genuinely repentant, and therefore righteous in the sight of God. In Mark, John the Baptist speaks to those people about the Messiah and says to them, “he will baptize you with holy spirit.” Mark does not record John saying the Messiah would baptize people with fire because the kind of people Mark is focusing on will not burn in the Lake of Fire; they are righteous in the sight of God.

That Mark does not say that the Messiah will baptize people “with holy spirit and with fire” is very solid evidence that the fire in the phrase “holy spirit and fire” is the fire of God’s judgment and not the fire of spiritual cleansing. If the Messiah’s baptism with fire refers to the fire of spiritual cleansing, then it ought to be in Mark as well as in Matthew and Luke because everyone needs spiritual cleansing, the best of us and the worst of us. The repentant people in Mark would need it as much as the religious leaders in Matthew. The best explanation for the Messiah’s baptism with fire to be omitted from Mark is that it is the fire of judgment. That being the case, the best way to translate what John said in Matthew and Luke is that the Messiah would baptize “with holy spirit **or** fire.”

Another valuable point to keep in mind before we conclude this study is that the word “baptism” can refer to having something unpleasant happen. In the New Testament, “baptism” was used of what people experienced, i.e., what they were “immersed in.” For example, speaking of his own death, in Mark 10:38, Jesus said to James and John, “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” The “baptism” that Jesus referred to was his suffering and death. Similarly, when John the Baptist mentioned the Messiah baptizing people with fire, it could easily refer to the baptism of their death in the Lake of Fire.

In conclusion, let us realize that the words of John the Baptist are absolutely true. John did come and offer repentance to anyone who wanted it. And Jesus will baptize everyone in either holy spirit or fire. Repentance and salvation are still available today because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Jesus Christ paid for everyone to be saved, so salvation is a free gift from God to mankind—all a person has to do is take it. If you want to be saved, simply do what Romans 10:9 says: “if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from among the dead, you will be saved.” For those who are saved, Jesus baptizes with holy spirit. Those people who refuse salvation will be baptized in the Lake of Fire until they are consumed. But there is no need for that. Life is precious and everyone can have everlasting life in paradise through Christ instead of extinction in the flames. If you have not already gotten saved, reach out and take it—you will be glad you did.

[For more on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire. For more on the figure of speech hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2. For more information on the uses of “holy spirit,” see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 3:17

**“barn.”** See commentary on Matthew 3:12.

Luk 3:18

**“exhorting.”** The Greek verb is *parakaleō* (#3870 παρακαλέω), and can mean exhort, encourage, etc. It is a verb (participle present active nominative masculine singular) and as such should not be translated as “exhortations” in the sense of a noun. John preached the good news, and one of the ways he did so was by speaking up about many (*polus*) and various (*heteros*) subjects, just as he had done in Luke 3:10-14. To say “many others” rather than “many” and “varied” takes some of the emphasis away from the number and variety of subjects that John must have covered in his teaching. Bible teachers should make note of John’s teaching. There is more to the Good News than teaching about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also have to tell people how to live righteously before God. For a similar translated structure to the REV, cf. Lenski.[[66]](#footnote-32434)

Luk 3:21

**“Now it came to pass.”** The record of Jesus’ baptism is in Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; and is mentioned in John 1:31-34.

Luk 3:22

**“the holy spirit.”** The Greek text has no article “the.” This refers to the holy spirit that is the gift of God.

[For more information on the holy spirit and uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” and also see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

**“descended onto him in a bodily form.”** This event was visible to those who were there, for example, John the Baptist saw it (John 1:32)

Luk 3:23

**“about 30.”** According to the Law of Moses, no one could enter Priestly Service as a Levite until 30 years old, and then they served from 30 to 50 years old (Num. 4:3, 23, 30, etc.). King David changed the age a Levite or priest could serve from 30 years to 20 years old (1 Chron. 23:24-27). However, it is important to note that the Word of God does not say that David spoke by revelation when he made the change. In fact, it is noteworthy that the Bible says that the Levites were counted from 20 years old and older “by the last words of David,” as if this were a decree David made, and thus “his words,” not “God’s word.” Jesus started his ministry when he was “about 30” (Luke 3:23), but would have turned 30 before he carried out his duties as both priest and sacrifice, dying for our sins and interceding for us before God. Jesus began his ministry when he received holy spirit when he was baptized by John (Matt. 3:13-17; John 1:32-34). In the spring of his twenty-ninth year he went to Passover at Jerusalem (John 2:23). That fall, we believe Tishri 1, he would have turned 30 years old. The next Passover he would have been crucified, when he was 30 years old.

[For a Tishri 1 birth, see: Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed*; Ernest Martin, *The Star that Astonished the World.*]

So what happened to the years of Jesus’ childhood and adolescence, and his life as a young adult? Where are the records that fill in the gap in his life from age 12 (Luke 2:42) to adulthood? The Gospels give us little information about Jesus before he started his ministry. Edersheim writes: “We feel that the scantiness of particulars here supplied by the Gospels was intended to prevent the human interest from overshadowing the grand central Fact, to which alone attention was to be directed. For the design of the Gospels was manifestly not to furnish a biography of Jesus the Messiah, but, in organic connection with the Old Testament, to tell the history of the long-promised establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth.”[[67]](#footnote-20177) What we do know is that Jesus was the son of a builder, and as the custom of the time was, was trained as a builder and became one himself (cf. Mark 6:3).

All the stories about Jesus going to India and studying to become a yogi, or going to some other place to study ancient mystic ways, are erroneous assumptions. In fact, the people of his own hometown Nazareth had witnessed him growing up and quietly doing his work, learning as he went. The prophecy was that Jesus would be quiet and orderly: “He will not cry out or shout or make his voice heard in the streets” (Isa. 42:2 HCSB). He lived the way the New Testament tells us to live: “Now we command and exhort such people … to be working in a quiet fashion, *and* to eat their own bread” (2 Thess. 3:12). Jesus never flaunted his knowledge and led a quiet and obedient lifestyle, growing up in the builders’ trade of his father, which is why he is called both “the builder’s son” (Matt. 13:55) and “the builder” (Mark 6:3). Jesus’ quiet and unassuming early years are why the people of his hometown were so surprised when he suddenly showed up with great knowledge and power. According to Matthew 13:54, they exclaimed: “Where *did* this man get this wisdom, and these miracles?” Had Jesus been gone for some 20 years, and studied mystic ways in some far-off place, they would have not been surprised at his knowledge. In fact, Jesus had been studying all along, learning the Word, being obedient to it, and preparing his heart for his ministry.

**“the son (as it was assumed) of Joseph.”** Luke contains the genealogy of Joseph, tracing his ancestry through David via David’s son Nathan. In contrast, Matthew contains the genealogy of Mary and traces her ancestry through David via David’s son Solomon. Nathan and Solomon were full brothers, both being the sons of David and Bathsheba (1 Chron. 3:5; cf. 2 Sam. 5:14; 1 Chron. 14:4). The Gospel of Luke never mentions Mary for the simple reason that it is not her genealogy. Similarly, Matthew never mentions Joseph, the husband of Mary, because it is not his genealogy (the Joseph in Matthew 1:16 is the father of Mary, see commentary on Matthew 1:16).

Once we realize that Matthew has Mary’s genealogy and does not mention Joseph at all, and Luke has Joseph’s genealogy and does not mention Mary at all, two things happen: the genealogies make sense (one genealogy for Mary and one for Joseph), and also many fanciful explanations for the two genealogies is eliminated. For example, some commentators have concluded that both genealogies belong to Joseph, saying that by custom Joseph had two different fathers, a real father, Jacob, and a levirate father, Heli. But that is clearly an assumption to solve a problem that does not actually exist, and it creates another and larger problem: it would mean that Joseph has two genealogies while Mary has none.

Most of the commentators who say that Matthew is Joseph’s genealogy and Luke is Mary’s genealogy realize that each parent should have a genealogy. However, they anchor their argument in their belief that Matthew 1:16 is referring to Joseph the husband of Mary (but it is not!), and based on that they say Matthew’s genealogy has to be about Joseph and Luke’s about Mary, even though Luke does not mention Mary. They answer the objection that Luke’s genealogy does not mention Mary by saying it does not have to since Luke chapter 1 made it clear that Mary was the mother of Jesus. Our rebuttal is that both Matthew and Luke make it clear that Mary is the mother of Jesus, but in the actual genealogical list, Matthew mentions only Mary while Luke mentions only Joseph.

Defenders of the position that Luke has Mary’s genealogy point out that the Talmud says Heli was the father of Mary, not Joseph, and therefore Luke must contain Mary’s genealogy. Our rebuttal to that line of reasoning is that the Talmud was written centuries after Christ, and the animosity between the Jews and Christians had been going on for years. It is well-known that in the centuries after Christ, the Jews did many things to try to prove that Jesus was not the Christ. As late as when the Gospel of Luke was written (likely AD 50-65; more than 20 years after Jesus was crucified) the Jews were still aggressively promoting that Jesus was not the Christ, which is why Luke says that it was “assumed” he was the son of Joseph. The Jews did not believe he was the Son of God. The Jews also promoted that Jesus’ body was stolen from the grave by his disciples (Matt. 28:11-15). They also discounted many of the Messianic prophecies so that Jesus could not be said to have fulfilled those prophecies. For the Jews, whether accidentally or on purpose, misunderstanding the genealogy in Luke would be just one more way to show the New Testament was confusing and erroneous. It should be recognized that believers such as Sextus Julius Africanus (c. 230), who predates the Talmud, wrote that Luke gave Joseph’s genealogy, and so did a number of the Church Fathers.

Despite all the rhetoric (some of it quite ungodly, even involving name-calling) about the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, the solution is quite simple. God gave us a mathematical key in Matthew that, along with the Aramaic text, makes it clear that Matthew has Mary’s genealogy, which is why Matthew mentions Mary and not Joseph. Luke, on the other hand, mentions Joseph and not Mary because it is Joseph’s genealogy.

Luk 3:36

**“the *son* of Cainan.”** The name Cainan does not appear in any Hebrew manuscript but appears in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew. The Septuagint added to the Old Testament in other places, and this is very likely an addition, for no one earlier than Augustine mentions Cainan. Also, some early Greek manuscripts omit the name in Luke, while others have a different form of it. It is almost certainly an addition to the Septuagint, which then was brought into some early manuscripts of Luke. Christopher Eames writes about P75, a manuscript fragment of Luke and other evidence that the name Cainan is not original: “A fragment known as Papyrus 75, showing this passage of Luke in question, contains no evidence of the name Cainan. This papyrus fragment potentially dates as early as the second century c.e. …We have no Cainan in the Masoretic genealogy. We have no Cainan in the Samaritan genealogy, nor in other early translations of Genesis 11—the Chaldee, Syriac, or Vulgate. We have no Cainan in the first-century historian Josephus’ genealogy (see *Antiquities,* 1.6.4-5). He is likewise missing from the first-century Philo’s accounts. And perhaps most condemning of all: 1 Chronicles 1 actually duplicates the genealogies of Genesis 11—and in this passage, the *Septuagint text itself likewise omits Cainan!* (1 Chronicles 1:24.) ...‘It certainly was not contained in any copies of the Bible which Berosus, Eupolemus, Polyhistor, Theophilus of Antioch, Julius Africanus or even Jerome, had access to,’ *McClintock and Strong*’s continues. ‘Moreover, it seems that the intrusion of the name even into the [Septuagint] is comparatively modern, since Augustine [fourth–fifth centuries c.e.] is the first writer who mentions it as found in the [Old Testament] at all.’”[[68]](#footnote-30367)

Eames goes on to point out that in the Septuagint text that has Cainan, both he and his supposed son, Salah, were the same age when they had a son (130), and lived the same number of years after that son (330) and thus were the same age when they died (460), which is highly suspicious. The evidence strongly supports that the name Cainan was an addition to the Old Testament Septuagint text and then was added to Luke as well.

Luk 3:38

**“the son of Adam.”** Adam was created from the ground (Gen. 2:7), and Eve was created from material from Adam (Gen. 2:22). Adam and Eve were the first two human beings, and from them came every human who has ever lived.

[For more on Adam and Eve being literal and the ones who began the human race, see commentary on Gen. 2:7.]

**Luke Chapter 4**

Luk 4:1

**“And Jesus.”** The record of Jesus’ being tempted in the desert is in Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; and Luke 4:1-13.

**“full of holy spirit.”** The Greek text has no article “the.” This refers to the holy spirit that is the gift of God.

[For more information on the holy spirit and uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” and also see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

**“in the desert.”** Matthew 4:1 and Mark 1:12 clearly tell us that the spirit led, or drove, Jesus *into* the desert: Greek, *eis* (#1519 εἰς). Luke, however, emphasizes that Jesus was being led (imperfect tense) by the spirit while *in* the desert, using the Greek word *en* (#1722 ἐν) rather than *eis*. Some later texts changed the reading to *eis* to harmonize with the other gospels, and this explains the KJV’s translation “into the wilderness.”

Luk 4:2

**“being tempted by the Devil.”** The record of Jesus being tempted by the Devil is in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Both records have the same three temptations but they are in a different order. It seems that Matthew has the chronological order the way the temptations occurred, because after the last one in Matthew, the text records Jesus saying, “Go away, Adversary!” (Matt. 4:10), and the next verse says, “Then the Devil left him” (Matt. 4:11). That command on the part of Jesus, and the Devil leaving him after that, are missing from Luke. It has been suggested that the order in Luke starts in the wilderness and ends in Jerusalem, thus emphasizing the spiritual importance of Jerusalem in the last temptation. Although that may be correct, it may also be that Luke has the order he does because, for the Devil, the most desirable outcome from his encounter with Jesus would be to have Jesus worship him, but if he could not accomplish that, to kill Jesus and be done with him. The order of temptations in Luke accomplishes that goal. The second temptation would result in Jesus worshiping the Devil, and if that failed the third temptation would have resulted in Jesus’ death.

**“Devil.”** The Greek word is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος), which literally means “Slanderer,” but *diabolos* gets transliterated into English as our more familiar name, “Devil.” Slander is so central to who the Devil is and how he operates that one of his primary names is “the Slanderer.”

[For more information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

Luk 4:3

**“the Devil.”** See commentary on Luke 4:2. Also, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”

Luk 4:5

**“And he led him up.”** There are a number of high mountains in the Judean Wilderness, and it seems like the Devil took Jesus to the top of one, and then in a vision showed him all the kingdoms of the world.

**“inhabited world.”** There are different words translated “world” or “earth,” and the differences in the meanings are important. Unfortunately, most versions translated both *oikoumenē* and *kosmos* as “world,” leaving the English reader with no way to see the differences. The Greek word in Luke 4:5 is *oikoumenē* (#3625 οἰκουμένη), and it means 1. The earth as inhabited area, exclusive of the heavens above and nether regions, the inhabited earth, the world. 2. The world as an administrative unit, *the Roman Empire* (in the hyperbolic diction commonly used in reference to emperors, the Roman Empire equaled the whole world). 3. All the inhabitants of the earth, then, figuratively *humankind* (cf. Acts 17:31; Luke 2:1; 4:5). When it means the whole world so far as living beings inhabiting it, it seems to include the realm of transcendent beings as well. The inhabited world is different from *kosmos*, the world as a creation.

The Greek word *kosmos* (#2889 κόσμος) has several different definitions.[[69]](#footnote-19133) The basic idea is one of order or orderliness. 1. That which serves to beautify through decoration, *adornment, adorning* (1 Pet. 3:3). 2. Condition of orderliness, *orderly arrangement, order.* 3. The sum total of everything here and now, *the world, the (orderly) universe* (John 17:5). 4. The sum total of all beings above the level of the animals, *the world* (1 Cor. 4:9). 5. The planet Earth as a place of inhabitation, *the world, the world* in contrast to heaven. 6. By metonymy: humanity in general, *the world*. 7. *The world,* and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God. 8. Collective aspect of an entity, *totality, sum total the tongue becomes* (or *proves to be*) *the sum total of iniquity* (James 3:6).

In Matthew 4:8 the Slanderer showed Jesus the kingdoms of the *kosmos;* in Luke, the Slanderer shows Jesus the kingdoms of the *oikoumenē*. Putting the two together shows that the Devil was offering Jesus everything in his dominion, the physical earth and the inhabitants of it.

Luk 4:6

**“the Devil.”** See commentary on Luke 4:2, and see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”

**“glory.”** The word also has the meaning of “praise,” “honor” (cf. Acts 12:23; 2 Cor. 6:8; 8:19, 23). The world praises the Devil and his ungodly ways. We Christians praise God and try to live by His commandments. If Jesus was looking for praise the people of the world, he could have had it then and there.

**“it has been handed over to me.”** God gave dominion over the earth to Adam and Eve, (Gen. 1:26-28), and Adam, by sinning, transferred that dominion to the devil Devil, who has it now.

Although it is commonly taught that “God is in [absolute] control,” or that “everything that happens is God’s will,” that is not what the Bible says, nor is it what we see in the world around us. It is true that God will have the ultimate victory, and the Devil and his demons and those people who follow him will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:9-10, 13-15). However, right now God is not in complete control of the earth. By His own decision and because He is love, He gave dominion of the world to Adam who transferred that dominion to the Devil. What we now see all around us is a universal war between Good and Evil, with many good things happening and many evil things happening. Indeed, there is so much evil in the world that the truth of 1 John 5:19 (ESV) is quite evident: “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” or, as the NIV puts it, “the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

God gave Adam and Eve dominion over the earth, but they transferred it to the Devil, who now has dominion over the earth. In Genesis 1:26, God and His divine council discussed making humankind and then giving them dominion over the earth (see the REV commentary on Gen. 1:26). Then, in Genesis 1:28, God actually gave dominion over the earth to humankind. This showed God’s great love and trustful expectation for humankind. The nature of love is to be in a mutually respectful relationship in which mature parties each do the work they are supposed to do without being “micromanaged.” God loved humankind so much that He gave them dominion over the earth, and evidence of God’s giving Adam that dominion is that God brought all the different animals He made to Adam so that Adam could give them names (Gen. 2:19).

The whole situation changed, however, when Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:6). When they followed the prompting of God’s arch-enemy the Devil and ate from that tree, they took on the crafty nature of the Devil (usually now referred to by theologians as “sin nature”), and they also transferred dominion of the earth over to the Devil. That is why the Devil told Jesus that the authority over the earth had been handed over to him and he could give it to anyone he wanted to (Matt. 4:9; Luke 4:6). Note that Jesus never disputed the Devil’s claim.

God had made the earth “very good” (Gen. 1:31), but once the Devil gained control over it, it became a very harsh and dangerous place. The ground was cursed and it took hard work to get food. Many plants became dangerous; some developed thorns, others became poisonous (Gen. 3:17-19), and many animals became dangerous. Also, the earth became plagued with disease, death, famines, earthquakes, floods, and more. In short, after Adam and Eve sinned, the Devil gained a lot of control over the earth, and the earth itself took on the nature of the Devil, an evil nature that it still has today. When the Devil gained control of the world, he became “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4), the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and the ruler of the domain of the air (Eph. 2:2). The Devil and his demons roam the earth seeking people to devour (Job 1:7, 2:2; 1 Pet. 5:8), and they oppress people (Acts 10:38). Indeed, the Devil and his henchmen (both demons and demonic people) come to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), and the Devil holds the power of death (Heb. 2:14).

Even more evidence that the Devil is in control of the world and the cause of many of its ills is the fact that after the Battle of Armageddon, the Devil will be imprisoned (Rev. 20:2), and the earth will return to being a “paradise” (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4). Jesus will rule from Jerusalem and the world will be a safe place with an abundance of food and water. Looking at the whole scope of Scripture should make the battle between Good and Evil very clear: when God is in charge, the earth is a paradise (thus the Garden of Eden and the paradise to come); but when the Devil is in charge (as he is today) the world is dangerous and evil.

The situation on earth today is that there is an ongoing war between God and the Devil. God is a warrior and many verses document His fight against evil. He fought against Pharaoh’s injustice by plagues of increasing strength. He fought against the Canaanites (Josh. 10:11). Many verses document Yahweh’s fight against evil (cf. Exod. 15:3; Ps. 18:6-17). When there is evil, the Devil is behind it. Sadly, the Devil has convinced countless Christian that “God is in control” so when something bad happens the people blame God. What a coup! What a trick! The Devil does evil but gets the people to blame God for it. Believers do not fight against God as if He were the cause of evil. No! Instead, we are to take up the armor God provides us and wrestle against the Devil and spiritual evil (Eph. 6:10-13).

Another commonly believed lie is that the Devil can only do what God allows him to do. But that is not true. The Devil is not an agent of God, nor is he doing God’s will; he is at war with God. Jesus taught that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand (Matt. 12:25; Mark 3:24; Luke 11:17). If God gave permission to the Devil to do evil, but then sent Jesus Christ to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8), God’s kingdom would be divided. If the Devil could only do what God allowed him to, then we humans would be more powerful than the Devil, because we sin and go against the will of God on a daily basis and do not check with God first to see if we can sin. We don’t need God’s permission to lie, cheat, steal, rape, or murder, and neither does the Devil. We are not more free to sin than the Devil is; the Devil “has been sinning from the beginning” (1 John 3:8), indeed, he was the first sinner. It is God’s angel army and the righteousness and prayers of believers that limit the Devil, not God’s permission. In fact, if God could stop the evil on earth by just saying “No” to the Devil, then God would be responsible for the evil on earth in the same way that a mob boss is responsible when he orders a murder but does not actually commit the crime himself. The only way God could be “good” given the evil on earth is if the Devil has free will and does what he does because he has the authority and power to do it, and he is sinning, going against the will of God, when he is doing his evil acts.

As stated briefly above, Jesus Christ never challenged or denied the Devil’s claim that he had authority over the whole world. Jesus knew the Devil’s offer to rule the world as Satan’s second in command was a legitimate one, but he wanted no part of it. It is amazing in light of clear verses like this, and all the verses that say the Devil is in charge of the world, and all the evil in the world that is so contrary to the nature of God, that Christians insist that God is in control of what happens on earth. God is only “in control” in the sense that at some point in the future He will step in and put an end to the Devil’s rule, and He and the Lord Jesus Christ will rule the earth. But God is not “in control” now in the sense that He controls and micromanages what happens on earth, something that each person can see for themselves just by willfully sinning. Today the earth is a war zone between good and evil, between God and the Devil, and between the followers of Christ and the followers of Darkness. A great many things happen on earth every day that are not God’s will, which is one reason that Christ prayed that God’s will would be done on earth (Matt. 6:10). The great victory of Good over Evil will come in the future, and at that time this “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4) will come to an end. In fact, the reason the Bible calls the age we live in “the present EVIL age” is that God is not in control of what is happening on earth: what is happening on earth is a war between Good and Evil, and Good wins some battles and Evil wins others.

Also, the New Testament makes it clear that the Devil is the ruler of the world, which is why the world has the nature of the Devil and not the nature of God. It is because the Devil is the ruler of the world that “the world” hates followers of Christ, and neither Christ himself nor his followers are “of the world” (John 15:18-19; John 17:14, 16). Far from being in control in the world, “the world” and the Father are opposed to one another (1 John 2:16), and, as we saw earlier in this commentary, the world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

[For more on the Devil being the god of this age, see commentary on 2 Cor. 4:4. For more on the names of the Devil that describe his characteristics, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.” For more on the warfare between God and His enemies, see commentary on 1 Sam. 1:3. For more on Adam and Eve getting the crafty nature of the Devil, see commentary on Rom. 7:17. For more on the future Kingdom of Christ on earth that will not have the Devil present, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on the Garden of Eden and the restored future earth being called “Paradise,” see commentary on Luke 23:43].

**“and I can give it to anyone I want to.”** The Devil made the point that he could give authority and glory in the world to anyone he wanted to, and Jesus did not refute that because it is true. The Devil would have been happy to make Jesus his “second in command” if Jesus had worshiped the Devil. Many people throughout history have agreed to worship the Devil (popularly called, “selling your soul to the Devil”) in return for money, fame, and power. The Devil keeps his part of the bargain, which is why so many evil and demonic people end up in powerful and notable positions in all sorts of fields, including government, education, music, art, sports, etc. Sadly, however, those people have committed the unforgivable sin (Matt. 12:31-32) and will not escape being thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

[For more on the unforgivable sin, see commentary on Matt. 12:31.]

Luk 4:7

**“if you will bow down in worship before me, it will all be yours.”** The Devil wanted Jesus to revere him as he revered God, and thus this is one of the many places the Bible reveals that Jesus Christ was not God, but a human being (see commentary on Matt. 4:9).

Luk 4:8

For more on this quote from Deut. 6:13, see commentary on Matthew 4:10.

Luk 4:9

**“And he brought him to Jerusalem.”** This reveals some of the power of the Devil. The Devil had the power to physically move Jesus from one place to another, and he did. The Devil is real, his power is real, and he can move a physical body as he did to Jesus (see commentary on Matt. 4:5).

Luk 4:13

**“the Devil.”** See commentary on Luke 4:2, also see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”

Luk 4:17

**“unrolled the scroll.”** The Greek reads, “opened,” but in the context, the way to open the scroll was to unroll it. The fact that Jesus could unroll the scroll of Isaiah and find the verse that he was looking for is a testament to how well Jesus knew the Word of God. At the time of Jesus, in all three biblical languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, the Bible was written in all capital letters as one long letter-string with no breaks between the words and no punctuation. The scroll was written in columns, and often the letters that ended the bottom of a column were part of a word that continued at the top and start of the next column. Also, the scroll of Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls is about 24 feet, so Jesus had to know about where in the scroll the lines he was searching for were written. This shows us that by the time Jesus started his ministry, when he was about 30 years old, he had a very good knowledge of the Word of God.

Luk 4:18

**“The spirit of the Lord is upon me.”** God put His gift of holy spirit, the gift of His nature, upon Jesus Christ to empower him spiritually. Jesus received holy spirit immediately after he was baptized by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:9-10; Luke 3:21-22). The prophet Elijah had holy spirit upon him, and Elisha had a double portion of the spirit that was upon Elijah (2 Kings 2:9), but God sent the gift of holy spirit upon Jesus Christ “without measure” (John 3:34).

All through the Old Testament and Gospels, God put the gift of His nature, which is called “holy spirit,” upon people to give them spiritual power (cf. Num. 11:17-29; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:13; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 15:1; Mic. 3:8; Luke 1:41-42, 67; 2:25-27). Jesus needed God’s gift of holy spirit to have spiritual power just like the leaders and prophets of the Old Testament did, and the Old Testament foretold that God was going to put holy spirit upon the Messiah (Isa. 11:2, 42:1, 61:1). After his resurrection, Jesus said that when people believed and received the holy spirit, they would have spiritual power (Acts 1:8), and Peter called the holy spirit that came on the Day of Pentecost, “the gift of holy spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Luk 4:21

**“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears.”** The rabbis taught that Isaiah 61:1-4 applied to the Messiah,[[70]](#footnote-20164) so when Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2 to the people of Nazareth and then said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears,” they correctly assessed that he was saying that he was the Messiah, the person that Isaiah was referring to. That led them to question among themselves, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:22). Jesus had been doing miracles in other places (Luke 4:23), but he had apparently not done miracles in Nazareth, and that had caused people to doubt him.

Luk 4:23

**“Capernaum.”** After this event, Jesus made his home in Galilee in Capernaum, but he had apparently been ministering in Capernaum before this.

[For more information on Capernaum, see commentary on Mark 2:1.]

**“Whatever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in your hometown.”** It was cultural for the Jews to ask for a sign that demonstrated a person’s authority (cf. Matt. 12:38; John 2:18; 6:30; 1 Cor. 1:22). However, often, as in John 6:30, demanding a sign was a cover-up for unbelief. That was apparently the situation in Nazareth. We don’t know exactly how much the people of Nazareth knew about Jesus, but it is very likely that what the shepherds said on the night of his birth about him being the Messiah had gotten back to Nazareth. In any case, the people of Nazareth were like Jesus’ own brothers, they did not believe in him.

Luk 4:33

**“in the synagogue.”** The record of Jesus casting a demon out of a man in the synagogue at Capernaum is in Mark 1:23-28 and Luke 4:33-37.

**“spirit (that is to say an unclean demon).”** This construction in Greek is the genitive of apposition.[[71]](#footnote-25046) The literal Greek, “a spirit of an unclean demon,” means, “a spirit, that is to say, an unclean demon,” or “a spirit, namely, an unclean demon,” or even, “a spirit—an unclean demon.” To us today it seems strange to say, “A spirit—an unclean demon,” because to us all demons are “unclean” and evil, but we must remember that in the theology and thinking of the Greco-Roman world, not all “demons” were evil. Like people, some were good and some were bad, and also like people they were capable of doing good in one circumstance but then evil in another.

[For more information on the use of demons in the Greco-Roman world, see commentary on Acts 17:18.]

Luk 4:34

**“Ha!”** An exclamation that combines many elements, and is therefore hard to translate. It can include the emotions of surprise, indignation, fear, and dismay.

**“What do you want with us.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:29.

Luk 4:35

**“And Jesus subdued him, saying, “Be bound!” and “Come out of him!”** The first half of verse 35 is worded exactly like Mark 1:25. The sentence uses vocabulary that has a technical sense. For example, in this case “subdue” is the Greek word *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω) and it is used in this verse as it was used in Greek religion of gaining control over a spirit, a demon. See commentary on Mark 1:25.

**“Be bound.”** The Greek word was used in magic to denote binding a person with a spell. Jesus “bound” the demon with his word. See commentary on Mark 1:25.

Luk 4:38

**“Simon’s mother-in-law.”** This record is in Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31, and Luke 4:38-39.

Luk 4:39

**“subdued.”** The Greek word translated “subdued” is *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω), and this is the technical sense of the word as it was used in Greek religion for taking control over a spirit. Robert Guelich notes that *epitimaō* is “a commanding word uttered by God or by his spokesman, by which evil powers are brought into submission.”[[72]](#footnote-32058) Jesus subdued the fever by the power of God, which was expressed in words. See commentary on Mark 1:25.

Luk 4:41

**“subduing.”** See commentaries on Luke 4:35, 39 and Mark 1:25.

**Luke Chapter 5**

Luk 5:1

**“the Lake of Gennesaret.”** This is another name for the “Sea of Galilee,” which was actually a lake. Gennesaret was a town that was on the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee was called by different names by the locals who lived around the lake, so here it is called the Lake of Gennesaret, while in John 6:1 and 21:1 it is called the “Sea of Tiberias,” after the city of Tiberias, the most important city on the lake.

The “sea” of Galilee is actually quite a small lake, only 7 miles (11.2 km) across and 12 miles (19.3 km) long, and the entire lake can be seen from the escarpments on both the east and west sides. The Greek word *thalassa* (#2281 θάλασσα), lake, sea, or ocean, does not really refer to the size of the body of water, and thus has to be translated into English as “lake,” “sea,” or “ocean” by knowing the body of water that is being referred to (see commentary on Matt. 4:18).

Luk 5:7

**“partners.”** The Greek word *metochos* (#3353 μέτοχος), means “partner,” business partner, companion. It is more than “friends.” Peter was in business with James and John (Luke 5:10). Luke 5:10 uses a different word for “partners,” *koinōnos* (#2844 κοινωνός), which in the context of business partners has more of a “full sharing” aspect to it and includes sharing in the finances of the business.[[73]](#footnote-31442)

Luk 5:10

**“partners.”** The Greek word is *koinōnos* (#2844 κοινωνός), see commentary on Luke 5:7.

Luk 5:11

**“they left everything and followed him.”** This is a summary statement. It does not mean that the disciples left that great multitude of fish to rot in the sun. Peter and the others had been involved in a months-long discipleship process that started with Andrew being a disciple of John the Baptist and telling Peter about Jesus. Their discipleship intensified over the months, and this record in Luke 5 is when Jesus called them to leave fishing and enter ministry on a full-time basis. In saying they left everything and followed him, the text is simply telling us that at this time the disciples took care of the loose ends of their fishing business, gave it into the care of others, and then followed Jesus.

[For a much more complete understanding of the discipleship of the apostles, see commentary on Matt. 4:20.]

Luk 5:12

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“fell facedown.”** The man bowed down in a typical oriental fashion, that is, first he got on his knees and then he bowed over with his chest and face to the ground. This action is expressed differently in the three Gospels that contain this record, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but comparing the Gospels gives us the whole picture. Mark says that the man kneeled, which was the start of the process, then Luke says he “fell facedown,” or “went down upon his face,” which is what the man did with the upper part of his body after going to his knees. Matthew simply records the whole process by saying that the man paid homage to Jesus, which in the common biblical manner was to go to one’s knees and then put the upper body and face to the earth. Kneeling with the upper body and face to the earth was the common way to show homage to people and to show obeisance to God (or a god), and it occurs throughout the Old Testament and as early as Genesis (see Word Study: “Worship”). That way of showing homage did not cease in the New Testament, and here we see it with this diseased man before Jesus. His kneeling and then bending his body and face to the earth would not have been different than what Abraham did before the Lord some 2,000 years earlier (Gen. 18:2).

[For more on the same word being used for paying respect and worship, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

Luk 5:18

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“on a bed.”** This “bed” was mats for sleeping.

[For more on beds in the biblical culture, see commentary on Matt. 9:6.]

**“a man who was paralyzed.”** This record of the healing of the paralyzed man occurs in Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:3-12; and Luke 5:18-26.

Luk 5:19

**“through the roof tiles.”** Mark 2:4 says that the men “uncovered the roof where he was, and...dug through it.” Although the average house had a roof of packed dirt, this house was in Capernaum, which had a large Roman influence, and so it is quite possible that the roof had a cap of tile over the dirt and beams. Thus, the men would “uncover” the roof and then dig through it. It is also possible that Luke, a Greek, was simply expressing what happened in the event in Greek terms. Because so many roofs in Greece and Rome had tile roofs, “the tiles” became a way to refer to the roof, so letting the man down “through the tiles” was simply a way of saying that they let him down through the roof.

Luk 5:20

**“Friend.”** The Greek text is literally “man.” However, the NET text note correctly states: “the term [man] used in this way was not derogatory in Jewish culture. Used in address (as here) it means ‘friend.’”[[74]](#footnote-21203)

Luk 5:21

**“blasphemy.”** The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία, pronounced blas-fay-'me-ah), and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning as it was used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. See commentary on Mark 2:7.

[For more on *blasphēmia*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

Luk 5:22

**“he answered and said.”** The original text has the phrase, “answered and said” more than 100 times in the Bible, and it can sometimes be confusing because it is often used when no one asked a question. The phrase is an idiom, but it has a literal overtone behind it. The person who “answered and said” may not have been answering a direct question from someone, but they were answering and addressing the situation that was presenting itself before them. In this case, Jesus was answering the situation caused by the erroneous thoughts of the religious leaders (see commentary on Matt. 11:25).

**“reasoning *these things*.”** The basic wording is taken from Mark 2:8.

Luk 5:23

**“Which is easier.”** Which is easier to say and accomplish, declaring someone’s sins are forgiven, or divine healing? They are equally easy. They both require authority from God and the faith to walk out on the revelation God gives. The Pharisees did not see this simple truth. They believed in divine healing but did not believe a person could have the authority to forgive sins. But God gives authority to do both.

Luk 5:24

**“bed.”** The Greek word here is different than Matthew 9:6 and Mark 2:11. The Greek word refers to a small bed. See commentary on Matthew 9:6.

Luk 5:27

**“Levi.”** The apostle Matthew was also called “Levi.” The calling of Matthew is recorded in Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:14-17; and Luke 5:27-32.

**“sitting at the tax collector’s booth.”** The tax office was close to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. See commentary on Mark 2:14.

Luk 5:29

**“And Levi made him a great feast in his house.”** This verse makes it clear that the dinner associated with the calling of the apostle Matthew was held at Matthew’s house. The Gospel of Matthew and Mark are not clear, and only say, “his” house (Mark 2:15) or “the” house (Matt. 9:10). See commentary on Matthew 9:10.

Luk 5:31

**“healthy.”** The Greek word is *hugiainō* (#5198 ὑγιαίνω), a more technical and accurate word for being healthy than the word *ischuō* (#2480 ἰσχύω), which means “strong” but can mean “well” or “healthy” in some contexts. It is possible that Luke, being a doctor was more sensitive to the precise meaning of words used for sickness and health.

Luk 5:32

**“I have not come to call the righteous.”** See commentary on Mark 2:17.

**“to repentance.”** That Jesus said that he was with the sinners to call them to repentance is huge in light of modern culture. Genuine “repentance” involves a recognition of one’s sin and guilt, confession (publicly or inwardly) of one’s sinful ways, and the decision and action that must be made to change one’s heart and life. For the sinners at Matthew’s feast to repent meant leaving old sinful ways behind and living a life that was acceptable and righteous in the sight of God. It also often meant changing one’s friends. Genuine repentance that involves a change of lifestyle is seldom easy, but each person must decide for themselves how valuable everlasting life and everlasting rewards are.

In today’s culture, there is pressure to believe “I’m ok, you’re ok” and to accept everyone just the way they are no matter how they act. In fact, if you say that how someone lives is not acceptable to you or to God, then you are often accused of “judging,” and not “being loving.” Then, to show that Jesus did not judge, liberal Christians will often bring up how Jesus ate and drank with sinners and accepted them just the way they were. But did he? Actually, Jesus did not accept people “just the way they were.”

Some 2,000 years ago Jesus told the group he was speaking with, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures…” (Matt. 22:29). That is still going on today. When we read the record of Jesus at Matthew’s house, a couple of things jump out. Obviously, Jesus ate and drank with sinners, and we should follow the example of Christ…but we should follow his example completely, not just an edited-down version of it.

When the religious leaders asked Jesus’ disciples about eating and drinking with sinners, Jesus told them, “Those who are in health have no need of a physician, but those who are sick *do*.” When Jesus said that, he made his position clear about the people with whom he was eating: they were “sick.” The people were not “ok,” and Jesus did not accept them just as they were without trying to help them. Of course, the people there at the feast were not actually physically sick, but they were sick in a way that they needed a physician, a healer. They were “sick” in the sense that they had turned from God and His ways and were on the path to eternal death. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 9:10), and those who do not obey God are neither wise nor knowledgeable, and in that sense, they are “sick,” that is, not well, not thinking rightly.

That the people were on a path toward death is why Jesus said he came to call them “to repentance.” Jesus did not come to tell people that they were okay just the way they were. He came to call people back to God, and for those people who were at the feast, that meant repenting and changing their lifestyle. For an example of the kinds of things Jesus would have said to the crowd at the feast, we need only to read what he said to the crowds at the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-7:29).

Christians need to be careful and wise about those who preach a “God loves you just as you are so you don’t have to change” message. God does love people just as they are, which is why He gives every person, no matter how sinful they are, an open door to change and come to Him. Sadly, those people who are fooled into believing that they don’t have to come to Christ to get saved will find out on Judgment Day—too late to change—that it is not God’s love that saves people; it is Christ’s blood that saves people, which is why each person has to come to Christ and be saved (Rom. 10:9).

[For more on the calling of Matthew see commentary on Matt. 9:9, and for more on who is “righteous,” see commentary on Mark 2:17.]

Luk 5:33

**“fast.”** See commentary on Matthew 9:15.

Luk 5:34

**“wedding guests.”** The literal Greek is “sons of the bridechamber,” which was an idiom for the wedding guests; and in some contexts more specifically for the friends of the bridegroom who were at the wedding. The wedding was a time of feasting and celebration, not for fasting.

**“groom.”** In many English versions, the older term “bridegroom” is used, but it just means the groom.

Luk 5:35

**“But the days will come.”** To be properly understood, this sentence fragment needs to be completed, finishing the thought of the previous sentence (v. 34). Thus, the full thought is, “But the days will come when the bridegroom is not with them.” This is not the figure of speech ellipsis, which is most usually the omission of a word in the middle of a sentence. Nevertheless, it is elliptical, in the sense that the reader must fill in what is missing.

**“groom.”** In many English versions, the older term “bridegroom” is used, but it just means the groom.

Luk 5:36

**“No one tears.”** See commentary on Matthew 9:16.

Luk 5:37

**“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins.”** See commentary on Matthew 9:17.

**“wineskins.”** A “bottle” or container made from animal skin.

[For more on skin-bottles, which were usually made from the skins of goats, see commentary on 1 Sam. 10:3.]

**Luke Chapter 6**

Luk 6:1

**“he was passing through the grainfields.”** This record occurs in Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28, and Luke 6:1-5. There were six incidents in the ministry of Jesus in which he showed that taking care of people was not considered “work” by God and thus was more important than keeping rules about the Sabbath that were made by humans. The six incidents were picking grain on the Sabbath and five healings (see commentary on Matt. 12:9).

Luk 6:2

**“what is not lawful to do.”** Although it would be work according to the Law of Moses to reap a field on the Sabbath, and so that kind of reaping would be breaking the Law of Moses, by the time of Jesus the tradition of the Jews had become that plucking any amount of grain, no matter how small, was “reaping” and therefore breaking the Law.

The Devil is always at work behind the scenes to make it seem difficult and exasperating to obey God’s laws. That puts unnecessary burdens on people who love God and turns away some people who are thinking about God and might otherwise turn to Him and His ways. So it came to be that by the time of Christ, the Jews had many burdensome and nonsensical traditions that were hard on the people, and Jesus pointed that out on a few different occasions (cf. Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46; Matt. 23:13, 16-22). Furthermore, to do God’s work or demonstrate the love of God, Jesus occasionally broke the illicit and burdensome traditions, as on this day when the disciples plucked and ate grain when they were hungry, or when he healed on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17). Jesus also directly confronted the religious leaders about their traditions (Matt. 15:1-8).

Sadly, many modern Christian denominations are following in the footsteps of the ancient Jews and have many burdensome traditions that are touted as necessary to keep to obey and please God but are actually not biblical at all. That is why the average Christian should know the Bible, so they can know what God desires and what is in the Word of God, and separate that from what is man-made and just another burdensome and frustrating tradition. Thankfully today in most places people have the freedom to walk away from groups that impose burdensome regulations, or at least if they decide to remain part of the group it is their choice. At many times in history, as was true at the time of Christ, that decision was not really even available to make.

Luk 6:3

**“you.”** This “you” is plural in the text. “Have all of you never read….”

**“and those who were with him.”** David was not alone when he came to Abiathar the priest. Just like Jesus had his disciples with him, David had some men with him (cf. Luke 6:4).

Luk 6:4

**“ate the Bread of the Presence.”** David and the men with him all ate the Bread of the Presence, which only the priests were supposed to eat (1 Sam. 21:1-6). The Bread of the Presence was large cakes of bread that were in the Tabernacle and Temple (see commentary on Exod. 25:30).

Luk 6:5

**“The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”** Jesus is the Lord of people, so he is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28; see commentary on Mark 2:28).

Luk 6:6

**“and his right hand was shriveled up.”** The record of healing the man with the shriveled hand is in three Gospels (Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11).

Luk 6:9

**“life.”** See commentary on Mark 3:4.

Luk 6:11

**“irrational *anger*.”** See Word Study: “Fool.”

Luk 6:13

**“and he chose twelve of them.”** The choosing of the apostles is in Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19; and Luke 6:13-16.

Luk 6:16

**“Iscariot.”** See commentary on Matthew 10:4 for more information.

Luk 6:17

**“And he came down with them and stood on a level place.”** This is “the Sermon on the Plain,” which in many ways is parallel to Jesus’ more well-known teaching, the “Sermon on the Mount.” The Sermon on the Plain is much shorter than the Sermon on the Mount, and occurs in a totally different context. The Sermon on the Plain takes less than one chapter (Luke 6:17-49) whereas the Sermon on the Mount takes three chapters (Matthew 5, 6, and 7). Preachers and teachers understand very well that the things they teach on one day are repeated, usually in parts, on other days, and that is certainly the case with the long Sermon on the Mount. Parts of it are repeated in Luke 6, but parts occur in other places in Luke There are things that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount that he taught in other places and so they occur in other places in Luke (e.g., Luke 11:2-4 and 12:22-31). Also, there are things in the Sermon on the Plain that are not in the Sermon on the Mount.

Luk 6:20

**“poor.”** This does not refer to people who are physically poor, it refers to the humble. In the culture, the word “poor” was sometimes used to describe people who were humble. At the time the New Testament was written, everyone knew that and the word “poor” here in Luke 6:20 would not have been confusing. But today we have lost many of the idiomatic uses of the vocabulary of the biblical period, and so the verse has become confusing to people.

The word “poor” is also used as “humble” in Matthew 5:3, when Christ spoke of the “poor in spirit” (humble in attitude), but sometimes only the word “poor” was used, as is the case here in Luke. One reason we know that “poor” is being used idiomatically is that being physically poor does not qualify a person for the Kingdom of Heaven. Many poor people are very ungodly, while, in contrast, many wealthy people are very godly. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were two such people.

It is often taught that Jesus was poor, but there is good evidence he was not. He certainly started out wealthy, because the Magi brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. He was criticized for eating and drinking with tax collectors, and they were usually quite wealthy and no doubt would have given him some money. Also, many wealthy women were helping to support him (Luke 8:3). At the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples asked Jesus if he wanted them to go buy food for the people, and that would have taken a very large amount of money (Luke 9:13). Judas was appointed treasurer for Jesus and the apostles, and he carried the money bag and stole from it (John 12:6), and the fact that the other disciples never discovered any missing money indicates they had a lot of money. At the crucifixion, Jesus’ tunic was so valuable that the soldiers would not divide it but cast lots for it (John 19:23-24).

One of the main reasons people think Jesus was poor is because he said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven *have* nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20; cf. Luke 9:58). That verse does not mean Jesus was poor. The man offered to follow Jesus wherever he went, and Jesus simply replied that might be difficult because he was always on the move.

[For more on Matt. 8:20 and Luke 9:58, see commentary on Luke 9:58.)

Luk 6:22

**“and denounce your name as evil.”** In Luke 6:22, Jesus made a very specific and powerful statement that is easy to read but difficult to do. God created us to be emotional beings and to strongly desire being part of a family or group. The desire to “belong” is so strong in most people that they will deny themselves and what they believe just to keep from being ostracized. But being a dedicated follower of Christ often leads to persecution and being ostracized (2 Tim. 3:12). Here in Luke 6:22, the Greek word translated as “denounce” is the strong Greek word *ekballō* (#1544 ἐκβάλλω), which means to throw out, drive out, or send out, often including the idea of violence. In this case, “denouncing your name” is not a calm dismissal, but an emotional rejection of you, your reputation, and what you stand for.

Also, the text is not “denounce you,” but “denounce your name.” In the biblical culture, a person’s name was more than just a moniker that pointed the person out. It stood for the person, his or her reputation, what the person stood for—his or her values and ideals—and usually the family, group, or tribe to which the person belonged. Proverbs 22:1 says, “A *good* name is to be chosen over great wealth.” We pray “in the name” of Jesus Christ. When the apostles healed the lame man, the Jews asked, “By what power, or in what name, have you done this?” They knew names were powerful. We baptize people “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Act 10:48), and we heal people and cast out demons “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 3:6; 16:18). It is a horrible experience to have someone denounce your name because it denounces you, your reputation, what you stand for, and can even include your group or family. But Scripture says if we are denounced because of believing the truth about Jesus Christ, we are blessed, and we should think and act that way. The truth is not how we feel, but how we stand before God and Jesus.

Luk 6:23

**“behold.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 6:27

**“love your enemies.”** The word “love” is the verb *agapaō* (#25 ἀγαπάω; the more familiar noun is *agapē*). In this context, to love one’s enemy does not mean to “feel good” about them, but rather to act toward them in a loving manner. To better understand what God is telling us when He says, “love your enemies,” see commentary on John 21:15, “I am your friend.” The second phrase of the verse, “do good to those who hate you,” explains *agapaō* in this context.

**“do good to those who hate you.”** This teaching is profoundly wonderful and the highest sense of morality was taught by our Lord. This can especially be seen when comparing this with the teachings of the Greeks at the time, who proclaimed that one ought to *harm* their enemies in order to be just. In the *Republic*, Plato’s interlocutors have the following exchange:

“Should one also give one’s enemies whatever is owed to them?”

“By all means, one should give them what is owed to them. And in my view what enemies owe to each other is appropriately and precisely—something bad.”

“…To treat friends well and enemies badly is justice?”

“I believe so” (*Republic*, 332b, d).

Luk 6:28

**“bless those who curse you.”** The word “curse” is *kataraomai* (#2672 καταράομαι), and it means to curse, to call down evil upon. A genuine curse is not just “hate language,” it has spiritual power. People can curse using the power of the Devil or the power of God. When we curse using the power of God, it is always by revelation, as God directs us to, and it is very rare. Jesus cursed the fig tree in Mark 11:14 (Peter correctly called what Jesus did a curse in Mark 11:21). When wicked people curse, they are using the Devil and his demons to accomplish the curse. Someone saying something bad about someone else is not a curse, but conscripting the power of the Devil to accomplish something spoken is a curse. Witches’ “spells” are curses.

This commandment requires much from the Christian, because personal attacks always hurt us emotionally. We have to understand that if we are blameless in God’s eyes, the curses of the enemy cannot hurt us. Proverbs 26:2 (NET): “Like a fluttering bird or like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause does not come to rest.” In other words, an undeserved curse will have no effect.

We Christians have to be so secure in who we are in Christ and that we will be blessed by God that we can bless those people who curse us. The reason that it can be so difficult to ignore curses is that they are often very personal in nature. They often come from people whom we care about, and/or can be very personal in nature. The ancient Romans and the people of the biblical culture often called on the gods to curse and harm people, and curses can have spiritual power and cause genuine damage if one is not protected by God and godliness. One curse tablet that now is in the City Archaeological Museum of Bologna reads: “Destroy, crush, kill, strangle Porcello and his wife Maurilla. Their soul [life], heart, buttocks, liver….” A curse directed at a Roman senator reads: “Crush, kill, Fistus the senator…May Fistus dilute, languish, sink, and may all his limbs be dissolved.”[[75]](#footnote-26705)

Especially in the biblical world where almost everyone believed in the power of curses to harm them, knowing about God’s protection and desiring to help the misguided person who cursed others by blessing him back, was an act of great love and faith.

Luk 6:29

**“*To* whoever strikes you on the cheek, offer the other *cheek* also.”** This verse is not talking about the death penalty or any other type of civil crime or punishment for crimes, although many Christians think it does. Interestingly, people who quote this verse as if it were saying there should not be a death penalty do not seem to grasp that the verse is saying there should not be any kind of retribution at all. If this verse were applied universally to the criminal justice system, it would mean no fines, no jails, and not even any community service time given to criminals. If applied in a criminal context, it would read something like, “If someone steals one of your cars, give him the keys to your other car.” Surely even the most liberal of people do not believe that we can have a safe society if we do not enforce any laws or have any kind of penalties for breaking laws.

Why would Christ say something like “turn the other cheek?” What did he mean? In the culture of the Bible, touching or striking someone on the cheek was an insult. It was the equivalent of calling someone a “dirty name” today. Jesus knew that his disciples would be insulted by evil and ungodly people, and that it is a waste of time and energy to try to get “satisfaction” for an insult. So he instructed people to “turn the other cheek,” i.e.*,* ignore insults, and by showing the other cheek, show that you are firm in your beliefs and actions even if it means you will be insulted again.

There are other Bible verses that show that slapping someone on the cheek was an insult: Lamentations 3:30: “Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes *him*; let him be filled with shame.” Job 16:10: “They have gaped on me with their mouth. They have struck me on the cheek with contempt.” Isaiah 50:6: “I offered...my cheeks...; I did not hide...from mocking and spitting” (NIV).

A good example of slapping on the face as an insult occurs in 1 Kings. The Israelite king, Ahab, was trying to convince the Judean king, Jehoshaphat, to join forces with him and fight the Arameans. Ahab brought out an impressive number of prophets who all foretold success in the mission. However, there was no prophet of the true God represented in the group. Jehoshaphat insisted on hearing from one, and at last, Ahab found a prophet of *Yahweh*, a man named Micaiah, who insulted the other prophets by first mocking what they had said, and then giving a contradictory prophecy—one that came true, by the way. One of the false prophets, a man named Zedekiah was incensed: “Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek” (1 Kings 22:24). This was not an attack on Micaiah’s life or body. Zedekiah was insulted by Micaiah’s words, and he insulted Micaiah back in a way that was perfectly understood in the culture. Micaiah, as if following the words of Jesus spoken some 800 years later, ignored Zedekiah’s insult and simply kept on speaking the words God gave him to speak.

Christians need to follow the advice of the Lord and learn to ignore insults without burning in anger. We also need to know the culture and customs of the Bible so that we can correctly interpret such verses. The command to “turn the other cheek” has no bearing on the criminal justice system and the justice exercised by the government in the defense of society, and neither does it have anything to do with self-defense or war.

Luk 6:31

**“And just as you want people to treat you.”** This is parallel to Matthew 7:12.

Luk 6:32

**“what credit is *that* for you?”** Here in Luke 6:32 (and Luke 6:33-34), the word translated as “credit” is *charis* (#5485 χάρις), which is normally translated as “grace,” but here it has one of the other meanings of *charis*, in this case, “thanks” (see KJV, ASV, DBY; in the REV and other versions *charis* is nuanced to “credit”). The person who only gives to those who can give back to them has no “thanks” or credit from God. The person who loves and cares for people just because they need it will get “thanks” and “credit” from God in the form of blessings and rewards on Judgment Day. Proverbs 19:17 says, “The one who shows favor to a poor person lends to Yahweh, and he will repay him according to his *good* work.”

[For more on charis and grace, see commentary on 2 Cor. 12:9.]

Luk 6:35

**“love your enemies.”** See commentary on Luke 6:27.

**“expecting nothing in return.”** Christ is not saying not to want to be repaid. This is still a loan, not a gift, as Jesus said. The “sinners” only lent to those who could absolutely repay the debt. Believers are to lend if they see a need and can help even though someone might not seem to be able to repay.

**“for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.”** In telling believers to love their enemies and do good to them, God sets Himself forth as the example to follow because he is kind toward the people on earth who are evil and unthankful. When we think of all that God provides on earth, food and water, rain for crops, the natural healing of the human body, and so much more, it is easy to see that God is good and kind to everyone, even those people who are evil. In fact, it sometimes seems that God treats unbelievers better than believers because they often prosper while the lives of believers are difficult, something that a number of godly people complained about (cf. Job 21:6-21; Psalm 73:1-14; Jer. 12:1-4). Actually, God is good to everyone, but in this fallen world it can be more difficult to live a godly life due to persecution and other afflictions that come directly from the Adversary and his people. On the Day of Judgment, however, believers will see just how blessed they are for obeying God and living a godly life.

Luk 6:37

**“do not judge.”** See commentary on Matthew 7:1.

Luk 6:44

**“bramble bush.”** A bramble bush is a generic term for a bush or shrub that is tangly and prickly. This is the same term used in the New Testament in reference to the burning bush in the Exodus narrative (Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; Acts 7:30).

Luk 6:45

**“his mouth speaks things that overflow from his heart.”** The Bible says in many places that what comes from the mouth flows from the heart, which is why it is so important to guard our heart (see commentary on Matt. 15:18).

Luk 6:48

**“but.”** The Greek text reads “and” (καὶ) but the nuance here is adversative where the river crashed against the house, “but” the house was not shaken by it.

**Luke Chapter 7**

Luk 7:1

This record is also found in Matthew 8:5-13.

Luk 7:3

**“he sent elders of the Jews.”** The centurion never directly spoke to Jesus. However, if we do not know the Jewish custom of agency, we might think that he did.

[For more on the Jewish custom of agency, see commentary on Matt. 8:5.]

Luk 7:12

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 7:14

**“bier.”** The Jews carried the bodies of their dead to the grave on something that resembled a stretcher. It was flat and open. “Coffin” gives the wrong impression, because the bier had no sides, but was simply a platform on which the body was laid. In the biblical culture, people were buried the same day they died, before the body started to decay.[[76]](#footnote-31810)

Luk 7:16

**“God has visited his people.”** This verse can be confusing to some people who do not realize that God usually “visits” us, or works around us, through other people. Occasionally, Trinitarians will cite this verse as proof that Jesus is God, because it says that God visited His people. However, that phrase in no way proves the Trinity. Any word or phrase in Scripture must be interpreted in light of both its immediate and remote contexts. In this case, the immediate context alerts us to the truth being presented. The people called Jesus “a great prophet,” which tells us right away that they did not think he was God.

God “visits” His people by sending them some blessing. This is clear from verses like Ruth 1:6, “Then she arose with her daughters-in-law in order to return from the country of Moab, for in the country of Moab she had heard that Yahweh had visited his people by giving them bread.” In the book of Ruth, Yahweh “visited” His people by sending them bread, but even that did not mean that God gave them the bread directly, like He had done with the manna at the time of Moses. God “visited” the people by ending the famine and allowing the ground to produce grain again, but the people were the ones who plowed, sowed, weeded, and harvested. God simply provided the fertility, but without His blessing, nothing would grow. So God “visiting” His people, in that case, was simply Him putting His blessing on the soil. In a similar fashion, in the Gospels, God visited His people by sending them “a great prophet” who raised a widow’s son from the dead.

A lesson we should learn from this verse and others like it is that God works through His people. When He does, He often gets the credit even when people do the actual work. When God works through people, the Word records things like, “God visited His people” (Luke 7:16) and “all that God has done for you” (Luke 8:39). Americans today use the same language. If an acquaintance gives you some money when you need it and says, “The Lord put it on my heart to give this to you,” you might well say to someone else, “The Lord really blessed me today.” Neither you nor any other person would believe that you were saying that the person who gave you money was “the Lord.” Everyone understands that the Lord works through people, and so our language, like biblical language, reflects that knowledge.

[For more information on Jesus being the fully human Son of God and not being “God the Son,” see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more on “the Holy Spirit” being one of the designations for God the Father and “the holy spirit” being the gift of God’s nature, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” For more information on this specific concept, see Charles Morgridge*, True Believer’s Defense Against Charges Preferred by Trinitarians*, p. 118.]

Luk 7:19

**“Are you the Coming One.”** See commentary on Matthew 11:3.

**“someone else.”** The Greek word “else” is *allos* (#243 ἄλλος), here meaning another of the same kind; a second one. In other words, “Are you THE one, or is there a second one?” (Or perhaps, “Is there someone else?”) This record has a different emphasis than the record in Matthew 11:3, which uses the Greek word *heteros* (#2087 ἕτερος), referring to someone of a different quality. See commentary on Matthew 11:3.

Luk 7:25

**“Look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 7:27

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“road.”** See commentary on Mark 1:3.

Luk 7:28

**“least *important* person.”** See commentary on Matthew 11:11. Luke 7:28 is a good example of how Greek texts get altered over time by overly zealous scribes copying the text, and thus Luke 7:28 is a case of both what scholars refer to as “the expansion of piety” and “harmonization.” Over time, some scribes changed “John” to “John the Baptist” (and there were other variant readings introduced as well). This is an example of harmonization, because Matthew 11:11, speaking about the same subject, reads “John the Baptist.” Some scribes were uncomfortable with verses about the same subject reading differently, so they “harmonized” them by changing the text so they read the same.

Also, Luke 7:28 is an example of the expansion of piety. That occurs when overly zealous scribes want to protect something they think is sacred. The most common example of the expansion of piety occurs when a name, such as “Jesus,” gets changed to “Jesus Christ,” and then to “the Lord Jesus Christ.” In this case, scribes knew that Jesus was born of a woman, so they were uncomfortable with saying that no one born of a woman was greater than John. So to avoid a possible misunderstanding about Jesus not being greater than John, they changed “no greater than John” to “no greater prophet than John” (or other similar changes, all with for the same reason and with the same effect), thus excluding John from being as great as Jesus. Thankfully, now that scholars have over 5,700 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, plus manuscript in Latin, Coptic, Aramaic, Georgian, and more, and also because we now can use computers to reveal the differences in all those manuscripts, scholars can get very accurate data about the way the original manuscript read, and modern versions such as the CEB, ESV, NAB, NASB, NET, NIV, NRSV read the way the REV does.

This all makes a point about reading the text. We must read it with an understanding and scope of the whole Bible, and the culture, and the audience being written to. Jesus was not worried about someone not realizing that God’s Messiah was no greater than other people, and he was speaking about the ministry of John. The people of the time were not confused and we today should not be either.

Luk 7:29

**“declared God righteous.”** This seemingly difficult phrase is very powerful. The idea being portrayed is that God is on trial. Is He a righteous God? Has he provided a way for mankind to repent, have forgiveness of sins, and thus have salvation? Yes, He has. The jury of the people has spoken. God is righteous, and has provided for mankind. However, the religious leaders rejected God’s provision (verse 30), to their own doom. It is important to realize that the tax collectors and sinners did not “declare” God to be righteous with their mouths, although they may have done that too, but by their actions.

Luk 7:33

**“neither eating bread nor drinking wine.”** Luke 7:33-34 contrast the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. When the text says that John did not come “eating bread,” it does not mean that he always fasted—that would be impossible. “Bread” is being used as a synecdoche[[77]](#footnote-21069) for food in general, and of course, John had to eat. But he did not go to feasts and parties, he lived a simple and ascetic lifestyle. What we see of John’s ministry in Scripture is that it prepared people for the Day of Judgment. He baptized people with a “baptism of repentance,” that is, a baptism that outwardly demonstrated their inward repentance. He fasted often, and in the records we have of him speaking, he often spoke of the subject of judgment and the wrath to come (cf. Matt. 3:7-12). In contrast, Jesus came “eating and drinking,” keeping company with sinners, and a large part of his teaching focused on the Kingdom of Heaven, and his actions portrayed the joy of that kingdom in many ways.

Neither John’s behavior nor Jesus’ behavior pleased the critical and over-religious Jews, which is a wonderful object lesson for us. Far too many people spend their lives trying to please other people who just cannot be pleased. We need to live our lives in a way that pleases God, and if other people are not happy about that there is nothing we can or should do about it. Jesus set the example for us in dealing with these Jews: he ignored their criticism.

[See Word Study: “Synecdoche.”]

Luk 7:34

**“See!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“a drunkard.”** See commentary on Matthew 11:19.

Luk 7:35

**“wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”** The Greek text can read “declared righteous” or understood as “vindicated.” In the biblical culture, children followed in the ways of their parents and did what the mother and father instructed (cf. Prov. 1:8). Here in Luke 7:35, Jesus used that common knowledge to say that the “children” of wisdom followed in the ways of wisdom and thus were wise themselves, and that fact “vindicated” wisdom (declared that wisdom herself was righteous) by showing that wisdom really was wise. Basically, what the saying means is that the disciples of wisdom, those who follow wisdom, vindicate wisdom by the way they live.

In the immediate context of Luke 7:35, the primary examples of people who are “children” of wisdom and who follow her ways are John the Baptist and Jesus, and what they do, though foolish in the eyes of the world, will prove to be wise and right in the end, and the same is true for all believers who are “children” of wisdom and follow God’s guidance. Also, it helps to understand what Christ was saying when we know that the word “wisdom” is feminine in both Greek and Hebrew, and is represented by a woman in Proverbs (cf. Prov. 9:1-5). What Jesus says here is stated slightly differently in Matthew 11:19, but Matthew and Luke harmonize together and let us know that Jesus made his point in slightly different ways so that it would be clearly understood (see commentary on Matt. 11:19).

Luk 7:37

**“behold.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 7:40

**“Simon.”** The Pharisee’s name was Simon. This is not Simon Peter, the apostle. Jesus is eating in the Pharisee’s house.

Luk 7:44

**“no water for my feet.”** For this Pharisee to not wash Jesus’ feet would have been considered very rude and degrading in the biblical culture, especially given the fact that Jesus was doing many miracles and healings, and would have supposedly been an honored guest. It would have been much easier for the woman to wash Jesus’ feet while he was reclining to eat in the biblical culture than in our modern culture because the people reclined to eat and their feet were easily accessible; they were not under a table.

[For more on the custom of foot washing, see commentary on 1 Tim. 5:10.]

**Luke Chapter 8**

Luk 8:1

**“he traveled through cities and villages.”** Josephus, who was almost a contemporary with Jesus, wrote that there were 204 cities and villages in Galilee, although how he came to that number is not known. Archaeology has not been able to confirm that number, but that is not surprising. Excavations and surface surveys reveal that, although there were some larger cities, most cities and villages were 2.5 to 10 acres and had populations ranging from a couple hundred to 2,000 people.[[78]](#footnote-11476) To give a basic idea of how big that is, although city blocks differ in size, the average city block is four to seven acres, so most villages in the ancient Near East were the size of a city block or smaller.

Luk 8:2

**“Mary, who was called Magdalene.”** In the chronology of Jesus’ ministry, this record in Luke 8:2-3 is the first time Mary Magdalene is mentioned. “Magdalene” was not her first or last name, as if her parents’ last name was “Magdalene.” Most men and women in the biblical culture did not have a last name, and Mary Magdalene did not either. It was common in the biblical culture to differentiate women who had the same name by adding something distinguishing about them after their name. Thus, Mary Magdalene was called that because she came from the town of Magdala on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee. Another well-known “Mary” in the New Testament is “Mary the mother of Jesus,” which is a very honorable and distinguishing description. Still another “Mary” in the New Testament was “Mary the wife of Clopas” (John 19:25).

It is commonly believed that Mary Magdalene was Jesus’ closest disciple and that she had been a prostitute (this is part of the plot and music of the play, “Jesus Christ Superstar,” for example). There is no biblical support for either of those beliefs. The historical evidence points to the origin of those beliefs being a sermon taught by Pope Gregory the Great on September 14, AD 1591. In his sermon, Pope Gregory took the record of the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50, the record of Mary Magdalene in Luke 8:2-3, and the record of the woman in Bethany who anointed Jesus’ head with oil in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9, and blended the three women of those records into one woman, whom he then asserted was Mary Magdalene. Actually, biblically it seems very clear those three women were different women.

Then, compounding his error, Pope Gregory taught that Mary was a prostitute because the woman in Luke 7:37-39 was a “sinner,” and Mary Magdalene had demons cast out of her. As for the sinful woman in Luke 7, although Gregory thought she was a prostitute, there is no factual evidence for that assertion. Although she might have been a prostitute, it is also possible that she was not. She was a “sinner,” but in the very legalistic Galilean culture dominated by the Pharisees, a “sinner” might refer to someone who had paid no attention to the Law of Moses and the oral traditions of the Pharisees. The woman did not have to be a sexual sinner to be called a “sinner.” Nevertheless, Pope Gregory bolstered his teaching that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute by asserting that Jesus cast seven demons out of her, and those demons would have led her into sexual sin, but that also is only his assumption. There is no biblical proof Mary Magdalene was a prostitute; many people who are afflicted by demons are not prostitutes or sexual sinners.

Mary Magdalene was obviously very thankful for what Jesus had done for her, and she became a devoted follower. But that does not mean Jesus thought of her in a special way and singled her out for special attention—especially sexual attention, although that is a popular belief. Mary Magdalene is listed in Luke 8:2-3 with a whole group of women who followed Jesus and helped support his ministry, she is not listed alone.

The other times Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the Bible are all around the time of his death and burial, but even then, with only one exception, she is mentioned in the company of other women and does not get any special attention. The one exception when Jesus was alone with Mary was after his resurrection, in the place where he had been buried in Joseph’s tomb. In that event, Mary’s devotion to Jesus brought her to the tomb area without anyone else being there, and Jesus rewarded her devotion by appearing to her, comforting her in her sadness and confusion by proving that he had been raised from the dead, and giving her a message for the other disciples (John 20:15-17). But even in that record it is clear that Jesus understood that she was a disciple, and he was her risen Lord, and when she apparently moved toward him he said, “Do not touch me” (John 20:17).

Everyone likes a good love story, and many people warm up to the thought that Mary and Jesus had a love interest going, but not only is there no evidence for it, the biblical evidence is against it. The ones that the Bible says Jesus was close to and spent time with teaching and discipling were the twelve apostles, who took over the leadership of the church after he was gone. There is no record of Mary ever being present when Jesus was teaching the Twelve apart from other disciples, and the separation of the sexes in the biblical culture would have militated against that occurring.

There is no reason to doubt that Mary Magdalene was a devoted follower of Christ until her death, but after the day she saw Jesus at the tomb, she disappears from history. For example, she is not mentioned in Acts in the gathering of the disciples as is Mary the mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14)—and this is contributing evidence that she was not Jesus’ closest disciple, as is sometimes taught.

Mary is a wonderful example of a believer because her devotion to him showed she was always thankful to the Lord for what he had done for her, even though there is no indication she thought she was somehow “special” in his eyes. To the Lord Jesus, every disciple is special, and Jesus shows attention to people as the opportunities arise, like he did to the woman at the well in John 4:7-26, and Martha in John 11:20-27.

Luk 8:4

**“he spoke by way of a parable.”** This is the Parable of the Sower. It is perhaps more accurately named, “The Parable of the Soil.” It is also in Mark 4:3-8 and Luke 8:5-8. See commentary on Matthew 13:3.

Luk 8:5

**“The sower.”** The Parable of the Sower and its explanation is in Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 14-20; and Luke 8:5-8, 11-15.

The parable Jesus tells in verses 3-8 is almost universally referred to as “The Parable of the Sower” because that is what Jesus called it (Matt. 13:18). However, it could just as well be called “The Parable of the Soils,” because the parable is not primarily about God who sows the seed; nor is it about the seed itself, which is the Word of God (Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11). Many parables have different names in different Bibles and commentaries because they are not named in the Bible itself: different scholars named the parables according to their best understanding of the subject of the parable.

In the Parable of the Sower, the people would have likely thought that the “sower” was God, but Jesus could have been referring to himself as he did in the parable of the weeds of the field (Matt. 13:27). Actually, however, in the Parable of the Sower, the “sower” is not specifically named because it is anyone who speaks the Word to lead people to salvation. The seed in this parable is the word of God (Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11), specifically the “message about the kingdom” (Matt. 13:19) which Jesus and others were preaching and teaching, and if a person believed the message and obeyed God they would be saved.

[For more information on the Parable of the Sower, see commentary on Matt. 13:3.]

**“the birds.”** In biblical times, birds were usually considered evil or harmful, and in the Parable of the Sower, the “birds” represent the Devil and his demons and the demonic influence they exert in the world. Thus, in the explanation of the parable, the birds are “the Wicked One” (Matt. 13:19), “the Adversary” (Mark 4:15); and “the Devil” (Luke 8:12).

[For more information on the birds being evil, see commentary on Matt. 13:4.]

Luk 8:6

**“on the rock.”** The shallow soil in Israel usually has limestone rock right beneath it. Reading Luke 8:6 with Matthew 13:5 and Mark 4:5 makes it clear what Christ is talking about.

Luk 8:8

**“Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen!”** This is the same Greek phrase as occurs in Mark 4:9, and almost the same Greek phrase as occurs in Matthew 11:15. For an explanation of the exclamation, see commentary on Matthew 11:15. This verse is longer, reading, “Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen,” while the occurrences in Matthew read, “Anyone who has ears had better listen!”

Luk 8:9

**“his disciples *began* asking him what this parable meant.​”** The disciples’ question is asked and answered in Matthew 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12; and Luke 8:9-10. Matthew has the most complete answer.

Luk 8:10

**“sacred secrets.”** We translate the Greek word *mustērion* (#3466 μυστήριον) as “sacred secret” because that is what *mustērion* actually refers to: a secret in the religious or sacred realm.

[For more information on the “Sacred Secret” and the Administration of Grace, see commentary on Eph. 3:9.]

**“so that seeing they do not see”** The “so that” comes from the Greek preposition *hina*, which in this context refers to a result (see Word Study: “Hina”). The full text in Isaiah uses the common Semitic idiom that many scholars refer to as “the idiom of permission.”

[For more on the idiom of permission, see commentaries on Rom. 9:18 and Exod. 4:21. For more on why Christ taught in parables, see commentary on Matt. 13:13.]

Luk 8:12

**“Devil.”** The Greek word is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος), which literally means “Slanderer,” but *diabolos* gets transliterated into English as our more familiar name, “Devil.” Slander is so central to who the Devil is and how he operates that one of his primary names is “the Slanderer.”

[For more information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

**“cannot believe.”** The verb “believe” is in the subjunctive mood, thus many versions have “may” not believe, but the Greek conjunction *hina* (#2443 ἵνα) earlier in the sentence is the reason the verb is subjunctive, and therefore in these cases, we must get the sense of the verb from the context. In this case, the Devil does not take the word from people so they “may” not believe, his intention is that with no word in their heart, they “cannot” believe (see J. B. Phillips, The New Testament in Modern English. The translations by N.T. Wright and A. Nyland, say “won’t” believe).

Luk 8:14

**“and *the* pleasures of life.”** Believers are to seek to please God and do his will, but too often believers get sidetracked by seeing happiness or pleasure and putting that ahead of God. “Having a good time” can be an idol that takes the place of God. God wants people to enjoy life, and life can be very enjoyable when one obeys God. Most committed Christians would testify that life is more fun and enjoyable when they are obeying God than when they are not. Leaving the things of God to have “fun” or “enjoy life” is not wise.

Pleasure and “fun” can be an idol, even though the person does not have a statue or something that represents “pleasure,” as did the ancient religions. An idol can be set up in the heart (Ezek. 14:3). The ancient Greeks and Romans recognized that pleasure could be a god, and both cultures had a goddess of pleasure. The Greeks had the goddess Hēdonē (#2237 ἡδονή, pronounced hay-doe-'nay) who was the personification of pleasure and enjoyment. The Greek word *hēdonē* means “pleasure” and is where the English word “hedonism” comes from. In Aristotelian ethics, *hēdonē* “is part of the philosopher’s account of virtue and that pleasure (along with pain) is said to reveal a person’s character. It is good if it is a consequence of a virtuous life.”[[79]](#footnote-19330) In Roman mythology, the goddess similar to Hēdonē was Voluptas (or Volupta), although Voluptas was more closely associated specifically with sensual pleasure than Hēdonē was. The Greek philosopher Aristotle was correct: there is nothing wrong with pleasure if it comes from virtuous behavior, but too often people seek pleasure at the expense of godliness.

Believers need to be aware that idols are not only things such as statues of gods (or the gods themselves) that are worshiped, but anything that replaces the worship of God can in a sense be an idol. The point is that “pleasure,” “fun,” and “having a good time” can be an idol in the heart and can take the place of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Thus, as Jesus pointed out here in the Parable of the Sower, a person who seeks out pleasure and having a good time, and allows themselves to be pulled by them into ungodly behavior or distracted from the things of God, chokes back the Word (Matt. 13:7) and becomes unfruitful. The believer is not to let that happen.

**“and so they do not bring fruit to maturity.”** The “they” is plural, the people who hear the word but allow it to be choked. The “seed,” the “part” that fell into the thorns, is singular, so the “they” who do not mature are the people, not the seed (see commentary on Matt. 13:22).

Luk 8:16

**“after lighting a lamp.”** The “lamp” was an oil lamp.

Luk 8:17

**“For what is hidden.”** Luke 8:17 is often misunderstood to be referring to secret sins, as is its parallel verse, Mark 4:22. However, when taking both the context and the Greek language into consideration, it becomes clear that Luke 8:17 is referring to the Kingdom of God that was hidden and would be revealed.

Almost all modern translations use “nothing” and “anything” as the subjects of the two phrases in this sentence, for example, the ESV reads, “For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.” However, translating the Greek into English that way is misleading because it makes the subject plural: in English, “nothing” and “anything” act as plurals and refer to many things. But the Greek verbs are singular; there is one thing that is hidden and will be revealed.

Furthermore, that the verse is speaking about something singular, not plural, is also shown by the Greek pronoun *ὃ* (usually “who” or “which”), which is also singular. It is difficult to bring the Greek *ὃ* into English because English does not reproduce the singular and plural in the same way the Greek does—the Greek has a different relative pronoun for singular and plural, and this is the singular relative pronoun. Thus, although the Greek *ὃ* could be translated more literally in this context as “that which” or “what,” even those are unclear in English because they can be plural also, whereas the Greek is unambiguously singular. A case could be made to nuance the English to match the Greek singular better by translating the *ὃ* as “that *thing* which,” but even that could be misunderstood (“that *one thing* which” would be much clearer). So, although there are two indicators in the Greek syntax that show that the subject of the verse is singular, in the end, it is a total package of those two Greek indicators, and the context, and the parallel verse in Mark 4:22, that clearly make the case that Jesus is speaking about the Kingdom of God being hidden and then revealed.

It is both the context and the verses themselves that show that Mark 4:21-22 and Luke 8:16-17 are speaking about the Kingdom of God and not “secret sins.” The lamp which is “brought out” is not a bad thing, it is a good thing, and it is brought out to be put on the lampstand to give light for all to see by (Luke 8:16). Similarly, the Kingdom of God has been hidden, but at some future date in God’s timing it will be totally brought out into the open for all to see.

[For a more detailed explanation of the context, see commentary on Mark 4:22.]

Luk 8:18

**“for whoever has.”** Jesus taught this principle of having and not having five different times. See commentary on Matthew 25:29.

Luk 8:19

**“his mother.”** Jesus’ family had come to take control of him because they thought he had gone insane. This record is in Matthew 12:46; Mark 3:21, 31-35, and Luke 8:19-21. See commentary on Mark 3:21. There is no mention of Joseph; he had apparently died (see commentary on John 19:27).

Luk 8:22

**“Let’s go over to the other side of the lake.”** This record of Jesus calming a storm—which is immediately followed by the record of Jesus healing a man afflicted by demons—occurs in Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22-25. The most detail occurs in Mark (see commentary on Mark 4:35).

Luk 8:24

**“subdued.”** The Greek word translated “subdued” is *epitimaō* (#2008 ἐπιτιμάω), and this is the technical sense of the word as it was used in Greek religion for taking control over a spirit. Robert Guelich notes that *epitimaō* is “a commanding word uttered by God or by his spokesman, by which evil powers are brought into submission.”[[80]](#footnote-19123) Jesus subdued the storm, which was no doubt caused by a demon, by the power of God that he wielded, which was expressed in words. The power came from God and was used by Jesus. Jesus did not gain control over the storm by some “magic words” or formula that he used. “It is not a magical incantation...it is the powerful Word of the Son.”[[81]](#footnote-13373)

[For more on *epitimaō*, see commentary on Mark 1:25.]

Luk 8:25

**“Who is this.”** See commentary on Mark 4:41.

Luk 8:26

**“Gerasenes.”** While Mark and Luke say “Gerasenes,” Matthew says “Gadarenes.” For more on how to harmonize this account in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, see commentary on Matthew 8:28.

**“across *the lake* from Galilee.”** The Galilee was an area in northern Israel. The word “Galilee” means “circuit,” because if you follow the plains and mountain ridges, the Galilee makes a kind of circuit in northern Israel. However, Galilee is west of the Jordan River, and ends at the Arabah (the Jordan Valley), both north and south of the Sea of Galilee. Thus, the east coast of the Sea of Galilee is not in “Galilee.” By saying that Jesus sailed across the lake from Galilee, the Bible is making it clear that Jesus is sailing to the east coast of the Sea of Galilee.

Luk 8:27

**“a certain man.”** Matthew says there were two men, and has other different details as well.

[For more on how to harmonize this account in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, see commentary on Matt. 8:28.]

**“in the tombs.”** Inside them, not “among” them. See commentary on Mark 5:3.

Luk 8:28

**“What do you want with me?”** See commentary on Matthew 8:29.

**“torment me.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:29.

Luk 8:32

**“And he allowed them.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:32.

Luk 8:33

**“the demons, having come out from the man, went into the pigs.”** Animals can be possessed by demons (see commentary on Matt. 8:32).

Luk 8:34

**“the men who were looking after them … fled.”** See commentary on Matthew 8:33.

Luk 8:35

**“the people.”** The text reads “they,” but it is clarified in the REV as “the people,” that is, the people of the city.

**“clothed.”** The clothes would have likely come from the apostles. It was common to have at least an extra tunic to travel with (cf. Matt. 10:10)

Luk 8:36

**“the people.”** The text reads “they,” but it is clarified in the REV as “the people,” that is, the people of the city.

Luk 8:37

**“and returned.”** That is, Jesus returned to Capernaum. Luke 8:37 is a summary statement and anticipates Jesus’ return to Capernaum. It is not strictly in chronological order. Luke 8:38 shows the man who had been delivered still talking with Jesus. Jesus actually returned in Luke 8:40. The Bible has many summary statements, and we must be careful not to be confused by them.

Luk 8:39

**“God has done for you...Jesus had done for him.”** God works His miracles through people. Thus, whenever a miracle is performed, the recipient or beneficiary gives thanks to the one who stood in faith and performed the miracle, and also thanks and glory are given to God who supplied the power and actually did the work. The whole lesson of Hebrews 11, which speaks of the heroes of faith, is that almost always someone has to walk in faith for God’s power to work, and the people were “commended for their faith” in Hebrews 11:39. So when Jesus performed miracles, it was not just he, but God acting also, just as it is when Christian believers do miracles, healings, *etc*. In fact, Jesus gave credit to God for what he was accomplishing. “The words that I am saying to you I am not speaking from myself, but the Father living in *union with* me does his works” (John 14:10b). Also, Peter made it clear that it was God doing miracles through Jesus Christ: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you….” (Acts 2:22 KJV).

[For more information on Jesus being the fully human Son of God and not being “God the Son,” see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more on “the Holy Spirit” being one of the designations for God the Father and “the holy spirit” being the gift of God’s nature, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Luk 8:40

**“returned.”** The Greek word is *hupostrephō* (#5290 ὑποστρέφω) and it means, to return, to turn back. In this case, the parallel record in Mark 5:21ff makes it clear Jesus “returned” to a city back across the Sea of Galilee, in this case to Capernaum. There are a number of reasons that support that Jesus returned to Capernaum, even though Capernaum was not specifically named. One is that the people were expecting him (Luke 8:40). That would be true of his hometown, but not necessarily of other towns. Also, Jairus was one of the “rulers of the synagogue” (Luke 8:41), and the major synagogue in the area mentioned in Scripture and confirmed by archaeology was in Capernaum. Also, Mark 5:21 says he was “by the lake,” that is, the Sea of Galilee, and Capernaum was right on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Also, Jairus spoke in a very confident manner that Jesus could heal his daughter, and it is likely that his confidence came from the fact that Jesus had done so many different kinds of healings right there in Capernaum. The town that fits all the conditions in the biblical record is Capernaum. So the record of the healing of Jairus’ daughter occurred at Capernaum.

Some people have been confused by the word “return” in Luke 8:40 because they mistakenly think it means return back to where the demon-possessed men were. The confusion comes because Luke 8:37 says that Jesus, “got into a boat and returned (to Capernaum),” so if he returned to Capernaum in Luke 8:37, then some people assume that he must have “returned” to where the demon-afflicted men were in Luke 8:40. But a more careful reading of Luke 8:37-41 shows that Luke 8:37 is a summary statement, not strictly in chronological order, because verse 38 shows the man who had been delivered still talking with Jesus, so Jesus had not in fact left the area and returned to Capernaum yet. He actually left in Luke 8:40. The reason this is important is that verse 40 says the people welcomed Christ, and were expecting him. That was certainly true of Capernaum, but not to where the pigs were drowned in the lake. Capernaum was Jesus’ home (see commentary on Mark 2:1), and where he lived, so the people expected him to come home periodically. In contrast, there is no indication Jesus said he would return—or did return—to the area where the demon-afflicted man lived.

Luk 8:41

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“Jairus.”** The record of the healing of Jairus’ daughter and the healing of the woman who was bleeding is in Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43; and Luke 8:41-56.

Luk 8:42

**“pressing in around him.”** The Greek verb gives the idea of pressing in so hard that it was difficult to breathe.

Luk 8:44

**“bleeding.”** The Greek is more literally, “her discharge (or “flow, issue”) of blood,” but it refers to the bleeding stopping.

Luk 8:45

**“crowd.”** The Greek is plural, technically “crowds,” but although that is the way the Greeks would say it, in English we use “crowd” as a collective singular for a lot of people.

Luk 8:47

**“she came trembling, and falling down before him.”** The record of the woman who had the issue of blood for 12 years occurs in Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-35; and Luke 8:43-48. Each record has some of the same information, but each record includes different details as well. In this case, there are too many matching details for the records not to be of the same event, and there are no contradictory details—they all fit together to make a singular picture of the event. Mark and Luke include many details that are left out of Matthew. Matthew does not record the power that came from Jesus, or how Jesus then searched for the person who touched him. The focus in Matthew is on the woman’s need, her King meeting that need, and Jesus focusing on her faith. Like a benevolent King, he tells the woman to “Be of good cheer” (Luke 8:48 NKJV), because her faith had healed her. Mark and Luke include many more details, and it seems almost like some kind of professional courtesy that it is Mark, not Luke (Luke was a doctor!) who says she suffered many things from many doctors and instead of getting better got worse (Mark 5:26). Mark and Luke record Jesus having to be persistent to find the person who touched him, including having to ignore his close disciples who thought it was incredulous that he would even ask who touched him in that large crowd. Because the Gospel of Mark focuses on Jesus as a servant, and Luke on Jesus as a man, a human being (see commentary on Mark 1:1), it seems to make sense that Jesus would have to fight with more circumstances to find out what happened to him, whereas it makes sense that as the King, Jesus would simply see the woman and address her.

Luk 8:49

**“*Jairus*.”** The name “Jairus” has been added for clarity due to the large number of pronouns in the context.

Luk 8:52

**“they were all crying and mourning.”** For more on this crowd and why they could go from mourning to laughing so quickly (Luke 8:52-53), see commentary on Mark 5:38.

**“asleep.”** The Greek verb is *katheudō* (#2518 καθεύδω). Sleep is used as a euphemism and metaphor for death. See commentary on Acts 7:60.

Luk 8:54

**“But he, taking her by the hand.”** Luke omits the fact that before Jesus ministered to the girl, he drove all the crowds of people who were in the house outside of the house.

Luk 8:55

**“spirit.”** The Greek word is *pneuma* (#4151 πνεῦμα). Here it refers to the natural life of the body. See commentary on Luke 23:46.

**Luke Chapter 9**

Luk 9:2

**“he sent them out.”** Jesus sent out the Twelve Apostles in Matthew 10:5, Mark 6:7, and Luke 9:2. Sometime after that, Jesus sent out 72 (or 70) disciples (Luke 10:1).

Luk 9:3

**“journey.”** Literally, “road.” Here used of the trip on the road, or “journey, trip.”

**“staff.”** The Gospel of Mark says to take a staff. For information on the apparent contradiction, see commentary on Matthew 10:10.

**“traveler’s bag.”** See commentary on Mark 6:8.

**“silver.”** “Silver” refers to money; coins made of silver.

**“two tunics.”** The tunic was a long shirt, like a long undershirt, that was against the skin. See commentary on Mark 6:9.

Luk 9:4

**“stay there, and *when it is time,* depart.”** In other words, do not hop from house to house in the same town. Stay in one house. That honored the first family to believe, and also let people know where to find the disciples if someone was looking for them.

“**from that area.”** The Greek text is more literally, “from there,” but the meaning of “there” is that city or that area. It does not make much sense to say, “stay there until you depart from there,” because if the first “there” in the sentence means “house,” which it does, then the sentence would seem to mean, “stay there (i.e., in that house) until you depart from there (ostensibly “that house”). But that does not make sense. The sentence is saying, “Stay ‘there’ (in that house) until you leave ‘from there’ (from the area or the city).”

Luk 9:7

**“from among the dead.”**[[82]](#footnote-16457) See commentary on Romans 4:24.

Luk 9:10

**“And when the apostles returned.”** The feeding of the 5,000 is in all four Gospels (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17, and John 6:1-13. The feeding of the 4,000 is in Matt. 15:29-39; Mark 8:1-10).

**“he withdrew by himself to a city called Bethsaida.”** Bethsaida is north of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus went up onto one of the mountains just east of Bethsaida (see commentary on John 6:1).

Apparently, after being at Bethsaida and feeding the 5,000 men, he went north to Caesarea Philippi, where he was when he went up to a “high mountain,” Mount Hermon, for the Transfiguration (see commentary on Matt. 17:2 and Mark 9:2).

Luk 9:12

**“to draw to a close.”** The Greek text is literally “decline,” that is, the sun began to go down in the west and the day began to close.

**“find… somewhere to stay *for the night*.”** The Greek verb is *kataluō* (#2647 καταλύω), which is often translated “destroy,” but *kataluō* was used of a traveler’s day “coming to an end,” so it was also used to mean halt on a journey, find a place to stay, or “lodge.” The noun form, *kataluma* (#2646 κατάλυμα), is a “guest room” (Mark 14:14, Luke 2:7, Luke 22:11). In Luke 2:7 is often mistranslated as “inn,” in large part due to Christmas tradition (see commentary on Luke 2:7).

Luk 9:14

**“about 50 each.”** See commentary on Mark 6:40.

Luk 9:17

**“twelve baskets.”** The feeding of the 5,000 and the twelve baskets of leftovers point to God’s blessing on the twelve tribes of Israel (see commentary on Matthew 15:37).

Luk 9:18

**“And it came to pass.”** There is a time break between Luke 9:17 and 9:18. In verse 18 Jesus had traveled with his apostles to Caesarea Philippi.

**“alone.”** In this case, “alone” means apart from the huge crowds mentioned in the previous verses.

Luk 9:19

**“Elijah.”** For information on why the people thought that Elijah would come, and why John the Baptist was called “Elijah,” see commentary on Matthew 17:10.

Luk 9:20

**“The Christ of God.”** This statement of Peter’s is in Matthew 16:16, Mark 8:29, and Luke 9:20.

Luk 9:22

**“the Son of Man must suffer many things.”** Now that the disciples know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:13-17; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21), Jesus begins to tell them that he must suffer, die, and be raised from the dead. Despite his clear teaching about it, however, they did not understand what he meant, and Peter even tried to stop Jesus from voicing it.

[For more on Jesus’ clear teaching that he would suffer and die, see commentary on Luke 18:34.]

**“be raised *from the dead*.”** The words “from the dead” are added for clarity. Jesus would be killed and rise after three days, “rise,” which would have to mean rise from the dead. This teaching of Jesus was very important, and is repeated in Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31, and Luke 9:22.

Luk 9:23

**“And he said to *them* all.”** This record is in Matthew 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-9:1; and Luke 9:23-27. Matthew says Jesus is speaking with his disciples, which was the major intent of what he was saying, however, Mark and Luke point out that the multitude was there also and was listening to this part of what he was teaching. What Jesus taught about him being the Messiah and suffering and dying was only taught to the disciples, which is why for this teaching he had to call the multitude to him.

**“take up his cross.”** The follower of Christ must be willing to suffer for Christ. Here in Luke 9:23, Jesus says that his followers must deny themselves and take up their cross “daily.” The inherent self-centeredness we humans have, the difficulties of life, and the ongoing war between Good and Evil are such that there are daily struggles in life, and the believer must be mentally prepared to take up their cross and struggle against evil day after day. (See commentary on Mark 8:34).

[For more on the meaning of “take up his cross,” see commentary on Matt. 16:24.]

Luk 9:24

**“life.”** The Greek word is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), often translated “soul.” The Greek word has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here it refers to the physical life of the body, which is why most versions translate it “life,” which is accurate in this context.

[See commentary on Matthew 16:25. For a more complete explanation of *psuchē*, “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

**“because of me.”** For an explanation of this phrase, see commentary on Matthew 5:11.

Luk 9:26

**“ashamed.”** The Greek word translated “ashamed” is *epaischunomai* (#1870 ἐπαισχύνομαι), and it means “to be ashamed; feel disgrace about; be embarrassed about; be reluctant about due to fear of being embarrassed.” Most Christians do not understand the Day of Judgment or the Kingdom of Christ on earth, so these words do not make sense to them. Although unbelievers may well be ashamed of the words of Christ, many believers are too, and they show it by not boldly standing on what Jesus said. In fact, many Christians never speak of Jesus or his teachings, but claim that is “private,” while meanwhile, they try to “blend in” with the people around them.

These words were spoken by Jesus to his followers, who were Jews, but they apply to Christians as well. For example, here Jesus says that those who are ashamed of him now will find him ashamed of them when he comes, and 1 John 2:28 speaks of Christians who will be ashamed when he comes. The truth that on Judgment Day we will get what we deserve is true for all humanity for all time.

[For more on the Kingdom being on earth, see Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.” For more on rewards and punishments on the Day of Judgment, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.”]

**“of the holy angels.”** This is a simple and well-stated truth. When Jesus comes back, it will be in his glory, and the Father’s, and the glory of the holy angels. There are three things mentioned here, but there is no mention of the “Person,” the Holy Spirit; instead, there are the Father, the Son, and holy angels. The “Person” of the Holy Spirit is missing because there is no such “third person of the Trinity.”

[For more on the Holy Spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” For more on there not being a Trinity, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For a more complete work on God and His Son Jesus, see, Graeser, Lynn, and Schoenheit, *One God & One Lord: Reconsidering the Cornerstone of the Christian Faith*. Also, by the same authors, *The Gift of Holy Spirit: The Power to Be Like Christ.*]

Luk 9:27

**“will absolutely not experience death.”** Luke 9:27 is a shorter version of what Jesus taught in Matthew 16:24-28, (Jesus also taught this in Mark 8:34-38; Mark 9:1). Although Luke’s version is quite abbreviated, we can tell from the parallel records in Matthew and Mark that Jesus was teaching that people must live with such a mindset that they would be ready to give up their life for Jesus’ sake, and that Jesus was coming back soon (Matt. 16:27), and that is why he said that “some” of the people in his audience would not die before they saw the Kingdom of God.

Although some people teach that the Kingdom of God is here now, or it was here on earth when Jesus was here, that is not reflected in what Jesus prayed or taught. In the Lord’s prayer he prayed “your kingdom come,” and in verses like Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1, and Luke 9:27 he taught the Kingdom was not here yet.

[For more information on what Jesus was teaching, see commentary on Matt. 16:28. For more information on the Kingdom of God, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Luk 9:28

**“went up onto the mountain.”** The evidence is that the “high mountain” was Mount Hermon, the start of which is immediately adjacent to Caesarea Philippi (see commentary on Mark 9:2). For an explanation of the Transfiguration, see commentary on Matthew 17:2.

Luk 9:29

**“the appearance of his face became different.”** The event described as the “Transfiguration” is recorded in three Gospels (Matt. 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36). For more on this event see commentary on Matthew 17:2 and 17:3.

Luk 9:30

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 9:31

**“who appeared in glory.”** So in the vision, Moses and Elijah also appeared “in glory,” that is, they appeared as they will appear in the future in their glorious state.

**“departure.”** The Greek word for “departure” is *exodos* (#1841 ἔξοδος), and it means “a going out or departure.” *Exodos* is used figuratively here to indicate Jesus’ “departure from among the living,”[[83]](#footnote-26252) which represented his death that was going to happen in the near future at Jerusalem.

Luk 9:33

**“not knowing what he said.”** Peter, always impulsive and now afraid (Mark 9:6), just had to say something so he spoke foolishly, as if the three men were going to spend the night and needed shelter.

Luk 9:37

**“a large crowd met him.”** The record of the healing of the epileptic boy is in Matthew 17:14-20, Mark 9:14-29, and Luke 9:37-43.

Luk 9:38

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 9:39

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 9:42

**“made him have convulsions.”** It is possible that the demon threw the boy to the ground, as some translations say. But there are other translations that say the demon tore the boy, and that seems to be in accord with the Greek which seems to be much stronger than simply throw on the ground. The word we translate as “tore” is *rēgnumi*, and means “To cause to come apart or be in pieces by means of internal or external force, tear in pieces, break, burst (burst the wine-skins: Mk 2:22; cf. Mt 9:17; Luke 5:37). The passive form has the meaning “be torn, burst,” and when it is used of ferocious animals it refers to tearing in pieces w. their teeth.[[84]](#footnote-11196) If a demon has to leave someone, because of its evil and hateful nature, it will do everything it can to hurt the person by tearing flesh, nerves, or anything else it can as it leaves. In this case, the demon saw Jesus coming, and was going to hurt the boy as much as possible before he left, tearing the boy and convulsing him (cf. the record in Mark 9:20).

Demons exist and are evil and very hurtful. Christians need to be aware of them and can, by revelation, cast them out (see commentary on 1 Cor. 12:10, “discerning of spirits”).

**“subdued.”** See commentary on Mark 1:25.

Luk 9:45

**“and it remained hidden.”** Christ had taught this earlier, before the Transfiguration (Matt. 16:21), and the apostles did not understand it then either.

**“so they did not grasp its *meaning*.”** This is a result clause in Greek. It was *not* hidden from them in order that, for the purpose of, the disciples not perceiving Christ’s meaning. Rather, the disciples’ own preconceived notion of the Messiah and his role concealed this meaning from their understanding, “so they did not grasp its *meaning*.” It does not make sense to say Jesus concealed it because he precedes the saying with, “let this sink into your hearing” (Luke 9:44). Nor does it make sense that God would be at odds against Christ, causing them to be blinded to it, when the Lord desired the disciples to understand. R. C. H. Lenski writes, “Robertson [in *Word Pictures*, 2:136]…considers *hina* [often translated “that” or “in order that”] as final, as denoting a divine purpose, that God did not want the disciples to understand these words of Jesus, and the commentators generally labor to make this divine purpose plausible. But such an effort is hopeless. The disciples were not obdurate unbelievers so that a judicial penalty should rest on them, that hearing they should not hear; they were believers, and the repeated announcements of the Passion were a serious effort on Jesus’ part to make them understand. By means of his literal statements, Jesus was revealing and not hiding his coming Passion.”[[85]](#footnote-20203)

Luk 9:46

**“And an argument arose.”** This record occurs in Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; and Luke 9:46-48, and then in a similar record, James and John requested to have the second and third positions of authority in the Kingdom, which angered the other apostles (Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45), and the subject came up and was disputed at the Last Supper (Luke 22:24-29).

The argument arose on the road between Caesarea Philippi and Capernaum (cf. Matt. 17:24; 18:1; Mark 9:33). The actual subject of the debate was who was greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 18:1). That would be related to who was the greatest here and now, but although the subjects are tied together there is a distinction. This is not “greatest” in the sense of who had done the most miracles or had the greatest trust (“faith”). Jesus telling them that the one who is greatest must be the servant of all (Mark 9:35), shows us that “greatest” refers to the person with the most authority. In the patron-client society of the biblical culture and Greco-Roman world, the “greatest” person was the one who had the most authority and ruled the others (cf. Mark 10:42). Jesus was trying to instill in his followers that we must have a servant’s heart, and the greatest one of all must be the most willing to serve.

The Greek text more literally reads, “which might be greater among them.” The Greek is technically “greater” (the comparative), not “greatest” (the superlative). Although most scholars believe that the comparative is used for the superlative here, some understand this as the literal comparative, that the disciples were not just arguing about which one of them was the greatest, but who was greater among them, that is, what was their order of greatness. For example, if Peter was first, who was second, etc.

The fact that the disciples would be arguing about who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven shows at least that they were thinking correctly about what mattered in life. This earthly life is short and difficult, and we must work with what we’ve been given and should strive to do the best we can with who and what we are. The next life will be different, and people will be rewarded according to what they have done in their first life. Too many Christians are talked out of making sacrifices for Christ because those sacrifices “are not good for me, and I must take care of myself first.” We should be very glad that Jesus did not do “what was good for him,” or he would have taken a vacation in the Galilee instead of dying on the cross for our sins.

[For more on rewards in the next life, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10. For more about what the next life will look like, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“*as to* which of them was the greatest.”** The crux of the argument was about which one would be greater in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 18:1), which of course would be linked to which one was greater on earth.

Luk 9:47

**“him.”** The text gives us no information about the sex of the child. The same record is in Matthew 18:2 and Mark 9:36 (see commentary on Mark 9:36).

Luk 9:48

**“Indeed.”** This is the “confirmatory” use of the Greek *gar*, not the causal use in which it is usually translated “for.” Some grammarians refer to it as the “confirmatory *gar*.”

Luk 9:49

**“he is not following *you* along with us.”** That is, the man was not a disciple of Christ like the others were. The Greek makes the English somewhat awkward, but the meaning is clear. We might say something like, “he is not part of our group that follows you.” It is so typical of human nature that we seem to instinctively divide ourselves into “us” and “them,” and having a heart that reaches out to others and includes them takes training and spiritual maturity.

Luk 9:51

**“firmly resolved.”** The Greek literally reads “he set his face.” The Greek word *stērizō* (#4741 στηρίζω) means “to be firm” and implies, “to determine, to establish, to be committed, and to strengthen.” In English, we might say that Jesus “set his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem,” meaning that he was absolutely determined and committed to going (cf. Isa. 50:7).

Luk 9:57

**“As they were going.”** Luke 9:57-62 groups together three similar incidents: a man who says he will follow Jesus; a man who wants to bury his father before following Jesus; and a man who wants to say goodbye to his family before following Jesus. The first two men are mentioned in Matthew 8:18-22, but the third man is not mentioned in Matthew. It seems certain that the three incidents did not happen together, but are mentioned together in Luke because of their similar nature. The times and places when the two men are mentioned together in Matthew, and the three men are mentioned together in Luke, are not the same; Matthew occurs earlier in Jesus’ ministry. Furthermore, it is extremely unlikely that there are two different times that men came to Jesus in the same order asking the same thing.

It is most likely that the incidents involving the first two men, who are mentioned together in Matthew in the context of Jesus leaving Capernaum, did in fact occur at that time and place. In contrast, the incident involving the third man, who asked to say goodbye to his family, happened at the time and place mentioned in Luke, and the other two men are grouped together in Luke with that third man because of the similar nature of their questions and Jesus’ answer.

**“a certain man.”** This event is also recorded in Matthew 8:19-20, and we learn from Matthew that this man was an expert in the Law of Moses (thus called a “scribe” in some versions).

Luk 9:58

**“the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”** Jesus was saying that he was constantly on the move, not that he had no place to stay. It is often taught that Jesus did not have a place to lay his head because he was poor, and furthermore, that being poor is a blessing. But both teachings are in error. Jesus was not poor, and when Scripture is properly translated, there is no indication that a person is blessed just because he is poor. The Bible constantly admonishes people to use wisdom with their money for the very reason that being poor makes life difficult; it is not a blessing. Money is a shelter (or “defense,” or “protection;” Eccl. 7:12). Everyone knows that many of life’s problems can be solved with a little money. Furthermore, the Bible says a wise person had treasure and oil in his house; he was not just “getting along” (Prov. 21:20). We are to have money to give to those in need (Eph. 4:28). Also, the wise man leaves enough inheritance that even his grandchildren get a share (Prov. 13:22). Jesus himself was apparently quite wealthy; he certainly was not poor.

[For more on Jesus’ money, see commentary on Luke 6:20.]

The meaning of Jesus’ answer in Luke 9:58 (and Matthew 8:20) is not immediately apparent because it is not a “yes” or “no” answer. An expert in the Law came to Jesus and stated that he would follow Jesus wherever he went. That sounded good and sincere, but was the lawyer really prepared for Jesus’ lifestyle? Maybe, but maybe not. Typically in that culture, an expert in the Law would have a home, a family, a home synagogue, and a circle of influence where he could teach and help people understand the scriptures they were reading. This certain expert in the Law must have been so impressed by Jesus’ teaching that he felt like he was ready to follow Jesus wherever he went, but was he really ready to be on the move day after day, away from his family and his circle of influence? This was a decision the man would have to make.

It is important to notice that Jesus did not say “yes” or “no” to the man’s request to follow Jesus, but simply pointed out the kind of lifestyle the man was getting himself into. After that, the man would have to make his own choice—and the Bible never tells us what choice he made. He may have been dissuaded by Jesus’ answer and gone back home, or Jesus’ answer may have crystalized his resolve so that he set out as a follower of Jesus. The Bible does not say, and so we do not know.

There is a great lesson in Jesus’ answer and in the fact that the Bible does not tell us what happened to the man and what choice he made. The choice of whether to actively follow Jesus from place to place, or to be a “follower” of Jesus back at his home by repeating the teachings of Jesus and imitating his ways was his to make—and both were “good choices.” The only bad choice would be to forget Jesus and return both to his old home and his old ways before he met Jesus. In this incident recorded in Matthew and Luke, God, by not elevating one good choice over the other, validates the ministries of all the people who follow Jesus, whether they are at home and seem comfortable, or whether they are in some kind of traveling or missionary lifestyle that seems more challenging. God calls us to serve, but often where and how we serve is our choice and it blesses God no matter what we choose. Every person has a unique calling from God, and no calling is more honorable to God than another. We humans may elevate one type of calling above another, but to God, serving Him is honorable no matter how He has chosen to call us to serve. Sometimes the only bad choice we can make is to not serve at all.

Luk 9:59

**“bury my father.”** This record also occurs in Matthew 8:21-22. It is almost certain that the man’s father was not dead yet. Burials occurred the same day a person died, and the fact that this man was with Jesus tells us that his father was not dead yet, or the man would have been home at the funeral with his family. In fact, it is likely that the man’s father was not even sick. See commentary on Luke 9:60.

Luk 9:60

**“Leave the dead to bury their own dead.”** This is the figure of speech antanaclasis, “word clashing,” when a word is used in a sentence or phrase with two different meanings.[[86]](#footnote-23818) The first use of “dead” refers to those who are spiritually dead but physically alive, while the second use of “dead” refers to being physically dead. Some people have maintained that the statement Jesus made is too harsh to actually be his, but that is not the case. For one thing, the very harshness is good evidence the saying is original. Scribes generally attempted to remove things from the text they found objectionable, not put objectionable things in the text. Beyond that, Jesus’ teaching and action showed that, although he respected family obligations, when family matters would have stopped a person from doing the will of God, he firmly advocated doing the will of God (Matt. 10:37; 12:46-49; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21).

This incident is also recorded in Matthew 8:21-22. Jesus’ answer sounds harsh, but under the circumstances, it was the honest reply the man needed to hear if he was going to follow Jesus. To understand the man’s request and Jesus’ answer, we must first realize that when the man said, “Allow me first to go and bury my father,” his father was likely not even sick. In the biblical culture, people were buried the same day they died because there was no way to preserve the dead body. If the man’s father was dead, he would be home burying his father and not with Jesus at that time.

Because people were buried the same day they died, if a family member, relative, or friend was away from home and traveling when someone at home died, it might be some time before the traveler could be located and even more time before he could make it back home. That made it very unlikely the traveler would make it home for the funeral. When Ananias died unexpectedly, apparently friends or family could not find his wife Sapphira, so they buried him without her even knowing about it (Acts 5:5-7). Also, sickness and death could occur unexpectedly and quickly, such as in the case of appendicitis, an infection, or some kind of accident. This disciple was telling Jesus he was not comfortable leaving his father before his father died, whenever that might be; and after that, he would follow Jesus. Jesus knew what the man did not know—that his ministry would be short, and if this man waited at home until his father died, he would likely miss Jesus’ ministry entirely, and thus lose his chance to be a disciple in the kind of meaningful way the man apparently desired.

This man expressed an interest in following Jesus, but wanted it to be convenient, when all his family affairs were concluded and his responsibility to be at his father’s funeral was over. Jesus, in saying what he did, shows us that following him will not always be tidy and convenient, but that we will sometimes have to make sacrifices.

Jesus’ answer should be very instructive to people who are torn between what they perceive as family and community responsibilities and what the Lord requires of them. Surely there are people who wrongly neglect their family responsibilities “for the work of the ministry,” but on the other hand, there are many people who should learn to say “No,” to things they are asked to do just to appease others when it keeps them from what they really need to be doing for the Lord. When it comes to our time, saying “Yes,” to one thing is always saying “No” to another. We need to be wise with our time and choices, and be willing to make tough choices for the Lord.

Just as Jesus made a choice between his family and his followers (cf. Mark 3:31-34), he asks us to do the same (cf. Luke 14:26). If his father loved his son, he would understand that following Jesus was a call of God and came with the risk of him not being present when the father died.

[For more on the figure of speech antanaclasis, see commentary on 1 Sam. 1:24].

[See Word Study: “Antanaclasis.”]

**“proclaim everywhere.”** The Greek is *diangellō* (#1229 διαγγέλλω), which is more than just to proclaim, it means to proclaim everywhere (NASB), to publish abroad (ASV), to spread the news (HCSB).

Luk 9:61

**“say goodbye.”** This seems to be an innocent request, but we can tell from Jesus’ statement in response that there was a lot to it. For one thing, leaving a family in the biblical time period was an emotional and drawn-out process. Without reliable communication, it was likely that there would be no contact between the man and his family until he returned, so families prolonged saying goodbye. For example, when Abraham’s servant wanted to take Rebekah away from her home to marry Isaac, her parents asked to let her stay with them ten days (Gen. 24:55). The Levite who wanted to travel with his wife away from her father ended up staying at the girl’s home for five days (Judg. 19:8).

It was customary in the biblical world that greeting people and saying goodbye took a very long time, which is why when Elijah sent his servant Gehazi to heal a child, he told him not to greet anyone or return a greeting (2 Kings 4:29). It is also why, when Jesus sent his disciples out to evangelize, he told them not to greet anyone on the road (Luke 10:4). The ungodly religious leaders loved the elaborate greetings in the marketplaces (Matt. 23:7; Mark 12:38; Luke 11:43; 20:46).

Of course, there was also always the possibility that the family would put so much pressure on the man that he would not leave his home and return to follow Jesus at all. The family would certainly plead with the man to stay, and the man may have given in to that pressure. That in part accounts for Jesus’ response to his request.

Luk 9:62

**“put his hand to the plow.”** This accurately reflects the biblical custom of plowing, because the biblical plow was held in one hand. In biblical times, the plow was a light wooden “scratch plow,” that just scratched the surface of the ground so there would be loose soil for planting. If the farmer could afford it, the plow blade would be of bronze or iron, but if not, the plow just had a wooden point that scratched the ground. The plow was fastened by straps or cords to the yoke on the oxen, and pulled behind the oxen and in front of the farmer. That way the farmer could see that the oxen were going straight ahead and the plow furrow was also straight. If the plowman looked behind him, the oxen could veer off the straight path and the plow make a crooked furrow. Because the plow was light it could be held and controlled in one hand, and the other hand held a goad.

[For more on the goad, see commentary on Acts 26:14. For more on plowing after the fall rains started, see commentary on James 5:7.]

**“and *yet* continues to look behind *him*.”** In reality, no one would plow forward but continue to look back because it would be impossible to plow in a straight line. However, what Jesus said made sense to people because people could identify with the feeling of not wanting to be plowing. Israel had a dry season and a wet season. The dry season started in April and went through the summer until mid to late October. By the end of the dry season, the ground would be baked so hard it could not be plowed. Farmers would have to wait for the “former rains” to soften the ground before they could plow (Ps. 65:10), and it often occurred that men ended up plowing in the rain. But plowing in the rain and cold was not fun, and more than one farmer would certainly have looked back at his house and wished he were warm and dry rather than cold and wet.

**“well suited.”** The Greek word is *euthetos* (#2111 εὔθετος), and it means “that which is well suited for something…fit, suitable, usable, convenient,”[[87]](#footnote-17703) properly, “well-placed; a fit…useful.”[[88]](#footnote-27608) The Anchor Bible Commentary has “suitable” in its translation.[[89]](#footnote-11005)

Every person, if they are going to live a godly life, has to fight against their sin nature, the fallen nature of the world, and the forces of evil in the world. Before the Day of Pentecost, getting saved took effort and did not happen by chance (today, getting saved is much easier thanks to the death and resurrection of Christ; cf. Deut. 6:25; Luke 18:18-20 with Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 10:9). No one “accidentally stumbles” into being saved and working for rewards in the Kingdom. Jesus said in Matthew 11:12, **“**And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful people are seizing it as a prize” (Matt. 11:12). There is so much working against being godly in this life that it often takes being “forceful” to do the things of God.

A person who is like the man plowing in Jesus’ illustration, who is plowing forward but also constantly looking backward at the world, will not do a good job plowing. He is double-hearted, wanting some of the things of the Kingdom but still being attached to the things of this life. That person is not well-suited for the Kingdom of God because he will not do well fighting his sin nature and the forces of evil that come against him. Jesus Christ himself was the best example of what it takes to be well-suited for the Kingdom. He was focused on doing the will of God and was willing to not only say, but to live out, “not my will but thine be done.”

People cannot afford to be attached to the world while trying to be attached to the things of God. God and the world are opposites. That is why the Bible says, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?” (James 4:4). Neither can people be wishy-washy in doing the will of God, trying to please God without offending the world. Jesus Christ is a “rock of offense” to the world, because he will bring it and its ways to an end (Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8). There are things that can seem attractive and exciting about the world and its ways—which is why so many people are caught up in sin—but the godly person knows how those things can destroy one’s relationship with God, and avoids them. The godly person puts his hand to the plow and does what it takes within his mind and heart to not spend time looking back at the world.

**“Kingdom of God.”** This is the future Messianic Kingdom on earth.

[For more information on the Kingdom of God, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**Luke Chapter 10**

Luk 10:1

**“sent them on ahead of him.”** Jesus sent out the Twelve Apostles in Matthew 10:5, Mark 6:7, and Luke 9:2. Sometime after that, Jesus sent out 72 (or 70) disciples (Luke 10:1).

**“ahead of him.”** The Greek has the idiom, “before his face.” It was the custom that disciples would follow behind the Rabbi, so when they were ahead of him, one way of speaking about it was to say, “before his face.”

**“72.”** This is one of the times when scholars have a difficult time determining what the original text of Luke said. The evidence of the Greek manuscripts and the Church Fathers is quite evenly divided, with some reading “70” (which appears in many English versions), and some reading “72.” In this case, the best determiner seems to be one of the standard ways that the original reading is determined when there are multiple readings: which reading is the most difficult (because scribes often changed the text to fit what they considered “more sensible” or “more acceptable”), and which reading best explains the other reading (since the original would have been changed to the second reading). In this case, “70” was a well-known and well-accepted number. For example, Moses picked 70 men to help him lead Israel (Num. 11:16), there were supposedly 70 men who translated the Septuagint (hence the designation for it: LXX), and there were 70 men on the Sanhedrin, the ruling Jewish council. In contrast, “72” was an odd and unhistoric number. So, that scribes would change “72” to “70” (to make Jesus similar to Moses?) is quite easily explained, whereas if the original text was “70” there is no good reason that a scribe would change the text to “72.”

Luk 10:3

**“Pay attention!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20. Evangelism is serious work, difficult in itself due to the fallen nature of man and mankind’s general resistance to godliness. Adding to that difficulty, however, is the spiritual battle that always rages around any outreach work. Thus, it is understandable that the Lord would start instructing us about it with, “Pay attention!”

Luk 10:4

**“greet no one.”** This does not mean to be unfriendly. The oriental greetings were long and involved, and Jesus wanted his disciples to go with haste.

Luk 10:12

**“more bearable.”** See commentary on Matthew 10:15.

Luk 10:14

**“more bearable.”** See commentary on Matthew 10:15.

Luk 10:15

**“grave.”** See Word Study: “Hades.”

Luk 10:18

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost. For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13.

[For more information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

This verse is a vivid testimony to the problems that believers can cause in the Adversary’s kingdom when they teach the truth, heal the sick, and cast out demons. The Devil spends much of his time in heaven, where he constantly makes accusations against God’s people (Job 1:6, 7, 12; 2:1, 2, 7; Rev. 12:10). However, he comes to the earth when he needs to, as he did when he appeared to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), or when he personally tempted Jesus Christ in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). The book of Revelation shows us that in the future the Devil will be cast out of heaven and no longer allowed access to God (Rev. 12:10).

In Luke 10 Jesus sent out the 72 (or 70; the Greek texts are divided) with the authority to heal and cast out demons. They were very effective in helping God’s people because they came back to Jesus amazed at the deliverance they were able to accomplish through the power of God. They said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!” (Luke 10:17). This was great news for God’s people, but terrible news for the Devil and his kingdom. Before Christ’s time, no one had effectively delivered people from demonic power. Now Jesus, the Twelve, and the 72, were casting demons out of people and destroying the oppressive system the Devil had carefully built.

The Devil could not just stand by and watch this happen. He came to earth to personally intercede, and try to minimize the damage that the disciples were doing, as well as try to cause them problems in any way he could. Thus, just as he left heaven to tempt Adam and Eve (Gen. 3), and to tempt Jesus (Matt. 4; Luke 4), he quickly left heaven to support his demonic army on earth. Although some people mistakenly believe that Satan is no longer allowed in heaven, the Scripture testifies that he is often there, sometimes “day and night” (Job 1:6-7; 2:1-2; Rev. 12:10). God showed Jesus the Devil’s rapid descent from heaven in a revelation vision. Thus, when the disciples joyfully exclaimed that even demons were subject to them in Christ’s name, Jesus supported their faith by telling them that they had such a powerful and damaging effect on Satan’s kingdom that Satan had quickly, like lightning, come down from heaven.

The Greek word translated “fall” in Luke 10:18 is *piptō*, (#4098 πίπτω) and is a general term for all types of falling or downward motion, including falling off of things, throwing oneself down before dignitaries, falling down dead, lightning falling from the sky, being ruined personally (“falling” from grace), and even the heat of the sun “falling” upon people. Thus, the exact meaning of *piptō* has to be taken from the context, and the context of Luke 10:18 is the disciples causing a disturbance in the Devil’s kingdom, so he “fell” (traveled quickly downward) from heaven to correct it.

Some Christians teach that when Jesus said he saw Satan fall from heaven, he was saying that he existed in the beginning and saw when Satan and his demons rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven. That interpretation does not fit the context of the verse. What difference would it make in the context of Luke 10 that Jesus had seen Satan’s rebellion and fall? Such a statement would not have supported the 72, and in fact, would have confused them. Furthermore, it is not the kind of statement that Jesus would make, because it would be pointing to something he supposedly would have had to have done ages before and that was completely removed and irrelevant to the 72 casting out demons. Actually, Jesus did not even exist when Satan originally fell from heaven, that belief came about as the doctrine of the Trinity was being developed.[[90]](#footnote-19401) The Trinitarian explanation of this verse is incorrect and takes away the powerful meaning of the verse, which is the damage we disciples can do to Satan’s kingdom if we walk in the power that God has given us.

[For more information on Jesus being the fully human Son of God and not being “God the Son,” see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more on “the Holy Spirit” being one of the designations for God the Father and “the holy spirit” being the gift of God’s nature, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

**“falling.”** The Greek is *piptō* (#4098 πίπτω), and it means to fall, or “to move with relative rapidity in a downward direction.”[[91]](#footnote-14009) It is not that Satan “fell,” as if he tripped and fell, or that he was thrown down, so he fell. He moved with great rapidity, like lightning, traveling in a downward direction from heaven to earth.

Luk 10:19

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“serpents and scorpions.”** This is the figure of speech hypocatastasis. It seems best to understand “serpents and scorpions” in its widest sense, referring to the Devil, evil spirits, and also evil people. The Devil is called a serpent in Genesis 3:1; 2 Corinthians 11:3, and Revelation 20:2, John the Baptist referred to the evil people he confronted as a brood of vipers (Matt. 3:7), and Jesus referred to the religious leaders he confronted as serpents and vipers (Matt. 23:33). Also, Psalm 91:13 says the one who makes Yahweh his refuge will trample on snakes and serpents. Furthermore, Ezekiel 2:6 refers to evil, rebellious people as “scorpions.”

Jesus gave his disciples authority to trample on “all the power of the enemy,” and that includes both evil spirits and evil people.

[For more on the figure hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2.]

Luk 10:21

**“in the holy spirit.”** The Greek text has no article “the.” This refers to the holy spirit that is the gift of God.

[For more information on the holy spirit and uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” and also see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 10:22

See commentary on Matthew 11:27. This verse is very similar.

Luk 10:25

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“life in the age *to come*.”** This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.

[See Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

Luk 10:26

**“Jesus.”** The Greek text reads “he,” but it is changed in the REV and some other versions for clarity (cf. ISV, NAB, NLT, AMP).

Luk 10:27

**“Love the Lord your God with all your heart.”** Luke 10:27 contains the first and greatest commandment and the second greatest commandment, and they are quoted by Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39 and Mark 12:29-31 (see commentary on Matt. 22:36).

**“soul.”** See commentary on Matthew 22:37.

**“neighbor.”** The quotation in the Mosaic Law was to love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18), but after Jesus said to the lawyer who was questioning him, “Do this and you will live,” the lawyer then asked the question, “And who is my neighbor?” This question may seem strange to us, but it was a subject of great discussion and disagreement among the Jews. Some Jews took “neighbor” to refer only to fellow Israelites; the Pharisees took it to mean only fellow Pharisees; and writings from the Qumran community show that at least some of those Jews thought that anyone who was not part of their group was a “son of darkness” and should be hated.[[92]](#footnote-19541) Also, it seems from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount that many Jews felt the commandment to love your neighbor also meant to “hate your enemy.”

To teach the lawyer and the people who the “neighbor” really was, Jesus taught the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus used the example of a Samaritan helping out a wounded Israelite—and Jesus taught this at a time when the Samaritans were hated by the Jews. Furthermore, Jesus added emphasis to his parable by saying that neither a priest nor a Levite would help the wounded man. Thus, through his parable, Jesus showed that all humans are our neighbors. Also, in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that we are even to love our enemy (Matt. 5:44).

**“as yourself.”** In the modern world we live in, this phrase that you should “love your neighbor as yourself” has often been greatly misunderstood; it has been taken to mean that we need to love ourselves more. That is not the correct understanding of what Jesus was saying. The theologian R. C. H. Lenski correctly observes in his commentary on this verse: “Every man naturally loves himself, and all he needs to do is to measure his love of his neighbor by that love for himself.”[[93]](#footnote-11506) Lenski’s view is corroborated by Scripture: “for no one ever hated his own flesh” (Eph. 5:29).

Of course, there are people who engage in self-hate, or don’t set proper boundaries in their lives, but all these acts originate in self-centeredness, even if they don’t seem to. The focus is always self, not actually love for others. For example, a person who does too much for someone else does so to assuage their own guilt, or for some other reason that is actually centered in themselves; and their “over concern” actually hurts the other person rather than helping him. Establishing a co-dependent relationship only weakens the other person, while true love always focuses on what is good for the other person, even if they don’t think so and protest vehemently about it.

We live in a society in which large numbers of people have a great deal of free time and disposable income, and they seem to always take time to do whatever they want. This often gets misconstrued as them “loving themselves,” while in contrast, people who are busy with responsibilities and don’t have a lot of free time are often mislabeled as “not loving themselves enough.” God says to seek first the Kingdom of God and be obedient to Him, and that is the standard of how we are to love ourselves and others. A person who spends all his time and money on himself is not “loving himself.” People who use up their free time on themselves without taking some of their time and resources to help others will find out on Judgment Day that they did not love themselves, they “loved the world,” and Scripture says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

It is true that many people are not good at setting boundaries or self-care, and so the world takes advantage of them. God tried to mitigate that evil influence in the Old Testament by having a Sabbath Day in which no work could be done. But even when people are letting the world take advantage of them, there is still something the person is getting from the experience—some way the “self” is getting satisfied or rewarded. We already all love ourselves, let’s do it in a way that is a blessing to us, to others, and to God.

Luk 10:28

**“live.”** This is one of the many places where “live” is used idiomatically for “live forever,” and sometimes “life” is used in the same way, that is, idiomatically for everlasting life. Occasionally when the Bible uses “life” or “live” with the meaning of “live forever,” scholars refer to the idiom as “the pregnant sense” of the word, either meaning the word has both a regular sense and a fuller meaning in that context, or the word is being used in only the fuller idiomatic sense in that context.

The idiom is very ancient, and is why Ezekiel 33:12-20 is very clear that if a “righteous” person becomes unrighteous he will “die” (i.e., “die” forever, which occurs sometime after he is judged on the Day of Judgment), while if a wicked person repents and becomes righteous he will “live,” (i.e., live forever). It is why Habakkuk says that the righteous will “live” (i.e., live forever) by their faithfulness (Hab. 2:4). There are many other uses of the idiom, and there are cases where, although the primary meaning of “live” is “live forever,” there are undertones of also “live to the fullest.” The word “live” often means “live forever” (e.g., John 5:25; 6:57; 11:25; 14:19; Rom. 6:8; 2 Tim. 2:11; Heb. 12:9). Similarly, the word “life” often means “everlasting life” (e.g., Matt. 7:14; 18:8, 9; 19:17; Mark 9:43, 45; John 3:36; 5:40; 11:25; 20:31; Acts 3:15; 11:18; Rom. 5:18; 2 Cor. 2:16; Gal. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:1; 1 John 3:14; 5:12).

Just as “live” or “life” can refer to everlasting life, “die” and “death” could refer to everlasting death (see commentary on John 8:51).

Luk 10:29

**“neighbor.”** See commentary on Luke 10:27.

Luk 10:30

**“who...stripped him.”** Modern clothing is cheap and form-fitting, so robbers do not usually strip people. In the ancient world, clothing was loose-fitting and handmade, so it was expensive, and because of that, robbers regularly stripped people of their clothing as we see in Jesus’ parable. Also, when Jesus was crucified, the Roman soldiers wanted his articles of clothing even though they would have had a lot of blood on them. In the 1850s, Josias Leslie Porter lived and traveled in Syria. He wrote about how men and women were regularly robbed if traveling the Middle East without enough protection. When it came to the clothing their victims were wearing, many robbers took all the clothing, sometimes even from the women. Porter wrote: “It is an inconvenient habit Arab robbers have of stripping their victims of every stitch of clothing, however rich may have been their baggage, and however full their purse. During my short experience in Syria, I have known more than one instance in which even ladies have shared the fate of their Lords in this respect.”[[94]](#footnote-25056) The practice of stripping one’s victims is mentioned in Ezekiel 23:29.

Luk 10:31

**“he passed by on the other side.”** The man who was mugged was an Israelite. So why would the priest and Levite not help him? It is not that they were “bad people.” They had their priorities wrong. The man was half dead and could have died at any time. If the priest or Levite was helping the man, and he died, then they would have been unclean for 7 days (Num. 19:11-16) and would not have been able to “spiritually minister” to others. Thus, these men put their “spiritual duties” above helping their fellow man. They should have known from the law that God desires mercy, not sacrifice (Matt. 12:7; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8). This happens far too often in Christianity. Our families get ignored while we do “spiritual things” for the Body of Christ. Or we ignore the cries of other humans while we take care of spiritual responsibilities. The lesson that the Lord is teaching us from the parable of the Good Samaritan is that we are to love our neighbor, and when we do, it is spiritual service.

Luk 10:42

**“but one thing is necessary.”** This is one of the many places where the verse should have been started in a different place for clarity. The sentence reads, “you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary….” When the sentence is broken in the middle by the “42,” it can be difficult to see what it means.

**Luke Chapter 11**

Luk 11:1

**“Lord, teach us to pray.”** This statement needs to be seen in light of the Jewish culture in which Jesus’ disciples lived. The disciples were used to going to synagogue in which many different prayers and different kinds of prayer were offered. They had also witnessed Jews like the Pharisees who prayed lengthy prayers. However, many of those prayers were just hollow flowery speeches or written prayers that had been recited over and over for generations. Jesus’ disciples recognized that due to that fact, John the Baptist had taught his disciples how to really engage in prayer, and they wanted to be taught that too, so they asked Jesus to teach them how to really pray in a way that got God’s attention and affected what happens in life.

Luk 11:2

**“When you pray, say.”** What we refer to as “The Lord’s Prayer” is in Matthew 6:9-13 and here in Luke 11:2-4. The longer prayer is in Matthew and it was part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. The rendition here in Luke, which Jesus taught some months after he first spoke it, is quite similar to what is in Matthew, but the prayer in Matthew consists of seven requests, whereas Luke has five. Luke omits the requests, “May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and “Deliver us from the Wicked One.”

**“Father.”** The evidence from a study of the Greek texts is that the original Greek text of Luke did not read the way Matthew does: “Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.” Instead, it has a much shorter reading, which many versions translate simply as “Father, hallowed be your name” (e.g., ASV, BBE, CEB, CJB, CSB, Douay-Rheims, ESV, NAB, NASB, NET, NIV, NRSV, and RSV). Also, as stated above, the prayer in Luke also omits “May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Over time, scribes copying the text of Luke made it read the same way that Matthew did, and that longer reading was preserved in a large number of manuscripts, from which it came into the Geneva Bible and the King James Version. The scribes were more familiar with the reading in Matthew than they were with the reading in Luke due to the fact that the reading in Matthew had been used in many of the Church liturgies.

Adapting Luke to be like Matthew in this verse is an example of what textual scholars refer to as “harmonization.” Harmonization is the sometimes unintentional, but often intentional, attempt to make every account of the same biblical event read the same way. It was bothersome to ancient scribes, as it is to many modern readers, that the wording of the same event, or a very similar event, is different in different Gospels. Bruce M. Metzger wrote: “Since monks usually knew by heart extensive portions of the Scriptures, the temptation to harmonize discordant parallels or quotations would be strong in proportion to the degree of the copyist’s familiarity with other parts of the Bible.”[[95]](#footnote-21992)

An example of harmonization outside the Gospels occurs in the records of Paul’s conversion. The more complete account of the conversation between Paul and Jesus is recorded in Acts 26:14, “…I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard on you to be kicking against the goads.’ However, Luke does not record that full conversation in his account of Paul’s conversion in Acts 9:4, and leaves out the part about kicking against the goads. Nevertheless, some scribes copying the text harmonized the text and added the phrase about kicking the pricks to the record in Acts 9, and from those Greek manuscripts it came to be part of the King James Version.

Another example of harmonization occurs in Colossians 1:2. The scribes who copied the text were very familiar with the greeting, “Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:2). Thus, it is no wonder that the original opening of Colossians, which was “Grace to you, and peace from God our Father,” became changed in some manuscripts to be the same greeting as in Ephesians, and that longer greeting became a part of the King James Version.

Sometimes harmonization occurred when a quotation from the Old Testament was “filled in” so that more of the Old Testament text was quoted than originally appeared in the Greek text. That happened in Hebrews 12:20. The Original Greek text of Hebrews read: “for they could not bear what was commanded: **if even an animal touches the mountain, it will be stoned.”** However, a few Greek manuscripts enlarged the Old Testament quotation from Exodus 19:13 so that the New Testament quotation read more like the complete Hebrew sentence. These larger texts added the phrase “or thrust through with a dart,” like the full sentence read in Exodus. Even though there were only very few manuscripts that had the enlarged reading, that larger reading came into versions such as the King James Version and Young’s Literal Translation.

Thankfully, many of the times that biblical records were harmonized, the harmonization was copied into so few manuscripts that it does not show up in any well-known version of the Bible. Perhaps a good example of that is Matthew 3:17, which records God speaking at Jesus’ baptism. In Mark and Luke, the text says that God said from heaven, “You are” my beloved Son. But in Matthew, the texts read, “This is” my beloved Son. However, Greek manuscript “D” from the fifth century, and some Syriac (Aramaic) texts have Matthew 3:17 saying, “You are my beloved Son,” just as Mark and Luke do. This reading was no doubt due to the pressure to harmonize what God said at Jesus’ baptism.

There are many different reasons that the records of the same account seem to differ in the different places it is recorded. Details may be added or left out. Also, sometimes records that seem identical are only similar. But also, sometimes the person talking said more than one record can easily contain without a lot of explanatory, parenthetical, or seemingly extra material. It is common in all conversations that we repeat phrases or sentences. We often say the same thing in different ways, especially if we think we need to emphasize something or if we think the listeners need to have a more complete understanding of what we are saying. That happened in the conversations recorded in the Bible, too. In those cases, it is appropriate that different records in the Bible have somewhat different wording.

Often, it is because the different records of the same event have different wording that we readers have a more complete understanding of what the biblical text is really saying. It is possible that Jesus only said what we now call the “model prayer” one time, and that Luke simply does not have everything that Matthew records, just as in the record of Paul’s conversion, Acts 9 does not include all the details that Acts 26 does. However, it is also possible that the disciples asked Jesus questions about his prayer, and so he repeated it or parts of it. It is unlikely that Jesus handled a question as important as “Teach us to pray” in just a few verses. In real life, that conversation likely took quite some time, and Jesus’ prayer required clarification, repetition, and explanation.

It is also helpful to understand that modern textual scholars have a huge advantage over earlier scholars in getting back to the original reading. For example, it is believed that the translators of the King James Version had only about 24 Greek manuscripts to work from when they translated the New Testament. Today, over 400 years later, due to the work of archaeologists and historians, we have over 5,700 Greek manuscripts (most are incomplete). It was hard to compare and contrast all those manuscripts until the invention of the computer, but now scholars have the ability to compare and contrast those manuscripts and also the ability to date them quite accurately, so it is much easier to see what changes were made by copyists and when those changes were made, allowing scholars to be much more decisive and accurate when it comes to reconstructing the original text. The result is that textual scholars today agree that the modern Greek text we have now is extremely close to the original autographs that the apostles wrote.

**“May your kingdom come.”** The Kingdom of God is a literal kingdom that will be ruled by Christ and will fill the earth (see commentary on Matt. 6:10).

[For more on the coming Kingdom of God, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Luk 11:3

**“Give us each day our daily bread.”** This is very similar in meaning to the line in Proverbs, “provide to me my portion of bread” (Prov. 30:8). That line is in the only prayer to God in all of Proverbs (Prov. 30:7-9). It is quite possible that Jesus got the idea for this line in his prayer from Proverbs, the Word of God.

Luk 11:4

**“forgive us our sins.”** For information on why Luke says “sins” while Matthew says, “debts,” see commentary on Matthew 6:12. For more information on “sin,” see commentary on 1 John 1:7.

Luk 11:6

**“just come.”** The verb is in the aorist tense. The guest had just arrived and caught the host off guard, with nothing to feed him.

Luk 11:9

**“keep asking.”** This verb is in the continuous present tense. See commentary on John 16:24 and Matthew 7:7, “keep asking.”

**“keep seeking, and you will find.”** God said basically the same thing to the Judeans (Jer. 29:13).

Luk 11:11

This verse has several textual variants. The one in the REV reflects the Nestle-Aland 27 Greek text.[[96]](#footnote-12935)

Luk 11:13

**“give holy spirit.”** The Greek text has no article “the.” This refers to the holy spirit that is the gift of God.

[For more information on the holy spirit and uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” and also see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 11:14

**“a demon that made people unable to speak​.”** The Greek text says, “mute demon,” but that can be confusing since the demon is not mute but rather makes the people it afflicts unable to speak, i.e., mute. The textual evidence favors the omission of “and it was,” which appears in some Greek manuscripts, and in those texts the Greek reads, “demon, and it was mute,” but even that is confusing since the demon was not mute.

Luk 11:15

**“But some of them said.”** The ones who said this were the Pharisees (Matt. 12:24).

**“Beelzebul.”** The Greek is *Beelzeboul* (#954 Βεελζεβούλ), which gets put into English as “Beelzebul.” He is called the “prince of demons”. “Beelzeboul” is “lord of the dunghill.” This comes from the Hebrew *zebul* (dung, a dunghill).

[For more on this name and the other names of the Slanderer (the Devil), see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

Luk 11:18

**“And also.”** cf. New Jerusalem Bible; Darby.

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost. For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13.

[For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

**“Beelzebul.”** See commentary on Luke 11:15.

Luk 11:19

**“Beelzebul.”** See commentary on Luke 11:15.

**“cast them out.”** It is often assumed that Jesus is condemning the disciples of the Pharisees by implying that they cast out demons by other demons, but that is not the case. Jesus did not unnecessarily antagonize the Jews here. He was simply pointing out the inconsistency in what the Pharisees had said. Generally, when exorcisms were done by people in the biblical culture they used the names of deities and recited various formulaic incantations, but Jesus did not do that even though the Pharisees accused him of it. But the disciples of the Pharisees no doubt did use the names of deities. The evil intent of the accusation was that Jesus was casting out demons by the prince of demons, but Jesus proves that accusation false by saying that a kingdom cannot be divided against itself and survive.

It is entirely possible that occasionally someone with pure faith and a desire to help might have cast out a demon, and even while Jesus was still alive people were casting out demons using his name (Luke 9:49).

**“sons.”** Not the literal sons, but the disciples of the religious leaders.

[For more information on “sons” being disciples, see commentary on Matt. 12:27.]

**“Therefore they will be your judges.”** For more information on this sentence see commentary on Matthew 12:27.

Luk 11:20

**“by the finger of God.”** Here, God’s gift of holy spirit upon Jesus Christ is called “the finger of God,” because it was the holy spirit upon Jesus Christ that empowered him so that he could do mighty works. Jesus says his ability to cast out demons was due to the “spirit of God” in the parallel record in Matthew 12:28.

Jesus received the gift of holy spirit at his baptism and had it upon him when he started his ministry (Luke 4:18). God put His gift of spirit, sometimes called “holy spirit,” upon people to give them spiritual power (cf. Num. 11:17-29; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:13; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 15:1; Mic. 3:8). Jesus needed God’s gift of holy spirit to have spiritual power just like the leaders and prophets of the Old Testament did. Other verses that say God was going to put holy spirit upon the Messiah are Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; and 61:1. Believers get spiritual power when they get the gift of holy spirit (Acts 1:8), but sadly, most believers are not taught how to use that spiritual power like Christ and the apostles did.

[For more on the holy spirit being a gift from God that empowered people to do wonderful things for God, see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 11:21

**“in peace.”** Other versions read “safe.” Christ, who spoke Hebrew (or Aramaic), would have used the word for peace, *shalom*, which indicates a state of well-being. But *shalom* would have been translated into the Greek *eirene*, which is the Greek word for peace, although it lacks the full sense of the Hebrew *shalom*. This is an excellent example of how meaning can be lost in translation going from the Semitic languages of Hebrew or Aramaic to Greek and then to English.

Luk 11:24

**“a resting place.”** The Greek is *anapausis* (#372 ἀνάπαυσις), and it can either mean “rest” or “a resting place”[[97]](#footnote-32700) (cf. The New English Bible; The Kingdom New Testament by N.T. Wright; The Kingdom of God Version by R. Faircloth). Here, the better translation is “a resting place,” that is, a place to settle in and use as a base for causing trouble and harm. The demon does not “rest” in the person or animal it occupies, it goes about its demonic activity.

Luk 11:29

**“the sign of Jonah.”** The “sign” of Jonah here in Luke 11:29-30 is different from the sign of Jonah Jesus spoke of in Matthew 12:40. (See commentary on Matt. 12:39).

Luk 11:30

**“Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites.”** There are two “signs” of Jonah in the New Testament. The first is that just as Jonah was dead for three days and nights and then God raised him up, so Jesus Christ would be dead in the heart of the earth for three days and nights and God would raise him up. This sign is spoken of in Matthew 12:40. Here in Luke 11:30, Jonah was a “sign” to the Ninevites. Ninevah was the capital city of the Assyrian Empire and was likely about 400 miles (650 km) from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, where Jonah landed when the great fish vomited him up. That meant that the Ninevites had no knowledge of Jonah being in a fish, and in any case that was not what Jonah’s message to Nineveh was. The “sign” to the Ninevites was Jonah’s preaching (Luke 11:32). Jonah went into the capital city of an enemy empire and told them they would be destroyed if they did not repent. That is exactly what Jesus did. He went into the heart of the major Judean city, Jerusalem, and preached. But the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, while the Israelites ignored and despised the preaching of Jesus, which is why the Ninevites will rise up in the Judgment and condemn the Israelites of Jesus’ time.

Luk 11:31

**“queen of the south.”** This is who the Old Testament refers to as the “Queen of Sheba,” here called the “Queen of the South” (1 Kings 10:1-2; 2 Chron. 9:1).

**“will rise up at the Judgment with this generation.”** This is one of the clearer verses showing that dead people are dead in the ground awaiting the resurrection and Judgment Day. The Queen of Sheba, who lived almost 3,000 years ago at the time of Solomon is still dead in the ground and awaiting her resurrection, at which time she will be judged. (See commentary on Matt. 12:42).

[For more on the resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15. For more on the dead being dead, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

**“behold.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 11:32

**“behold.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 11:34

**“lamp.”** The eye is the “lamp” of the body. The eye is not the light, but the lamp that allows the light to shine. A poorly cared for lamp (the lamps of the time were oil lamps, usually made of clay) would not allow the light to shine well. Similarly, if one’s “eye” was impure, the light of God would not shine well, or shine at all, in the body.

**“single.”** The Greek word translated “single” is *haplous* (#573 ἁπλοῦς), and means “single,” therefore “unmixed.” The key to this saying about the “single” eye and the “evil eye,” in this context of wealth, is to realize they are Semitic idioms. In this context the “single eye” is the generous eye, it is unmixed with worldly desires for wealth and possessions, and is therefore generous toward others. In contrast, the “evil eye,” is used idiomatically in the Semitic languages for a person who is greedy, covetous, and envious.

In Western cultures, the “evil eye” was a look or glance that meant harm and brought harm. Although this use of the “evil eye” may have existed in ancient Judaism, there is no reason to think it is used in Matthew or Luke. The Semitic idiom of the “good” or “single” eye being generous, and the “evil eye” being greedy, covetous, and stingy, holds true throughout the Bible. The “good eye” of Proverbs 22:9 is generous, and the “evil eye” of Deuteronomy 15:9; 28:54; Proverbs 23:6; 28:22 refers to someone who is greedy and stingy. See commentary on Matthew 6:22.

[For more on the idiom of the good eye, see commentary on Prov. 22:9. For more on the idiom of the evil eye, see commentary on Prov. 28:22.]

Luk 11:37

**“eat a meal.”** Although the Greek word can refer to a specific meal such as breakfast or the main meal of the day, when context is unspecified, as it is here, it can refer to any meal.

**“and he went in and reclined *to eat*.”** The record of Jesus being in the house of the Pharisee and boldly confronting the Pharisees is Luke 11:37-52. After that, he leaves the house but the confrontation continues. The normal position for eating in that culture was to recline, to lay on one’s side, specifically one’s left side, and then to eat with the right hand.

Luk 11:41

**“But give those things that are within as charitable gifts.”** The way the Greek text is worded is not clear, but the meaning can be ascertained from the context. The problem with the Pharisees was that they were not clean on the inside. On the inside they were full of greed and wickedness (Luke 11:39). Jesus challenged them to be clean on the inside—something that would be apparent if they could give charitable gifts with a cheerful heart—and then they would be completely clean. The NLT translation has: “So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over.” The NIV has: “But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.”

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 11:42

**“rue.”** The herb “rue” was used extensively in ancient Near Eastern and Roman cooking, which is why it was grown by the Pharisees, who actually tithed a tenth of it (but how they did that is not known). Rue is used today in some Mediterranean countries and in Greece as a traditional flavoring. However, because it is bitter and can upset the stomach and bowels, it is used very sparingly. Large amounts can cause intense gastric pain, vomiting, liver damage, and even death. These symptoms are due to a number of toxic compounds in the plant, especially in the sap. Rue must be avoided by pregnant women and people who have liver issues. Because of its bitterness and toxicity, rue is not typically used by modern cooks. During the Middle Ages, rue was commonly used in witchcraft, however, the Roman Catholic Church used a branch of the rue plant to sprinkle holy water on its followers, and during that time rue was known as the “herb of grace.” It is worth noting that, due to its aroma, it has some household uses. For example, it is traditionally used in Central Asia as an insect repellent and room deodorizer.

**“necessary.”** The Greek word is *dei* (#1163 δεῖ, pronounced “day”), and it refers to what is necessary, what one must do, or has to do. In today’s English, it seems to be watering down the meaning to translate it as “should” or “ought,” because there are many things we “should” do that are not actually a necessity. But love and justice are not just things we “should” do, if we are going to obey God, they are necessities. R.C. H. Lenski, in his translation, says, “But these it was necessary to do, and those not to dismiss.”[[98]](#footnote-29562) John Nolland also uses “necessary” and has, “[if you were to do the will of God] it would be necessary to….”[[99]](#footnote-22383) The verb tenses in the phrase are somewhat idiomatic, the infinitives acting more like aorists,[[100]](#footnote-12540) and being “difficult to catch precisely in translation,”[[101]](#footnote-11452) which explains why the versions word the last phrase in the verse somewhat differently from one another.

Luk 11:43

**“For you love the most important seats in the synagogues.”** The essence of this verse is, “For what you love is the most important seats in the synagogues,” meaning that you love those seats and the accolades of people more than you love God and doing what is right. It is not wrong to enjoy what you have worked for, such as an award or position, but it is wrong to gain things by evil and immoral ways and then love what you have more than you love God.

Luk 11:44

**“For you are like unmarked graves.”** Stepping on a grave made a person levitically unclean, so an unmarked grave could cause problems for the Jewish people. For Jesus to accuse the Pharisees of being like unmarked graves was very serious. Numbers 19:11-13 mention touching a dead body making someone unclean, but then that idea was extended to touching the grave of a person.

Luk 11:45

**“the lawyers.”** Some of the Pharisees were “lawyers,” as were some of the Sadduccees. The “lawyers” were not lawyers in our modern sense of the word, although what they did overlaps with what modern lawyers do. These ancient lawyers studied the Scripture and the teachings of the Rabbis to determine what was right and wrong in the eyes of God. Since the Pharisees got much of their doctrine from the lawyers, this lawyer rightly felt that Jesus’ words to the Pharisees also applied in large part to him and his fellow lawyers, and he was right. The lawyers studied the law but missed the heart of it and ended up with oppressive and evil guidance for the people.

Luk 11:46

**“For you load people with burdens *that are* hard to carry.”** Luke 11:46 is similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 23:4: “they tie up burdens *that are* heavy and hard to carry and lay *them* on people’s shoulders, but they are unwilling to *help* move them with their finger” (see commentary on Matt. 23:4).

Luk 11:50

**“with the result that.”** The Greek preposition *hina* (#2443 ἵνα) is being used in this verse primarily to show result, but it is also a kind of purpose clause.[[102]](#footnote-32698) This verse is similar to what Jesus said later in his ministry, as recorded in Matthew 23:35-36.

The primary emphasis here in Luke 11:50 is not that God sent prophets with the purpose of them being slain so He could punish a generation; instead, He sent them to turn people from sin and call them back to Him. The fact that the prophets were killed “resulted” in a generation that will experience the wrath of God. Of course, God also realized that His prophets would be mistreated and killed, and that eventually, that would result in His wrath, but He still sent them to help people. The sacrificial death of the prophets and righteous people became part of the necessary redemptive process, God fully knowing that the final outpouring of His wrath would be the precursor to the Messianic Kingdom on earth. God gives people every chance to change, but also acts in a way that His judgment is just. The two processes are inextricably linked.

Part of the beauty of the preposition *hina* here in Luke 11:50 is that it captures God’s plan for justice and redemption as well as the process it takes to bring those things to pass, and also that it was the result of the free will decisions made by evil people that God’s wrath comes upon them. Thus, BDAG says, “In many cases, purpose and result cannot be clearly differentiated, and hence ἵνα is used for the result that follows according to the purpose of the subject, or of God.” The problem we have in English is that our vocabulary forces us to make a choice between purpose and result in the verse.

Most versions emphasize the purpose of God; some very clearly, using “so that” or “in order that” as a translation of *hina*. That is not wrong, but it is only one side of a two-sided meaning. To us, far too many people already blame God for things He did not do, and the translation “so that” contributes to that misunderstanding. God did not primarily send prophets “so that” people could kill them and then suffer His wrath, He sent them “so that” people would have a chance to see the truth and turn from their evil ways. As it turned out, He sent them “with the result that” the people’s rejecting their message and the Messiah fit His plan of redemption. To us, given that *hina* in this verse combines both purpose and result, and given that most people are already confused about whether God does evil to bring about His purposes, we felt translating *hina* as a result clause was the better choice. Other verses that combine purpose and result in *hina* are: John 4:36; Romans 3:19 and 8:17. Luke 11:50 is similar to Matthew 23:35.

As things turned out, God did send the prophets so that the evil of the world could be clearly exposed and shown for what it was, and then punished and cleansed from the earth. Matthew 23:35 emphasizes God’s purpose and plan; whereas Luke 11:50 has more emphasis on the result of sending prophets and righteous people (see commentary on Matt. 23:35).

**“will be required of this generation.”** The context of Luke 11:49-50 is Jesus pronouncing woes on the religious leaders who opposed him (Luke 11:42, 43, 44, 46, 47). Then he made the profound and unusual statement that the blood of “all” the prophets (and righteous people: Matthew 23:35) that had been shed from the “foundation of the world,” going all the way back to Cain killing Abel, would be required of that generation. From the context and from what we know happened to the generation in which Jesus lived, that statement does not seem to be correct.

The generation that killed Jesus was not treated differently by God than other evil generations had been. The people of that generation, especially those old enough to have been the ones judging Jesus, died off like the generations before them, with no noticeable way that the blood of every prophet from Abel was “required” of them. Even the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 cannot be the fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy. First, it is questionable if the destruction of the Temple can be said to have occurred to that generation, because it was over 40 years later, and most of that generation were dead. Second, there had been catastrophes of that magnitude before. In fact, the destruction of Solomon’s Temple and the accompanying deportations of the Jews and importation of foreigners to Israel around 586 BC, was at least as big a catastrophe as the destruction of Herod’s Temple in AD 70, and Israel had experienced many other catastrophes as well.

To understand Jesus’ prophecy, we must look carefully at what he said would happen. He said the blood of all the prophets would be “required” (KJV) of that generation. The word “required” is the Greek word *ekzēteō* (#1567 ἐκζητέω), which is the Greek word *zēteō* (#2212 ζητέω), to seek or search for, with the Greek prefix *ek*, which often intensifies the word but sometimes changes its meaning. Most of the time *ekzēteō* is used in the Bible, it refers to diligently seeking. In this case, however, it means to seek in order to avenge or bring judgment upon.[[103]](#footnote-13366)

If Jesus’ prophecy is going to be fulfilled literally as he spoke it, there must be a single generation that will experience God’s vengeance for the blood of all the prophets going all the way back to Abel, the first man killed. We learn from Scripture that the one single generation that will suffer God’s vengeance for the blood of the prophets and righteous people is the generation that will go through the Great Tribulation. In Revelation 6, before the Tribulation has really begun, some righteous souls call out from under the altar and ask, “O Master, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who live on the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). That the souls in Revelation 6:10 are still calling out for God to avenge the innocent victims of evil shows that even at that future date the Day of God’s Wrath for all the earth’s sin was still future, yet the Temple had already been destroyed in AD 70 when Revelation was penned by the apostle John.

Revelation 6:17 says it is at that time that the great day of God’s wrath has come, and other verses in the book of Revelation show that the wrath of God comes during the Tribulation (Rev. 11:18, 14:19; 16:19). Verses such as Revelation 6:10 directly connect God’s wrath with the blood of the saints and prophets, and so does Revelation 16:6: “for they poured out the blood of the holy ones and the prophets, and you have given them blood to drink; they deserve it.” As the Tribulation comes toward a close in chapter 19, we read, “he [God] has judged the great prostitute, she who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his servants *shed* by her hand.” (Rev. 19:2). While the earth is being destroyed and the vast majority of people on earth are being killed in the Tribulation, the statement is made, “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy ones, and you apostles, and you prophets, for God has judged her because of her judgment of you” (Rev. 18:20).

Jesus accurately taught that there will be one generation upon which the blood of the righteous people from Abel onward will be “required.” However, Jesus was not correct that it was “this generation,” i.e., the one that he was speaking to; rather, it will be the generation that goes through the Great Tribulation. God, for reasons known only to Him, delayed the time of Christ’s Second Coming, which made the timing of what Jesus said incorrect. It is possible that God delayed Jesus’ Second Coming to allow more people to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9).

One of the arguments in favor of the Rapture of the Church is that God is a righteous and just God, and it seems unlikely that He would judge one single generation for the sins of all the generations since Cain killed Abel without giving righteous people a way to avoid that judgment. The Rapture would allow for God’s love and mercy in a unique way: Every person on earth who believes in Christ would be raptured off the earth before the Great Tribulation, thus delivering them from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). Immediately after the Rapture will be the only time in history since Adam and Eve sinned that the only people on earth will be unrighteous before God. Of course, very shortly after the Rapture people will begin to believe and be righteous before God, but at the time of the Rapture they will not have believed yet. The Rapture is God’s way of making sure that no saved person on earth will be forced to go through the Great Tribulation simply because he or she happens to be alive at that time in history. Until the moment the Rapture happens, every unsaved person has the chance to believe and be saved (Rom. 10:9) and escape the wrath of God that we see poured out in the book of Revelation.

[For more information on verses in which Jesus implies his coming is near, see commentary on Matt. 16:28.]

Luk 11:51

**“the blood of Zechariah.”** This “Zechariah” was the last person murdered in the Hebrew Old Testament (see commentary on Matt. 23:35).

**“required of this generation.”** See commentary on Luke 11:50.

Luk 11:53

**“And when he had come out from there.”** Jesus left the Pharisee’s house where he had been eating, but the Pharisees and lawyers followed him out and the debate and argument continued. But he started to address his disciples and the crowd who had gathered to hear what he had to say (Luke 12:1).

Luk 11:54

**“that he might say.”** The Greek is literally, “out of his mouth,” but it refers to what Jesus might say. Here we see the evil heart of the Pharisees. Jesus had been brutally honest with them about their thoughts and actions, and pointed out the evils they did (Luke 11:30-52), and in doing that he gave them the chance to see their sin and repent. But the only thing the Pharisees could see was how evil they claimed that Jesus was. So they were not at all interested in learning from Jesus; they were interested in catching him in the act of saying something that would supposedly discredit him.

The wise Christian learns from this record that there are evil people who do not want to know the truth, but will ask questions as if they wanted to know it. Christians need to be aware that many of those questions are phrased in such a way that makes them traps and that the people asking the questions are asking them only because they are seeking ways to discredit the Christian. Christians need to be wise in what they say and realize they are under no obligation to answer any question they sense is a trap.

**Luke Chapter 12**

Luk 12:1

**“In these circumstances.”** The connection the opening clause of Luke 12:1 makes with Luke 11 is logical more than temporal (cf. “In these circumstances” HCSB, NASB). In Luke 11:37, Jesus went into a Pharisee’s house to eat and a huge crowd started gathering. The tension between Jesus and the Pharisees had been building since Jesus started his ministry. In his very first teaching, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), Jesus confronted many of the things taught by the religious leaders, saying “You have heard it said...but I say to you” (Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44). That kind of teaching would have upset the Sadducees and Pharisees in the crowd there. So now that Jesus was in the house of a Pharisee and eating with Pharisees, it is no wonder that multitudes of people wanted to listen in on what he had to say. In the ancient world, it was quite easy to be outside a house and hear what was being said inside that house because ancient houses did not have glass windows. But the eavesdropper had to be close by a window or open door. In this case, there was so much interest in what Jesus had to say to the Pharisees that there was a crowd of thousands of people trying to hear, and they were pressing in so hard that they were literally stepping on each other.

Lenski translates the opening of Luke 12:1 as “In connection with,” and writes: “To begin a new paragraph with a relative clause is classical [Greek usage]. It is not temporal (our version and others) [such as the NAB, NIV, NET, NRSV “meanwhile”] but states that what is now reported stands in vital connection with what precedes. But this connection is not restricted to Luke 11:53-54, because these two verses are only a summary of what the scribes and the Pharisees did during the next days. The connection is [with] all that proceeds at least from Luke 11:37 onward. …The meal broke up, Jesus walked out. The multitudes mentioned in Luke 11:29 were now gathered thickly about him. Luke speaks of ‘the myriads of the multitude,’ which is hyperbolic for an exceedingly great number; the article should not be overlooked: ‘the myriads,’ not merely ‘myriads,’ because these are ‘the multitudes’ mentioned in verse 29. They kept treading on each other because they were not in the open country but in a city jammed together in the street. … The impression made by the text is that Jesus went to the Pharisee’s house alone and is now again surrounded by his disciples. He speaks to them first.”[[104]](#footnote-22832)

**“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.”** Jesus was teaching an important truth, and even though there would have been Pharisees in the crowd who would be offended, Jesus still taught the truth that the disciples needed to hear.

Here in Luke 12:1, Jesus states that the “leaven” of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. In Matthew 16:12, which is a totally different context, the “leaven” of the Pharisees and Sadducees was false doctrine. Both are related, because the Pharisees and Sadducees taught false doctrine, but did not even keep their own false doctrine (cf. Matt. 23:2-4; Luke 11:46).

Luk 12:2

**“nothing concealed that will not be revealed.”** Jesus’ statement shows the utter futility of hypocrisy. Hypocrites say one thing but do another, and what they do is what is really in their heart. They lie with their mouth and reveal what they believe by their actions. But on the Day of Judgment, the true beliefs and hidden actions of every person will be revealed. Nothing will be hidden then.

Luk 12:4

**“And I say to you.”** Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:4-5 teach the same message.

**“do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.”** Jesus was teaching on hypocrisy (Luke 12:1-3). While some people, such as the religious leaders, were hypocrites so they could deceive people and lord it over them and control them, most people are hypocrites because of fear. Those people say one thing while actually believing or doing something else. People are afraid of other people. They are afraid of being left out or not being accepted, afraid of criticism, afraid of social rejection. Jesus teaches us to be honest about who we are and what we believe. We don’t want to be unwise, but we don’t want to be hypocrites, hiding who we really are. The way out of the trap of being afraid of people is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and being more afraid of offending God than offending people (Luke 12:4-5).

Luk 12:5

**“fear him who after killing you has the authority.”** The One who has the authority to throw people into Gehenna is God Himself, and He will do it to the unsaved (Rev. 20:11-15).

**“Gehenna.”** See commentary on Matthew 5:22.

[For more information on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Luk 12:6

**“little sparrows.”** Matthew 10:29-31 and Luke 12:6-7 teach the same message. The Greek word translated “little sparrows” is *strouthion* (#4765 στρουθίον) the diminutive of *strouthos* (στρουθός) sparrow. However, the Greek word is sometimes used of little birds that were not specifically sparrows.

**“two assaria.”** The Greek reads “two assarion,” and an assarion was a coin worth about 1/16 of a denarius, and a denarius was a day’s wage for a minimum wage worker (although sometimes Roman soldiers made a denarius a day). So two assaria were worth about an hour of work for a laborer. If we were to use the time value of money based on today’s workday, one assarion would be worth half an hour of work and so two assaria would be worth about one hour of work. However, in biblical times, a laborer’s workday was often longer than eight hours, typically lasting from shortly after sunrise to sundown.

It is verses like this that reveal the difficulty in bringing modern values to ancient practices. In the ancient world, a couple of sparrows were almost worthless; worth perhaps only a half-hour’s work. But in today’s world a sparrow, if you could even get one at a restaurant (it is currently illegal to kill songbirds in the United States), would be a “delicacy” and be very expensive.

[For more on a denarius and a day’s wage, see commentary on Matt. 10:29.]

**“forgotten.”** See commentary on Matthew 10:29.

Luk 12:7

**“But even all the hairs of your head have been counted.”** This reveals God’s great concern for His people. He cares about things about us that are almost of no concern to us.

**“you are of more value than many little sparrows.”** The commentators point out that this statement gives confidence to the people listening to Jesus that God knows them and will not forget them. If God does not forget sparrows that are sold in the market and then eaten, He will certainly not forget or abandon His people. Also, however, it seems that Jesus was making his point in a way that was greatly understated and thus lighthearted, “funny,” and brought joy to people through the seemingly ridiculous comparison. It seems that if a person was told in seriousness, “You are worth more than many sparrows,” their response would be to think they were not worth much. But if stated half seriously and half jestingly, the lightheartedness would help drive the point home. It seems that Jesus would have had a joyful attitude toward life, and that lighthearted attitude seems to have shown up here.

Luk 12:8

**“everyone who acknowledges me before others.”** The overarching context is hypocrisy and being afraid of people to the end that a person will not say or do what is in their heart to do. People need to love God to the extent that they will openly confess Christ and not fear the consequences of it.

**“the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.”** In this context, the angels of God are likely angels who make up the heavenly court and who will assist with the judgment of people on Judgment Day (cf. Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:4, 10). Here in Luke 12:8-9, Jesus speaks of acknowledging people before the angels of God. In the same context in Matthew, Jesus speaks of acknowledging people “before my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33). It seems on the Day of Judgment, the judging will involve God, Jesus, and angels working together to judge people.

Luk 12:10

**“blasphemes.”** See commentary on Mark 3:28.

**“the Holy Spirit.” “**The Holy Spirit” is the name for God that emphasizes His power in operation and His special holiness. God is called “the Holy Spirit” in a number of verses in the NT, including Matthew 1:20; 12:32; and Hebrews 9:8.

[For more information on the uses of “Holy Spirit,” see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

**“it will not be forgiven.”** For more information on the “unforgivable sin,” see commentary on Matt. 12:31.

Luk 12:11

**“the rulers and the authorities.”** The designations “rulers” and “authorities” occur together nine times in the New Testament (Luke 12:11; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15; and Titus 3:1). Sometimes the rulers and authorities are demons (Eph. 6:12), sometimes they are human rulers (Luke 12:11; Titus 3:1), and sometimes the designations are more general and refer to all rulers and dominions, both spirit beings and human beings (Eph. 1:21).

[For more on the use of “rulers” and “authorities” in the New Testament, see commentary on Eph. 6:12.]

Luk 12:12

**“the holy spirit.”** Here in Luke 12:12, “the holy spirit” is the gift of God’s nature that God put upon people to empower them with spiritual power. We can see that Mark 13:11 and Luke 12:12 use “holy spirit” as the gift of God from the parallel verse in Matthew 10:20. In the Old Testament and Gospels, when God wanted to empower someone with spiritual power so they could prophesy or do great feats, He placed His gift of holy spirit upon them (cf. Num. 11:17-29; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:13; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 15:1; Mic. 3:8). God placed His gift of holy spirit on Jesus Christ for the same reason; so that he could be spiritually empowered (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; Luke 4:18).

On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), Jesus Christ poured out the gift of holy spirit on everyone who believed (Acts 2:38), and that gave them spiritual power (Acts 1:8).

[For more information on the uses of “holy spirit,” see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

Luk 12:14

**“an arbitrator.”** In this context, one who will divide the inheritance, who is “over” the two men, and therefore has the authority to make final decisions as to how things are to be divided.

Luk 12:15

**“be on guard against every *form of* greediness.”** The Bible says a lot about being content and not laboring to get rich (cf. Prov. 23:4; Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:8-10; Heb. 13:5. See commentary on Prov. 23:4).

**“the abundance of the things that he possesses.”** The Bible warns us that people can own things that actually harm them (Eccl. 5:13). A person can have so many things that they distract him or her from the things of God.

Luk 12:18

**“barns.”** The word “barns” is almost anachronistic because they did not have barns like our modern barns, which mostly have a defined “barn-like” shape and roofline. Instead, in the biblical world, they had “storehouses” or “warehouses” that were more square-shaped at the roofline. Nevertheless, they were freestanding buildings like our barns today, so the translation “barns” is acceptable if properly understood.

Luk 12:19

**“soul” (2x).** The Greek word often translated “soul” is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), and it has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; and attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here *psuchē* is used of the person himself. Thus, the NIV says, “And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty….”

[For a more complete explanation of “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

Luk 12:20

**“senseless one.”** See Word Study: “Fool.”

**“soul.”** In this verse, the word “soul,” *psuchē*, refers to the man’s life. See commentary on Luke 12:19.

**“is being demanded.”** The Greek word is *apaiteō* (#523 ἀπαιτέω), which means to demand or ask for something back or to demand something that is due; to ask or demand with some urgency. Here it is in the present tense, active voice, so it has the essence of, “is being demanded from you.” The present tense is sometimes used in a general way to express something that will happen in the future, and so some versions have a future tense (“this night your soul will be demanded from you”). However, it is likely that the present tense subtly portrays the spiritual battle that is always going on behind the scenes. Satan stands before God day and night accusing people (Rev. 12:10), and he certainly demanded to have Peter, who, like all of us, had sinned (Luke 22:31).

Luk 12:22

**“life.”** The Greek word is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), often translated “soul.” The Greek word has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here it is broadly used as the person and his life. It could be translated “Do not be anxious about your life,” or “Do not be anxious about yourself.”

[For a more complete explanation of *psuchē*, “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

Luk 12:23

**“life.”** The Greek word is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), often translated “soul.” Here it refers to the person and his life. See commentary on Luke 12:22.

Luk 12:35

**“Your.”** In talking to his disciples, the Lord’s words become emphatic to them (partly from the imperative mood of the associated verb). No matter what others do, the disciples of Christ must be focused on obeying him.

**“must be.”** The verb is imperative. Sometimes the imperative mood can mean an encouragement, as in, “Let your,” but that is not the case here. The Lord will come, and his servants must be ready for him. We dare not treat the commands of the Lord as if they are just suggestions. God created us to do good works (Eph. 2:10), and there are rewards for those who do, and punishment for those who do not.

Luk 12:48

**“the one who did not know, but did things worthy of stripes, will be beaten with few *stripes*.”** In the Mosaic Law, if a person sinned without realizing he was sinning, he was still guilty (Lev. 5:17).

Luk 12:53

**“mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”** Luke 12:49-53, is quite similar to Matthew 10:34-36.

These words of Jesus had much more impact in the ancient biblical culture than they do today in modern Western culture. Almost everyone has heard in-law jokes and knows that relationships between in-laws can be strained. But in the biblical culture, families generally lived very close together and depended on each other, and in-law relationships were very tight. Also, since almost all marriages were arranged, the in-laws were often friends and/or approved of each other. So for Jesus to say that in-laws would be divided against each other because of him was a very harsh and attention-grabbing statement.

Luk 12:54

**“in the west.”** That would be over the Mediterranean Sea. Wind from the sea brought rain, while a wind from the south, from the Sinai, or from the east, Arabia, brought dry uncomfortable heat.

Luk 12:58

**“For *example*.”** Jesus was very aware of the times and the importance of being able to serve God rather than be sidelined by tricks and traps of the Adversary (cf. Luke 12:45), so he gave this example.

**Luke Chapter 13**

Luk 13:6

**“And he spoke this parable**.” If we are going to understand the parable, we have to understand its context, and the context is that people must repent of their sin and live godly lifestyles before God. Life can end shortly, and waiting for one reason or another before turning to God is foolish. Like the unfruitful tree in the parable, they may have a few more years (or maybe not), but that time will come to an end, because everyone dies eventually.

Luk 13:7

**“See.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get the reader’s attention. Usually translated “Look,” such a translation seems too strong in this direct address. The vinedresser was not being condescending to the owner in any way. Other options could be to use the archaic word “Lo,” or the common rendering “Behold” (see commentary on Matt. 1:20).

**“use up.”** The Greek word *katargeō* (#2673 καταργέω) means to use up, to waste, so it is unclear whether the landowner in the parable thought the unfruitful tree was actually depleting the soil or just taking up space that could have been used more productively. The phrase “use up” covers both possibilities, and points to the fact that the landowner would have realized that the tree required precious moisture from the ground that could have helped other plants to be fruitful. The parable makes a very powerful point: “unfruitful” people are just not unfruitful themselves, but they use up resources that keep others from being fruitful. Nevertheless, the vinedresser had a heart for this unfruitful tree and wanted to save it. This too is like life. Often people take an interest in helping others who are unfruitful. But, like this compassionate vinedresser, even they must realize that if the people they try to help remain unfruitful month after month, there comes a time when they have to be let go.

Luk 13:9

**“soon after.”** The Greek phrase, *eis to mellon* is idiomatic, but *mellon* most often refers to something that is about to happen, not something that is far off. The point the gardener was making was that once the tree was fertilized, he and the owner should start to see positive changes very quickly and realize there would be a good chance the tree would bear fruit next season. Although some versions use “next year” as a translation of the phrase *eis to mellon*, there is no reason to think the gardener was thinking about a time that far off. The point of the parable, and something we should keep in mind when working with people, is that if we give them the attention they need, we should start to see some results fairly quickly. While it is true that there are people who do not change for years and then suddenly change, we are not to spend an inordinate amount of time trying to help those people. When we say “Yes” to helping one person, we are saying “No” to other opportunities and serving the Lord in other ways. We are not called just to use our time for the Lord, but rather to make the best use of our time for him (Eph. 5:16).

Luk 13:11

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 13:14

**“angry.”** The Greek word is *aganakteō* (#23 ἀγανακτέω), and it refers to being angry or displeased at a situation that is perceived to be unjust.

**“that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath.”** There were six incidents in the ministry of Jesus in which he showed that taking care of people was not considered “work” by God and thus was more important than keeping rules about the Sabbath that were made by humans. The six incidents were picking grain on the Sabbath and five healings (see commentary on Matt. 12:9).

Luk 13:16

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost. In this case, the Adversary has used his power to cripple this believing woman. For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13.

[For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

**“for 18 years”** The Greek also has the word *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), “behold,” but it does not make good sense in English here. Jesus was talking with great force and passion, and “woke up” the minds of his audience, which is why those who suggested that this woman not be healed after 18 years of torment were put to shame.

Luk 13:17

**“put to shame.”** See commentary on Romans 9:33.

Luk 13:19

For more information on this parable, see commentary on Matthew 13:32.

Luk 13:21

**“50 pounds of flour.”** See commentary on Matthew 13:33.

Luk 13:22

**“through.”** The Greek is *kata*, used in the distributive sense.[[105]](#footnote-10565) Lenski translates this as: “city by city and village by village.”[[106]](#footnote-28928)

Luk 13:24

**“succeed.”** The verb translated as “will…succeed” is *ischuō* (#2480 ἰσχύω), and it means “to be strong or to have power, to be able,” and in this verse it is in the future tense, “will succeed.”

Luk 13:25

**“Then he, answering, will say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’”** Jesus taught this same truth here in Luke 13:22-30 that he taught in Matthew 25:1-13, in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

Luk 13:27

**“all you who practice unrighteousness.”** The meaning of the Greek phrase is basically, “all you who live unrighteously.”

Luk 13:28

**“sobbing and gnashing of teeth**.**”** The mention of sobbing and gnashing of teeth occurs seven times in the Bible (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). All of these occurrences are in the Gospels. There is only one future Messianic Kingdom, and it fills the whole earth. The unsaved are not part of that Kingdom but are thrown into the Lake of Fire where there is sobbing and gnashing of teeth (Rev. 20:13-15).

[For a more complete explanation of the sobbing and gnashing of teeth, see commentary on Matt. 8:12.]

**“Kingdom of God.”** One of the many names for the future Messianic Kingdom on earth. Sometimes called “the Kingdom of Heaven,” it is called by many different names in the Bible.

[For more on the attributes of the Messianic Kingdom on earth and the names by which it is called, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“but yourselves cast out.”** The unsaved are excluded from the feast in the Kingdom of God and are thrown out into the darkness where, in the Lake of Fire, they will be eventually annihilated.

[For more on the feast in the Messianic Kingdom see commentary on Matt. 8:11. For more about the unsaved being annihilated in the Lake of Fire and not burning forever, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Luk 13:29

**“And they will come from the east and west, and from the north and south.”** Jesus taught this truth again at a different time in his ministry (see Matt. 8:5-13, esp. Matt. 8:11). These people who come from the east and west are Gentiles, not Jews, as we see from Matthew 8:12 which refers to the Jews as the “sons of the Kingdom” because as God’s chosen people they were the rightful heirs of the land and kingdom, but they rejected God and so were rejected by him. In contrast, many non-Jews throughout history kept the heart of the Law by being loving, giving, and kind, and they are granted everlasting life and so get to eat at the feast in the Kingdom of Christ. The Old Testament foretold that people would come from the east and west and be in the Kingdom (cf. Isa. 59:19).

**“recline *to eat at the feast*.”** The word “recline” is *anaklinō* (#347 ἀνακλίνω), and it means to recline, lie down, lean against or lean on, or to ask or make someone recline or lie down. In most contexts, we would simply translate the verse as “recline at the table” (NASB), which is more literal, but in this context, Jesus is talking about the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven, so writing “recline to eat at the feast” is contextually acceptable, especially since “to eat at the feast” is in italics in the REV.

[For more information on reclining at this feast in the Messianic Kingdom, see commentary on Matt. 8:11.]

Luk 13:30

**“take note.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 13:31

**“Herod wants to kill you.”** Herod was tetrarch over Perea, an area east of the Jordan River, and that is where Jesus was ministering at the time. There is no evidence that Herod wanted to kill Jesus, and did not when he had the chance to kill him in Jerusalem at the Passover. This may well have been an attempt of the Pharisees to get Jesus to go back to Judea, where they thought they would have the influence to kill Jesus, which is eventually what happened.

Luk 13:32

**“fox.”** This is the figure of speech, hypocatastasis. A study of the word “fox” in the biblical culture reveals that Jesus was calling Herod a destructive nuisance. The meaning of the word “fox” when used in figures of comparison has changed over time. In the United States today it usually refers to a beautiful woman, whereas 50 years ago it usually referred to someone who was sly or sneaky. In biblical times “fox” referred to a destructive nuisance, something that could be dangerous, but not as dangerous as a wolf, bear, or lion. For an explanation of hypocatastasis, see commentary on Revelation 20:2.

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“today and tomorrow, and on the third *day* I will be finished.”** Luke 13:32 is a difficult verse, and commentaries and versions differ on its meaning. Nevertheless, there are clues as to its meaning in the verse itself, the context, and the scope of Scripture. The primary meaning is that Jesus was going to continue his work and in a little while be finished with it when he died. A subtle secondary meaning is that he would be completely finished after being dead for three days and nights when he was raised from the dead and able to be given all authority by God.

The immediate context is Jesus speaking to the unbelieving Pharisees, not his disciples. Jesus had been ministering in the Galilee for months and he had been a problem for the Pharisees who lived there and they wanted to get rid of him. So the Pharisees told him that he should leave the area because Herod Antipas, the ruler over the Galilee and the man who executed John the Baptist, was trying to kill him (Luke 13:31). Jesus knew he was not going to leave, and he told them that, but in veiled language. Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees is Luke 13:32-35, and those verses contain a lot of information, which no doubt later became very important to his disciples, who would have been nearby listening to the conversation.

In Luke 13:32, Jesus used the phrase, “today and tomorrow, and on the third *day*,” but what did he mean by it? Some scholars say the third day refers to the day of his resurrection but that is very unlikely as a primary meaning. Jesus was talking about what he himself was doing, and that he would heal people “today and tomorrow,” and it seems incongruous for him to then skip past his death, which was a vital part of the work that he himself was doing, and skip to his resurrection, which he did not do but God did for him.

Also, the very next verse, Luke 13:33, uses a very similar phrase about three days. In Luke 13:33 Jesus said, “I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the *day* following,” and the context makes it clear that the “day following” (more literally, “the following *one*”) could not be the day of his resurrection because it is prefaced by “I must go on my way,” referring to what Jesus himself was doing, not something—his resurrection—that was done to him by God.

Also, the “days” Jesus spoke of are not literal days of 24 hours, because in Luke 13:31, Jesus did not just heal and cast out demons for two more literal days, but rather for a reasonably short period of time. So Jesus used the word “day” to refer to a period of time, which was a common use of “day” in both Hebrew and Greek. Thus, the evidence is that the phrase “today and tomorrow, and on the third *day*” in Luke 13:32 was a way Jesus referred to the days ahead and what would shortly come to pass, and the phrase did not refer to two literal days and then somehow skip to the day of the resurrection.

Still another reason to believe the “third day” in Luke 13:32 refers to Jesus’ death is that the very next verse, Luke 13:33, is about his death, not his resurrection. In that verse, Jesus said, *“*it cannot be that a prophet perish outside of Jerusalem.” It does not seem logical that Luke 13:32 would be about Jesus’ resurrection, then Luke 13:33-34 be about his death, then the next verse, Luke 13:35, to be after his resurrection. It would make much more sense for Jesus to speak of his death, then his resurrection in chronological order.

Still another indication that the “third day” does not refer to the day of the resurrection but instead to the day of Jesus’ death is the final phrase of Luke 13:32, “I will be finished.” First, that would be accurate and chronological. Jesus’ work that he was doing was finished when he died on the cross, and as he died he specifically said, “It is finished” **(**John 19:30). The Greek word translated “I will be finished” is *teleioō* (#5048 τελειόω). The many meanings of *teleioō* include: “to complete, to carry through completely, to accomplish, to finish, to bring to an end, to perfect, to reach a goal; to bring to full measure, to fulfill; to initiate, and to consecrate.”[[107]](#footnote-29941) We can see from the many meanings of *teleioō* that it cannot be accurately translated without some idea of what the context is indicating. Scholars have translated it in a number of different ways that appear in the different English versions, for example: “the third day I will complete my work” (CEB, NET; cf. CSB, NRSV); “the third day I reach my goal” (CJB, NASB, NIV); “the third day I finish my course” (ESV, RSV); “the third day I accomplish my purpose” (NAB, NLT); “the third day I attain my end” (NJB); “the third day my work will be complete” (BBE; cf. GW); and *“*the third day I am perfected” (ASV, DBY; cf. KJV, NKJV, YLT).

As we can see from the translations above, most of the translators agree on the fact that the third day is the day Jesus completes his work, finishes his course, accomplishes his purpose, and reaches his goal, which was “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). Once we see that the “third day” refers to the day of his death we can see why that day is connected to his work and what he accomplished, and also see how it fits in chronological order in Luke 13:32-35. Then, as a shadow behind the primary meaning, the third day was another day in which Christ’s goal was reached, and that was when God raised him from the dead so that he could rule over God’s creation and bring it back into the loving and “very good” creation that God designed it to be (cf. Gen. 1:31).

Luk 13:33

**“for it cannot be that a prophet perish outside of Jerusalem.”** This statement must be taken in the larger context of Jesus’ ministry, and points to Jesus’ death in Jerusalem. The statement is certainly not absolute, because other prophets were killed outside of Jerusalem, notably John the Baptist, who was beheaded by Herod Antipas in the Transjordan. Jesus was pointing to the fact that he would die in Jerusalem.

Luk 13:35

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**Luke Chapter 14**

Luk 14:1

**“he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on a Sabbath.”** There were six incidents in the ministry of Jesus in which he showed that taking care of people was not considered “work” by God and thus was more important than keeping rules about the Sabbath that were made by humans. The six incidents were picking grain on the Sabbath and five healings (see commentary on Matt. 12:9).

Luk 14:2

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“whose body was swollen.”** Medically this is normally referred to as edema.

Luk 14:5

**“son.”** The oldest texts read “son.” It seems that reading was unsettling to copyists, who at some point changed υἱός (son) to ὄνος (donkey). There would be no reason to change “donkey” to “son.” Some manuscripts have all three: donkey, son, and ox, the copyists not being able to decide how to correctly copy the text.

Luk 14:12

The Greek word translated “banquet” is *deipnon* (#1173 δεῖπνον), and in the Greek and Roman world *deipnon* usually referred to the large formal and elaborate meal at the end of the day, however, it can also refer to a banquet. In this case, because Jesus is talking about a person inviting many friends and even rich neighbors, “banquet” is more fitting than just “supper” or “dinner.”

[For more on *deipnon*, see commentary on Rev. 19:9.]

Luk 14:14

**“resurrection of the righteous.”** In the future, the dead will be raised at different times. Dead Christians will be raised at the Rapture, which is immediately before the Great Tribulation. Those people who are righteous will be raised at the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), also called the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5, 6), and “the resurrection of life” (John 5:29), and people in that resurrection are part of the Messianic Kingdom on earth.

[For more on the Rapture and the resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

Luk 14:15

**“Blessed is anyone who will eat bread *at the feast* in the Kingdom of God!”** There is a lot in this statement. The exclamation point comes from the tone of the sentence, not from an imperative verb. The man, hearing Jesus speak about the Resurrection of the Righteous, correctly understood that anyone who was part of that resurrection would be a part of the Messianic Kingdom on earth.

It was “a prevailing Jewish idea, a great and long-continued feast will be held when the Messianic kingdom is established on earth after the resurrection [of the Righteous].”[[108]](#footnote-29608) This feast is foretold in Isaiah 25:6, and called “the marriage banquet of the Lamb” in Revelation 19:9. Although there will be a specific feast in the Kingdom, there will be so much food that the Kingdom will almost be a continual feast. Although the word “feast” is not in the Greek text, it is supplied from the cultural context, for the man who spoke up thought of eating in the Kingdom of God in terms of participating in the feast that would be eaten there. The cultural understanding of the feast in the Kingdom explains why Jesus immediately followed the man’s remarks with a parable about a man throwing a great banquet.

[For more on the feast in the Messianic Kingdom, see commentary on Matt. 8:11].

It is clear that the man who spoke up, likely a Pharisee or expert in the Law, did not think that the Kingdom of Heaven was currently going on, but was future (the verb “will eat” is in the future tense). The man’s statement is clearly true: anyone who is in the Resurrection of the Righteous (or in the Rapture) and gets to take part in the Messianic Kingdom on earth is indeed blessed.

[For more on the kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

The belief in a Messianic Kingdom on earth was prevalent among the Jews, but so was the belief that “good” Jews like the Pharisees would certainly be a part of it—a belief that Jesus took some pains to dismantle at various times in his teachings (cf. Matt. 5:20; 21:31). So it was that after the man made his statement, that Jesus took time to correct him, albeit in a manner that set forth the truth in a way that was not directly confrontational and one that invited the dialogue, “What did that parable mean?” Those who were self-absorbed or arrogant would never see the point Jesus was making, while the humble would either see it or ask about it.

**“bread.”** The Greek word is *artos* (#740 ἄρτος), and means “bread,” but bread was such a staple and indeed, “the staff of life,” that the word “bread” became generally used by synecdoche for food of any kind. Thus, although we translate it “bread” here, what the man was saying was “blessed is the one who will eat food at the feast in the Kingdom of God.” The danger of leaving the word artos translated as “bread,” even though all the major versions do, is that someone may think that the man is saying that a person is blessed if he gets to be in the Kingdom of God even if all he gets to eat is bread. That was not at all in the mind of the person, he was using the word “bread” in the standard cultural idiom of food in general.

[See Word Study: “Synecdoche.”]

Luk 14:16

**“A certain man.”** In the parable, the “man” is God. In Christ’s parables, the king, lord, landowner, or man, is often God. Christ teaches about God and His plan and actions in his parables.

**“great banquet.”** The Greek word translated “banquet” is *deipnon* (#1173 δεῖπνον), and in the Greek and Roman world, it usually referred to the large formal and elaborate meal at the end of the day. However, it was sometimes used of regular meals, and sometimes used of a feast or banquet, for example, it is used as a banquet in Luke 20:46. *Deipnon* is used of the great feast in the Kingdom of Heaven, called the “marriage banquet of the Lamb” in Rev. 19:9. The translation “banquet” is warranted in this context because it was obviously a huge, elaborate, and well-prepared meal.

The man at the Pharisee’s dinner to which Jesus was invited (Luke 14:1) had just remarked that people who ate at the feast in the Kingdom of God would be blessed (Luke 14:15). Jesus knew the beliefs of the Pharisees, especially the rulers of the Pharisees, and he knew that they believed they were so holy they would all be in the great feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus knew differently, and that some, perhaps many, of them were not saved. They had perverted the Scriptures and mostly rejected him. So he told a parable about a man [God] who threw a great feast [the great feast in the Messianic Kingdom; Isa. 25:6], but the people who were invited [the Jews] began to make excuses as to why they could not be at the feast. This paralleled the religious leaders, who had many good “reasons” [excuses] as to why their perversion of the Scripture was correct. Thus, in a powerful way that would be understood by those with ears to hear but completely missed by those who were hard-hearted, Jesus let the Pharisees know that just because they were the seed of Abraham did not mean they would be allowed to be part of the feast.

[For more on the great feast in the Kingdom of Heaven, see commentary on Matt. 8:11.]

Luk 14:21

**“Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and maimed and blind and lame.”** The ancient world always had a large population of extremely poor people—destitute people—and homeless people. The death rate in the population was huge so there were many orphans and elderly people who had no caretakers and could not earn much of a living, and also almost everyone was sick with some kind of disease that sapped their strength and made life unenjoyable, and some of those diseases made them unable to work. Also, debilitating accidents were common, so many people were lame. The only truly meaningful consolation of these people was the hope of a better next life, which is the subject of Jesus’ parable: the poor and debilitated (with faith) would have a place in the future Kingdom of God.

Luk 14:23

**“will be filled.”** The verb is subjunctive, hence many translations say “may” be filled, but the Greek preposition *hina* that starts the phrase requires the verb to be subjunctive. Thus, the verb has to be translated from context. Here, the Lord wanted the servants to bring people in so his house “will” be filled.

Luk 14:26

**“hate.”** We are not to “hate” our parents and our family. The Greek word is *miseō* (#3404 μισέω), “hate,” but in Hebrew and Greek, the word “hate” has a large range of meanings from actual “hate” to simply loving something less than something else, neglecting or ignoring it, or being disgusted by it.

In this context, we “hate” our family, even our own life, by putting the Lord Jesus first in our lives and putting our own desires and our family second to him. We “hate” our family only by loving them less than we love the Lord. Interestingly, often when we prioritize God or the things of God, or our own decisions as to what is best for us, over being talked into doing things we know within ourselves are not good, we get accused of “hating” the person we are saying “No” to.

[For more on the large semantic range of “hate” and its use in the Bible, see commentary on Prov. 1:22, “hate.”]

**“life.”** The Greek word is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), often translated “soul.” The Greek word *psuchē* has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here it is broadly used as the life of the person.”

[For a more complete explanation of *psuchē*, “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

Luk 14:27

**“carry his cross.”** The follower of Christ must be willing to suffer for Christ.

[For more on the meaning of “carry his cross,” see commentary on Matt. 16:24.]

Luk 14:33

**“who does not renounce all that he has.”** To understand what Jesus is saying here we have to have the scope of the Bible. First, it is clear that Jesus was not making a blanket statement about people renouncing all that they have in life. We see that among even his friends and apostles. For example, Peter still had part of his fishing business (John 21:3), and Lazarus, Jesus’ friend, was wealthy (the ointment that Mary poured on Jesus’ head was worth a year’s wage, for example (John 12:5). The context is a person making plans and then not doing a good job of it. The point Jesus is making, which is made in other contexts as well, is that when we are making plans we must first seek God about them such that what we do is inside the will of God (cf. John 6:27; Matt. 6:33; 2 Cor. 5:9).

Luk 14:35

**“It is thrown out *into the street*.”** This is similar to Matthew 5:13 (see commentary on Matt. 5:13).

**“Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen!”** This is the same Greek phrase as occurs in Mark 4:9 (see commentary on Mark 4:9), and almost the same Greek phrase as occurs in Matthew 11:15. For an explanation of the exclamation, see commentary on Matthew 11:15. This verse is longer, reading, “Anyone who has ears to hear had better listen,” while the occurrences in Matthew read, “Anyone who has ears had better listen!” Jesus has just taught about the cost of being a disciple, and he gives this stern warning and exhortation to people so they will not take it lightly.

**Luke Chapter 15**

Luk 15:1

**“kept drawing near.”** The Greek is *engizō* (#1448 ἐγγίζω), to come near or close, but the real meaning here is expressed by the fact that it is a present participle, active voice. The action was going on and on. The sinners did not just “come,” they “kept coming.” This makes a sharp contrast with the religious leaders in verse 2 who do not just grumble, they keep grumbling.

Luk 15:2

**“kept grumbling to each other.”** The Greek is *diagonguzō* (#1234 διαγογγύζω), and it means to murmur among a crowd or to each other (*gonguzō* without the dia prefix is used of just murmuring). It is “always used of many indignantly complaining.”[[109]](#footnote-12592) Here it occurs in the indicative imperfect active, meaning that the action was ongoing. The sinners kept coming, and the religious leaders kept grumbling among themselves.

**“This one.”** The Greek is just “This” or “This one,” used derisively. They scorned Jesus with their words.

Luk 15:3

**“And he spoke to them this parable.”** As Jesus was teaching, the sinners kept coming to him while the self-righteous religious leaders kept grumbling about him and stayed away (Luke 15:1-2). Jesus wanted to reach the hearts of both groups, and he told four parables that pertained to them: the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7), the Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10), the Parable of the Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-32) and the Parable of the Wise Manager (Luke 16:1-9). In the first two parables, the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin, Jesus emphasized God’s role in seeking the lost so they would be saved; the shepherd sought the sheep and the woman sought the coin. In the third parable, the Parable of the Forgiving Father, Jesus introduces the role that the sinner has to play. Ultimately, the sinner must choose to be saved. Although the Father is looking for the sinner to become humble and come to Him, it is the sinner who must humble themself and come to God. By casting the parable with two sons, not just one, Jesus shows how some sinners become humble and come to God for forgiveness while other self-righteous sinners do not humble themselves and come to God. In the fourth parable, the Parable of the Wise Manager, Jesus continues to emphasize the active role the sinner must take in coming to God and being saved, but is more specific than he was in the Parable of the Forgiving Father. Jesus tells the parable in such a way that it emphasizes the importance of using the wealth available to us to do the will of God, and the importance of being saved, which includes getting rewards in the future Kingdom of Christ.

[For more about the Kingdom of Heaven, also called the Kingdom of God, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more about rewards in the next life, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10.]

Luk 15:4

**“What man among you.”** In Luke 15:1-16:9 Jesus tells four parables, and they fit together (see commentary on Luke 15:3).

**“does not leave.”** No shepherd would leave a flock of sheep unattended in the wilderness. This is one of those places where we have to understand the ancient customs to have the parable make sense; Jesus’ audience lived in the culture and thus understood the parable. Rarely if ever would a flock of 100 sheep be watched by one person. There would be an owner or the main shepherd, and then some helpers. The owner cared for the flock, but would never leave it unguarded to search for one sheep. Instead, he would leave his flock, the 99, in the care of hired help while he searched for the one lost sheep. This is the point of the parable: that the owner cares so much for the sheep that he would search for one that is lost, not just hope it came home somehow. God is constantly searching for people who are lost, and we should be too.

Luk 15:5

**“lays it on his shoulders.”** Shepherds have reported that sometimes sheep that have been lost are so scared and disoriented that they will not walk, and even if they would they would probably walk too slowly to suit the shepherd. So the shepherd does the hard work of carrying the sheep. This is a wonderful illustration of how just “finding” the lost person is not enough. We then have to carry that person until they are “with the flock” and can stand strongly on their own.

Luk 15:7

**“who repents.”** The verb is a present participle, not an aorist, as if it were a one-time action, thus, the phrase could well read, “*more* joy in heaven over one sinner repenting.” Christ does not say, or imply, that repentance is a one-time thing. When we sin, we are to repent and ask forgiveness.

**“over 99 righteous people who have no need of repentance.”** The evidence is that this is irony. Scripture is clear that no one is righteous by way of their own works (cf. Rom. 3:9-18). Jesus had used this kind of irony before when he said that only the sick need a physician but the well do not, and the religious leaders in the room were considering themselves well when they were actually sick but did not recognize it (Luke 5:31-32). The situation is the same here in Luke 15:7. Of course God rejoices over people who repent and then work hard to live obediently and have been declared righteous by their faith. Jesus was trying to wake up the religious Jews who thought they were righteous by saying there was more joy over the sinners who repented than over them.[[110]](#footnote-28689)

Luk 15:8

**“Or what woman.”** The Parable of the Lost Coin is the second of four parables that Jesus told his audience, and they fit together (see commentary on Luke 15:3).

**“drachma.”** The drachma was a Greek coin made of silver.[[111]](#footnote-26698) Although it varied in value over the course of the Roman Empire, during the time of Christ it was apparently equivalent to a Roman denarius, which was worth a day’s wage for a laborer (cf. Matt. 20:2).[[112]](#footnote-19008)

**“a lamp.”** The “lamp” of the time was an oil lamp, fueled by olive oil and it generally had a wick made of flax.

Luk 15:11

**“Parable of the Forgiving Father.”** In Luke 15:1-16:9 Jesus tells four parables, and they fit together (see commentary on Luke 15:3). This is the third parable, and although it is not named in Scripture, it is generally referred to as “the Parable of the Prodigal Son.” However, the parable deals with the father, representing God, who is willing to forgive both his sons, the prodigal son and the overly religious son, hence the title in the REV: the Parable of the Forgiving Father. R. C. H. Lenski thought it should be called “the Parable of the Two Lost Sons.”[[113]](#footnote-22751)

**“A certain man.”** The “certain man” is God. Most of Christ’s parables were in one way or another about the Kingdom of Heaven, Christ’s future Kingdom on earth. Also, in most of his parables the king, ruler, landowner, or man was God. There are times when the main person in the parable was not God, for example in the Parable of the Sower, the sower was Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:37), and the man in the parable of the treasure in the field and in the parable of the pearl of great price is any believer who is wise enough to do what it takes to enter the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13:44-45).

In many of Christ’s parables, God is compared to a landowner, rich person, or king, although the relationship is not explicitly spoken but is implied. For example, God is compared to a king in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:23-35); the parable of the wedding banquet; Matt. 22:1-14; cf. Luke 14:16-24); and the parable of the ten minas (Luke 19:11-27). He is compared to a wealthy landowner in the parable of the workers in the field (Matt. 20:1-16) and the parable of the evil tenants (Matt. 21:33-40; Mark 12:1-11; Luke 20:9-16). He is compared to a man, a father, here in the parable of the forgiving father, which is usually referred to as the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32); and in the parable of the man with two sons (Matt. 21:28-31). God is compared to a wealthy man in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30); and in the Parable of the Wise Manager (Luke 16:1-9).

[For more about the Kingdom of Heaven, also called the Kingdom of God, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“had two sons.”** In the two previous parables, the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:1-10), we see that God saves sinners, and Christ emphasized God’s role in seeking the lost; the shepherd sought the sheep and the woman sought the coin. Here in the Parable of the Forgiving Father, we see the role that the sinner has to play. Ultimately, the sinner must choose to be saved. Certainly, the Father is looking for the sinner to become humble and come to Him, but it is the sinner who must humble themself and come to God. In this parable we also see what is clearly all around us in the community: the prodigal son is like sinners who humble themselves and turn from their sin and come to Christ; while the “righteous” son is like the religious zealots who think they are holy but are like the religious leaders who thought they were holy but who in God’s eyes were worse than other sinners (Matthew 21:23-32).

Luk 15:12

**“give me the portion of the property that is coming to me.”** This point in the parable is unrealistic, and shows us that sometimes a teacher must use an example that is unrealistic in order to make a point. In the culture, a son would never ask for an inheritance before the father was dead. He might ask for money, but never for his inheritance. Asking for his inheritance would be equivalent to saying, “I wish you were dead.”

Although there is nothing legally wrong with the younger son’s request, it reveals a selfish and naïve heart, duped by inexperience and ignorance. It was selfish because it did not take into account that the father was not dead and might have encountered troubles in which he would have needed that extra wealth, and furthermore, it was the father’s wealth, not the son’s. Also, the son’s arrogant assumption that he was owed an inheritance from his father overlooks the fact that the wealth was his father’s, not his; he was not “owed” anything from his father. In fact, he only had that wealth “coming to him” if he deserved it and the father still had it when he passed away. Proverbs says, “The one who troubles his household will inherit wind” (Prov. 11:29), and the way this son was behaving, it is somewhat amazing he got anything at all.

**“And he divided to them his living.”** According to the Mosaic Law, the older son would get twice as much as the younger sons, so in this case, the older son would get two-thirds of the inheritance and the younger son one-third (Deut. 21:17). The father did what was right in dividing his inheritance to both sons; if he gave it to one he would give it to the other. As the parable continues, the father still seems to control some wealth, but since this is a parable and not actual history, the facts can be made to fit the story.

Luk 15:13

**“and went on a journey into a far country.”** Luke 15:12 reveals that the younger son was distant from his family in his heart because he asked for his inheritance as if his father was dead. Now he becomes distant physically, leaving the family to go to another location. Mental separation leads to physical separation.

**“he wasted his wealth.”** The word “wealth” could also be translated as “property” (Luke 15:12), or “substance.”

**“by living recklessly.”** The details are not described, but his older brother said the reckless living included prostitutes (Luke 15:30), which is likely.

Luk 15:14

**“a severe famine came upon that country.”** Since agriculture was the main economic support in ancient societies, a severe famine would put people out of work and dry up many sources of work.

**“and he began to be in need.”** Wise people know how to live within their means, and to curb their desires so that they do not end up in need. Proverbs 21:17 says, “The one who loves pleasure *will become* a poor person; the one who loves wine and oil will not become rich.” Proverbs 13:18 says, “The one who ignores discipline *will get* poverty and dishonor.”

Luk 15:15

**“hired himself out to**.” The Greek phrase is literally, “joined himself to,” which is an idiom for beginning to work for someone, to hire oneself out to someone else (NET First Edition text note).

**“he sent him into his fields to feed pigs.”** There could not have been much more degrading work for an Israelite, to whom pigs were unclean animals, than feeding the pigs of a foreigner and pagan. Besides the degradation, herding pigs was hard, lonely, and dangerous work. The pigs were herded outside the city, so there was no social interaction with other people. Also, the herdsman had to keep watch day and night, so if the animals were nervous for whatever reason, the herdsman could go night after night without a good night’s sleep, as well as be out in the weather by day and night, whatever that may have been. Also, robbers and wild animals were a constant source of danger, and the herdsman was expected to protect the herd from both.

Luk 15:16

**“the carob pods that the pigs were eating.”** The pods were food for the pigs and occasionally for the very poor. The fact that the son was longing to eat them shows how desperate and hungry he was, and the fact that people would not even give them to him shows how deep the famine was. The parable does not explain what he did end up eating.

**“and no one gave *anything* to him.”** Giving to the poor was valued in Jewish society (cf. Prov. 14:31), but it was also valued in pagan society; the whole ancient world had needy people who were sustained by charity and even officially sanctioned charities, such as the food the Roman government provided to the poor. So the fact that no one gave anything to him likely meant that he was quite far removed from places that people frequented, and also that people who knew of his circumstances felt that he did not deserve the help.

Luk 15:17

**“when he came to himself.”** Christ was telling the parable to teach and evangelize, and in that context, this phrase is the very heart of the parable. Listening to him were many different sinners, and also the religious leaders who were the worst sinners but did not know it (Luke 15:1-2). Salvation was open to everyone, but which of them would accept it? The people of both groups had to come to themselves, that is, come to their senses and realize the unparalleled value of salvation, and then do what it takes to get saved. Christ portrays that beautifully in his parable. The prodigal man is in need of food to survive, and the sinners are in need of salvation to survive forever. Nobody would give the prodigal man anything to sustain him, and nobody can give another everlasting life; each person must do what it takes to get it from God. The prodigal realized his help would come from his father, and we all must realize our help comes from THE Father, God. Thankfully, God has given us the intelligence to realize that He has more than enough of what any and all of us need to survive and prosper.

Luk 15:18

**“I will get up and go.”** In his teaching and parable, Christ provides his listeners with a plan of action. The prodigal son has to act to get forgiveness and be accepted back into the family, and sinners have to act to be forgiven by God and be saved and join His family. The prodigal son follows through on his plan and goes to his father (Luke 15:20), and the sinner must not just think about repentance or plan repentance, the sinner must actually repent.

**“Father, I have sinned.”** The prodigal son now demonstrates complete humility. Hardship and disaster have taught him and he is now humble. He offers no excuses or reasons for what he did; none are valid anyway. He states the simple truth: “I have sinned.” The lesson he learned, and the statement he made, should be seen for what they are: honesty and a decision on the part of the son. Hardship taught this prodigal son, but we must not be fooled into thinking that hardship is some kind of universal teacher. Hardship does not teach everyone. The Bible is full of examples of men and women who went through disaster after disaster but hardened their heart rather than humbled it. The pharaoh of the Exodus is a good example, and Amos writes about it (Amos 4:1-12). It takes a very honest person to repent of their sin and come to God.

**“in your sight.”** The Greek is *enōpion* (#1799 ἐνώπιον). The word has several meanings, and thus the meaning must be determined from context. Its primary meaning is literal, “before,” and it pertains to a position in front of an entity, before someone or something. Thus, it also pertains to being present or in view, in the sight of, in the presence of, among, and it also pertains to value judgment, thus, “in the opinion of; in the judgment of.” It also has special uses, such as in this verse when it is combined with “sin.” In this case, it means more than just in your sight or judgment, but “against you.”[[114]](#footnote-21631)

The word is a good one for the son to use; it reveals his humility at this point in his life. He says he has sinned against God (“heaven” is used as a euphemism for “God” because the word “God” was often considered too holy to say) and “against you,” which includes the fact of the sin being against his father, but also recognizing that it was “in your opinion,” thus recognizing that the father was aware of the sin and personally hurt by it.

Luk 15:20

**“And he got up and went.”** The son follows through on his decision and plan (cf. Luke 15:18).

**“But while he was still a long way off.”** This is the sinner’s hope and joy. The father started running to the son while he was still “a long way off.” God does not wait for people to reach some kind of perfection or sinlessness before He accepts them back. God loved us when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10), and surely He does not expect perfection now. He loves us and moves to help us while we are still a long way off. For example, God does not wait for an addict to be drug-free before He accepts them back. He accepts them when they repent even though they are still a long way from His perfection.

Jesus is not making a point about the geography here; “Hey, the land is really flat, look how far you can see.” The point Jesus is making is that the father was constantly watching for his son. He loved his son and never gave up hope he would come home. He recognized him from a distance and responded immediately. He ran to the son and fell on his neck and hugged and kissed him. Such is the love of God for both unsaved sinners and His children (who are all still sinners). When we wander He watches for us to come back to Him. And when we move toward Him, He immediately responds. As we see in Luke 15:21-22, in his love for his son and joy at having him back in his family, the father does not even let his son finish his little speech about being a hired servant, but cuts him off and begins to bestow gifts and honor upon him. So it is with God. Repentance is not a lengthy process, it occurs in the heart and is immediately accepted.

Note that the father does not ask for, or allow, the son to work his way back into being accepted. The fact that he is back and is humble is all that is needed. Similarly, we do not work our way back into God’s graces when we sin. We do not have to prove to God that we are sorry for our sin and have repented by demonstrating that fact by weeks or months of good behavior. The sinner repents and is accepted.

Luk 15:21

**“And the son said to him.”** Out of pure humility, the son openly admits his sin. No doubt he would have asked to be accepted back as a hired servant, as he had planned to say (Luke 15:19), but his father cut him off and accepted him back into the family. Because this is a parable and not a historical account, the fact that the father cut the son off and did not listen to his full speech is part of the lesson Christ is teaching us. It is not just that the father was in a hurry to accept his son, he was not going to hear anything about his son being a servant. Never! The son was a member of the family and accepted and loved in full status as such. So it is with God. When a sinner repents, they are accepted into God’s family with full status. No child of God is some kind of servant with lesser status and privilege. Children of God will be a part of His everlasting kingdom and live forever with Him. Also, we must realize that if the son was helpful at all to the father before he left and went away, coming back humble, more worldly-wise, and more thankful made him many times more valuable in the family. Not loved more, but more valuable.

Some commentators suggest that the father did not cut off the son, but that the son changed his mind, but that does not fit the context, nor does it fit with the fact that this is not a historical account but a parable designed to teach about God. God does not need or want us to be His hired servants, and will hear nothing about it, and Christ intended to make that clear in the parable.

Luk 15:22

**“robe...ring...sandals.”** The best robe (the outer garment), the ring, and the sandals were all trappings of honor, and show that the father has fully accepted the son back into the family.

Luk 15:23

**“the fatted calf.”** Wealthy people kept certain animals especially for feasts and celebrations, and this “fatted calf,” a grain-fed animal, would have been such an animal. The father wanted a feast, not just a meal, and the amount of food indicates that he intended to have more than just immediate family. He would have invited his extended family and even perhaps the community to his feast.

Luk 15:24

**“for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found.’”** Jesus puts these words into the mouth of the father in his parable, and we can see where a father in that situation might have said them. More to the point, however, is that Jesus wanted his audience to hear them, because they are true to fact. The unsaved are “dead” and “lost,” but when they repent of their sin and come to God they are “alive” and “found.” Jesus wanted to reach all the unsaved in his audience, and he wanted to make clear to them how desperate their situation really was. If they did not repent and come to God, they would indeed be dead in every sense of the word.

[For more on dead people being truly dead and not alive in any form or place, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.” For more on the unsaved perishing in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Luk 15:25

**“Now his son, the older one, was in the field.”** The parable now shifts to the other lost son. The prodigal son was obviously and openly lost, but this “good” son is lost too. Note that he was in the fields working. “Religious” people are often very hard workers; in fact, they get many of their self-righteous “better than thou” feelings from being harder workers than others. The way Christ told the parable, the older son “drew near” like the tax collectors and sinners were doing as Christ was teaching the parable (Luke 15:1), but when the older brother realized how his younger brother was being treated, then he stayed back and grumbled like the religious leaders were doing while Jesus was teaching (Luke 15:2).

Luk 15:26

**“one of the servants.”** The Greek word is *paidōn*, the masculine plural of *pais* (#3816 παῖς), which could more literally be translated “one of the young men” or even “one of the boys,” but the word “boy” is being used here, like it sometimes is in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, to mean “servant.” In the biblical culture, the “young men” and “young women” of the house were often the servants and the people living in that culture would get the sense from the context, but it is not that obvious in English, so the word “servant” better catches the meaning of the text than “young man.”

Luk 15:27

**“And he said to him, ‘Your brother is here, and your father has killed the fatted calf.”** Although without adjectives the written text cannot reproduce the servant’s excitement and tone of voice, we can tell from his words that he is excited to see the family together again and cannot imagine that this older brother would not be excited too. He says, “Your brother has come,” as if that alone explained it all. But he adds, “and your father has killed the fatted calf” to show that the father is joyful and excited too. It seems the servant would have been totally caught off guard by the older son’s reaction, but the parable is not about the servant, it is about the father and sons, and so it moves on to the feelings of the older son.

Luk 15:28

**“But he became enraged, and would not go in.”** To have the proper effect, certain details of the parable are not the way things would have likely happened in real life. In putting on the feast and inviting family and friends, it is not realistic that the father somehow omitted telling his oldest son that the younger one had returned, but that is necessary in the parable to make the point about the anger and stubbornness of the older son. Upon finding out that his younger brother was alive and had returned, he showed no love for his younger brother. One would think that even if he was angry that his brother was being treated to a feast, he would have at least been glad to know he was alive. But he was not. The older brother shows up in the parable exactly like the religious leaders do in real life. They are not glad that prostitutes and tax collectors are turning from their sin to learn about God and follow this young rabbi. Instead, they are angry that things are not unfolding around Jesus according to the way they would want them to. For example, they are envious that Jesus can reach prostitutes and tax collectors who will have nothing to do with their institutional and hypocritical religion.

The verb “became enraged” is an ingressive aorist, thus it is translated as “became enraged” and not “was enraged.”

**“And his father came out and pleaded with him.”** Here again, we see the father’s love and compassion for his children, as well as his desire for them to think and act in a godly way. The father could have become angry that the older son was being so stubborn and hard-hearted but that is not the way God is. Nor did the father send a servant out to get him. He left the feast to go speak to his oldest son like the shepherd leaves the 99 to find the lost sheep. It is the goodness of God that leads people to repentance, not getting angry with them (Rom. 2:4). The word “pleaded” is the common verb, *parakaleō* (#3870 παρακαλέω). It has many meanings, such as “exhort, encourage, and comfort, and more than one of those meanings applies here. He certainly pleaded with his son, exhorted him, encouraged him, and may have even tried to comfort him in his anger. Thus, this is an example where the Greek words have a semantic range, making it challenging to find the most accurate representation in English to convey the intended meaning. In the parable, the father tried to reason with his angry son and get him to the feast, and in real life, Jesus tried to reason with the religious leaders and get them to see their own hard-heartedness and come humbly to God.

Luk 15:29

**“Look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“I never transgressed a commandment of yours.”** The younger son humbly told the father he had sinned against both him and God. The older son arrogantly stated that he had never transgressed a commandment of the father’s, but of course he had. Perhaps not a specifically stated request, but throughout the parable, the father modeled great love for his sons to imitate, but the older son certainly did not. Instead, he showed anger, unthankfulness, and hard-heartedness. Are those unspoken commandments of God, demonstrated by the father, still commandments? They are, because they come from God and were recognized and obeyed by the father and should have been recognized and demonstrated by the son as well.

**“and *yet* you never gave me a young goat.”** The selfish heart of the younger son was revealed early on when he asked to have the inheritance that was “coming to” him, in other words, the inheritance he deserved (Luke 15:12). Now the self-centered and unthankful heart of the older son is revealed. He blames his father for not honoring him when in reality what the father said was correct, that everything the father had was available to the son. In fact, we learned early in the parable that the father divided his living to both his sons, so the older son had already received his inheritance. It was actually his goat, not the father’s, so if he wanted to kill and eat it, or something much better, he could. His unthankfulness had made him blind to the blessings around him. The mention of the “young goat” reveals the anger and unthankfulness in the older son’s heart. A small goat is not what anyone would cook for a feast of any size. That the older son proposed that his prodigal brother got a fatted calf when he did not even get a young goat is purely evil fantasy. He could have had a fatted calf too if he wanted. People exaggerate and make all kinds of false claims when they are angry and upset.

Luk 15:30

**“this son of yours.”** The older son will not call his younger brother, “my brother.”

**“devoured your living with prostitutes.”** Even though this is likely true to some extent, it is still just an invented assumption at this point.

**“you killed the fatted calf for him.”** The older son now turns his accusation directly against his father and implies that the father has made a poor judgment and done something wrong. This is taking the unthankful heart of the older brother to a whole new level. Blaming his father! He refused to call his brother “my brother,” and in the parable, he never calls his father, “father.” We remind ourselves that Jesus is not recounting a historical event, but is telling a parable, so why include this phrase about the father? It indicates that Jesus knew that in their hard-heartedness, the religious leaders were also hard-hearted and unthankful about God. Somewhere in the depths of their dark hearts, they blamed God for the way things were and that their “righteousness” was not seen and rewarded in a more open and obvious way. In their own minds, God never gave them a fatted calf, whatever that would have meant to them.

Luk 15:31

**“*My* child.”** The father reaches out to the heart of his son with the single word, “child.” He had reached out with his eyes to see his other son returning from a distant land, and he reaches with his words to his other son. God is always reaching out to win the lost.

**“you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.”** The father in the parable states the simple and obvious truth that is true of both the father in the parable and our heavenly Father, God. God has given us every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). We need to open our hearts to God and see it.

Luk 15:32

**“and *was* lost, and is found.”** As the parable concludes, we see that both the sons were “lost,” but the younger one was found. But would the older one be? The question is left unanswered in the parable and is unanswered in life because the hard-hearted religious leaders continued to keep their distance from Jesus.

**Luke Chapter 16**

Luk 16:1

**“And he said also to the disciples.”** In Luke 15:1-16:9 Jesus tells four parables, and they fit together (see commentary on Luke 15:3).

The Parable of the Wise Manager Luke 16:1-9), is the fourth and last of the four-parable group, and it continues and adds detail to the point Jesus made in the third parable, the Parable of the Forgiving Father. The Parable of the Wise Manager continues the point that each person is responsible for doing what it takes to get saved. God wants people to be saved, but people must humble themselves and respond to God’s call. Specifically in this parable, Jesus shows that believers should be diligent to use the “unrighteous wealth” that they have here on earth now in such a way that they “make friends” with God and Christ, so that when the things of this life fail—and they will fail—God and Christ will welcome and reward you in the Age to Come. The “wealth” that each person has includes their mental and physical talents and abilities as well as any material goods they have. In the parable, Jesus focused on the material goods because the religious leaders were wealthy and greedy for money (Luke 16:14). Far too many believers are skimpy and selfish with the material things they have here on earth and are not doing a good job of using earthly things to prepare for a wonderful future life.

[For more on rewards in the future life, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10. For more on the wonderful future life on earth when Christ is king and ruling the earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“There was a certain rich *man*.”** The rich man in the parable is God.

[For more on the “king,” “landowner,” “ruler,” or “man” in Christ’s parables being God, see commentary on Luke 15:11.]

**“and it was reported to him.”** In Jesus’ parable, the lord of the house only heard that the manager was wasting his goods. It is quite possible that the report was not true, but that often did not matter in the ancient world, or even today. The position of a house manager was such that it demanded the absolute trust of the owner of the house. If that trust was broken or was in doubt, then the lord-manager relationship was broken and the lord would not be carefree about the things concerning the house as he had been before, and the house manager would always feel watched over, hampered, and second-guessed in his decisions. The lord of the house is never said to conduct a thorough investigation of the situation; whatever it was, his trust was gone, and so he simply said that the man could no longer be the house manager.

Luk 16:8

**“And his lord commended the unrighteous house manager because he had acted prudently.”** This sentence is the end of the parable. The next sentence, that “the sons of this age are in their own generation more prudent than the sons of the light,” is not what anyone in the parable would have said, but is Jesus’ comment about life after he finished the parable. The parable would have been a little easier to understand if, when the verse numbers in modern New Testaments were added in the 1550s, the last sentence in Luke 16:8 had started Luke 16:9 instead of ending Luke 16:8.

The house manager acted prudently because he acted in such a way as to assure his future well-being without being dishonest to the lord of the house. The Lord must have understood this because he “commended” (often translated as “praised” or an equivalent, cf. AMP, BBE, CSB, GWORD, Goodspeed, LSB, NASB1995, NJB, It was common for a wealthy man to be owed money and goods in biblical times just as it is today, and there is always a portion of those debts that never end up being collected. In many cases, it is better to receive a portion of the payment right away than to hope for full payment at some future time, and this practice still occurs in modern business. Ecclesiastes 11:2 speaks of being generous when you are able to, so that others may help you in the future if you are in need, and that is exactly the situation the house steward was in, so in acting the way he did, he was being prudent.

**“For the sons of this age are in their own generation more prudent than the sons of the light.”** Jesus was a keen observer of life, and made this true statement about believers and unbelievers in business. It is often the case that believers have a general trust and sense of well-being that causes them to be less diligent in business than unbelievers. Unbelievers are generally much more suspicious and much less trusting in life than believers are, and so unbelievers are usually much more diligent in business than believers are. Unbelievers generally pay attention to details, word things exactly, get things in writing, and make sure the risk-reward of business is in their favor. Although it is good to be trusting, business is business, and there is no reason for believers not to be as diligent in business as unbelievers are.

Luk 16:9

**“make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth.”** The answer to this difficult verse lies in understanding that only God and Christ can receive anyone into “the tents in the Age,” i.e., the dwellings in the Millennial Kingdom and beyond. Here in Luke 16:9, Jesus is giving good counsel about how to be blessed both in this life and in our future life.

Jesus’ advice does not fit for us who live after the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) in the Administration of Grace when salvation is by confession and belief in Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9), but it fits very well for believers who lived before Pentecost. Before Pentecost, the way a person related to their wealth, as well as their keeping of God’s commandments (Matt. 19:17), were important demonstrations of their trust in God, which led to salvation. This shows up in many places in the Old Testament. For example, we see the way people treated wealth and giving was directly related to their trust in God in Malachi, where the ungodly priests and people cheated on their tithes and offerings (Mal. 1:8, 13; 3:8-9). There are verses in the Old Testament that say God will bless you if you tithe (cf. Mal. 3:10) and many verses that say that people who give money to the poor will be blessed for it and are lending to Yahweh (cf. Prov. 19:17; 11:17; 14:21, etc.). Jesus also taught about money management in his parables, where good people used their wealth and built it and were blessed and received more, while people who hoarded their wealth or hung on to it (those who buried it or the man who just built bigger barns for it, Luke 12:18) suffered for it.

Although today our salvation is not related to how we use our wealth, our rewards are, and Paul wrote to the Philippians who gave to him that he desired fruit to their account, meaning their rewards account (Phil. 4:17). Luke 16:9 also speaks of the time when wealth will fail, and there is a time when wealth will fail, and that is at the time when Jesus comes. Many verses in the OT remind people that when the Day of the Lord comes, Yahweh can save them but their wealth cannot (cf. Isa. 10:3; Ezek. 7:19). If people “make friends” in their life on earth with the wealth they have, when Christ comes and it fails, God will be there to repay people for the blessings they have given to others. So how does the believer “make friends” with wealth? By using it to help and bless others. Matthew 25:40 notes that what we do for the least of the believers we do for Christ himself. When we use our wealth properly, we make friends of God and Christ, who then help us, just as the unrighteous house manager made friends who later helped him when he was in need.

**“unrighteous wealth.”** The Greek text more literally says, “the mammon of unrighteousness,” which in this context refers to unrighteous wealth. In this context, “wealth” is considered to be “unrighteous.” This has nothing to do with whether or not the wealth was righteously earned or inherited, or gained by unrighteous means.

[For more on “mammon,” see commentary on Matt. 6:24.]

**“in the age *to come*.”** This is the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.

[For more information on this phrase, see Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

Luk 16:11

**“So if you have not been faithful…”** This verse contains the figure of speech hyperbaton[[115]](#footnote-29519) and more literally reads, “If, then, you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, the true *riches*—who will entrust them to you?”

Luk 16:13

**“No servant is able to serve two masters.”** See commentary on Matthew 6:24.

**“hate.”** The servant does not “hate” the lord in the sense of a feeling of intense hostility. The Greek word is *miseō* (#3404 μισέω), “hate,” but in Hebrew and Greek, the word “hate” has a large range of meanings from actual “hate” to simply loving something less than something else, neglecting or ignoring it, or being disgusted by it. Here, the servant “hates” the one lord only by loving him less, that is, being less devoted to him, than he is to the lord whom he “loves,” that is, shows more attention to.

[For more on the large semantic range of “hate” and its use in the Bible, see commentary on Prov. 1:22, “hate.”]

Luk 16:18

**“Everyone who divorces his wife.”** Luke 16:18 seems to come out of nowhere and be connected to nothing in the context. Why would Jesus bring up marriage here? Actually, what Jesus says is tied very closely to the context. Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees started back in Luke 15:1 when the tax collectors and sinners (some of whom were prostitutes) kept gathering around Jesus to hear him. So, what may seem like a long time to us reading the Bible was actually only a little time; from when Jesus started telling the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4) until Luke 16:18 could have easily been only a short time.

The Pharisees were very upset about the fact that Jesus was welcoming tax collectors and sinners, and were disdaining him, saying, “This one welcomes sinners, and eats with them.” What they were blind to was that they were sinners too. In fact, in God’s eyes, they were likely greater sinners than the ones they thought were “sinners” because of the leadership position they held in society (see commentary on James 3:1 about teachers receiving stricter judgment). R. C. H. Lenski writes: “Were these Pharisees any better than harlots? No; they lived in the same open violation of the Sixth Commandment. Jesus now confronts them with that fact. What he tells them is this: You Pharisees also disregard and violate God’s law of marriage by changing from one wife to another at pleasure….”[[116]](#footnote-22329)

So the Pharisees were ridiculing Christ for welcoming sinners when they were guilty of sexual sins too. Jesus made reference to God’s laws on marriage to openly show the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and perhaps get some of them to repent, and also to teach the “sinners” that their sin was no worse than the sins of others. Jesus did not bring up marriage and divorce in this context to expound upon the law of God and teach about that subject, which is why the verse seems so short and out of place here in Luke 16:18. There are other places in the Gospels where Jesus taught about marriage in much more detail (cf. Matt. 19:1-9).

**“a woman.”** The word “woman” is not specifically in the Greek text but comes from the verb *apoluō* (#630 ἀπολύω, pronounced ä-pŏ-'loo-ō), which means “loosed, released, put away,” and in this case refers to being divorced. Here in this verse, it is in the feminine gender. English verbs do not have a gender, so we have to add it by adding a separate word. One of the ways to do that is to add “a woman” (cf. HCSB, ESV, NAB, NET, NIV, NLT, etc.).

**“commits adultery.”** There are a few keys that are vital to properly understanding this verse. One is that this verse cannot contradict what Jesus taught about divorce and remarriage in his Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:32), and neither can it contradict what he taught when the Pharisees tempted him with a question about divorce (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12). Another key is the social context, which was that, at the time of Christ, Rabbi Hillel and his supporters, which included the Pharisees, believed and taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all. The 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia says, “Hillel was recognized as the highest authority among the Pharisees and the scribes of Jerusalem.”[[117]](#footnote-27626) A third key is that in this context Jesus was directly confronting the Pharisees, who were scoffing at his teaching (Luke 16:14), and he was trying to open their eyes to the truth.

This verse seems very similar to Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:32), and to his teaching at the event recorded in Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:11-12, but this event in Luke is separate from those two records, and there are some very significant differences between them. For example, in Matthew 5:32, Jesus taught about the sanctity of marriage, and that there were cases in which a mostly innocent woman had been forced into a divorce. In those cases, the woman was harmed and Jesus did not say she couldn’t remarry. In Matthew 5:32 as well as in Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:11-12, the verbs for adultery are in the passive voice, which in some contexts can greatly affect their meaning (see commentaries on Matt. 5:32 and 19:9). Here in Luke, however, the verbs are in the active voice. Jesus was directly telling the Pharisees that their behavior was tantamount to adultery.

In Luke 16, Jesus had been teaching about financial stewardship. The Pharisees, who loved money, scoffed at his teaching (Luke 16:14). At that point Jesus made an attempt to open their eyes so that they could see that they, too, were unrighteous in the sight of God. The Pharisees prided themselves on being righteous in the sight of God, and in being more righteous than everyone else, so if Jesus was going to shake up their thinking and reach their hearts he would need something important and profound that they should be able to relate to. He used what they taught about marriage as a way to try to soften their hard religious hearts. First, however, he told them, “God knows your hearts” and “That which is highly esteemed by people is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

Jesus then went on to tell them, “Everyone who puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery, and he who marries one that is put away from a husband commits adultery.” We can see this is different from the records in Matthew and Mark. For one thing, Jesus leaves out the part about “except because of sexual immorality” (Matt. 19:9). There was no need for Jesus to mention that here because it did not apply to the Pharisees. They were divorcing for other reasons—primarily lust. Also, Jesus did not mention the woman divorcing her husband as he did in Mark 10:12. Again, that did not apply to these Pharisees.

Jesus was speaking directly to the Pharisees about their thoughts and behavior, and they were guilty of the easy divorce that Jesus was talking about. They were divorcing their wives for flimsy reasons and often simply because of lust, and Jesus (and hopefully they) knew that. We can now see the reason for Jesus’ statement which was short and to the point: if you divorce and remarry (like you are doing), you are committing adultery, and if you marry a divorced person (like you are doing), you are committing adultery.

It is essential that we keep in mind the social context of this interaction if we are going to properly understand it. The last phrase, that a man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery, needs some explanation, especially because that was not the case in Matthew 5:32, where the verb for adultery was in the passive voice because the woman, and now her new husband, were victims of the divorce forced upon the woman by her former husband. That is not the case in this context, however. The verbs for adultery in Luke 16:18 are active verbs. That makes perfect sense because, here in Luke, Jesus is addressing the specific behavior of the Pharisees in divorcing their wives.

But the Pharisee men were not the only sinners. Often the wives wanted to leave their husbands just as Herodias wanted to, and did leave, her husband Philip to marry Herod Antipas. Here in Luke, Jesus is not making a “blanket statement” about divorce, or addressing the innocent victims of divorce as he did in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:32). In this context, Jesus is speaking of the teaching and behavior of the Pharisees, and the resulting “merry-go-round” of divorce and remarriage in that cultural context. The easy, quick, and repeated marriage and divorce in some cultural circles was no different than having one affair after another or “wife swapping.” It is adultery in the eyes of God and a grievous sin. To more fully understand Jesus’ statement to the Pharisees here in Luke, see the commentaries on Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

Luk 16:19

**“a certain rich man.”** This record of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable, not a literal portrayal of events that were actually occurring. The reason Jesus spoke this parable was that he was trying to reach the hearts of the hard-hearted Pharisees without directly confronting them. The Pharisees “were greedy for money” (Luke 16:14), and they were rich. Also, they treated poor people badly, like the rich man treated Lazarus, which is how they got rich (cf. Luke 20:46-47). So the Pharisees in life were like the rich man in the parable, and the poor people the Pharisees mistreated were like Lazarus in the parable. Furthermore, the Pharisees believed that every person had a soul that lived on after the person died, and the souls of evil people were tormented, while the souls of good people were not, so the parable fit what the Pharisees believed. So by wording the parable the way he did, Christ was “becoming a Pharisee to win the Pharisees” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-22).

The parable makes several profound points. Perhaps the most important one is the way Jesus ended the parable, that if hard-hearted and rebellious people would not believe Moses and the prophets, they would not change their mind and believe even if someone rose from the dead (Luke 16:31). This was shown to be absolutely correct when both Lazarus and Christ rose from the dead and yet the religious leaders did not believe.

Another point of the parable was that the way people deal with their wealth and earthly possessions will directly affect what happens to them on Judgment Day. Luke chapter 15 has three parables that show how valuable every person is and that they should be loved and cared for. Those three parables are then followed in Luke chapter 16 by two parables—the parable of the unjust house manager and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus—that show how important it is for people to steward their material possessions in a godly way. The parables in Luke 16 were stern warnings to these greedy Pharisees that their selfishness would have severe consequences.

In spite of the fact that the record is a parable, just as in every parable, there is some truth in it. Scholars debate exactly how much truth is in the parable. For example, some scholars believe in disembodied souls, while others do not. Of those that do, some believe those souls have fingers that can be dipped in water, while others do not. Some scholars point out that it is very unlikely that Abraham would have the authority to allow someone from Paradise to return to earth to warn the unsaved, so the rich man asking that of Abraham would not be literal. Other scholars doubt that unsaved people in torment can speak to the saved people in Paradise.

When it comes to determining what is true about things such as life after death, our only reliable source is the Bible, and conclusions must be drawn from the entire scope of Scripture, not just individual sections. It is not good exegesis to use a parable as a primary source of doctrine about what happens to people when they die, especially when that parable contradicts other clear verses of Scripture. Many verses of Scripture show us that when a person dies, their soul does not live on, but the person is dead in every way until the Rapture or one of the resurrections.

One thing that is true in the parable is that some people will not die immediately in the Lake of Fire, but will be in torment for a period of time as retribution for their sins. This conclusion can be drawn from many verses of Scripture, and thus the clear message of the Bible is that unless people get forgiveness for their sins they will be punished for the evil they have done (cf. Ps. 62:12; Eccl. 11:9; Jer. 17:10; Ezek. 33:20; Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23). Romans 2:5 says of stubborn people, “you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath” (NIV). Just as godly people by their good works store up treasure for the life to come, wicked people store up wrath for themselves.

It is important to realize that although many Bible teachers use this parable to teach that there is everlasting torment for the unsaved, the parable itself never says that. Nowhere in the parable is it stated or implied that the rich man’s torment will go on forever. The parable simply portrays him being in torment, and a period of torment for the unsaved is expected, based on the Scripture. However, from the scope of Scripture, we learn that the unsaved in the Lake of Fire eventually die and are consumed.

People who assert that the record about Lazarus is factual and not a parable argue that Jesus did not say it was a parable and furthermore, no other parable contains a proper name. While it is true that Jesus did not say he was speaking a parable, it is also true that many parables start without Jesus saying he is speaking a parable. A few examples from Matthew include the parable of the Workers in the Field (Matt. 20:1-16), the Two Sons (Matt. 21:28-31), the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), and the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30; this is a different parable from the parable of the Minas in Luke 19:11-27 which is specifically said to be a parable).

In answer to the assertion that no parable contains a proper name, we must realize that there is no “rule of parables” that says a parable cannot have a proper name. Furthermore, it is not true that parables do not contain proper names. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan mentions both Jerusalem and Jericho. While these are not names of people, they are proper names. Also, it is generally acknowledged that Ezekiel 23 is an allegory or parable about Israel and it contains the proper names “Oholah” (“my tent”) and “Oholibah” (“my tent is in her”). In Ezekiel, Oholah and Oholibah are names assigned by God to Samaria (Israel) and to Judah to make the point that He had been personally involved with them, and similarly, in Luke 16, it is likely that Jesus used the name “Lazarus” (“whom God has helped”) to show that no one will be saved and be in Paradise without God’s help. So it is not actually true that no parable in the Bible contains proper names, and many of them contain very specific other details, such as amounts of money or goods, or times of the day.

There are a large number of reasons to believe that this record of Lazarus and the rich man is a parable. For example, very solid evidence that Luke 16:19-31 is a parable comes from paying attention to the fact that this parable opens in the same way many other parables in Luke open: “there was a certain rich man.” Many of Jesus’ parables in Luke open with “a certain man,” but none of his other teachings open that way; only his parables do. For example, the Parable of the Good Samaritan opens with, “A certain man” (Luke 10:30, YLT). The Parable of the Rich Fool opens with, “Of a certain rich man” (Luke 12:16 YLT). The Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree opens with “A certain one” (Luke 13:6, YLT). The Parable of the Great Supper opens with “A certain man” (Luke 14:16, YLT). The parable of the Prodigal Son opens with, “A certain man” (Luke 15:11). In Luke 16, the Parable of the Shrewd Manager opens with, “A certain man was rich” (Luke 16:1, YLT). Following immediately after the Parable of the Shrewd Manager is the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, and it opens the same way the Parable of the Shrewd Manager does, but starts with the word “and,” marking the continuation of Jesus’ thought and teaching. It opens, “And a certain man was rich” (Luke 16:19, YLT). Going through all the different teachings of Jesus in Luke shows us that when he started speaking and used the phrase, “a certain man” or “a certain one,” he was speaking a parable.

Another reason to understand what Jesus said about Lazarus and the rich man as a parable is that, as was already pointed out, the scope of Scripture reveals that once a person dies, he is dead in every way—body and soul—until he is raised at one of the Judgments. No one is alive in heaven (or Paradise) or hell immediately after they die. Of course, someone reading this parable and thinking it is literal would take the position that this parable proves that theology false, but every text of Scripture must fit into the scope of the rest of Scripture. Scripture teaches via many clear verses that dead people are dead and in the grave, not alive in heaven or hell. For example, Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NIV84) says, “…for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.” Yet the rich man and Lazarus had knowledge and wisdom despite the fact that they were “dead.” Luke 16 and Ecclesiastes 9 cannot contradict one another, because they are both God’s Word and, as we have said, there are many other clear verses in the Bible that, like Ecclesiastes, teach that when a person dies, he is dead in every way until he is raised.

What happens to dead people is that they will be raised in one of the resurrections (dead Christians will be raised in the Rapture). Dead people who are resurrected in the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5-6), also called the “Resurrection of the Righteous” (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), and “the resurrection of life” (John 5:29), will live forever with Jesus. Dead people who are resurrected in the second resurrection, the Resurrection of the unrighteous (Acts 24:15), and who are judged unworthy of everlasting life will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. The Lake of Fire is the second death (Rev. 20:14) and people who are thrown into it will die and their bodies will be totally consumed.

Another reason to view this record as a parable is that it is set with four other parables, and it flows well with them. Still another reason is that the information in this parable was not the kind of factual information that Jesus could have known. How could Jesus have known about a conversation that was going on between two dead people? The traditional answer is that Jesus was God so he knew everything, or he could have known it by revelation. However, Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, and if they thought he was recounting to them an actual incident of a man who had brothers living among them, and that somehow Jesus knew who had gone to Paradise and who had gone to Gehenna, and furthermore, he knew what these dead people were saying to each other, they would have thought he was insane or had demons, and he would have had no credibility with them whatsoever. In contrast, by presenting his teaching as a parable with a valid point, he had the opportunity to make a big impact on the Pharisees, who already believed the basic premises in the parable.

Another reason to believe that the record is a parable is that it seems inconceivable that saved people could enjoy everlasting life if they were hearing the cries and pleas of people in torment. Could it really be that right now, today, people in everlasting torment are begging people in Paradise for water but are being ignored? And could it be that saved people who were merciful and loving throughout their earthly life and took care of the poor, wretched, and needy, are in their perfected state more hard-hearted than they were in their sinful earthly state? While it is true that God is a God of justice, it seems hardly possible that the everlasting joy that is promised to those who are saved could include purposely ignoring tormented people crying out for help and relief, especially since, according to orthodox teaching, those cries of pain go on for eternity. It fits the scope of Scripture and makes much more sense that this is a parable and Jesus was speaking it to the Pharisees who loved their money and believed in a destiny similar to that which Jesus portrayed in the parable.

Another reason to believe that the record is a parable is that for it to be literal, it would have to be available for people living in heaven to go to earth and warn the people on earth about the future judgment, which is what the rich man asked Lazarus to do (Luke 16:27-28). It is inconceivable that people in heaven can come to earth and warn the living about the reality of hell. Many dead Christians tried their best to warn their families while they were alive; would they care any less for their families once they got to heaven? If dead people in heaven could do what the rich man asked Abraham to have Lazarus do, the world would be full of dead people making appearances and trying to win the unsaved. This point alone should show us that the record is a parable.

Still another reason that supports the record being a parable is that if the rich man really was living in torment in hell, and he could speak to Abraham, would he really only ask for Abraham to send Lazarus with a finger-dip of water to “cool his tongue” (Luke 16:23-24)? Would a drop or two of water really help? If he could talk to Abraham, wouldn’t he ask for more than that, or at least more than just the smallest sip of water? Logical inconsistencies such as that reveal that the record is a parable.

Not only is the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus a parable, but it was also quite possibly one that Jesus used because the religious leaders were already familiar with it. Karel Hanhart did his doctoral dissertation on the parable, and his research uncovered some seven different versions of the parable that were around at the time of the New Testament. Jesus only had to modify his version of the parable somewhat to make it fit the points he was trying to make.[[118]](#footnote-25171)

A large number of conservative and orthodox biblical scholars believe that the record of Lazarus and the rich man is a parable. This list is not exhaustive, but the commentators represent many different theological backgrounds and denominations. Bibles and Study Bibles include: *The Catholic Study Bible* edited by D. Senior and J. Collins; *The Companion Bible* by E. W. Bullinger; *The ESV Study Bible* by Crossway Bibles in Wheaton Illinois; *The MacArthur Study Bible* edited by John MacArthur; *The NIV Study Bible* edited by K. Barker.

Some Bible dictionaries that recognize the record as a parable are: *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley; *Holman Bible Dictionary* edited by Trent Butler; *Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible* edited by H. B. Hackett; *A Dictionary of the Bible* edited by James Hastings; and the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* edited by Watson Mills.

Some commentaries that recognize the record as a parable are: The New International Commentary on the New Testament: *The Gospel of Luke* by Norval Geldenhuys; *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* by William Hendriksen; *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown; *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* by R. C. H. Lenski; *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* by John Lightfoot; *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* by Matthew Henry; The International Critical Commentary: *Luke* by Alfred Plummer; *Word Pictures in the New Testament* by A. T. Robertson.

Some of the other specialty books that recognize the record as a parable include: *The Greek Testament* by Henry Alford; *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* edited by Cross and Livingstone; *The Fire that Consumes* by Edward Fudge; *All the Parables of the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer; *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* by W. R. Nicoll; *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* by R. C. Trench; and *The Parables of Jesus in the Light of the Old Testament* by Claus Westermann.

Many of the authors listed above believe in the everlasting torment of the unsaved, so the fact that they consider Luke 16:19-31 to be a parable is important support for its being a parable. Many unsaved people will spend time in torment in the Lake of Fire as retribution for their sins. That point is well made in the parable. This wonderful parable makes many good points, not the least of which is that we need to take our lives seriously. Our life is a gift to us, and God holds us responsible for living in a way that brings glory to Him. If we are disobedient or rebellious, and squander the life He has given us, there will be serious consequences.

[For more on the fact that dead people are dead in every way, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.” For more on Sheol, the state of being dead, see Word Study: “Hades.” For more on people not “burning in hell” forever, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire,” and commentary on Matt. 5:22, “Gehenna.” For more on the Rapture and the resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15. For a much longer treatment on the state of the dead, see the book, *Is There Death After Life?* by Graeser, Lynn, Schoenheit.]

Luk 16:23

**“the grave.”** See Word Study: “Hades.”

Luk 16:31

**“from among the dead.”**[[119]](#footnote-26033) See commentary on Romans 4:24.

**“they will not be persuaded if one rises from among the dead.”** Although this statement is couched in a parable (see commentary on Luke 16:19), it is also very literally true, and is prophetic of the situation through history. The word “persuaded” is translated from the Greek word *peithō* (#3982 πείθω), and its meanings include “persuade,” “move or induce one to do something,” and “to induce to believe.” Most English versions have “persuaded,” “convinced,” “believe,” or “moved.” Sadly, most people when speaking about Jesus’ resurrection from the dead do not believe it, even though there is overwhelming evidence that Jesus was a real person and very good evidence that he was raised from the dead.

**Luke Chapter 17**

Luk 17:2

**“millstone.”** Here in Luke, the text just says “millstone,” whereas in Matthew 18:6 and Mark 9:42, it is specified as a millstone turned by a donkey; a large commercial millstone.

**“hung around his neck.”** For information on millstones, see commentary on Luke 17:35.

Luk 17:6

**“trust as a grain of mustard seed.”** A mustard seed looks small to the world, but it has total trust that it can do what God designed it to do, and we, too, should have total trust that we can do what God has called us to do. Some versions, such as the HCSB, NIV, and NRSV, add to the Greek text a reference to size (for example, the NIV says “as small as a mustard seed…”), and this reverses the meaning of the parable and makes it nonsense. Small faith will not get us much, but total faith can move mountains. The mustard seed may be small, but it has total trust that it will turn out to be the big plant God intended it to be.

[For more information on the mustard seed and having faith like a mustard seed, see commentaries on Matt. 13:32 and 17:20.]

Luk 17:8

**“and tie *your robe* up.”** The robe, the outermost garment worn to keep people warm and protected from the weather, was long; so when people worked, they drew it up and tied it with a belt so they could move faster. If a woman is wearing a long dress and needs to hurry somewhere or step up or down, she will often draw it up with her hand to get the same effect of easy movement. In this case, the master wanted the slave to serve him and realized it would take a lot of work and going back and forth, so he told the slave to tie up his robe.

Luk 17:9

**“Does he thank the servant.”** The cultural answer to the question is “No, he would not.” The master would not thank the servant (or slave) for doing what he was told to do. The point Christ is making is that when believers do the will of God, they should not get all puffed up and self-righteous about it, as if they had done some great thing. Believers should expect themselves and others to do the will of God, and when it is done, to maintain a humble and thankful attitude about it.

Luk 17:11

**“on his way to Jerusalem.”** This makes it seem like Jesus is traveling south to Jerusalem, but actually, he is traveling north. Between verse 10 and this verse (11), Jesus went to Bethany and healed Lazarus (John 11). While he was there, the religious leaders made plans to kill him (John 11:53), so he left and traveled north. He went to the city of Ephraim (John 11:54), which is about 13 miles (21 km) NNE of Jerusalem. The Bible does not say how long he stayed in Ephraim, but it was from there he went on this final itinerary. The fact that this verse places him at the border between Samaria and Galilee means that he had already traveled north from Ephraim through Samaria. That he was already through Samaria and in Galilee is clear in the following verses, because one of the ten lepers that were healed was a Samaritan (Luke 17:16). If Jesus was still in Samaria, we would expect all, or most, of the lepers to be Samaritans, but the fact that only one of them was shows us that Jesus was now in Galilee. From Galilee, he traveled across the Jordan River to the territory known as Perea. Both Matthew 19:1 and Mark 10:1 say that Jesus was in the area of Judea beyond the Jordan. Although Perea was not technically part of Judea, the territory ruled by Herod the Great had included both regions, and so Perea became commonly called a part of Judea. Thus, for Jesus to come to Jericho (Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35), he had to cross the Jordan River again. He arrived in Bethany six days before Passover (John 12:1, 2).

**“*the border*.”** The Greek text can be confusing here if the reader does not have a knowledge of the geography of Palestine at the time of Jesus. The Greek text reads that Jesus passed through the “midst” of Galilee and Samaria. That makes it sound like Jesus walked south through both areas. However, Galilee was the area to the north, and Samaria was the area to the south, and in the midst of them was the border between them, sort of like in a figure 8, the place in the midst of the upper and lower circle is also the border between the two circles.

Luk 17:19

**“Your trust has made you whole.”** All ten of the men were healed of their skin disease, but only this one expressed genuine thankfulness to God for it, and openly praised God. That showed his humility and thankfulness and revealed his personal maturity on many levels; mental, emotional, and spiritual. Many ungodly and selfish people get physically healed, but only the truly godly people are thankful and humble about it, and those people are “whole” in that they are on the path to everlasting life.

Luk 17:20

**“The Kingdom of God does not come accompanied with observation.”** The Kingdom of God does not come as a spectacle that people will sit by and watch. It is not at all a kingdom that will come in that way.

Luk 17:21

**“behold.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 17:22

**“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.”** Jesus was teaching his disciples about the terrible times ahead. During those difficult times, disciples would long for even a temporary rest, even just one day from the “days of the Son of man” (i.e., one of the days in the Millennial Kingdom, not just one of the happier days when Jesus walked the earth with them), but there would not be any rest. Thus, this teaching is similar to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 24:4-25. The tribulation will be a terrible time for people on earth.

Luk 17:26

**“days of Noah.”** For an explanation of why Jesus used the illustration of Noah, see commentary on Matthew 24:40. Noah’s ark and the Flood are described in Genesis 6-7.

Luk 17:28

**“days of Lot.”** For an explanation of why Jesus used the illustration of Lot and Sodom, see commentary on Matthew 24:40. The record of the destruction of Sodom is in Genesis 18:20-19:29.

Luk 17:31

**“not go down.”** People could generally travel from roof to roof, so Jesus said to not go back into the house. See commentary on Matthew 24:17.

Luk 17:33

**“life.”** See commentary on Matthew 16:25.

Luk 17:35

**“There will be two *women* together grinding *grain*.”** A biblical custom. One of the ways to grind grain was with a grinding mill of a lower millstone and an upper millstone. These stone wheels were mostly 18-24 inches in diameter and 2-4 inches thick. A hole in the center of each stone allowed a stick to pass through them so the top one would stay on the bottom one while they turned. Then another hole was put into the top one, and a stick inserted as a handle. The women would sit on opposite sides of the stone, each taking a grip on the handle. In this manner, the two women could put grain between the stones, and then turn them to grind it, each pulling and pushing opposite the other to help each other. The big hole in the middle made carrying the stone from place to place easier, and also, a rope could be run through it and tied around things, such as a person’s neck in order to drown him (cf. Luke 17:2).

Luk 17:36

This verse, as it appears in some manuscripts of the Western Text, and thus got into the KJV, does not appear in the oldest and best Greek manuscripts, but was almost certainly added here to harmonize with Matthew 24:40.

**Luke Chapter 18**

Luk 18:3

**“kept coming to him.”** In the ancient Near East, the officials were appointed by the King or ruler and were answerable to him, not to the public. In fact, often they were related in some way to the ruler. One of the reasons people would give their daughters to a man like Solomon, who had 1,000 wives and concubines, was so they could gain political appointments. The judges and magistrates, then, were not voted in and could not be voted out, so many of them felt no compulsion to be helpful. The usual way to get their assistance was that they could be threatened by someone with equally powerful contacts, or they could be bribed or offered some benefit for giving their assistance. Alas, the only resort of the poor was to become such a bother that eventually the judge might actually be helpful.

In 1853, the oriental scholar Richard Burton made a secret pilgrimage to Mecca (at that time, any Western Christian discovered there would shortly be killed). One thing he needed to start his journey was a certain passport. Burton went to the gate of the building of the Governor of Alexandria, where he sat without being helped for over three hours until someone finally bothered to tell him he was in the wrong place.

The next day, he went to the Palace. He writes:

The first person I addressed was a Kawwas, or police officer, who, coiled up comfortably in a bit of shade fitting his person like a robe, was in full enjoyment of the Asiatic “Kayf” [a state of relaxation]. Having presented the consular certificate and briefly stated the nature of my business, I ventured to inquire what was the right course to pursue for a visa.

…“Don’t know,” growled the man of authority, without moving anything but the quantity of tongue absolutely necessary for articulation.

Now there are three ways of treating Asiatic officials,—by bribe, by bullying, or by bothering them with a dogged perseverance into attending to you and your concerns. The latter is the peculiar province of the poor. Moreover, this time I resolved, for other reasons, to be patient. I repeated my question in almost the same words. Ruh!, “Be off,” was what I obtained for a reply. But this time the questioned went so far as to open his eyes. Still I stood twirling the paper in my hands, and looking very humble and very persevering, till a loud, “Ruh ya kalb,” “Go, O dog.”[[120]](#footnote-31513)

At that point Burton left, fearing that the next thing would be a lash from the hippopotamus hide whip the policeman had. Burton goes on to say, “I tried a dozen other promiscuous sources of information,— policemen, grooms, scribes, donkey-boys, and idlers in general,” but he got no help. Finally, his patience wore out and he bribed a soldier with some tobacco and money, and met with success.

Thus, the parable that Jesus told about the poor woman whose only recourse to get help was to pester the judge was something his audience was all too familiar with. Without explaining all the reasons why we on earth have to pray and pray to get success, which is not due to God’s not caring but due to the intensity of the spiritual battle raging in the universe, Jesus effectively made the point that if we want to get things from God, we have to persevere and pray until we get them.

Luk 18:9

**“treated…with contempt.”** From *exoutheneō* (#1848 ἐξουθενέω). See commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:20.

Luk 18:11

**“took a stand.”** Robertson writes: “Stood (*statheis*). First aorist passive participle of *histemi*. Struck an attitude ostentatiously where he could be seen. Standing was the common Jewish posture in prayer (Matt. 6:5; Mark 11:25).”[[121]](#footnote-29967) Lenski writes, “‘He took a stand right up front, next to the stone balustrade which divided the priest’s court from that of the men.”[[122]](#footnote-31507)

**“went on praying these things.”** The imperfect tense tells us that he, like many other Pharisees, made long prayers.

**“for himself.”** The Greek is *pros heautou* (πρός ἑαυτοῦ). Lenski writes: “The phrase is to be construed with the verb (not with the participle) and means that he prayed these things “for himself,” “in favor of himself,” using the *pros* of direction, which may be either hostile (‘against’) or friendly or neutral; here it is the second.”[[123]](#footnote-30486) The Pharisee prayed on his own behalf, which is not wrong if that is only a part of one’s prayer life and it is done with the right heart. However, the picture here is an ostentatious Pharisee who stands right up front where everyone will see him, keeps on praying on his own behalf, and even thanks God that he is not like other men, whom, instead of helping or blessing, he looks down upon.

Luk 18:12

**“I fast twice in the week.”** The Pharisees fasted twice a week, on Monday and Thursday.

[For more on fasting, see commentary on Matt. 9:14.]

Luk 18:15

**“so that he could lay his hands on them.”** It was common in the culture that people would bring their children to the rabbis, and the rabbis would put their hands on the children and bless them. Note that in this case, Jesus was not asking to bless the children, this is what the parents wanted.

Luk 18:17

**“like a little child.”** That means with the same attitude a child would have: humility, openness, innocence, excitement, and joy. Expecting to receive and live in harmony, not to control or be someone important.

Luk 18:18

**“And a certain ruler asked him​.”** The record of the rich young ruler is in Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22, and Luke 18:18-23. It is Luke who tells us that the man was a ruler.

**“Good teacher.”** For an explanation of Jesus’ answer to the rich young ruler, see commentaries on Mark 10:18 and Matthew 19:16.

**“life in the age *to come*.”** This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.

[See Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

Luk 18:19

**“No one is good except God alone.”** Jesus was good, so to understand more about why Jesus would say that, see commentary on Mark 10:18.

Luk 18:25

**“Indeed.”** The Greek conjunction *gar* (#1063 γάρ) usually expresses a reason and is translated “for.” But occasionally it expresses a continuation of the thought and is sometimes then referred to as a “confirmatory *gar*,” and can be translated, “indeed,” “yes,” etc. Here the camel reference is elucidating the point Jesus just made about the difficulty of getting into the Kingdom of God.

**“camel.”** There has been much discussion about this verse. The Greek and Aramaic texts read “camel,” and that does not seem too extreme given the fact that Jesus, and Orientals from that era in general, were fond of hyperbole (cf. Luke 6:41, a person having a “log” in his eye). Origen referred to a reading that said “rope,” but it has little support. In the fifteenth century AD, it was postulated that the “needle’s eye” was a small gate that the camel had to crawl through, but that view has now mostly lost scholarly support. For one thing, historically, the explanation was developed centuries after the biblical era, and also there is no epigraphical or archaeological support that there was any such practice in biblical times of trying to get a camel through a small door. As the “gnat” in Matthew 23:24 is a real hyperbole, so also is the camel.

**“the eye of a needle.”** The “eye” of a needle is the hole that the thread goes through, the other end that is sharp is referred to as the “point” of the needle.

Luk 18:28

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention (see commentary on Matthew 1:20). Here it is not spoken with great force, but to remind Jesus of the sacrifices the apostles had made. In this context, the meaning is close to “Look at what we have done. We have left everything and followed you.”

Luk 18:30

**“and in the age to come—everlasting life.”** The “age” is the new Messianic Age that will come in the future; Christ’s Millennial Kingdom.

[For more on Christ’s Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 1: Life in the Age to Come.”]

Luk 18:31

**“And he said to them.”** This record of Jesus telling the twelve apostles that he would be arrested and killed is in Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34, and Luke 18:31-34.

**“Pay attention!”** The Greek word translated “pay attention” is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 18:34

**“this saying was hidden from them.”** There was much about the mission and ministry of the Messiah that was hidden in God until after it had been accomplished (cf. Isa. 49:2).

**“they did not comprehend the things that he said.”** When the disciples realized that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:13-17; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21), he began to tell them that he must suffer, die, and be raised from the dead. Despite his clear teaching about it, however, they did not understand what he meant.

Jesus taught about his suffering, death, and resurrection many times. He taught about it right after the disciples recognized him as the Christ (Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31, 32; Luke 9:22). Then he taught about it again immediately after the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:9-12; Mark 9:9-13); then again when he was in Galilee shortly after the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:22, 23; Mark 9:31, 32; Luke 9:43-45), then again at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 8:21, 28); then again while he was going up to Jerusalem for the Passover, at which time he would be killed (Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34); and then again when he was in Jerusalem for the Passover (Matt. 26:2; cf. John 12:7).

The fact that the disciples never understood what Jesus meant, even though he clearly taught that he would suffer, die, and be raised from the dead, gives us some very important insights. For one thing, it shows us how the Jews at the time of Jesus viewed their Messiah, and it also shows us that once someone has a firmly embedded preconceived idea about what the Bible says, that person can look at very straightforward verses and misunderstand them.

As to what the Messiah would do when he came, just as the Jews never expected a virgin birth (Mary was surprised by what the angel told her, and see commentary on Luke 1:34), they never expected their Messiah to suffer and die. There are many Scriptures in the Old Testament that speak of the coming of Christ and God’s vengeance on the wicked as if they were going to happen at the same time (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 61:1-3; Mic. 5:2; Zech. 9:9-10; Mal. 3:1-3; 4:1-3). The common teaching at the time of Christ was that there were two great ages: the present evil age (Gal. 1:4), and the wonderful Messianic Age to come. Furthermore, it was believed that it was during the time of the Messiah when this Evil Age would end and then the Messianic Age would start. In other words, when the Messiah came, he would personally put an end to the present evil age and start the new Messianic Age. This teaching was so embedded in the minds of the people of the time, which included the apostles, that they could not understand Jesus’ teaching that he would suffer and die. That is why Peter, the first time he heard Jesus teach that he was going to suffer and die, said, “This will never, ever happen to you” (Matt. 16:22). It also explains why the people were confused when Jesus taught that he would be “lifted up from the earth,” that is crucified (John 12:32-34), even though Scripture says he was plainly telling them how he would die (John 12:33).

The death of the Messiah was so contrary to what the disciples thought that even though Jesus said it plainly over and over, they did not understand it until they saw him personally after his resurrection (this should also give us some insight into why it was so difficult to make converts—trying to get the Jews to believe in a crucified-then-resurrected Messiah required the signs, miracles, and wonders prevalent in the early years of the Church!).

Even after his death and resurrection, upon seeing the empty tomb, the disciples did not understand what had happened (John 20:9). It took Jesus personally appearing to many different people for the disciples to believe he had been raised from the dead. Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:16), then to the women who came to the tomb (Matt. 28:9), then to Peter (this appearing is not recorded in Scripture; we are only told that it happened; Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5); then to the two men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:31), then to the disciples as a group (Luke 24:36ff). Even with all this evidence, Thomas, who was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared, still did not believe until he had personally seen the resurrected Lord (John 20:26-28). Ultimately, it took both understanding the Scriptures and personally seeing the resurrected Christ to fully confirm their belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead (Luke 24:45; John 2:22).

And just as they were not able to understand the death and resurrection of Jesus before it happened, they did not understand what he was saying to them when he spoke of his ascension into heaven (John 14:5; 16:17-19). Even after his death and resurrection, the disciples did not understand the ascension. Very close to his ascension, the disciples asked him if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). They understood the prophecies of the restored earth ruled by the Messiah and thought that he would use his spiritual power to conquer Jerusalem and the world. They did not realize Jesus had to ascend into heaven. Jesus’ ministry from heaven became clear to them over time. When the ascension happened, the apostles kept looking into heaven, as if he would come right back down. They had to be told by two angels that suddenly appeared that he would come back down in the future, something that became much more clear year after year as the books of the New Testament were written and Jesus did not come back and establish his kingdom.

Many people think the Old Testament has many Scriptures that say that the Messiah will be killed and then raised from the dead, but that is a misconception. There are only a few Scriptures that indicate that the Messiah would die. For example, Psalm 22:15 and Daniel 9:26 can be read that way, but those two verses can also be understood to not be about the Messiah, or they can be understood in a way that the Messiah does not actually die. There is no indication from the ancient texts that the Jews thought of these verses as indicating the Messiah would die.

Isaiah 53:8-10 is much clearer, but the Jewish community did not apply those verses to the Messiah, as we clearly see from the New Testament records. We do know from history that there was a small group of rabbis that recognized that Isaiah 53:8-10 was about a Messiah, but instead of saying that “the” Messiah would have two comings, i.e., that he would come, be killed, and come back again, they taught that there were going to be two different Messiahs. The first one they called “Messiah ben Joseph” because they thought he would come from the tribe of Ephraim, a son of Joseph, and they thought he would die. The second one they referred to as “Messiah ben David,” and according to their teaching, he would be the Messiah who would conquer and rule the world. Thus, although some rabbis did see the death of a Messiah in Isaiah 53, it did not occur to them he would have two different comings. These things can be discovered from a search of the historical documents on the subject.

Luk 18:35

**“as he drew near to Jericho.”** This record occurs in Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43. The timing of the event in Matthew and Mark seems to contradict Luke 18:35-39, but they actually do not.

Jericho is a city with a long and important history and it has actually changed location through the years. Both the city centers of Old Testament Jericho and New Testament Jericho are now abandoned sites. Old Testament Jericho was a well-fortified Canaanite city when Joshua arrived about 1414 BC, and although the city had abundant water after Elisha healed the spring there (2 Kings 2:19-22), the main city with its defensive wall was abandoned by New Testament times. Herod the Great built New Testament Jericho about 1.5 miles south and slightly west of the Old Testament site of Jericho. Herod located his winter palace at Jericho and made it the winter capital of Israel. Herod built New Testament Jericho on both sides of the Wadi Kelt, and chose that site because of the water the Wadi Kelt supplied, making it less important to be right next to Elisha’s Spring. The modern city of Jericho is between Old and New Testament Jericho, and somewhat to the east, and so the three cities of Jericho form a triangle, with Old Testament Jericho being to the north, New Testament Jericho being to the south, and today’s modern Jericho being to the east, about halfway between the other two, but stretching west and intertwining with especially Old Testament Jericho. Actually, because there was only one spring—the one Elisha healed (2 Kings 2:19-22)—the extended housing area of all three cities of Jericho bled over to some degree into the area of the spring (which is right next to Old Testament Jericho).

The fact that there is an Old Testament Jericho and a New Testament Jericho could be the reason that Matthew and Mark seem to contradict Luke when it came to the healing of the blind men. The circumstances of the healings are so similar that it is highly unlikely that there were two almost identical healings, one as Jesus entered Jericho (Luke 18:35) and one as he left Jericho (Matt. 20:29 and Mark 10:46).

Scholars have tried to solve the puzzle of the apparent contradiction that Matthew and Mark have with Luke, but none have done so satisfactorily, mostly because they do not recognize that two different cities are involved. A natural solution to the apparent contradiction is that Matthew and Mark were Jewish and thus would identify more with “Jericho” being the Old Testament city of Jericho, which was the city of their heritage and right next to the spring that the great prophet Elisha healed, while Luke, being a Greek and not from the area, would have identified “Jericho” with the current city and location of the government there, and not thought of Jericho in terms of the abandoned Old Testament site. Also, Matthew was with Jesus as they passed by Old Testament Jericho and then healed the men. Matthew’s love of Israel would surely have risen up as they passed that notable site, in contrast to then going on to New Testament Jericho, for which he would have had no love, especially after being a tax collector and then leaving that corrupt system.

Since Old Testament Jericho was to the north of New Testament Jericho and Jesus was coming from the north and heading south then west to Jerusalem, Jesus would have had to have gone through the outskirts of Old Testament Jericho (thus “leaving Jericho”) and then, on his way forward on the “Jericho Road” leading to Jerusalem, would have walked toward New Testament Jericho, and thus healed the men as he was drawing close to New Testament Jericho. There is little doubt that the blind men who needed healing had positioned themselves along the road between the two cities of Jericho to maximize their chances of getting alms so they could support themselves. The fact that Jesus walked by and afforded them a chance to be healed would have been an unexpected blessing and the fact that they were not going to let that opportunity escape them explains their persistence in trying to get Jesus’ attention (Matt. 20:30-31; Mark 10:47-48; Luke 18:35-39).

Luk 18:38

**“Son of David.”** A messianic title. It is not known how this man came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but he did. God reveals the truth to people who are humble and hungry for truth (see commentary on Matt. 1:1).

Luk 18:39

**“but he cried out all the more.”** There are many lessons that we learn from Scripture about things that help us get what we want in life. One of them is being doggedly determined, and this is an example of it. You would think that the crowd would want to help a blind man see, but, alas, often people do not have the best interest of others at heart. In this case, the crowd likely had some “religious reason” for supposedly protecting the sanctity of Jesus, and not letting him be disturbed from his goal of reaching Jerusalem. Not deterred by the false religious scruples of the crowd, the blind man knew what he wanted and knew what it took to get his petition to Jesus—by yelling loud enough so Jesus could hear him—and he yelled until he was heard, at which point he could bring his petition directly to Jesus, who in typical loving and compassionate form, saw the man’s trust and determination and healed him. People who want Jesus’ help today should do as this blind man did and ignore those who try to stifle believing or acting on what the Bible says, and instead press forward to belief and obedience.

Luk 18:41

**“Lord, I want to regain my sight!”** See commentary on Mark 10:51.

**Luke Chapter 19**

Luk 19:2

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“a man called by the name of Zacchaeus.”** The name “Zacchaeus” means “pure, innocent.” We wonder if this was his given name or if the believers gave him this name after his encounter with Jesus.

It is not surprising that a chief tax collector would be at Jericho. Jericho was at the crossroads of both major east-west and north-south trade routes, and also controlled trade in balsam and dates that were grown in the area, so it was a very desirable place and had a lucrative tax business. Zacchaeus was a “chief tax collector,” that is, a tax collector who managed other tax collectors under him, so he made money from the tax collectors under him.

Luk 19:4

**“climbed up into a sycamore tree.”** Far from being aloof and seemingly disinterested, like so many of the religious leaders were, this tax collector set aside his dignity and, by climbing the tree, openly showed his great interest in seeing Jesus.

Luk 19:5

**“he looked up and said to him.”** Zacchaeus had climbed up in the tree to see Jesus, but since Jesus was almost always surrounded by a crowd, there were surely many times that people climbed up into trees to see him. That Jesus stopped and talked to Zacchaeus and invited himself to stay at Zacchaeus’ house shows that Jesus walked by revelation and specifically knew to stop and talk to Zacchaeus. Furthermore, that Zacchaeus was excited about it even though he was a chief tax collector shows how God had worked beforehand to prepare Zacchaeus’ heart.

No doubt the crowd was surprised that Jesus would stop and talk to the man in the tree, but surely Zacchaeus himself was the most surprised when Jesus invited himself to spend the night in Zacchaeus’ house. In fact, it is likely that the reason Jesus told Zacchaeus “I must stay at your house,” rather than to ask him if he could stay, is that Zacchaeus would not have known quite how to answer in the spur of the moment. But although Zacchaeus was surprised that Jesus was going to stay with him, God had prepared his heart for this encounter, and Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully, not with the doubt, worry, or hesitation that one might expect from a tax collector. No doubt the two of them (and interested guests) talked through the afternoon and into the night, and then continued talking the next morning. It is likely that at some point in the many hours of conversation and discussion, what Zacchaeus knew to do and wanted in his heart to do congealed into a plan of action. He announced that he was going to give half his belongings to the poor and repay any person he had defrauded. Jesus responded by saying that salvation had come to Zacchaeus’ house (Luke 19:9). Jesus could not have said anything more impacting and exciting than that—the promise of everlasting life. Jesus was not insinuating that a person could buy their way into salvation, but that salvation came from trust in God, and what Zacchaeus had determined to do was based on his trust in God.

The record of Zacchaeus is one of the many lessons in the Bible about how to walk by the spirit, that is, by revelation. Jesus received revelation from God about Zacchaeus and his situation, and he knew he was supposed to invite himself to spend the night at Zacchaeus’ house, so he boldly moved forward based on the revelation he received. To follow in Christ’s footsteps, Christians need to learn to discern when they are hearing from the Lord and then walk out boldly on the revelation they receive.

[For more on revelation, see commentary on Gal. 1:12. For more on the manifestations involving revelation or the trust to carry them out, see commentaries on 1 Cor. 12:7, 8, and 12:9.]

**“I must stay at your house.”** Jesus spent the night at Zacchaeus’ house. The trip from Jericho to Jerusalem was over 15 miles (24 km), all uphill, and so he would have started out on the next day. The trip to Jerusalem took place six days before Passover (John 12:1, 2).

Luk 19:7

**“they saw it, they all murmured.”** There was a huge crowd following Jesus, and the fact that they murmured when Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house to eat and spend the night shows that even at this late point in his ministry—the last weeks before he was crucified—they did not understand him or his mission.

The Bible is silent about the apostles at this point. Even they may have been confused as to why Jesus did what he did, but his actions are consistent with his mission to save the lost. Furthermore, the Bible does not tell us where the apostles spent the night. Because Zacchaeus was rich it is possible that he could have housed Jesus and all his apostles, or the apostles could have found housing in Jericho.

Luk 19:8

**“stood *up*.”** There is much detail left out of Luke’s Gospel, but enough is in it to reconstruct what was going on with Zacchaeus and Jesus if standard Eastern customs are understood. In Luke 19:5 Jesus asked Zacchaeus to come down from the tree, and in Luke 19:6 Zacchaeus not only came down from the tree, but he and Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house where Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully. We know that Jesus went into Zacchaeus’ house because in Luke 19:7 the people murmured about Jesus, that he had “gone in” to be a guest of Zacchaeus. The fact that Zacchaeus “received” Jesus tells us a lot because there were common customs that would always be followed when welcoming guests. Servants would wash the feet of the master and guests, and everyone would sit down and begin to talk, and some refreshments would be served. A major meal would come later. Zacchaeus’ heart was already ready to receive the Gospel, and Jesus understood more than anyone the need to speak of things that would lead people to salvation decisions. So at some point, Zacchaeus was compelled by his conscience and heart’s decision to stand up and declare his intention to make amends for past sins and follow the way of God. Jesus read the heart of Zacchaeus and made the statement that must have made Zacchaeus’ heart sing, that salvation had come to his house, that is, that he would have everlasting life (Luke 19:9).

**“See.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“fourfold.”** Zacchaeus was likely thinking of Exodus 22:1, that if a sheep was stolen, the thief would have to restore it fourfold. It is likely that many people paid their taxes with sheep or other animals, and that came into Zacchaeus’ mind when he was thinking of restoring things he had wrongly taken.

Luk 19:9

**“he also is a son of Abraham.”** Instead of speaking directly to Zacchaeus, Jesus spoke about him and his salvation to those who were present.

Luk 19:12

**“A certain nobleman went into a far country.”** This is somewhat similar to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. In the parable of the ten minas here in Luke 19:11-27, each servant was given the same amount, one mina. One servant took his one mina and made ten more minas. Another servant took his one mina and made five more minas. But the wicked servant did not trade or invest his one mina but hid it in the earth and it did not even earn interest. The parable of the talents is different (Matt. 25:14-30). In that parable, one servant was given five talents and made five more talents with them; one servant was given two talents and made two more with them, and one servant hid his talent in the earth and did not invest it. Also, this parable in Luke 19 adds the information about the citizens who reject the nobleman whom later the nobleman commands to be executed.

The “nobleman” in this parable most likely represents God. It is possible that the nobleman represents Christ himself, but given the fact that most of the time when there is a king, landowner, or lord in Christ’s parables, he represents God, that is the most likely case here.

The whole parable is a very accurate overview of the coming of Christ and his kingdom on the earth. The nobleman (God, or God represented by His agent, Jesus Christ), goes into a far country to receive a kingdom. In a broader sense, the far country represents the whole earth, but in a narrower sense, it represents Israel. When the nobleman came, some people accepted him (“his servants”) and were given things to steward in his absence (money; the “minas.” Luke 19:13) But other citizens of the country hated him and rejected him and his reign over them (Luke 19:14). The nobleman went away for a while, and when he came back he paid his servants, rewarding those who had stewarded well what they had been given, and taking away from those who had not stewarded well what they had been given. However, the citizens who had rejected and hated him were brought before him and executed.

The parable reflects the truth that Jesus Christ came and proved in many ways that he was Messiah and Lord. Some people accept him and they serve with varying degrees of sincerity and effort, and some people reject him. When Christ comes again to establish his kingdom on earth, he will reward his servants according to their efforts, and he will kill the wicked (cf. Ps. 2:8-12; Isa. 11:4; 63:1-6; Rev. 20:11-15). In fact, a major reason the next life will be wonderful is that there will be no evil people.

Although the parables in Luke 19 and Matthew 25 are different and were spoken at different times, the major lesson of both parables is the same: we were created by God with a purpose—we were created to do good works, His works (Eph. 2:10)—and people who do not invest their lives to enrich His kingdom are wicked in His sight.

[For more on the “king,” “landowner,” “ruler,” or “man” in Christ’s parables being God, see commentary on Luke 15:11. For more on Christ ruling the earth in the future, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on rewards in Christ’s future kingdom on earth, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.” For more on the Jewish custom of agency and how Jesus could represent God even without that being expressly stated, see commentary on Matt. 8:5.]

Luk 19:13

**“minas.”** The Greek is *mna* (#3414 μνᾶ), which we translate as “mina.” The mina was a Greek monetary unit worth 100 denarii (also 100 drachmae), and a denarius was worth one day’s wage for a fieldworker or soldier, or what we today would roughly call “minimum wage.” If a worker makes $8 an hour or $64 per day, in 100 days he makes $6,400. One hundred days’ work is roughly 1/3 of a year’s working days, so a mina was worth about 1/3 year’s wage for a worker.

Luk 19:20

**“see.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 19:24

This verse demonstrates clearly that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 3:19), and the world does not understand the wisdom of God. The world takes from the rich (often by excessive taxes) and gives to the poor. But the poor have demonstrated their inability to manage what they have, and despite hundreds of years of various welfare programs in different countries and different cultures (from the “grain dole” in the Roman Empire to the welfare system in the United States), the poor almost always stay poor. Furthermore, by taking away from the rich both the building power of their money and their incentive to work hard, the rich are made poorer and the poor are reduced to the point of being almost destitute. Christ demonstrates the wisdom of God and the way economies should work. The poor lose what they have but can work if they wish to survive, and the rich have plenty to use to build an economy that supplies jobs because they have full control of their own money and plenty of incentive for making more.

Luk 19:25

**“Lord, he has ten minas.”** The people in the parable, not the crowd listening to the parable, speak this. The crowds were used to listening to parables and would not have expressed such surprise by something said in a parable, even if it seemed unusual. On the other hand, Jesus knew the parable reflected the reality of what will happen on the Day of Judgment, and that some people will be very surprised at God’s justice, and thus he builds that surprise into the parable. It is both wise and just to give more responsibilities to people who have demonstrated the capacity to well manage what they have. There are some commentators who see this statement as part of the crowd listening to Jesus rather than the crowd in the parable, which is why some versions such as the KJV have the verse in a parenthesis.

Luk 19:26

**“to everyone who has.”** Jesus taught this principle of having and not having five different times. See commentary on Matthew 25:29.

Luk 19:28

**“And when he had said these things, he went on ahead.”** Jesus had spent the night at Zacchaeus’ house in Jericho (Luke 19:5). It was over 15 miles (24 km) from Jericho to Jerusalem, all uphill, so he would have gotten up and gotten a start by late morning, and sometime after he arrived in Bethany at the house of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha (John 12:1, 2), they made him supper.

Luk 19:30

**“colt.”** This “colt” is not a young horse, but a young donkey (Matt. 21:2-5; cf. Zech. 9:9).

Luk 19:31

**“The Lord has need of it.”** Jesus needed it to fulfill the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 as Matthew 21:5 says.

Luk 19:34

**“The Lord has need of it.”** Jesus needed it to fulfill the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 as Matthew 21:5 says.

Luk 19:37

**“as he was drawing near.”** This verse is in contrast with verse 41, which states “when he drew near.” As Jesus left Bethany for Jerusalem, he would be going up the east slope of the Mount of Olives, from which Jerusalem could not be seen. However, “as he was drawing near *Jerusalem*,” at the start of the downward slope of the west side of the Mount of Olives, the first glimpses of Jerusalem would be visible. The full panorama of Jerusalem, including the City of David (south of the Temple Complex), the Temple Complex, and the city of Jerusalem, would not yet be visible (cf. Luke 19:41), because it would have been obscured by houses and perhaps even by part of the Mount of Olives itself. Nevertheless, parts of Jerusalem did start to come into view. Upon seeing Jerusalem, the huge crowd became filled with emotion and began to shout and praise God because of all the miracles they had seen, and because their expectation was that someone who could heal the blind and raise the dead would be able to deliver them from the Romans and usher in the Messianic Kingdom.

**“*Jerusalem*.”** Jerusalem, and what he would accomplish there, had been the object of his travels for months now. Even before the Feast of Tabernacles the year previous, he “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). We must note that this phrase is eschatological, not geographical; it points to the end of his life and what he will accomplish. From a purely historical/geographical point of view, Jesus would go to Jerusalem one more time before he went there at Passover (when he was crucified), and that time was for the Feast of Dedication in the winter (John 10:22). As the months drew closer to his crucifixion, the Word tells us more and more he was going to Jerusalem. Luke 13:22 says Jesus traveled through the cities and villages, heading for Jerusalem. Later, as he headed for Jerusalem, he took the apostles aside and told them he would suffer and die there (Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-33). After leaving Jericho, he made the steep climb up and out of the Great Rift Valley and up the east slope of the Mount of Olives, heading for Jerusalem (Luke 19:28). Now at last he drew near the city. The verse is not simply stating that what he drew near to was the west slope of the Mount of Olives, although the Greek can be translated that way. No, he drew near Jerusalem. How near? He was already at the west slope of the Mount of Olives, on the verge of entering the city. We believe the *Expositor’s Greek New Testament* correctly notes that “Luke is thinking of Jerusalem = when he was nearing the city. The next clause, πρὸς τῇ καταβάσει, is added to define more precisely the point reached = at the descent of the mount.”[[124]](#footnote-20881)

**“the whole crowd of his disciples.”** This huge group of disciples consisted of the crowds who had followed Jesus from Jericho, where Jesus had performed miracles such as healing blind Bartimaeus and his blind companion (Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43) and was greatly swelled by the crowd of people in Jerusalem who heard he was approaching and went out to see and welcome him (John 12:12-18; note that John 12:17-18 mentions two crowds).

Luk 19:41

**“drew near and saw the city.”** Jesus had come up from Jericho and stayed in Bethany (John 12:1-12). Bethany is on the east slope of the Mount of Olives, but houses continue up the slope and cover the top of the mountain. Thus, in verse 37, as the procession reached the top of the Mount of Olives, the whole city of Jerusalem was still not in view. However, the Mount of Olives is steep, and as Jesus and the crowd descended the Mount of Olives and came closer to Jerusalem, the whole city became visible before them. Upon seeing it, Jesus became overcome with emotion and burst into tears.

**“burst into tears.”** The Greek verb is *klaiō* (#2799 κλαίω, pronounced klī-ō), a word that refers to the expression of deep emotion, strong inner emotions, and as such it can refer to crying, weeping, mourning, wailing, or lamenting over someone or something. Any exact meaning must be determined from the context, and many times *klaiō* expresses a mix of emotions that accompany strong feelings or loss. *Klaiō* is used of crying from pain and grief. In this verse, the verb is an ingressive aorist, which means the crying happened suddenly: “burst into tears.”[[125]](#footnote-17691) Lenski writes, “burst into sobs.”[[126]](#footnote-24892) Robertson notes that Jesus probably cried audibly,[[127]](#footnote-11989) while Vincent[[128]](#footnote-28426) asserts Jesus did weep out loud. H. A. W. Meyer writes, “Observe, further, the audible weeping of Jesus at the view of Jerusalem, not the silent δακρύω [weeping], as at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:35).”[[129]](#footnote-32341)

It is a normal human emotion that when we are faced with difficult circumstances, such as a death or separation, we can control our emotions much of the time, but are sometimes overcome with a wave of grief or sadness that causes us to burst into tears. That is what happened to Jesus. He knew the Jews in Jerusalem rejected him, and he knew that most of the people in the crowd that surrounded him, although they were saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord,” in their hearts, they did not really want the Messiah that he was. They wanted political deliverance; they wanted the peace of the Messianic Kingdom; they wanted an easy life; they did not want to repent and change themselves. That is why, when Jesus was arrested and did not give the people what they wanted, they quickly changed what they were shouting, and shouted, “Crucify him!” (Mark 15:11-14). Jesus knew all this already and had been dealing with it emotionally. However, upon getting a clear view of Jerusalem he was overcome by a wave of emotion and burst into audible crying, sobbing over the wasted lives, the pride and selfishness, the unbelief, and the untapped potential of the people, as well as over the destruction he foresaw of the people and city that he loved. (for his more silent crying, see commentary on John 11:35).

Jesus wept when he saw the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives because he knew they rejected him, which would mean his death and Jerusalem’s doom. About 1,000 years before, King David wept on the Mount of Olives as he climbed it to leave Jerusalem in the hands of his ungodly son Absalom (2 Sam. 15:30).

Luk 19:42

**“would bring.”** The Greek preposition *pros* means “to” or “toward,” and the idea is the things that would lead to or would bring peace. The hardness of Jerusalem and its leaders no doubt fueled Jesus’ emotion, but that was exacerbated by the people around him shouting, “Blessed is the King....” He knew that they wanted a Messiah, yes, but the kind they wanted was not the kind he was. They wanted political deliverance, wealth, and health, and would not settle for less. Thus, it was only a few days later when they realized Jesus would not bring them what they wanted, they shouted, “Crucify him” (Luke 23:21).

**“peace...”** Jesus, overcome with emotion or seeing no point to it, did not finish his sentence. When a person stops speaking in the middle of a sentence due to emotion or for effect, it is the figure of speech, aposiopesis, or “sudden silence.”[[130]](#footnote-12164) The figure is common in languages, and thus in English. For example, two children are in the back seat of a car fighting and the frustrated driver says, “If I have to pull over and stop this car…! The threat is unfinished letting the imagination of the children finish the sentence in their minds, thinking of how terrible it will be if the driver stops the car.

There are some wonderful examples of aposiopesis in the Bible. For example, after the Israelites made the golden calf god, Moses interceded for them and said to God, “Yet now, if you would only forgive their sin…! But if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written” (Exod. 32:32). Moses never completes his sentence about what would happen if God forgave Israel’s sin. In Genesis 31:50, Laban threatened Jacob, saying, “If you afflict my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters…!” But Laban never finished his threat by saying what he would do if Jacob did afflict his daughters. In Genesis 3:22, God says, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now, so that he does not reach out his hand and also take of the tree of life and eat, and live forever….” God never finishes His sentence about what would happen if humankind lived forever in a fallen state; the consequences are too terrible to try to articulate. In Psalm 6:3, the psalmist, who is troubled, says, “But you, O Yahweh, how long...? He is caught up in his troubled emotions and so he lets his thoughts drop off before completing them. He might have competed them by saying something like, “But you, O Yahweh, how long before you put an end to my troubles?” Still another example is Acts 23:9, where the Pharisees said about Paul, “We find no evil in this man. And if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him….” The Pharisees did not finish their thought, but let it drop. We would have expected the full thought to be something like, “We find no evil in this man. And if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, then he is innocent!” But, for unstated reasons, the sentence was never completed. It is possible that the roar of the crowd shut down the people speaking.

Here in Luke 19:42, some English versions end Jesus’ statement with an exclamation point, as if Jesus was showing great emotion, perhaps anger or frustration. There is no imperative in the Greek text and Jesus is crying over the lost potential: “If only you had known...” and he let his voice drop off. Then he restarted with the actual situation, “But now they have been hidden from your eyes.”

**“have been hidden.”** The Greek is *kruptō* (#2928 κρύπτω), to conceal or to hide, and it is in the passive voice. This verse is not saying that God hid what the people of Jerusalem needed to see, but rather just makes the statement that they have been hidden. When a person stubbornly refuses to acknowledge the truth, over time one’s understanding becomes darker and darker. This was the situation with Jerusalem. The leaders and the people had refused to believe Jesus over and over, and eventually, their eyes could not see.

Luk 19:43

**“For the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you.”** The capture of the people of Jerusalem and the destruction of the city was foretold in the Old Testament and will be part of the Great Tribulation (Dan. 9:26; Zech. 14:1-2). The Romans surrounded Jerusalem and destroyed it in AD 70, but did not literally fulfill the details of the prophecies in Zechariah and Daniel; those prophecies do not match up with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been rebuilt, and the Jews will build another Temple in it, the one the Antichrist goes into (2 Thess. 2:4) and the Jews worship in during the Tribulation (Rev. 11:1). That third temple (Solomon’s Temple, then Ezra/Herod’s Temple, then the third Temple) will be destroyed during the Tribulation as Christ foretold).

[For more on the terrible death and destruction in the Great Tribulation and Armageddon, see commentary on Dan. 12:1. For more on the duration of the last half of the Tribulation, as well as the days of Judgment following Armageddon, see commentary on Dan. 12:11. For more on the basic chronology of the End Times, see commentary on Matt. 25:32. For more on the worldwide kingdom that Jesus Christ will set up on earth after he conquers it at the Battle of Armageddon, the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on the first and second resurrection, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

Luk 19:48

**“hanging upon *what* he *said*.”** A very graphic idiomatic saying. A more literal, but also more confusing, translation is that all the people “were hanging on him, listening” (cf. YLT). But the people were not literally “hanging on him,” they were hanging on every word he spoke. The Jewish leaders hated Jesus, but the crowds loved him.

**Luke Chapter 20**

Luk 20:7

**“they did not know where *it was* from.”** The religious leaders lied to Jesus. They were convinced, wrongly, that John’s baptism was from men, but they lied about it to protect themselves. They would not tell where they thought it was from, so Jesus said he would not tell them where he got his authority.

Luk 20:8

**“Then I will not tell you.”** Jesus was not fooled by the Jews saying they did not know. They knew exactly what they believed, but those hypocrites and cowards were afraid to say it. Jesus had said if they would tell him about John’s baptism, he would tell them about the source of his authority. Since they would not tell him, he kept his word and would not tell them.

Luk 20:9

**“And he began to speak to the people this parable.”** This parable of the Greedy Farmers is in Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12, and Luke 20:9-19. This parable is a clear reference to the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7, except in Isaiah the vineyard is itself Israel, and is wicked, while in Jesus’ parable the vineyard is God’s and it is the people who are hired to tend it who are evil. Jesus was using thinly veiled language to speak of the leaders of the Jews, who had been entrusted by God to take care of His vineyard, i.e., His people, but were evil. The Jews got his point (Luke 20:19), and wanted to arrest him but were afraid of the people.

Luk 20:10

**“of the fruit.”** This is an example of a partitive genitive. The custom was that the owner would get a specific portion of the yield of the crops.

Luk 20:14

**“will be.”** The Greek verb is subjunctive, but that is due to the *hina* (#2443 ἵνα) that starts the phrase and demands a subjunctive verb, and in these cases, the tense of the verb must be translated from context. The renters thought if they killed the heir, the vineyard would be theirs.

Luk 20:16

**“May it not be!”** Literally in the Greek, “May it not be.” This is an idiom that reflects revulsion at the thought. Perhaps, “Perish the thought” would be good. “God forbid,” which is employed in many versions, is not bad, and carries the sense, but it is so different from the Greek text that it is better, in this case, to translate the idiom more literally.

Luk 20:17

**“What then does this scripture mean.”** The Greek is idiomatic and reads, “What then is this that has been written,” but basically the meaning is, “What does this writing [scripture] mean?”

“**the cornerstone.** The Greek text reads, “the head of the corner.” That is, the stone with the most important place (see “cornerstone” in commentary on Matt. 21:42).

Luk 20:20

**“in order to catch him in some statement.”** The record of the trap about paying taxes is recorded in Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17, and Luke 20:20-25.

Luk 20:22

**“to pay taxes.”** The Gospels of Matthew and Mark make it clear that the “tax” being spoken about is the census tax or poll tax, a yearly tax on adults. This is not referring to taxes such as income tax (see commentary on Mark 12:14).

Luk 20:27

**“who say that there is no resurrection.”** See commentary on Matthew 22:23.

Luk 20:34

**“people of this age.”** The Greek literally reads, “the sons of this age,” but that is the standard Semitic idiom where a “son” of something refers to someone who is somehow associated with it, for example, a “son of disobedience” is a disobedient person. Thus, a “son of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36) is a person who is resurrected.

Luk 20:35

**“from among the dead.”**[[131]](#footnote-29437) See commentary on Romans 4:24. This verse in Luke is referring to the first resurrection, the resurrection of the righteous, which is at the start of the Millennial Kingdom, Christ’s 1,000-year reign (Rev. 20:4). The second resurrection is the resurrection of the unrighteous (Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:5, 11-14).

[For more on the resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

**“neither marry nor are given in marriage.”** In the next life, people do not marry. See commentary on Matthew 22:30.

Luk 20:36

**“Indeed.”** The confirmatory use of *gar*. See commentary on Romans 9:3.

Luk 20:37

**“But that the dead are raised.”** The Greek verb, *egeirō* (#1453 ἐγείρω), is in the present tense, not to say that they are being raised as they die (the dead bodies were obviously in the ground), but rather as a contrast to the Sadducees’ claim that the dead do not rise.

Luk 20:38

**“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”** For an explanation of this, see commentary on Matthew 22:32.

**“for all live for him.”** This verse makes the point that God created people to live for him (cf. Eph. 2:10), and it will not do to have His beloved be dead in the ground. His purposes, as accepted by those who believe in Him, will be fulfilled, they will live for him. The key to understanding the phrase, “for all live for him,” lies in knowing that the Sadducees said there was no resurrection, while Jesus said there was a resurrection (cf. Luke 14:14; 20:35, 36). Neither the Sadducees nor Jesus was espousing that the dead were actually alive. Rather, the issue was, did people die and then stay dead, or did they die and then later, at the resurrection, get raised back to life? Since the Sadducees only accepted the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) as the Word of God, and considered the rest of Scripture to not have divine authority, Jesus, to help them understand, quoted from the Torah. Other Scriptures perhaps more clearly prove the resurrection, such as those Peter used (Acts 2:25-36), or Paul (Acts 13:33-35), and there are other verses such as some in Isaiah 53 that are not quoted in Scripture, but clearly refer to the resurrection of Christ. Translating the Greek as “for to him all are alive,” as the NIV does, misses the point and clouds the issue. Not everyone is alive, and God knows this, which is why He fights for His people to stay alive. All through the Bible He rescued His people from death. Dead people cannot praise God (Isa. 38:18).

Luk 20:39

**“you have spoken well.”** The experts in the law who made that statement would have been Pharisees, and they believed in the resurrection (cf. Acts 23:6-9), but had never managed to silence the Sadducees like Jesus had just done.

Luk 20:40

**“For they did not dare to question him any more.”** After Jesus silenced the Sadducees, they did not question him any more.

Luk 20:42

**“The Lord said to my Lord.”** The quotation is from Psalm 110:1, and it is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36, and Luke 20:42-43.

Luk 20:44

**“how is he his son?”** Jesus is the Son of David (cf. Matt. 1:1; 9:27; Luke 18:38-39, etc.), so this question is inviting a discussion on the subject.

Luk 20:46

**“experts in the law who like.”** The English versions are divided as to whether the meaning is, “Beware of the experts in the law. They like to walk in long robes…” or “Beware of the experts in the law who like to walk in long robes.” The Greek text can be punctuated either way. If there is a period (or even a comma) after “law,” then Jesus is warning the people about all the experts in the law. If, on the other hand, there is no punctuation between “law” and “who,” then Jesus is only warning people about those experts who are self-seeking. It is a difficult choice. On the one hand, the Bible testifies that there were some experts in the law who were godly, and Jesus surely knew that, and so could have made a simple literal statement. On the other hand, it is common to exaggerate that kind of statement; they did it in biblical times and we do it today. We might say, for example, “Lawyers are greedy,” and our audience would know that not every lawyer is greedy, but many of them are.

So was Jesus making a literal statement, or was he exaggerating to make a point? We may never know, but for translation purposes, given the fact that only a few verses earlier there were some apparently godly experts in the law (Luke 20:39), it is clearer to translate the statement in a way that expresses literal truth. That makes it much easier for the English reader to believe what Jesus said—that only some experts in the law were to be avoided. Also, it avoids the possibility that someone would think that Jesus said every expert in the law was an ungodly person, something clearly not true.

**“like.”** The Greek is *phileō* (#5368 φιλέω). See commentary on John 21:15.

**Luke Chapter 21**

Luk 21:6

**“one stone on top of another.”** The Greek is literally, “a stone upon a stone that will not be thrown down.”

Luk 21:8

**“come in my name, saying, ‘I am *he.*’”** This is like Mark 13:6. See commentary on Matthew 24:5.

**“Do not follow after them.”** The Greek text is more literally, “do not go after them,” but sometimes in English to “go after” someone is to attack him, and that is not the meaning here. In the biblical culture, to “go after,” or “follow after” someone was to become their disciple. We hear what many different people have to say, but we don’t become the disciples of people without much prayer, thought, and checking things out.

Luk 21:10

**“group.”** See commentary on Matthew 24:7.

Luk 21:11

**“terrifying events. “**The Greek is *phobētron* (#5400 φόβητρον), and it only occurs here in the New Testament. It refers to something that strikes great fear or terror into people, and as such it could be a terrifying event or a terrifying sight. Because of its close connection to earthquakes, famines, and plagues, the REV translates it as “terrifying events.” There are versions, however, that think it is connected to what happens in heaven and have “terrifying sights” (cf. NET).

Luk 21:13

**“It will turn out *as an opportunity* for you to *provide* a testimony.”** It is important to God that every person has a chance to say “Yes” or “No” to the Good News about Jesus Christ. On Judgment Day, the way a person responded to hearing a believable testimony about Jesus can determine whether the person lives forever with Christ or dies in the Lake of Fire (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:11-15). God calls upon those who believe in Him and the Lord Jesus to testify to all people—even those who almost certainly won’t believe—so that on Judgment Day the judgment that the Lord gives to each person will be seen to be just and fair. What will be very obvious on Judgment Day is that God did not arbitrarily judge people, but instead, He gave them what they asked for either directly or indirectly. For those people who humbled themselves and chose to make Jesus Christ Lord, God will give everlasting life, just as He said. To those people who chose to reject Christ and defy God, God will give them death in the Lake of Fire, and they will perish, just like He said.

The need for God to give every human being on earth the opportunity to humble themselves and choose everlasting life over everlasting death means that He must ask believers to testify about Him, as we see here in Luke 21:13. Furthermore, we see the same basic thing in verses such as Jeremiah 7:27, when God told Jeremiah, “You are to speak all these words to them [the people of Judah], but they will not listen to you; you are also to call to them, but they will not answer you.” If God knows the people will not listen to Jeremiah, why does He send Jeremiah to speak to the people? Because those defiant Jews still needed a clear chance to say “Yes” or “No” to God, and Jeremiah’s testimony would provide that chance. The same was true for what Jesus was teaching his disciples. Jesus never said or implied that when the believers were taken to court and testified that the unbelieving judge and onlookers would believe. Perhaps some of them would, but Jesus’ point was that in that situation it was the believers’ testimony that was important because the circumstances were such that most judges would not believe.

When we testify to people, if they believe, wonderful. But if they do not believe, which is their choice and privilege, we believers are not to be discouraged or self-condemned, thinking we were a bad witness, but instead, we are to let the peace we offer to others come back upon us—Jesus Christ taught that to his disciples when he sent them out to witness (Matt. 10:13).

[For more on people burning up in the Lake of Fire and not “burning forever in hell,” see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Luk 21:15

**“a mouth.”** Figure of speech metonymy, the mouth being put for the words that will come from it.

[See Word Study: “Metonymy.”]

Luk 21:18

**“will never ever perish.”** Jesus was not saying that his followers would not die in the Great Tribulation, because he had just said that some of them would die (Luke 21:16). Here Jesus uses the word “perish.” None of the believers would “perish,” because they would be raised from the dead to everlasting life. Believers must not fear death to the point that we abandon Christ to save our physical lives. Every human will die, so wise believers come to grips with that fact and do the heart work that it takes to overcome any fear of death we might have. If we fear death, the Devil will use that against us to keep us in bondage to him (Heb. 2:14-15).

Luk 21:19

**“lives.”** The Greek word translated “lives” is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), and it has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; the animating spiritual force in a living human or animal (“soul”); an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here it refers to the physical life of the body, which is why some versions and the REV translate it “life.” In this context, Jesus is not referring to temporal life, but everlasting life. By staying faithful to the end, believers gain everlasting life.

[For a more complete explanation of “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

Luk 21:23

**“How terrible.”** The Greek word is *ouai* (#3759 οὐαί, pronounced ooh-'eye). For an explanation of the meaning of “how terrible,” see commentary on Matthew 11:21

**“distress…wrath.”** This is the wrath of God associated with the Day of the Lord (see commentaries on Rev. 6:17 and Isa. 13:9).

**“against this people.”** That is, against the Jews.

Luk 21:24

**“the mouth of the sword.”** The phrase is a Semitic idiom, and used to show great destruction, as if the sword was eating its victims (see commentary on Josh. 6:21).

**“And they will fall by the mouth of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations​.”** The capture of the people of Jerusalem and the destruction of the city was foretold in the Old Testament and will be part of the Great Tribulation (Dan. 9:26; Zech. 14:1-2). The Romans surrounded Jerusalem and destroyed it in AD 70, but did not literally fulfill the details of the prophecies in Zechariah and Daniel; those prophecies do not match up with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been rebuilt, and the Jews will build another Temple in it, the one the Antichrist goes into (2 Thess. 2:4) and the Jews worship in during the Tribulation (Rev. 11:1). That third Temple (Solomon’s Temple was the First Temple, then Ezra/Herod’s Temple was the Second Temple, then the third Temple) will be destroyed during the Tribulation as Christ foretold).

[For more on the terrible death and destruction in the Great Tribulation and Armageddon, see commentary on Dan. 12:1. For more on the duration of the last half of the Tribulation, as well as the days of Judgment following Armageddon, see commentary on Dan. 12:11. For more on the basic chronology of the End Times, see commentary on Matt. 25:32. For more on the worldwide kingdom that Jesus Christ will set up on earth after he conquers it at the Battle of Armageddon, the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on the first and second resurrection, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

Luk 21:25

**“perplexed *and anxious* because of the roaring of the sea and the waves.”** The words “perplexed and anxious” are a translation of the Greek noun *aporia* (#640 ἀπορία), which means “the state of perplexity,” or “the state of anxiety,” depending on the context. In translating the Greek to English, we have translated *aporia* as if it were an adjective, thus having “perplexed” instead of “in perplexity” for clarity and ease of reading. In most cases when a Greek word has more than one meaning we choose one for the REV Bible text and cover the other meaning in the commentary. Occasionally, however, both meanings are so vital to the understanding of the passage that we include them both in the REV text, putting one in regular print and the other meaning in italics. That is the case here.

To understand this prophecy of Christ, we must realize that the Greek word for “sea” refers to any sizable body of water including both oceans and inland lakes. For example, the “Sea of Galilee” is an inland lake only about 7 miles wide and 12 miles long. Many lakes around the world are much bigger than that, and would be called “seas” in the Bible. Here in Luke, the word “sea” is singular as a collective noun and also because not all the seas will roar, or roar at one time. In the End Times, the oceans and lakes will become unpredictable and dangerous for many different reasons, including high winds, hurricanes, earthquakes, and more. It is very likely water levels will occasionally rise (like the storm surge that often accompanies hurricanes) and some lowlands will be submerged. There will also be tsunamis (also called tidal waves or seismic waves) that will cause huge amounts of damage. It is also likely that ocean currents that have been dependable for thousands of years will change, resulting in global weather changes. The “reasons” for these things will not be clear, so the people of the world will be perplexed. But it will not just be an “academic perplexity,” that is, people simply being puzzled about the behavior of the oceans. The unpredictable oceans will create danger and huge problems for the people on earth, especially for anyone who lives near a coast, so people will be puzzled, anxious, and worried.

Luk 21:31

**“know that the Kingdom of God is near.”** The “Kingdom of God” is the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth (see commentary on Matt. 24:14).

Luk 21:33

**“Heaven and earth will pass away.”** This sentence is almost exactly the same in Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, and Luke 21:33.

**Luke Chapter 22**

Luk 22:2

**“looking for a way to put him to death.”** The chief priests and the experts in the law were afraid to arrest Jesus openly, so they were plotting behind the scenes how they could arrest Jesus without stirring up the crowds.

Luk 22:3

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost. For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13.

[For more information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

**“Iscariot.”** See commentary on Matthew 10:4.

Luk 22:4

**“*Temple* commanders.”** The Greek word is *stratēgos* (#4755 στρατηγός), and it is only used in the New Testament in the books written by Luke: the Gospel of Luke and Acts. The “commander” was the highest official in a Greco-Roman city (thus the REV translated it as “magistrate” in Acts 16:20, 22, 35, 36, 38). The Greek word *stratēgos* is also used of the commander of the Temple police in Jerusalem. The “commander” was the top man in charge of the police force that governed the Temple. Then there were officers of various ranks under the commander. In the Jewish writings, the commander of the Temple is called “the man of the Temple Mount.” The Temple police were a large number of hand-picked Levites who kept order at the Temple, which was a huge complex, covering more than 37 acres, and was sometimes filled with tens of thousands of people. The Temple police were empowered by the Romans and the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council of 70) to maintain order and ensure that the laws of Israel were being kept. They had the power to arrest people, which is what they were sent to do to Jesus but were unable to do (John 7:30, 32, 45). There were many specific rules and regulations concerning the Temple that needed to be enforced. These included ensuring that the boundaries of the various courts (Court of the Gentiles, Court of the Women, Court of the Men, etc.) were respected, the purity laws kept such that no unclean people approached the holy places, and that the many other rules were kept as well.

At night the Temple police were placed in 24 stations around the Temple and its compound. Twenty-one of the stations were occupied by Levites, while three were occupied by both Levites and priests. There were ten men at each station except for the three innermost to the Sanctuary, which had ten Levites and ten priests. Thus, there were 240 Levites and 30 priests on guard in the Temple every night.

This verse mentions the “commanders” of this police force, as does Luke 22:52, while Acts 4:1; 5:24, 26 mention the top commander (using the word in the singular).

Luk 22:10

**“Listen!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“a man carrying a pitcher of water.”** This would be very unusual. The customary practice for millennia was that women carried the water.

Luk 22:14

**“and the apostles with him.”** Matthew, Mark, and Luke all agree that Jesus ate the Last Supper with the twelve apostles (Matt. 26:20; Mark 14:17, and Luke 22:14). That makes sense, because much of the Last Supper was instruction and guidance that they needed to be able to start and run what would become the Christian Church.

Luke 22:14 is one of the verses that gives evidence that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was an apostle and thus supports that the disciple was the apostle John (see commentary on John 21:20).

Luk 22:15

**“With *great* desire I have desired.”** The Greek is the figure of speech polyptoton, and reads, “with desire I have desired,” meaning with great desire, or eagerly desired.

[See Word Study: “Polyptoton.”]

Luk 22:18

**“not drink of the fruit of the vine.”** The “fruit of the vine” is wine. At the Last Supper Jesus promised his apostles that he would not drink wine again until he drank it with them in the Kingdom of God, also called the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the Messianic Kingdom on the restored earth.

[For more on Jesus’ promise not to drink wine until the Kingdom, see commentary on Matt. 26:29.]

Luk 22:19

**“This is my body.”** This is the figure of speech metaphor. In the Bible, there are many uses of the three common figures of speech of comparison, which are simile, metaphor, and hypocatastasis. These three figures are commonly used in English speech as well, but only simile and metaphor are generally known by name.

A *simile* is a comparison by resemblance, usually using “like” or “as.” If a person is a sloppy and noisy eater, someone might say, “You eat **like** a pig.” Psalm 1:3 uses a simile when it says a righteous person is **like** a tree planted by the water. Proverbs 11:22 (HCSB) says, “A beautiful woman who rejects good sense is like a gold ring in a pig’s snout.” Jesus effectively used the figure simile when he said. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are **like** whitewashed tombs” (Matt. 23:27).

More intense than a *simile* is the figure *metaphor*, a comparison by representation. In a metaphor, one noun represents another. In the pig example above, a metaphor would be, “You **are** a pig.” Jesus used a metaphor when he said to his disciples, “I **am** the vine; you **are** the branches…” (John 15:5 NIV).

Even more intense than metaphor is the figure hypocatastasis, which is a comparison by implication. This figure is very common, but not well-known by name. In the pig example, instead of comparing the messy eater with a pig by saying he is “like” a pig, or even that he “is” a pig, in hypocatastasis the comparison is just implied. One person says to the other, “Pig!” and the meaning, although just implied, is effectively communicated.

[For more on hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2.]

There are many metaphors in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Genesis 49:14 says, “Issachar is a strong donkey.” Deuteronomy 33:22 says “Dan is a lion’s cub.” Job 25:6 says, “man, who is a worm.” Psalm 18:2 says, “Yahweh is my rock,” and Psalm 84:11 says, “For Yahweh God is a sun and a shield.” God is not literally a “sun” but He does provide warmth and what is needed for life and growth. Neither is He literally a “shield,” but He does protect us from much harm. Psalm 60:7 (ESV) says, “Ephraim is my helmet; Judah is my scepter.” Jeremiah 50:17 says, “Israel is a hunted sheep....” Hosea 10:1 says, “Israel is a fertile vine that puts forth fruit for himself.”

New Testament metaphors include: “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13), “I am the bread of life” (John 6:48), “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7), and “you are a letter from Christ” (2 Cor. 3:3).

The danger with the figures metaphor and hypocatastasis is that the reader may not realize that a figure is being used and mistake the figure for a literal statement. That is what has happened with Jesus’ statement, “This is my body.” The early Christians understood the metaphor that Jesus used when he said, “This is my body.” There is no evidence that the apostles or anyone in the early Church misunderstood that what Jesus was saying was a metaphor or ever even considered the idea of what is now called “transubstantiation.”

The doctrine of transubstantiation, in which the bread (“host”) is said to become the actual body of Christ developed very late, more than 1,000 years after Christ. The Internet encyclopedia Wikipedia says, “The earliest known use of the term ‘transubstantiation’ to describe the change from bread and wine to body and blood of Christ was by [Hildebert de Lavardin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hildebert_de_Lavardin), Archbishop of Tours (died 1133), in the eleventh century and by the end of the twelfth century the term was in widespread use. In 1215, the [Fourth Council of the Lateran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Council_of_the_Lateran) spoke of the bread and wine as ‘transubstantiated’ into the body and blood of Christ.” (This information from the Internet can be confirmed in books such as Walter Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, under “Transubstantiation.”)

Luk 22:20

**“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.”** The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke both record Jesus speaking about the cup here at the Last Supper, but the emphasis in those two Gospels is different—something that is not well-known or understood, in part because biblical covenants are not well understood. That the Bible is not well understood when it comes to covenants and what Matthew and Luke are each saying is demonstrated by the translation of Matthew 26:28 in the Amplified Bible (2015), which reads, “for this is My blood of the [new and better] covenant, which [ratifies the agreement and] is being poured out for many [as a substitutionary atonement] for the forgiveness of sins.” This translation includes the two things covered by Jesus’ sacrifice: the payment for breaking the covenant which provides for the forgiveness of sins, and the sacrifice that ratifies the New Covenant. However, in the actual Greek text, those two things are covered in the two different Gospels, whereas the Amplified Bible adds to the text and thus puts them both in Matthew 26:28.

Here in Luke 22:20, Jesus emphasized that the cup represented the blood that he shed that ratified and inaugurated the New Covenant. When a covenant was made, it was often inaugurated and ratified by a blood sacrifice, as was the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:7-15), the Old Covenant (the Mosaic Covenant; Exod. 24:4-8), and the covenant that the leaders of Israel made to release their slaves (Jer. 34:8, 18-19). The blood of Jesus Christ ratified and began the New Covenant as Luke 22:20 says: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (cf. 1 Cor. 11:25).

The fact that animals were killed when a covenant was made was a clear indication the covenant had not just been “discussed” or “intended,” it had actually been made. In Luke, Jesus held up the cup and said “This cup is the new covenant in my blood,” and in saying that he made it clear that the cup with the red wine in it represented his blood that would be poured out at his death that ratified the New Covenant. The New Covenant that Jesus spoke of in Luke was the New Covenant that God had spoken of in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:31).

The shedding of blood was so central to the making of a covenant that the phrase “cut a covenant” was used of making covenants even when it seemed apparent that actual blood was not shed because the covenant was made with salt or in some other way. Unfortunately, this is difficult to see in most English Bibles because although the Hebrew text usually says “cut a covenant,” most English Bibles translate the phrase as “made a covenant” (cf. 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Sam. 3:12; 5:3; 2 Kings 11:4; 2 Chron. 29:10; Ezra 10:3; Ps. 89:3; Isa. 57:8).

In contrast to Luke, Matthew does not emphasize the New Covenant but rather emphasizes Jesus’ fulfillment of the Old Mosaic Covenant. Although at first reading Matthew 26:28 seems to say the same thing as Luke 22:20, a closer examination of the text combined with a knowledge of biblical covenants shows that Matthew is making a different point. While Luke emphasizes that Jesus’ death was the sacrifice that inaugurated and ratified the New Covenant, Matthew 26:28 emphasizes that Jesus’ death paid the penalty for breaking the Old Covenant. Jesus could have said both what Matthew records and what Luke records in a couple of sentences and the disciples would not have realized the meaning of what he had said because they did not yet realize Jesus was going to die. Then later, after Jesus’ ascension into heaven, the two Gospels separately record the two different aspects of Jesus’ death.

An animal was killed to ratify a blood covenant, but why? It was because the death of the animal represented the consequences of breaking the covenant. In killing the animals, both parties were making a pledge that is known as a “self-maledictory oath” (an oath in which a person speaks potential harm to themselves). Thus, in killing the animals and walking between the pieces, it was understood that if one of the parties broke the covenant, they would be put to death like the sacrificed animals. The sacrificed animals showed the seriousness of the covenant and pictorially stated, “If I do not keep this covenant, may what happened to these animals happen to me.” Thus, if one party broke the covenant, that party would be subject to death.

Covenants were serious institutions, they were not “just words.” If a person made a covenant and broke it, that person was subject to death, something that has played out in blood feuds in the Middle East for millennia, and we see it in the Bible. For example, when the leaders of Israel made a blood covenant before God and then broke it, the leaders who made the covenant were the subject of divine retribution and death. God said, “I will give them into the hand of their enemies…and their dead bodies will be for food for the birds of the air and for the animals of the earth. (Jer. 34:8-10, 15-20).

Israel broke the covenant they made with God on Mount Sinai, the “Old Covenant,” so in order for that covenant not to be a sham—not to be “just words”—there had to be a penalty paid for breaking it, and that penalty was paid for by the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), and he was sinless, that is to say, “without blemish,” just as the sacrificial animals that covered the sin of Israel had to be without blemish (cf. Exod. 12:5, Lev. 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6, etc.). So Jesus’ death could atone for the sins of Israel (and our sins also) just as Romans 5:12-21 says. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and the perfect representative of the human race, so one aspect of his death was that it could fulfill the requirement of death that was the consequence for breaking the covenant and thus fulfill the covenant (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 10:4). In reading both Matthew and Luke we see that Jesus’ death was both the blood sacrifice that paid the penalty for breaking the Old Covenant (in Matthew) and also the blood sacrifice that ratified the New Covenant (in Luke).

Matthew 26:28 does not mention the “New Covenant,” it just says “covenant,” which in Matthew refers to the Old Covenant. There are some Greek texts that add the word “new” before “covenant,” but the textual evidence is that the word “new” was not in the original Greek text but was added later by copyists in order to harmonize Matthew 26:28 with Luke 22:20. The proper reconstruction of the original Greek text explains why most modern English Bibles have only “covenant,” and not “new covenant” in Matthew 26:28 (cf. ASV, HCSB, ESV, NAB, NASB, NET, NIV, NJB, NLT, NRSV). Matthew is referring to the Old Covenant because Jesus said that his blood was “poured out for the forgiveness of sins.” But the blood sacrifices that inaugurate and ratify a covenant, such as the sacrifices that ratified the Abrahamic or Mosaic covenants, were not for the forgiveness of sin, they were the graphic presentation of the maledictory oath that if the covenant was broken the covenant-breaker deserved death. If the blood of the covenant sacrifices was shed to forgive the sins of anyone who broke the covenant, then there would be no penalty for breaking the covenant. If someone broke the covenant, they were not forgiven on the basis of the ratification sacrifice; on the contrary, the blood sacrifice that ratified the covenant emphasized that there would be death to anyone who broke the covenant. It was the death of the one who made the covenant or a designated representative that paid the penalty for breaking the covenant and thus allowing sins to be forgiven.

So in a biblical covenant, blood was shed when the covenant was made to point out that anyone who broke the covenant deserved death, and blood was also shed if the covenant was broken. Amazingly, Jesus’ death fulfilled both parts of that shedding of blood. His death on the cross was the death required because Israel broke the Old Covenant, and it was also the sacrificial death that was required to inaugurate the New Covenant.

John Hughes writes about Jesus’ death doing two things: “Christ, by means of his death, took upon himself the penalty due to those who, by virtue of being members of the old covenant, stood in jeopardy of being cut off from God. …From another perspective Christ’s death inaugurates the new covenant…in this case not over dead animals…but upon the basis of Christ’s death.”[[132]](#footnote-24444)

It is generally taught that the “forgiveness of sin” was part of the New Covenant and that was what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 26:28, but although there is a provision for the forgiveness of sin in the New Covenant just as there is in almost every covenant (Jer. 33:34), the sin of breaking one covenant was not rectified by making another covenant. People could not just ignore when a covenant was broken and say, “No problem. We will just make a new covenant.” No, the penalty for breaking the first covenant had to be paid before the second one could be ratified.

No one’s sin is forgiven by entering the New Covenant; they are able to enter the New Covenant because they already have their sin forgiven. Peter understood that, so on the Day of Pentecost he told the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sin so that they could then receive the gift of holy spirit (Acts 2:38; cf. Luke 1:77). Today we understand that the humility required to repent is the humility required to confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life, and after confessing Christ and believing God raised him from the dead the individual is born again (Rom. 10:9). Actually, forgiveness of sins is so integrally tied together with salvation that they are often mentioned as part of the same event, but repentance and forgiveness have to come first. If a person was saved and then had their sins forgiven after that, then every sinner would be saved because they would not need to be forgiven to be saved. God would just save people and then forgive their sin—but that is not what happens.

That the death of Christ had to pay for the sins of breaking the Old Covenant is why Isaiah 53:10-11 says, “Yet it was the will of Yahweh to crush him.” It was not a happy thing for God to give His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for sin, but it pleased God in the sense that He knew it was the only way the sins of humankind could be paid for, so it was necessary (see commentary on Isa. 53:10).

[For more information on the events from Jesus’ arrest through his resurrection appearances, see commentary on John 18:13 and 19:14. For more information about Jesus being in the tomb, “the heart of the earth,” for three full days and three nights, see commentary on Matt. 12:40. For information on the two-stage burial of Jesus, first by Joseph of Arimathea and then by Nicodemus, see commentary on John 19:40. For information on the Hasmonean palace as the likely location of Jesus’ trial before Pilate, see commentary on Luke 23:7.]

**“which is poured out for you.”** The last phrase in this verse has been translated in two different ways.

· (REV) “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

· (ESV) “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

The question is: is the verse saying that it is the literal cup of wine that is being poured out, or is it saying that Jesus’ blood is being poured out? This has to be a reference to Jesus’ blood being poured out. His sacrifice had begun. He was at the Last Supper, and Judas had already arranged with the Jews to betray him (Luke 22:4). Lenski writes: “Jesus means that this pouring out of his sacrificial blood has now begun. And he has, indeed, truly entered upon his sacrifice.”[[133]](#footnote-27480) Jesus was beginning the sacrifice of his life for the salvation of mankind, hence the present participle, “is poured out.” To make the verse say that the cup of wine was being poured out is only to state the obvious, and misses the point that the pouring out of Jesus’ life had started in a very real and powerful way.

Luk 22:21

**“look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 22:22

**“but how terrible it will be for that man.”** This warning is in Matthew 26:24, Mark 14:21 and Luke 22:22 (see commentary on Matt. 26:24).

Luk 22:24

**“*as to* which of them was regarded to be greatest.”** This event at the Last Supper is only recorded in Luke 22:24-30. Nevertheless, it is similar to the event recorded in Matthew 18:1-5, Mark 9:33-37, and Luke 9:46-48, and to the somewhat similar event recorded in Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45. Positions of authority in the coming Kingdom of Christ on earth is a very important subject, so even though Jesus deals with it each time it comes up, it still comes up over and over. Frankly, most Christians are not concerned enough about how they will spend their time in Christ’s Millennial Kingdom. Jobs will range from very honorable, including leading and judging with Jesus Christ, to very ordinary jobs with much less honor, and people will be assigned the jobs they deserve based on what they have done in this life. It is a mistake to take this life lightly and not work hard to have an honorable job in the future. Paul certainly did (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

[For more on the different records of the apostles’ discussion, see commentary on Luke 9:46. For more on the future Millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth, including the different jobs the Bible says will be in the future, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Luk 22:25

**“Philanthropists.”** The Greek word translated as “Philanthropists” is *euergetēs* (#2110 εὐεργέτης), and it most literally means “Good-worker” (“Worker of Good”). It is a title of honor given to those who have done great service for the community and/or country, primarily in the area of civil good or improvement, such as putting on gladiator games or other sporting events, or building a temple to a god or goddess to acquire the blessing of that deity. However, as with today’s super-wealthy people, those of wealth in the ancient world often acquired that wealth by dishonest or unethical means, but then they gave money to a civic cause to gain notoriety for themselves. But God looks on the heart, and does not overlook unethical behavior just because someone gives away some of the dishonest gain they made.

It is hard for us to understand how people who have authority over others are called “philanthropists,” but they are understood that way (and act that way) in the honor-shame society of the ancient world. It is difficult for people of the United States today to understand how people in the ancient world thought because they perceived life very differently from the way we instinctively perceive life. The unspoken rules (and some spoken ones) that govern society are drilled into us from such an early age, and are so “universal” to us, that we usually never think that there is any other way to think about life than the way we perceive it.

However, the biblical societies, and some modern ones, have a very different value system than we in the United States and most of the Western world does. In our modern Western world, people are usually held in high value, have prestige, or are envied, because of the money they have and thus their ability to control their own lives and destiny. While we Westerners have great respect for people who are “exemplary role models,” we usually don’t envy them or consider them “prestigious” unless they have the money to have nice things and control their own destiny. The “currency” in American society and many Western societies is cash, and the saying is “cash is king.”

That is not at all the case in the honor-shame societies of the Bible. In the biblical world, the primary organizing principle was “belongingness,” and the currency that dictated much of what a person did in life was honor or shame. People desired to belong to the right family, right group, right town, right nation, etc. For example, notice how Paul gains honor and credibility in the Philippian Church by pointing out he is an Israelite, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, etc. (Phil. 3:4-6). Furthermore, success in the group and in life consisted in having the right connections. But those connections were rooted in the basic values of honor and shame. People constantly did things to increase their honor, especially if they could do so while lessening the honor of someone else (thus “bringing shame” on them). Honor was considered a “limited resource;” there was only a limited amount of it, so a primary way to get honor was to dishonor someone else, which brought you more honor.

The value system of belonging and getting honor meant that money was thought of much differently in the ancient world than it is today. Today, a person with loads of money in the bank and lots of personal “toys” such as cars, boats, planes, and vacation homes is envied and considered prestigious. However, in the biblical society, as Bruce Malina writes, “…any concern people show for the acquisition of goods derives from the purpose of gaining honor through generously disposing of what one has acquired among equals or socially useful lower-status clients. In other words, honor is acquired through beneficence, not through the fact of possession and/or the keeping of what one has acquired. Thus, money, goods, and any sort of wealth are really a means to honor, and any other use of wealth is considered foolish.”[[134]](#footnote-16957) In the movie, *Lawrence of Arabia*, one of the Arabian sheiks described himself as “a river to my people,” meaning that the wealth he acquired through wars and pillaging he generously distributed to his people, who then honored him for it.

In other words, in the biblical society, the proper use of money was to dispose of it in ways that brought you honor. That was why wealthy individuals constantly did things like fund public spectacles such as gladiator games and sporting events, or build temples to the gods, especially the gods that were important to the local community, or pay for public works that benefited the community. The unspoken rules of what kind of giving brought honor and what giving did not bring honor (and could even bring dishonor) explain why building a seemingly unnecessary temple brought honor while making sure one’s field slaves had proper clothing did not.

The “upper class” of ancient society, the ones with the most honor, the best connections to make wealth and maintain it (or the ability to tax or take money from the lower classes of people), and therefore the people with the most authority over others, were the “philanthropists” or “benefactors” in society. They did many things that were considered to be for the public good. In the ancient world, they gave consistently with the specific purpose of gaining and maintaining honor in the eyes of their clients and the public. In contrast, a philanthropist today, while being “honored” in some way (like getting a building named after them), usually would never give because he or she was thinking, “I have to acquire and maintain an honored state in society, so I will donate this money.”

Luk 22:28

**“you are those.”** Jesus was speaking to his apostles.

Luk 22:30

**“and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”** Jesus’ prophecy that the 12 Apostles would sit on thrones in his kingdom is also in Matthew 19:28 (and see commentary on Matt. 19:28).

Luk 22:31

**“Simon, Simon.”** Jesus doubles the name “Simon” because of the gravity of the moment, and he wants to be sure to get Simon’s full attention. Also, “Simon,” the original name Peter was given by his parents, is the correct name to call Peter here at the Last Supper, when, in the next few hours he would act so human and not like the “Rock” Jesus named him to be (Peter is Greek, and Cephas is Aramaic, for “Rock”).

Jesus is speaking to Peter as the representative head of all the apostles, and he is saying that the Devil sought after all the apostles, which is why the “you” in the verse is plural (translated as “you all” in the REV). But then, in the next verse, the “you” is singular and Jesus is addressing Peter alone.

**“Look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20. The doubling of “Simon,” combined with “Look,” shows us the extreme seriousness of Jesus’ words in this section of Scripture.

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost. For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13.

[For more information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

**“so that he could sift you like wheat.”** Jesus is referring to the process of sifting wheat, which separated the “wheat,” (which in this context would refer to the godly people), from the “rocks,” (in this context referring to the ungodly and sinners). The sifting resulted in the “stones” being rejected and thrown out. Peter was not perfect, and because of his supposed faults, Satan demanded that God sift him, thinking that then God would have to “throw him out.”

[For more on the process of sifting the wheat, see commentary on Amos 9:9]

Luk 22:32

**“prayed.”** The Greek word translated as “prayed” here is *deomai* (#1189 δέομαι), and it means to ask or even beg, and thus often to ask with some urgency. Jesus sets a wonderful example for us because here he says he prayed specifically and urgently for Peter.

**“*Simon*.”** The REV translation adds the word “Simon” to make it clear to the reader that Jesus is now speaking to Simon alone. Whereas the “you” in Luke 22:31 is plural and refers to “you all” (all the apostles), the “you” here in Luke 22:32 is singular and refers to just Peter.

**“once you have turned back *in repentance*, strengthen your brothers.”** Jesus saw clearly that Peter would fall further than the rest of the apostles. Peter was the most impetuous and most assertive, and we see that here because he flatly states that even if everyone else denied Christ, he would not. But he did deny Christ, and wept bitterly over it. Jesus foresaw Peter’s fall, but also saw his recovery, and so here Jesus told Peter that once he recovered (“ turned back *in repentance*”) from his shame and guilt and got back on track with the Lord, he was to step forward again and strengthen his brothers, i.e., the apostles and disciples.

Luk 22:34

**“a rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know me.”** This was revelation, and convicted Peter when the rooster crowed. There is a teaching in some Christian circles that Jesus was not referring to a rooster, but rather to the priest who opened the Temple doors first thing in the morning. According to the Jewish writings, at first light, the priest who opened the Temple doors would cry three times, “All the priests prepare to sacrifice. All the Levites to their stations. All the Israelites come to worship.” Because of his crying out at dawn, this priest was referred to as the “rooster.” The idea that Jesus is referring to the “rooster” priest, and not a real rooster, is supposedly bolstered by the fact that because of their habit of getting into places where they are not wanted, and because the priests did not want them getting into the Temple, roosters were not allowed inside the walled city of Jerusalem. However, a careful study of the Bible and roosters will show that the “rooster” mentioned by Jesus was a real rooster. The rooster that crowed after Peter had denied Jesus did not crow first thing in the morning. It crowed after Jesus had only been at the High Priest’s house for no more than a couple hours (Luke 22:57-60). This alone rules out the possibility that the rooster was the priest who opened the Temple gates. Anyone who owns roosters will tell you that the common belief that roosters crow only at dawn is simply not true. Roosters crow throughout the day and even the night. Furthermore, in the cold night air of the Passover season, their crows can be clearly heard for more than a mile across the hills of Judea. The city of Jerusalem in Christ’s time was only about a square mile, so it would not be impossible that a rooster on the Mount of Olives could be heard by most of Jerusalem, for example. And from what we know of the layout of Jerusalem in Jesus’ time, the High Priest’s house was next to, or at least close to, the wall of the city. Therefore, a rooster outside the city could be heard very clearly in his courtyard.

When the text says “today,” we must remember that the Jewish day started at sunset, and by this time in the Last Supper it was already dark out so the new day had just started. It would only be a matter of hours now before Peter denied Jesus three times, so it was perfectly within God’s power to keep the roosters around Jerusalem from crowing for a few hours until after Peter denied Jesus.

Luk 22:36

**“purse.”** A money bag, a wallet. The apostles had not needed to bring money with them on their earlier journeys because people always took care of them. Now, however, by this time at the Last Supper, Jesus knew that the trouble coming in the future would be such that the apostles could not rely on people’s help but would have to be prepared to fend for themselves. Note what Christ said, “…you will be hated by all the nations because of my name” (Matt. 24:9). So he told them to be prepared for hard times.

**“provision bag.”** People in biblical times generally had to carry needed supplies with them. For example, a well would just be a hole in the ground but no rope or way to get the water would be provided at the well; there were no civil authorities that saw to that kind of thing. That is why Jesus needed his own rope and bucket when he came to Jacob’s well (John 4:11). Travelers would generally have a provision bag for things they might need: extra clothes for warmth, food, rope, leather bucket, and that sort of thing. Jesus’ telling the apostles they would need their provision bag told them they might not get help from the people they would meet.

**“let the one who has no sword sell his outer garment and buy one.**” This statement by Jesus highlights the need for believers to be prepared for times of trouble. There have always been sudden and unexpected disasters, and the wise Christian follows Jesus’ advice and prepares for trouble, especially now that it seems like we are approaching the End Times.

Earlier in his ministry, Jesus had sent out the apostles to be missionaries around Israel, and he specifically told them not to take much on their journey (Matt. 10:5-10; Mark 6:6-9; Luke 9:1-3). Now things were different. Jesus spoke the words recorded in Luke 22:35-36 in the last few days of his life on earth, when he was about to be arrested and killed. In biblical times, including the time of Christ, it was believed that the time of great trouble for Israel and the world that was foretold in the Old Testament would come on the earth when the Messiah came (cf. Isa. 61:1-2). The tribulation that Jesus called the “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:2) that occurs during the End Times is written about a lot in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 13:9-13; 24:1-23; 34:1-8; 63:1-6; Jer. 30:6-7; Dan. 12:1; Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; 3:14-16; Amos 5:16-20; 8:8-14; Obad. 1:15-16; Mic. 5:10-15; Zeph. 1:7-18; Zech. 12:1-9; 14:1-6; and Mal. 4:1-3). So when Jesus talked about it with his disciples, they were very familiar with it, but they thought it was coming very soon since the Messiah was now on earth. But the Tribulation did not come immediately.

Due to 20/20 hindsight, we now know that after Jesus ascended, God interposed the “Administration of Grace” into His timetable and we have now been living in the Age of Grace for some 2,000 years. But people at the time of Christ did not know about, or expect, the Age of Grace (1 Cor. 2:8-10). They expected the Messiah to come, there be a time of tribulation, and then the Messiah would establish his kingdom on earth, all happening in rapid succession (Acts 1:6-7). It seems certain that even Jesus did not know about the Age of Grace until after his resurrection (cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32), which is why, here in Luke 22:36, he told his apostles to buy swords.

That Jesus told his disciples to have a sword for protection, even if it meant having to sell their cloak to buy one, shows us the importance of self-protection and preparing for difficult times. Jesus never mentioned to his disciples that they should have a sword before this time, but now that he foresaw the Tribulation coming upon them, he wanted them to be prepared to protect themselves. Wise people prepare for trouble ahead, while foolish and naïve people ignore the warning signs and suffer for it (Prov. 22:3; 27:12).

We can learn a lot by paying attention to how Jesus told his disciples to prepare. Each one (the Greek text is singular) was to have some money; some ready cash so he or she could buy things they needed. Each one was to have a provision bag, which would have some food to sustain them for a while as well as be something they could barter with. Each one was to have a sword for protection (today we would likely use a gun). Jesus already had said that people would be lawless (Matt. 24:12), so protection would likely be necessary. Each one was to have proper clothing and shelter, but Jesus did not have to really say anything about that; the apostles were already wearing clothes, and people in biblical times usually wore clothes that protected them and that they could sleep in (Exod. 22:26-27). Also, they were to have companions because there is strength in numbers. Jesus addressed them as a group (Luke 22:35), and in the phrase, “I say to you” (Luke 22:37), the “you” is plural in Greek.

Troubled times are coming. We cannot stop them. But we can always “praise” (because God always deserves that); “pray” (because that always helps); “proclaim” (because we never know when we will save a soul from eternal death), and “prepare” (because our preparation might save our life or the life of those whom we are with).

There are people who believe that Jesus taught non-violence in every situation and who say that Christ’s admonition to have a weapon was fulfilled at that time and once he was arrested there was no more need for weapons. However, that interpretation does not fit the context or circumstance. For one thing, Jesus told his disciples they should each have a sword, not that the group only needed two swords. Furthermore, Jesus could not have been talking about being prepared for his arrest for a couple of reasons: one is that he stopped any aggression when he was arrested (Matt. 26:52). Besides that, however, Luke 22:14-38 occurs at the Last Supper and Jesus knew he would be arrested in a few hours. He certainly did not expect any of the apostles to leave the meal and go sell their cloak and buy a sword right at that time. At the Last Supper, Jesus knew he would be arrested and killed, and he took that opportunity to tell his followers how to prepare for the challenging future ahead.

Another way we know that there at the Last Supper Jesus was speaking about preparing for dangerous times in the future is that he specifically mentioned three things that people should have to prepare: money (“a purse”), provisions, and a sword (a weapon). People who believe that Jesus never taught that disciples should have a weapon try to explain away the sword, but that cannot be done without also saying that a true disciple should not have money or provisions; the three things go together. Jesus’ message is clear, and the world today confirms it: disciples should be prepared to help themselves and others in difficult times, and that means having some money, provisions, and a means of protection.

[For more on the Administration of Grace, see commentary on Eph. 3:2. For more on the Tribulation, see commentary on Matt. 24:21.]

Luk 22:37

**“and he was counted with the lawless.”** The prophecy of the Messiah in Isaiah 53 was that the Messiah was “counted among the transgressors,” in other words, he was thought to be one of the criminals, and he was put to death along with other criminals. Although that prophecy came to pass when Jesus was crucified, that is not the context in which Jesus quoted Isaiah 53:12 when he quoted it here in Luke 23:37.

In Luke 22:37, Jesus used the prophecy in Isaiah in another way, saying that the disciples would be considered lawless because of their association with him. Jesus had just told his disciples to prepare for difficult times ahead, and had told them to have money, food and provisions, and a way to defend themselves such as a sword (Luke 22:36). For a long time, Jesus had been telling them the Tribulation was coming in which they would be thought to be the enemy, arrested, tortured, and killed (Matt. 10:16-39; 24:6-9). Now his death was near, and so according to the Old Testament prophecies, so was the trouble for the believers (cf. Dan. 7:21, 25; 9:26-27). Jesus knew that if he was hated, his followers would be hated (Mark 13:13), and that if he was considered a transgressor, or criminal, they would be too because of their association with him. In this case, the lawless ones he would be counted with were his disciples.

Luke 22:36 is a record of Jesus telling his disciples to prepare for difficult times. Then, Luke 22:37 starts with “For,” which can be understood as ‘because.” So Christ was saying, “prepare because.” Jesus was telling the apostles to prepare because bad times were coming and by their association with him they would be “counted with the lawless.” The disciples would be considered criminals, so they should prepare to provide for themselves and protect themselves.

**“is being fulfilled.”** “Is being” is the translation of *echō* (#2192 ἔχω), “to have” or “hold,” in the present tense. Literally, it reads, “has fulfillment.” But in English, we would say “is being fulfilled,” not “it has its fulfillment,” which could give the false impression of past tense. The present tense shows that the fulfillment is going on; the prophecy is presently being fulfilled.

Luk 22:38

**“see.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“here are two swords.”** It is possible that a couple of the disciples already had swords, as implied in Luke 22:36—that if you did not have one, go buy one—or it is possible that the owner of the home had the swords there in the house with him. The fact that Peter drew his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane only hours later shows us that either one of the two swords belonged to Peter, or that he asked the homeowner for one when he and the others left the house and went to Gethsemane.

**“Enough of that!”** The translation, “Enough of that,” picks up the sense of the passage. The Greek can be translated in two different ways: one is that Jesus is saying, “Enough of that,” i.e., “Stop what you are doing.” The other way is “It is enough,” i.e., two swords are enough for us. Since the verse can be translated in two very different ways, we need to get the sense of how the verse should be translated from the scope of Scripture and the immediate context. What we find is that Luke 22:38 should be translated, “Enough of that” or an equivalent.

From the scope of Scripture we learn that, here at the Last Supper, the apostles did not even know Jesus was going to suffer and die, much less that he was going to be raised from the dead and ascend into heaven.

[For more on this, see commentaries on Luke 18:34 and John 16:17.]

From the first-century Jewish culture and the words and actions of the apostles themselves, we can safely conclude that the apostles believed what most of the Jews of the time believed—that when the Messiah came, he would personally put an end to the present evil age and usher in his Messianic Kingdom. He would do this by fighting the enemy armies (in this case, starting with the Romans), and eventually conquering the whole earth. Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 63:1-6 do indeed show the Messiah conquering the earth, but what they do not show is that he will conquer it at his Second Coming, not his first coming. The first-century Jews thought the Messiah would conquer the earth at his first coming.

The apostles had been patiently waiting for Jesus to “make his move” and start to conquer the earth and rule as king. Some of Jesus’ followers had not been quite so patient, such as when he fed the 5,000 and the crowd came to make him king (John 6:15). But now, at the Last Supper, when Jesus said that anyone who did not have a sword should sell his coat and buy one, the apostles misunderstood him completely. Instead of realizing that Jesus was telling them to prepare to defend themselves during the Tribulation that was ahead, the apostles thought Jesus was telling them to arm themselves for the conquest of the world. They were very excited about the coming Kingdom, and very willing to do their part to fight and conquer the enemy.

Jesus very quickly perceived that the apostles misunderstood why he told them they should each have a sword, and he immediately put a stop to their weapons-gathering efforts. He did not want things to get out of hand and some kind of skirmish to break out with the authorities, which would only have ended up with his disciples being killed outright or arrested and crucified. However, despite his efforts, things did almost get out of hand at the Garden of Gethsemane when Peter struck the High Priest’s servant with a sword and cut off his ear. Only Jesus’ rebuke of Peter and the miracle healing of the servant kept things under control (Matt. 26:51-52; Luke 22:50-51). So we see that the scope of Scripture supports the translation, “Enough of that!”

The immediate context of Luke 22:38 also supports the translation, “Enough of that.” Jesus was speaking about the disciples being prepared for the hard times after his resurrection and ascension—the Tribulation—and he told them that each of them should have a money bag, a traveling bag, and a weapon to protect himself with (Luke 22:36). In fact, he told them, “let the one who has no sword sell his outer garment and buy one” (Luke 22:36). Since there were twelve apostles, and many more disciples, and since he told them to buy a sword if they did not have one, it would not make sense for him to then say that two swords would be enough. Furthermore, as the apostles were thinking, two swords would not be enough to conquer the world; and as Jesus was thinking, two swords would not be enough to protect all the disciples. Two swords are not “enough,” so that cannot be the meaning of the verse.

Luke 22:38 is a clear example of Jesus having to put a stop to the misunderstanding and misguided efforts of the apostles to gather weapons and form an army, and “Enough of that,” or a similar translation, is a good translation of the verse (cf. CEB, CJB, HCSB, Kingdom of God Version, and the Charles Williams’ New Testament).

Luk 22:39

**“he came out.”** Jesus continued teaching and praying, and the disciples did not actually leave until John 18:1 (cf. Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39; John 14:31). Luke 22:39 records the time when Jesus did finally leave the Upper Room (see commentary on John 18:1).

Luk 22:43

**Luke 22:43-44**. There are a number of reasons for believing that these verses are an addition to the text and are not original. They are absent from the earliest Greek manuscripts, but also from manuscripts of diverse text types. Also, some of the manuscripts that do contain them have scribal marks indicating that although the scribe copied them into the text, they were not original. Also, they are not in the same place in every ancient manuscript. In some manuscripts they occur in Matthew, after Matthew 26:39. This fact is very telling, because if a text is original and gets accidentally removed, it is always in the same place in the manuscripts that have it. However, if a verse is added, sometimes scribes add it in different places, which is what happened with these verses. Also, the verses contain vocabulary that occurs nowhere else in Luke, which, on its own does not carry much weight, but when combined with the other evidence is noteworthy. While it is still possible that the verses are original (some early manuscripts contain them while others do not, and some Church Fathers quote them while others omit them), the weight of the evidence leads us to believe they were added to the text.

One thing to keep in mind is that, although it sometimes happens that a section of scripture this long is added or deleted by accident, it is far more likely that this section, as complete as it is, was added or omitted on purpose. That being the case, and since we can construct from the manuscripts that this addition or deletion occurred sometime in the second century after Christ, why would the change occur? The most likely reason for the change would have been as an effort to combat one of the “heresies” of the early church: Docetism. The label “Docetism” came from the Greek word *dokein*, “to seem,” and it was the belief of the docetics that Jesus was not human, but only seemed human. The debate over whether Jesus was human or merely some sort of phantom raged hot and heavy in the second century and was firmly condemned at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Thus, given the time period and the evidence of the text itself, it seems likely that in order to have a text that “proved” Jesus was human, these verses were added to the text of Scripture.

Even if the verses were added to the text, that does not mean the event did not happen. It is possible that Jesus really did pray so hard he sweat drops of blood, and this was part of the oral tradition that was passed down about Jesus by the members of the early Church. Then, especially considering the controversy about the humanity of Jesus, it was added to the text by scribes anxious to defend Jesus’ humanity.

[For more information, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, and Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*.]

Luk 22:47

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“a crowd *was coming*.”** This “crowd” consisted of both Jewish police and Roman soldiers (see commentary on John 18:3).

Luk 22:52

**“commanders.”** The Greek word is *stratēgos* (#4755 στρατηγός), and it refers to the commanders of the Temple police. See commentary on Luke 22:4.

Luk 22:54

**“and brought him into the high priest’s house.”** This statement puts two events, Jesus being taken first to Annas and later to Caiaphas into one sentence and simply says that Jesus was taken to the High Priest. The Bible says that Jesus was taken first to Annas, and from Annas to Caiaphas, (John 18:13, 24). Annas was the father-in-law to Caiaphas, and from the biblical record and archaeological evidence, Annas and Caiaphas lived side by side in a family compound, which was not unusual. That would also explain how Peter could follow what was happening to Jesus through the night even though the Gospels seem to have him in the same general area. The compound in which Annas and Caiaphas lived would have had a big yard and been surrounded by a fence or wall, which explains why Peter had to be let into the area through a gate (John 18:16), but did not have to go through another gate when Jesus was taken from Annas to Caiaphas. So, Jesus was taken to Annas first, and because he had been the High Priest he was still thought of that way (cf. Acts 4:6), then to Caiaphas, the Roman-appointed High Priest, and it was at Caiaphas’ house that all the chief priests and elders gathered (Matt. 26:57), then in the morning they all took Jesus to the Sanhedrin for a daybreak trial (Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71), then they took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

[For more on the chronology of the last week of Christ’s life from his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane to his appearances on Sunday after his crucifixion, see commentary on John 18:13. For more information about Jesus being in the tomb, “the heart of the earth,” for three full days and three nights, see commentary on Matt. 12:40. For information on the chronology of the four trials of Jesus on Tuesday (before the Jewish Sanhedrin, then Pilate, then Herod, then Pilate) see commentary on John 19:14, “the sixth hour.” For information on the two-stage burial of Jesus, first by Joseph of Arimathea and then by Nicodemus, see commentary on John 19:40. For information on the Hasmonean palace as the likely location of Jesus’ trial before Pilate, see commentary on Luke 23:7.]

Luk 22:57

**“Ma’am.”** The Greek is literally “woman,” but while that was acceptable and polite in Greek culture, it is not in English. “Ma’am” is a polite address in English.

**“he denied it.”** For more on the denials of Peter, see commentary on Matthew 26:70.

Luk 22:58

**“someone else.”** In verses 56 through 60, Peter is accused of being associated with Jesus three times by three different people, and three times here he denies the Lord. We know the first accuser is female because it specifically says she was a “servant girl” in verse 56, and Peter replies with the appellation, “woman” in verse 57. The second two accusers were males, which we can tell from the Greek words *heteros* and *allos*, and the fact Peter changes his address to “man,” in verses 58 and 60.

After the servant girl accuses Peter, the Greek says “another” saw him and addressed him, using the word *heteros* (#2087 ἕτερος). This word means, “another of a different kind.” In this case, the first “kind” was a female; then by using *heteros* in the masculine, Luke is telling us the second questioner was a male. Hence Peter changes his appellative to “man” here in verse 58. Then in verse 59, we are told still “another” addressed Peter, but this time the Greek is *allos* (#243 ἄλλος), meaning “another of the same kind”—since the last questioner was male, another of the same kind would also be a male, hence Peter also uses the appellative “man” in verse 60. This record is an excellent example of how the words *heteros* (“another of a different kind”) and *allos* (“another of the same kind”) can help to understand a passage.

Reading this record in the KJV can be confusing because *heteros* and *allos* are both simply translated “another.” It says a “maid” first talks to Peter, then “another,” then “another,” leaving the impression it is another maid—but Peter switches his replies from “woman” to “man.” To avoid this confusion and bring out the full meaning of the Greek, we translated *heteros* as “someone else” in verse 58.

Luk 22:61

**“the words.”** The Greek text has “the word,” which is a collective singular. In English, we would say “the words” for clarity.

Luk 22:65

**“insulting him.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) is transliterated (not translated) from the Greek into English as “blasphemy.” In English, “blasphemy” is only used in reference to God. However, in Greek, *blasphēmeō* and *blasphēmia* (the noun) did not have to refer to God or a god, although they could, but were common words that were used of someone speaking against another. The primary meanings were showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. In this case, the people at the trial of Jesus were insulting and defaming him.

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

Luk 22:66

**“led him away into their Sanhedrin *chamber*.”** This is an empty show of godliness. According to law, there had to be a trial before anyone could be condemned to death. The leaders had already decided Jesus’ fate, but now they had to pretend to have an actual legal trial. The real trial that happened during the night at Caiaphas’ house was illegal on many counts. It was at night; likely the whole Sanhedrin was not there; the witnesses were false witnesses; and Jesus did not actually break any laws, he said he was the Messiah and he was. There was no Mosaic Law against claiming to be the Christ, especially if you were the Christ. The whole night trial was an illegal sham, and this sunrise trial was a sham too, and meant to deceive the people and the governor Pontius Pilate, not reach a righteous verdict.

Luk 22:70

**“Then are you the Son of God?”** The religious leaders never thought Jesus was claiming to be God, and they did not arrest him for that. They knew he was claiming to be the Messiah, and they did not think the Messiah was in any way God

[See commentary on Matthew 26:63, also see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

**“You say *correctly* that I am.”** See commentary on Matthew 27:11; “*It is as* you say.”

**Luke Chapter 23**

Luk 23:1

**“all of them.”** More literally from the Greek: “the whole crowd of them,” but that is awkward in English.

Luk 23:3

**“*Yes, it is as* you say.”** Pilate’s question, “Are you the King of the Jews,” and Jesus’ affirmative answer, “Yes,” is very important, both for Pilate and for us, and it is recorded in all four Gospels (Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; and John 18:33 and 18:37). Jesus answered Pilate’s question in the affirmative, that, yes, he is a king. It is important to translate this verse in the affirmative. Jesus was not playing word games with Pilate, giving him an ambiguous answer. See commentary on Matthew 27:11; “*Yes, it is as* you say.”

Luk 23:4

**“crowd.”** The Greek is plural, technically “crowds,” but although that is the way the Greeks would say it, in English, we use “crowd” as a collective singular for a lot of people.

Luk 23:7

**“he sent him up.”** The Greek verb, “he sent…up” is *anapempō* (#375 ἀναπέμπω), and it means “to send from a lower to a higher place,” or “to send to a person of higher authority,” or “to send back to a previous location.”[[135]](#footnote-22369) In this context, the meaning is “to send from a lower to a higher place,” and it helps us locate where Pontius Pilate was during the trial of Jesus Christ.

There is some very good evidence that Pilate tried Jesus in the Hasmonean palace, which was just west of the Temple and on the west slope of the Tyropoeon Valley, the valley that runs south to north through Jerusalem. During Jesus’ trial, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas. It is most likely that Herod Antipas, who grew up in the Western Palace as a boy, would be offered that as a place to stay during Passover. The Western Palace, or “Citadel,” was the ancestral home of the Herods and it was on the far west of Jerusalem and higher in elevation than the Hasmonean palace. So if Pilate sent Jesus from the Hasmonean palace to the Western Palace, then the Bible did indeed correctly state that Pilate sent Jesus “up” to Herod.

The Judean ruler, king Herod Archelaus (Matt. 2:22), who was the son of Herod the Great and his wife Malthace and who replaced Herod the Great as king, was deposed by the Romans in AD 6, at which time all his possessions, including his palaces, became the property of Rome. Thus, by the time Pilate was governor, he controlled and used both the great Western Palace and the old Hasmonean palace. The Hasmonean palace was directly west of the Temple and had towers that overlooked its walls, and historically, both palaces were called a “Praetorium.” Little attention is paid to the Hasmonean palace today. This is partly due to the fact that nothing remains of it; in fact, even its exact location was disputed until recently. Also, it has only been recently that some scholars have begun to put together the evidence and come to the conclusion that the old Hasmonean palace was the place of the trial of Christ.

There are a number of pieces of evidence that lead us to conclude that Pilate tried Jesus in the Hasmonean palace, too many to discuss here. Nevertheless, one very important piece of biblical evidence is the Bible’s use of *anapempō* in Luke 23:7. As the Roman authority and governor of Judea, Pilate was a higher authority in the land than Herod Antipas, which was likely why Herod was flattered and honored when Pilate sent Jesus to him, and thus why Herod and Pilate became friends (Luke 23:12). Many lexicons write as though Herod was the higher authority in Israel at the time, and make it seem like Pilate sent Jesus “up” to Herod because Herod was a higher authority than Pilate. But that is clearly not the case. For one thing, Herod was visiting Judea for Passover, and Judea was not even technically his jurisdiction. Also, the religious leaders brought Jesus to Pilate because he was the authority in Judea. So, Pilate did not send Jesus “up to a person of higher authority” when he sent Jesus to Herod, nor did he “send Jesus back to a previous location.” The evidence leads us to conclude that the Bible is historically correct and Pilate sent Jesus “up” to Herod because the Western Palace was higher in elevation than the Hasmonean palace.

Also, Pilate’s wife had a dream about Christ, and “sent word to him” to have nothing to do with Christ (Matt. 27:19). Although it is possible that she would have “sent word” even if she and her husband Pilate were in the same palace enclosure, it seems unlikely. The message seems urgent enough that if she could have reasonably seen her husband face to face, she would have. If, however, she was staying in the plush and very secure Western Palace, and at that time of day Pilate was working from the Hasmonean palace near the Temple, she would have “sent word to him.” The Roman workday, even for government officials, began very early, so it would not be unusual for Pilate to be working when his wife wanted to tell him about a dream she had (there is also some ancillary evidence that perhaps the governor and his wife would not have stayed in the same location anyway).

Also, the Hasmonean palace had been used as the administrative center of Jerusalem for years, so there is some support from tradition. And, as the historian Jack Finegan points out, “…the oldest Jerusalem tradition, attested by the pilgrims down into the seventh century, points to the Praetorium of Pilate as being on the west bank of the Tyropoeon Valley, which was the area of the Hasmonean palace which became Herod’s Lower Palace.”[[136]](#footnote-26591) However, Finegan notes that the Western Palace is also a possibility even if it does not have the historical support the Hasmonean palace does.

Also, at some point in the early centuries after Christ, the Christians built a church on the site where Jesus had been on trial, and that church was visited by early pilgrims, including Peter the Iberian in AD 451; there is a church in that location on the Madaba Mosaic Map (done sometime between AD 542 and AD 570). It has only been in the last decades that remains of an ancient church have been uncovered on the west slope of the Tyropoeon Valley where the Hasmonean palace would have been located, whereas there is no history of a church being in the location of the Western Palace.

Although it is possible that Pilate did try Jesus in the Western Palace, and today a lot of people believe that is where Jesus was on trial before Pilate, the actual evidence for it is very limited. It mainly comes from traditional support; the fact that the Western Palace, like the Hasmonean palace, was called a Praetorium; and archaeology showing there was a pavement there and room for a crowd. But the Hasmonean palace would have had plenty of room for a trial also.

If Pilate was at the Western Palace, that does not explain why Pilate sent Jesus “up” to Herod. Also, if Herod had been staying in the Antonia Fortress or the Hasmonean palace, those places were “down” from the Western Palace.

It also should be noted that although the Antonia Fortress has often been traditionally known as the place where Pilate tried Jesus, the historical and archaeological evidence is against it.

[For more information, see J. Finegan.[[137]](#footnote-15352) See also, Bargil Pixner.[[138]](#footnote-15864)]

Luk 23:9

**“questioned him at considerable length.”** The Greek reads, “was questioning him with many words,” but the phrase means “questioned him at considerable length,” (NET; cf. “great length” CJB; “some length” ESV, NASB, NRSV). Herod questioned Jesus for a considerable length of time, but there is no evidence of a formal trial. Herod wanted to have his curiosity satisfied, and did not really care whether or not Jesus got justice in his court.

**“but he did not answer him.”** It is certainly understandable that Jesus did not answer Herod Antipas. First and foremost, there was no profit in it. For him to die in Jerusalem he would have to be tried before Pilate, who had the authority there. He had no desire to be taken under arrest back to Galilee. Furthermore, there was no point in providing any satisfaction to Herod, who had killed his friend and cousin John the Baptist. Neither was he interested in giving any satisfaction to Herod’s court, which included his murderous wife Herodias, or his dancing step-daughter Salome. He could have told them that soon he would be their judge and condemn them to a second death, but that would have only subjected him to their ridicule.

Luk 23:11

**“treated…with contempt.”** From *exoutheneō* (#1848 ἐξουθενέω). See commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:20.

**“mocked.”** The Greek word translated “mocked” is *empaizō* (#1702 ἐμπαίζω), and means “mock,” “make fun of,” “ridicule.” See commentary on Matthew 27:29.

**“sent him back to Pilate.”** Herod Antipas was no doubt embarrassed by his failure to get Jesus to talk to him, so he mocked Jesus, treated him badly, and sent him to Pilate. He could have taken Jesus back to Galilee and tried him there, but since he was already feeling a lack of support from his subjects for killing John the Baptist, he would not take Jesus back to his area of strongest support and execute him when he could simply send him back to Pilate, who would then have to deal with him.

Luk 23:12

**“friends.”** Pilate and Herod Antipas had been hostile to each other, deeply disliking one another. Herod had even sent a letter about Pilate to the Roman Emperor Tiberias about his not respecting Jewish customs (see commentary on Matt. 27:2, “Pilate”) Pilate’s sending Jesus to Herod, even though Pilate could have tried the case himself, was viewed by Herod as a personal and professional courtesy, both in recognizing his rank as Tetrarch of Galilee, but also in allowing him to see Jesus, something that Pilate likely knew Herod wanted.

Luk 23:13

**“Pilate called the chief priests and the rulers and the People together.”** This was now close to noon on Tuesday (John 19:14), and the start of Jesus’ second trial before Pilate. When the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate the first time, they had just had him on trial before the whole Sanhedrin, so when they came to Pilate they did not have to be called together, they came as a whole assembly (Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-23:1). But when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, their group went their own way. So now, after Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate, the leaders of the Jews had to be assembled again, which is what we see here in Luke 23:13.

Luk 23:14

**“look”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 23:15

**“See!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 23:17

This verse is an addition to some Greek texts, from whence it was translated into some versions. It was apparently added, based on Matthew 27:15 and Mark 15:6.[[139]](#footnote-28712)

Luk 23:19

**“murder.”** Mark 15:7 and Luke 23:19 say Barabbas committed murder. We don’t know the circumstances of Barabbas’ imprisonment. He may have been a genuinely evil person, or he may have been rebelling against Roman oppression, which could be very real and very unjust. If he had been involved in insurrection against Roman oppression, that could be a reason the crowd could have been easily convinced to ask for him to be released from prison (Matt. 27:20; Mark 15:11).

[For more on Barabbas, see commentary on John 18:40.]

Luk 23:21

**“Crucify! Crucify him!”** The majority of this crowd was probably Jewish leaders, followers of the Jewish leaders, Temple police, etc. There is a lot of traditional teaching about the fickle crowd who shouted “Hosanna” as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, but shouted “crucify him” only a few days later, but the real situation was different than that. To be sure, there would have been people who, seeing Jesus humbled and beaten by the Jewish rulers and the Romans would have thought he was a deceiver who misled and tricked them, and they would have changed their mind perhaps to the point they wanted Jesus crucified. However, the Gospel records make it plain that there were always people who doubted Jesus. This second trial before Pilate had not been advertised (Pilate had to gather the Jewish leaders back together after Herod returned Jesus to Pilate; Luke 23:13), but when the Jewish leaders were summoned before Pilate, no doubt they quickly spread the word to gather their supporters, who would have made up this crowd before Pilate. The followers of Jesus made up the crowd that followed him and were mourning (see commentary on Luke 23:27).

Luk 23:27

**“a great multitude.”** This shows that there was a huge crowd of people who did follow Jesus Christ, and did not agree with his crucifixion. It shows that the people in Jerusalem were divided into two camps: the group of people who shouted “Hosanna” and “Son of David” when Jesus entered Jerusalem some days earlier (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9; John 12:13), and the group of people who had shouted “Crucify him” (Matt. 27:23; Mark 15:14; Luke 23:21; John 19:15). The great multitude who was following Jesus seemed to genuinely sympathize with him, but it was to the women who were so emotional that he addressed himself.

**“the People.”** In this context “the People” refers to the people who were Jews (see commentary on Matt. 2:4).

**“were beating themselves on the chest.”** The Greek is *koptō* (#2875 κόπτω), and it means, to cut, strike, smite, or to beat one’s breast for grief.

Luk 23:28

**“do not cry for me.”** The women were already crying. The verse could perhaps better be translated, “Stop crying for me, and be crying for yourselves.” “In negative commands the present imperative often means, as it does here, to stop an action already begun.”[[140]](#footnote-32618) Jesus told the women to “be crying for themselves.” Jesus had been teaching that soon after his death the Great Tribulation would occur (cf. Matt. 24:34), and things would become very difficult for believers. Daniel foretold that during the End Times, the worldly rulers would persecute the believers and succeed (Dan. 7:21), and the book of Revelation confirms that (Rev. 13:7). Families would be destroyed, and so the emotional pain of those times would be less severe for women who did not have children.

Luk 23:29

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

Luk 23:30

**“to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Bury us!’”** The Tribulation of the End Times will be so terrible that people will long to die, and prefer the quick death of being crushed to the lingering pain of tribulation. Revelation 9:6 says, “And in those days people will seek death but will not find it, and they will long to die, but death will flee from them.”

Luk 23:33

**“Skull.”** There is excellent evidence that Jesus Christ was crucified on the top of the Mount of Olives, which is where there was a “headcount” done, and there is other supporting evidence besides that (see commentary on Matt. 27:33).

**“they crucified him.”** The crucifixion was the one event that separated the real Jesus Christ from all the myths and tales about Greek and Roman gods and heroes. According to the myths, the gods and heroes did wonderful things and even miracles, but none of them ever died on a cross for the sins of others. It is the crucifixion that separates the truth of Jesus from the myths about the gods.

[For information on Jesus being crucified on Wednesday and being raised from the dead Saturday just before sunset, see commentary on Matt. 12:40, “three days and three nights.” For more information on Nicodemus and that he came after Joseph of Arimathea left the tomb, see commentary on John 19:40. For more information on the events from Jesus’ arrest to his death, see commentary on John 18:13 and 19:14.]

Luk 23:34

**“And Jesus said...”** This verse is omitted in some early manuscripts, and therefore scholars have debated long and loud about whether it was or was not original. We believe it was original.[[141]](#footnote-29386) If it was original, it would have been removed by those who were so biased against the Jews that any thought of them being forgiven by Jesus was repugnant (and had they believed it, they would have had to markedly change their attitudes toward the Jews). On the other hand, that Jesus would utter a prayer of forgiveness from the cross after some 40 hours of inhuman and merciless torture is so astounding and such an amazing act of grace that we dare say no human would have thought to add it. We believe any addition of that kind would have been immediately rejected by peers as absurd, and the saying would have never made it into the textual tradition.

Luk 23:39

**“hanged.”** The Greek is *kremannumi* (#2910 κρεμάννυμι), and it means, to hang, to hang up, to suspend, and it was also used of hanging or suspending someone on a cross, just as we used the word “hang” in reference to the cross, and say, “Jesus hung on the cross.”

**“kept insulting.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more information on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

Luk 23:42

**“remember me.”** In this case, the word “remember” has an idiomatic sense. Scholars sometimes refer to this idiomatic sense as the “pregnant sense” of the word because the word often has its normal meaning but it is “pregnant” with a deeper meaning as well. Thus, here in Luke 23:42, “remember” refers to much more than just the mental action of remembering. It means to remember and then act upon one’s knowledge or previous knowledge. Idiomatically, “remember” often means “pay attention to” and/or “help, support, assist,” etc. To “remember” God’s law is to obey it (cf. Mal. 4:4). “Remember” can also be used of “remembering” someone in a bad sense, to “remember” and act in response (cf. Jer. 14:10).

Here in Luke 23:42, the criminal on the cross was not asking that Jesus simply “remember” him intellectually, but that on Judgment Day that Jesus would look favorably upon him and allow him to enter the kingdom. Jesus knew exactly what the malefactor was asking and calmed his heart by saying that he would be with Jesus in Paradise.

There are many examples of “remember” being used with its idiomatic meaning. For example, God “remembered” Noah in the sense that He helped and protected Noah (Gen. 8:1). In Genesis 19:29, God “remembered” Abraham, that is, He blessed and helped Abraham by saving his nephew Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In 1 Samuel 1:19, God “remembered” Hannah in that He especially blessed her in getting pregnant after she had been barren for years. When the children of Israel did not “remember” Yahweh, it does not mean that they forgot who He was, it means they quit paying attention to Him and quit obeying His commandments (Judg. 8:34).

The idiomatic sense of “remember” is used by both God (Gen. 30:22; Exod. 2:24; 1 Sam. 1:19) and people (Judg. 16:28; 1 Sam. 1:11; Ps. 74:22; Lam. 2:1), and there are many examples of it being used idiomatically (cf. Gen. 19:29; Neh. 6:14; 13:31; Ps. 106:4; Eccl. 9:15; Hos. 8:13). “Remember” can also mean “to keep in mind” (Ps. 103:14). Examples of “remember” being used in the bad sense of acting against a person or people include 1 Samuel 15:2-3; 3 John 1:10; and Revelation 18:5. The idiomatic use of “remember” occurs in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament (cf. Gal. 2:10; Col. 4:18; and Heb. 13:3). The phrase “do not forget” has the same basic meaning as “remember” (Ps. 74:23).

Many other words besides “remember” are used in an idiomatic or pregnant sense. For example, the word “forget” is used idiomatically to mean “ignore, not pay attention to.” Thus, Hosea 4:6 says that people had “forgotten” the law. They had not actually forgotten it, they had simply ignored it.

Similarly, the word “look” (or “see”) often means more than just to look at, but to look at and then act in the situation (cf. Gen. 29:32, Exod. 4:31; 1 Sam. 1:11; 9:16; 2 Sam. 16:12; Job 40:12; Lam. 1:9; Luke 1:48). In Genesis 22:14, Abraham named the mountain on which he offered Isaac “Yahweh will see,” often translated with the idiomatic or pregnant sense of “see” as “Yahweh will provide.” There is evidence that Yahweh provided Jesus as the sin offering for all humankind on that same mountain, which would therefore be the Mount of Olives (see commentary on Gen. 22:2 and commentary on Matt. 27:33).

Also, “watch” is used of much more than just watching in Matthew 25:13. There it means to keep watch and keep doing what you are supposed to be doing.

The word “know” can mean to know or experience, but it can also have an idiomatic or pregnant sense and mean “to care about,” “to act lovingly toward.” Thus, Psalm 144:3 (YLT 1862/87/98) says, “what is man that Thou knowest him,” while the NIV(2011) translates that in a way that recognizes the idiom: “what are human beings that you care for them?” Similarly, Proverbs 12:10 (YLT) says, “The righteous man knoweth the life of his beast,” while the NIV(2011) has, “The righteous care for the needs of their animals.” Also, “know” is used idiomatically for sexual intercourse because when a man has sexual intercourse with a woman it involves knowing her experientially, and often deeply intellectually as well (see commentary on Matt. 1:25).

[For more on “know” see commentary on Gen. 3:22.]

The word “foreknow” can also have the meaning of care about beforehand (see commentary on Rom. 8:29).

The word “hear” can have the meaning “obey,” to “listen to and obey,” and to “pay attention to” (cf. Exod. 19:5; Deut. 4:30; 8:20; 11:27; 12:28; 28:1; Josh. 5:6; 1 Kings 11:38; Neh. 9:16; Isa. 30:9; and many more).

Luk 23:43

**“I say to you today, you will be with me.”** This verse is one of the demonstrations of Jesus’ great love for people. The malefactor on the cross had no assurance of salvation, and in fact, may have been fairly certain of his own doom. Yet in a last act, he reached out to the Messiah, and Jesus promised him life in Paradise. Jesus never turns away those who come to him for salvation.

What Jesus said in Luke 23:43 to the criminal on the cross has been quoted to prove that when a person dies, he goes immediately to heaven or hell, but it does not have to read that way. Admittedly, the way that this verse is punctuated in almost every English Bible, it does say the criminal was going to go to Paradise that day. However, there was no punctuation in the original text (in fact, there were not even spaces between the words). All punctuation was added by translators, and they added it in a way that fit their theology and made sense to them. Thankfully, most of the time, the translators have done a good job with the punctuation, and it is correct and helpful. However, in this verse, almost every English Bible puts the comma in the wrong place, creating a false and misleading reading.

The biblical evidence is that the comma should be after the word “today,” not in front of it. That way, the verse reads: “And he [Jesus] said to him [the criminal], ‘Truly I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise.’” Thus, Jesus did not say the criminal would be in Paradise that day, but rather made the point that “today” he was saying the criminal would be in Paradise in the future.

Placing the comma after “today” makes the verse fit with both the scope of Scripture and the immediate context. From the scope of Scripture, we learn that when a person dies, he is dead; not alive in any form.

The comma being after “today” also fits with the immediate context. To see this, we must remember what the criminal said to Jesus in the previous verse, Luke 23:42: “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” The criminal was speaking about the “kingdom.” The “kingdom” is not “heaven,” and it is future. The kingdom is the Messianic Kingdom that Jesus will set up on earth after he fights the Battle of Armageddon and conquers the earth. The Bible has a lot to say about the Messianic Kingdom: there will be peace, justice, and safety on earth. Jesus will rule from Jerusalem, everyone will worship in the Temple (Ezek. 40-44), and the lion will eat straw like the ox (Isa. 11:7). Also, everyone will be healthy and have plenty to eat.

The criminal did not doubt that the Messianic Kingdom was coming, but he likely doubted whether he would be allowed into it. So in an unassuming, pleading way, he requested, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” In other words, the criminal said to the Lord that he would like to be in the first resurrection, the Resurrection of the Righteous, and get to enter the Kingdom and be saved. It was a wonderful act of love for Jesus to say, “you will be with me in Paradise.”

Why did Jesus use the word “today?” In many languages, including Greek, Hebrew, and English, words that we normally think of as being “time words” are often used for emphasis. This happens with the English word “now” all the time. A teacher might say, “Now class, make sure you sign your test.” The purpose of “Now” in that sentence is not time, but emphasis, and that can be the case in both Hebrew and Greek as well (cf. Luke 11:39, Acts 13:11; 15:10; 22:16; 1 Cor. 14:6; James 4:13).

In Hebrew, the word “today,” or “this day,” was also used for emphasis, and it is used that way many times in the Old Testament. “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day,...” (Deut. 4:26); “know therefore today,...” (Deut. 4:39); “These words that I command you this day...” (Deut. 6:6). “I testify against you this day that you will surely perish” (Deut. 8:19). A use that is very similar to Luke 23:43 is Deuteronomy 30:18, “I declare to you this day that you will surely perish.” There is very little difference between “I say to you today” (Luke 23:43) and “I declare to you this day” (Deut. 30:18). Deuteronomy 9:1 says, “Hear O Israel today you are to cross over the Jordan” (without punctuation).[[142]](#footnote-19477) It is vital that we understand that Israel did not cross Jordan “that day,” and in fact, did not do so for another couple of months. So “today” did not mean that very day, but was used for emphasis. Bullinger notes the punctuation of Deuteronomy 9:1 should be: “Hear O Israel today, you are...,”[[143]](#footnote-17784) which is very similar to Luke 23:43. Other uses, just in Deuteronomy, that include the words “today” or “this day” more for emphasis than for time, include Deut. 4:40; 5:1; 7:11; 8:1, 11, 19; 9:1, 3; 10:13; 11:2, 8, 13, 26, 27, 28, 32; 13:18; 15:5, 15; 19:9; 26:3, 16, 17, 18; 27:1, 4, 10; 28:1, 13, 14, 15; 30:2, 8, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19; 32:46.

Neither Jesus nor the criminal went to “Paradise” that day. In the Bible, “Paradise” is a place on earth. In the context of Luke 23:43, “Paradise” refers to the Millennial Kingdom when Christ rules the earth.

[For more information about dead people being dead in every way, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.” For more information about the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth” and John W. Schoenheit, *The Christian’s Hope: The Anchor of the Soul*. For more on “Paradise being a place on earth, see commentary on Luke 23:43, “Paradise.”]

**“the Paradise.”** The Paradise” (*tō paradeisō*) is a well-known term that the prophets had been speaking about for centuries. Jesus was not speaking about “a” paradise, but “the Paradise” that will be on earth when he conquers the earth and sets up his kingdom.

The English word “paradise” comes from the Greek word *paradeisos* (#3857 παράδεισος, pronounced pä-rä-day-sos). “Paradise” was, and will again be, a place on earth. God’s plan was that humankind would live on earth, and so He put Adam and Eve on earth in the Garden of Eden. God’s plan for mankind to live on a wonderful earth was temporarily spoiled by sin, but God will bring His plan to fulfillment. When Jesus Christ conquers the earth at the Battle of Armageddon and sets up his Messianic Kingdom, mankind will again live in “Eden,” in Paradise (Rev. 2:7).

The Hebrew word *eden* (#05731 עֵדֶן) means “delight, or pleasure.” When God created Adam and Eve, He loved them and so He put them in the “Garden of *eden*;” the “Garden of Delight” (Gen. 2:15). It is unfortunate that the translators decided to transliterate the word *eden* into “Eden” instead of translating it into “Delight.” The phrase “Garden of Eden” does not mean anything to most English readers except that it was a physical place on earth. In contrast, had the translators decided to say, “Garden of Delight” instead of “Garden of Eden,” we would still know it was a place on earth, but God’s love and purpose in putting people in a wonderful place would have been revealed.

When the Greeks living in Egypt translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek around 250 BC and made the Septuagint version, they translated the phrase “garden of *eden*” in Genesis 2:15 as “*paradeisos.*” Actually, *paradeisos* was not a Greek word, but was a loanword from the Persian language and meant “pleasure garden.” It referred to the lush, protected pleasure gardens that oriental rulers and powerful men kept for their enjoyment. The English word “paradise” comes from the word “*paradeisos*.” That the Greek-speaking Jews translated the “garden of *eden*” as “*paradeisos*” was a good choice, because the Garden of *eden* was indeed a garden of delight, a paradise. By the time of Christ, *paradeisos* (Paradise) was one of the terms used for the kingdom of Christ on earth, as we can see from 2 Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7.

We do not know for sure what language Jesus spoke when he spoke to the criminal on the cross because we do not know the nationality of the criminal, but Jesus did know because he heard the criminal speak. If Jesus spoke Hebrew, what he said would be in essence, “You will be with me in Eden.” If he had spoken Greek, he would have used the word *paradeisos*.

English readers today do not usually see the flow of God’s plan for humankind from the Old Testament to the New Testament because of the change from Old Testament Hebrew to New Testament Greek. God’s plan was to put humankind on earth in “Eden,” “Paradise.” But Adam and Eve sinned and Paradise was lost and the earth became the fallen world we live in today. But God’s plan will not be thwarted forever: God will reinstate Paradise on earth for humankind (the Millennial Kingdom and the Eternal Kingdom), as many prophecies in both the Old and New Testament state. However, today we read about “Eden” in the Old Testament and “Paradise” in the New Testament and don’t see the connection. But although the sin of Adam and Eve derailed God’s plan for a while, Jesus will come back to earth, fight the Battle of Armageddon, and conquer the earth, and again set up Paradise on earth. Thus, God’s plan to have His saved people live in “paradise,” although in abeyance now, will not be thwarted forever; it will happen.

The criminal on the cross asked to be remembered when Jesus came into his Kingdom, which will be on earth, and Jesus responded and comforted the man by saying he would indeed be in Eden, or Paradise, which will be on earth. When Jesus said, “You will be with me in Paradise,” Jesus was promising the man he would be in the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), also called the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5, 6); and “the resurrection of life” (John 5:29), and people in that resurrection then get to be part of the Messianic Kingdom on earth.

[For more information on the resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

Neither Jesus nor the criminal went to “Paradise” that day. When Jesus Christ died, Scripture universally testifies that he was in the grave and not in Paradise. In fact, Paradise (the Messianic Kingdom on earth) has still not come—we are still awaiting the resurrection of the dead and the Messianic Kingdom on earth. But the fact that Jesus said, “You will be with me in Paradise” is a beautiful expression of Christ’s heart for mankind. He could have looked at the criminal and said, “Okay, I will remember you.” But by saying “You will be with me in Paradise,” Jesus gave the man strength and hope to be able to endure his last few hours of tremendous suffering on the cross. The man was in excruciating pain, but he had a hope that burned with a fire that must have kept his heart warm until his dying breath. Paradise is also specifically mentioned two other times in the New Testament. Once by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:4, where we learn that Jesus took Paul into the future Paradise in a vision in much the same way that he took the apostle John by a vision into the future and told John to write the book of Revelation describing what he saw. The other time is in the vision John had of the future, which mentions Paradise and the tree of life, just like the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8-9; Rev. 2:7). The fact that the tree of life was in the Garden of Eden in Genesis and the future Paradise in the book of Revelation is more evidence that “Paradise” is on earth, not in heaven.

[For more information on the Kingdom of Christ being on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

It is sometimes taught that “Paradise” is an intermediary state that existed for righteous people before they could go to heaven. There is no direct scriptural support for such a place, but it is assumed to exist due to some false assumptions.

The first false assumption is that the soul is immortal, and therefore has to live someplace. However, there is no Scriptural support for the soul being immortal. In fact, just the opposite. The soul can and does die (cf. Matt. 10:28). The reason that people need to be “raised from the dead” is that the “person” is dead, not just the person’s body. If the person’s soul was alive someplace, it could be judged without the body being present, but Scripture never teaches that. Furthermore, when it speaks of resurrection, it speaks of the “person” being raised. There is no verse about a living soul rejoining a dead body.

[For more information on this topic, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

Having made the false assumption that the dead person is actually alive and has to live someplace, theologians then drew another false conclusion based on the first one. First, they correctly realized that if the person died before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the person’s soul could not go to “heaven.” If a dead person could go to heaven before Jesus died for his sin, then anyone could go to heaven before Jesus, and thus Jesus would not really have needed to come at all. So theologians invented a place where the souls of good people could go while they waited for the Savior to save them and open the way to heaven. This “place” does not exist in the Bible, so it needed a name, and therefore some theologians call it “Paradise.”

The simple, biblical truth is that when a person dies, he is dead until God raises him from the dead, and the three major times that happens in Scripture are the Rapture of the Church, the First Resurrection (or Resurrection of the Righteous), and the Second Resurrection (or Resurrection of the Unrighteous). Jesus and the malefactor both died on the cross that day. God raised Jesus from the dead three days later and Jesus is now in heaven ruling as Lord and Christ. The malefactor is still in the grave, dead and completely unaware of the passage of time. But Jesus will be good for his promise, and on Resurrection Day that man will hear the shout of the Son of Man and come out of the tomb (John 5:25-29; Ezek. 37:12-14).

[For more on the dead being dead and not alive in any form, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

Luk 23:44

**“sixth hour…ninth hour.”** This is about our noon to 3 p.m. Both the Jews and Romans divided the day into 12 hours, starting at daylight, roughly 6 a.m.

[For the hours of the day and the watches of the night, see commentary on Mark 6:48.]

Luk 23:45

**“because the sun’s light failed.”** A more literal reading might be, “the sun’s light having failed.” Also, some later manuscripts read, “the sun was darkened,” but the earlier manuscripts, and some ancient versions as well, are likely more correct. God’s Son was dying, and God, in honor of His Son and as an expression of His own grief and sorrow, and also as an expression of the evil that was occurring on earth, darkened the sun until His Son died.

**“curtain of the sanctuary.”** The front of the Temple was covered with a large curtain, and it tore when Jesus died, opening the way for “regular people” to enter into the presence of God.

**“was torn down the middle.”** The curtain was torn “down,” not “up.” That the Temple curtain was torn from top to bottom not only showed that God tore the veil, but the act was also likely very symbolic. It showed the extreme grief God experienced when His only begotten son died (see commentary on Matt. 27:51).

Luk 23:46

**“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”** Jesus, speaking to his Father, God, committed the ultimate act of trust by giving up his life. The word “spirit” is translated from the Greek word *pneuma* (#4151 πνεῦμα), which has many meanings and can refer to things that are invisible and immaterial, but yet often exert a force or influence that can be seen. We need to be aware that “spirit” itself has many meanings, including God (John 4:24); Jesus (2 Cor. 3:17; Rev. 2:7); angels (Heb. 1:14); demons (Matt. 10:1), “attitude” (Matt. 5:3; 26:41; Mark 14:38; Acts 18:25), and the natural life of the body, which is immaterial and thus in the realm of “spirit” (Luke 8:55; Acts 7:59; James 2:26). The natural life of the body (sometimes referred to as “soul”) is by nature “spirit,” and therefore is sometimes referred to as “spirit.” Examples include Luke 23:46, Matthew 27:50, Luke 8:55; and James 2:26. Here in Luke 23:46, Jesus committed his “life” to his Father, God, trusting that God would give him life again by raising him from the dead.

[For more on the uses of *pneuma* (“spirit”) in the Bible, see Word Study: “Pneuma,” and also see Graeser, Lynn, Schoenheit, *The Gift of Holy Spirit: The Power to be like Christ*, Appendix B, “Usages of ‘spirit’ in the New Testament.”]

Luk 23:47

**“And when the centurion saw what had happened.”** One of the most notable things that happened at the exact time of Christ’s death was the curtain of the Temple was split from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). The only place in Jerusalem that could be seen to happen was from the top of the Mount of Olives, which had a wonderful view of the east side of the Temple. That the centurion could apparently see the Temple veil tear is good supporting evidence that Jesus was crucified on top of the Mount of Olives.

[For more evidence that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives, see commentary on Matt. 27:33.]

Luk 23:50

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“*there was* a good and righteous man named Joseph.”** Joseph is mentioned in all four Gospels. For the relationship between Joseph and Nicodemus, see commentary on John 19:39.

The death and resurrection of Christ is the pivotal point in the history of mankind. Each of the Four Gospels describes the event, but describes different aspects of it. It takes some effort to make all the pieces on the subject fit together. To be sure, the central message is crystal clear and stands on its own in every Gospel—God raised Jesus from the dead and the tomb is empty. However, when just read side by side, the Gospels have apparent contradictions. But the fact that we must piece the records together to get the actual history of the account is the same thing we have to do in many other places in the Bible in order to understand the more intricate information God has for us in His Word.

Just because the Four Gospels do not read the same way about an event does not mean they contradict each other. In order for each Gospel to portray its own unique picture of the Messiah, it has to have information that the other Gospels do not have, or omit information that they do have

[For the four unique Gospel portraits of Jesus Christ, see commentary on Mark 1:1.]

We must keep in mind that even when a record in one Gospel seems to flow smoothly from one event to another, words such as “and,” “now,” or “but,” can represent a break in time. Thus, the two events connected by a conjunction do not necessarily follow one right after the other, but may have other events that occur between them. For example, there are a large number of verses that start with “and,” which read as if they followed immediately after the previous verse, when actually we can see from the scope of Scripture that time passed and other events occurred between the verses.

The only way to properly construct the chronology of the Four Gospels is to be willing to split the seeming flow of events in a Gospel when there is good evidence from the other Gospels that there are intervening events. By reading each Gospel quickly, and simply noticing what is included or excluded, the unique emphasis of each Gospel is more easily seen. In contrast, by reading the record of Jesus’ life event by event in all four Gospels, we get the composite historical account of what happened.

In fitting the records together, we can see that sometimes large periods of time occur right in the middle of a verse, and only by splitting a verse into two parts can we reconstruct a proper chronology. It would have been helpful if the men who invented the verse divisions had started a new verse each time there was a break in the chronology of Christ’s life. However, because the verse divisions are man-made (in fact, the modern verse divisions we use today were not put into the New Testament until the mid-1500s), they are not always put in the best places. They are good for reference, but unfortunately, sometimes they conceal the true chronology of the biblical text rather than help us understand it.

To understand the events in the Gospels and Acts and be able to better see how they fit with the prophecies and feasts in the Old Testament, it is important to know that the Jewish day started at sunset, while the Roman day started at midnight (like our Western time does). This is important because, although an event that happened at 3 p.m. would be counted on the same day in both Jewish and Roman time, an event between sunset and midnight would be a day earlier in Roman time than in Jewish time. This is because sunset would have started the new Jewish day. The study below lists the verses in chronological order. Commentary on the individual verses can be looked up under that specific verse reference. As we do our study, it is helpful to overview the chronology. The events below are recorded in both Jewish and Roman time.

* **Wednesday, Nisan 14**. Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried.
* **Thursday, Nisan 15**. The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a Special Sabbath. The people rest. The religious leaders ask Pilate for a guard to watch the tomb for three days, which would be Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.
* **Friday, Nisan 16**. The women get spices to properly bury Jesus but they do not go to the tomb because they knew a guard had been placed there for three days.
* **Saturday, Nisan 17**. The weekly Sabbath. The people rest. Jesus gets up from the tomb just before sunset, “three days and three nights” after he was placed in the tomb, fulfilling his prophecy of Matthew 12:40 that he would be “in the heart of the earth” for three days and three nights.
* **Sunday, Nisan 18**. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, then the other women, then the men on the road to Emmaus, then Peter, then the disciples behind locked doors.
* **Sunday, Nisan 25**. Jesus appears to the disciples and Thomas behind locked doors.

**THE EVENTS STARTING WEDNESDAY LATE AFTERNOON.**

**Wednesday, Nisan 14 (Jewish and Roman time): close to sunset**

* Matthew 27:57-61
* Mark 15:42-47
* Luke 23:50-55
* John 19:38

**Wednesday, Nisan 14 (Roman time; if after sunset, then the fifteenth, Jewish time): just before or after sunset**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John 19:39-42

**Thursday, Nisan 15 (the Special Sabbath): morning**

* Matthew 27:62-66
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John: not mentioned

**Friday, Nisan 16:**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark 16:1
* Luke 23:56a
* John: not mentioned

**Saturday, Nisan 17 (the weekly Sabbath):**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke 23:56b.
* John: not mentioned

**Saturday, Nisan 17: evening. The Resurrection. The event itself is not described in Scripture.**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John: not mentioned

**Saturday, Nisan 17: late in the day**

* Matthew 28:1
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John: not mentioned

**Sunday, Nisan 18: very early Sunday morning**

* Matthew 28:2-4
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John: not mentioned

**Sunday, Nisan 18: very early Sunday morning while it was still quite dark**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John 20:1-10

**Sunday, Nisan 18: around sunrise**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* [[Mark 16:9]]
* Luke: not mentioned
* John 20:11-17

**Sunday, Nisan 18: just after sunrise**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark 16:2-4
* Luke 24:1-2
* John: not mentioned

**Sunday, Nisan 18: just after sunrise**

* Matthew 28:5-7; 28:8
* Mark 16:5; 16:6, 7
* Luke 24:3-4a; Luke 24:4-5a; Luke 24:5-9a
* John: not mentioned

**Sunday, Nisan 18: sometime after sunrise**

* Matthew 28:9, 10
* [[Mark 16:10, 11]]
* Luke: not mentioned
* John 20:18

**Sunday, Nisan 18: early to mid-morning**

* Matthew 28:11-15
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke 24:9b
* John: not mentioned

**Sunday, Nisan 18: early to mid-morning (summary statement)**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke 24:10, 11
* John: not mentioned

**Sunday, Nisan 18: early to mid-morning**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke 24:12
* John: not mentioned

**Sunday, Nisan 18:**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* [[Mark 16:12-13]]
* Luke 24:13-35
* John: not mentioned

**Sunday, Nisan 18: evening, before sunset**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* [[Mark 16:14]]
* Luke 24:36-46
* John 20:19-24

**Sunday, Nisan 18 (or soon afterward):**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John 20:25

**Sunday, Nisan 25:**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John 20:26-31

**Sunday, Nisan 25 (or soon afterward):**

* Matthew 28:16a.
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John: not mentioned

**Between Tuesday, Nisan 27, and the Ascension:**

* Matthew 28:16b; Matthew 28:17-20
* [[Mark 16:15-18]]
* Luke 24:47-49
* John 21:1-23

**The Ascension:**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* [[Mark 16:19]]
* Luke 24:50-51
* John: not mentioned

**The Day of Ascension to the Day of Pentecost:**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke 24:52-53
* John: not mentioned

**Summary Statement:**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* Mark: not mentioned
* Luke: not mentioned
* John 21:24, 25

**[After the Day of Pentecost:]**

* Matthew: not mentioned
* [[Mark 16:20]]
* Luke: not mentioned
* John: not mentioned

[For information on the events of the last week of Jesus’ life, see commentary on John 18:13. For a more detailed explanation of the Wednesday crucifixion and Jesus’ three days and three nights in the grave, see commentary on Matt. 12:40.]

Luk 23:52

**“This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.”** Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. See commentary on Matthew 27:58.

Luk 23:53

**“wrapped it in a linen cloth.”** This was not a royal burial, and Joseph left before Nicodemus came with spices to give Jesus a royal burial.

[For more on the women not seeing that Jesus was properly buried, see commentary on John 19:40.]

Luk 23:54

**“and the Sabbath was beginning.”** This was not the regular weekly Sabbath, which occurred on Saturday, but the Special Sabbath that was Nisan 15 and the first Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Greek word translated “was beginning” is *epiphōskō* (#2020 ἐπιφώσκω), and it literally means to grow light. Thus, it was used of “dawn,” or also idiomatically as “beginning.” Thus, literally, “the Sabbath was dawning.” This phraseology can be confusing to us Westerners because the Jewish Sabbath began at sunset, not “dawn,” that is, not at sunrise. The Jews, however, used the phrase “growing light” or “dawning” idiomatically for the beginning of something. We could translate the verse as, “the Sabbath was dawning,” and understand it idiomatically, just as they did, but a less confusing way to translate the phrase is “the Sabbath was beginning.” The Jews did not have accurate clocks to tell them when Sabbath began, they just knew from the sky it was drawing close.

[For more information on *epiphōskō* see commentary on Matt. 28:1.]

According to Jewish reckoning of time, the sunset started the new day, so here in Luke 23:54, Wednesday Nisan 14, the day Jesus Christ was crucified, was ending, and Thursday, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Special Sabbath, was starting. Nisan 15 was always a Sabbath, no matter on which day of the week it occurred (Exod. 12:16-17; Lev. 23:6-8). Since the Law of Moses decreed that Nisan 15 was a special Sabbath, Luke 23:54 says the “Sabbath” was beginning.

It is important to realize that the “Sabbath” in Luke 23:54 is not the weekly Sabbath on Saturday, but the Special Sabbath on Thursday, Nisan 15. Knowing that will clear up a large number of apparent contradictions in the Bible. The point that Jesus was crucified before a Special Sabbath is made again in John 19:31, which tells us specifically that this Sabbath was a “high day,” meaning a special Sabbath, not the regular weekly Sabbath.

Most Christians do not realize that when the Bible says Jesus was crucified the day before the “Sabbath,” it does not mean the regular weekly Sabbath, and so tradition has taught that Jesus was crucified on Friday before the Saturday Sabbath. But that interpretation causes a number of problems. For one thing, Jesus could not have been “in the heart of the earth” for three “days” and three “nights” (Matt. 12:40) from Friday at sunset to Sunday morning when it was still dark (John 20:1). There are not three “days” and three “nights” between Friday at sunset and Sunday so early in the morning that it was still dark.

More evidence that Jesus was in the grave for three full days and nights, from Wednesday sunset to Saturday sunset comes from the fact that the women would not have had time before the Sabbath started to go and buy spices and then prepare them after watching Joseph bury Jesus without any spices (Matt. 27:60-61; Mark 15:46-47; Luke 23:53-55). Furthermore, they could not have bought the spices in the dark after the Saturday Sabbath was over either. Even if there was some special condition where they could have bought spices Saturday night, they could not have both bought them and prepared them before the Sabbath like Luke says (Luke 23:56) and also bought them after the Sabbath like Mark says (Mark 16:1).

The key to solving all the apparent contradictions is to realize that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, Passover day, and that both Thursday and Saturday were Sabbaths. In that situation, Jesus could be in the grave for three full “days” and “nights,” from Wednesday at sunset to Saturday at sunset, not just 36 hours with no third “night” at all. That also helps explain why Jesus waited two full days before raising Lazarus (John 11:6). Jesus showed through Lazarus that a person could be raised after three full days, which many people doubted at that time; (see commentary on John 11:15). Also, both Mark and Luke would be correct. The women would have bought spices on Friday, which was “after” the Special Sabbath and “before” the regular weekly Sabbath. Since the Jewish calendar had many special Sabbaths, the people of the time were used to the language that some event could be both before and after a Sabbath, and were used to sorting through the context and seeing the truth of the situation.

A Wednesday crucifixion and burial also explains why the women thought they could go to the grave to anoint Jesus on Sunday morning but had not gone on Friday after preparing the spices. Sunday morning had been more than the three days the Roman guard was supposed to be at the grave, which was Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The Roman guard had run off after seeing the earthquake and the angel, but the women did not know that when they came to the tomb with the spices, expecting someone could roll away the stone for them—something the Roman guard would never have allowed.

Still another ancillary piece of evidence for a Wednesday crucifixion comes from typology. Jesus got up from the dead on Saturday evening, day 17 of the month Nisan, proving that death had no power over mankind and that mankind was safe from death. It was that same day of the year (Nisan 17) that Noah’s ark rested on the land and mankind was safe from evil people and from the Flood (Gen. 8:4. To understand that, we must realize that the “seventh month” in Genesis was the month Nisan, which God later changed to be the first month of the year; see Exod. 12:2). If, as tradition teaches, Nisan 14 was a Friday, and Jesus was crucified on Friday Nisan 14 and got up on Sunday morning, then that would make the day Jesus got up Sunday Nisan 16. There is no typological parallel date for his resurrection if it occurred on Nisan 16 instead of Nisan 17. but if Christ was crucified on Wednesday Nisan 14, and got up on Saturday Nisan 17, then Noah’s ark is the perfect type of Christ’s resurrection when it comes to saving mankind. Although this ancillary fact does not prove a Wednesday crucifixion, it supports it.

Tradition is hard to change, and the tradition for a Friday crucifixion comes from John 19:31, that the crucifixion was before the Sabbath. That tradition has been bolstered by the teaching that Jesus was in the grave for 3 days, and “any part of a day can be counted as a day.” While that is true, it is not an honest handling of the text. The Bible does not say Jesus was in the grave “three days,” but “three days and three nights” (Matt. 12:40). Even if you count the tiny amount of time between when Nicodemus properly buried Jesus as a “day,” there are not three “days” and three “nights” between Friday sunset and Sunday morning before the sun came up and it was still dark—at absolute best, there are only three days and two nights.

Tradition has also been bolstered by the words of the angel that “he is not here; he has risen” from the dead (Matt. 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:6). It has been assumed that Jesus had just gotten up a short while before that, but Scripture never says that. The three days and nights ended Saturday before sunset. If Jesus got up at that time, then what the angels told the women was true. They never said he had just gotten up; only that he was raised from the dead and therefore not in the tomb when the women arrived.

It is also important to remember that Jesus was quoting the book of Jonah when he said he would be “three days and three nights” in the heart of the earth (Jon. 1:17). It is likely that Jonah was thrown into the sea in the afternoon (perhaps even the late afternoon around when Jesus was buried), because the sailors tried hard to row to land so they would not have to throw Jonah into the ocean, but they eventually realized they were not getting anywhere and gave up (Jon. 1:13). Would the book of Jonah really have said that Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and nights if he was only there for three days and two nights? There would have been no need for that misstatement. The only reason that Christians have tried to force three days and nights into the short time from Friday sunset to Sunday morning while it was still dark is they know Jesus was up from the dead by Sunday morning and they assume Scripture teaches he was buried on Friday, the day before the weekly Sabbath.

In light of the teaching of Scripture on the subject, it is time to let tradition go. Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday and buried that day before Sunset. Then, three days and three nights later, Saturday before sunset, God raised him from the dead.

[For a chronology of the crucifixion week, see commentary on John 18:13.]

Luk 23:55

**“And the women ... having followed after *Joseph*.”** The women saw that Joseph had not prepared Jesus’ body, so they thought they had to prepare him themselves.

[For more on the women not seeing that Jesus was properly buried, see commentary on John 19:40.]

Luk 23:56

**“prepared spices and perfumes.”** The women did this on Friday, Nisan 16. This was after the Sabbath as Mark 16:1 says (i.e., after the special Sabbath, Nisan 15, and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread), and before the Sabbath (i.e., Saturday, the weekly Sabbath), as Luke 23:56 says (see commentary on Matt. 12:40).

It has been noticed by many Bible commentators that Mark 16:1 contradicts Luke 23:56, and many different explanations have been set forth to explain the “problem.” For example, some liberal theologians are comfortable saying that one of the two Gospels is wrong, but that kind of error is only human. We reject that explanation entirely.

Other commentators say the women must have bought spices twice, once before the Sabbath, then realized they did not have enough, and bought more after the Sabbath. However, in the orthodox model of death, burial, and resurrection of Christ that explanation will not work for two reasons. First, the women did not have time to buy and prepare spices after Christ’s burial, it was too close to the Sabbath, and Luke 23:56 makes it clear the women rested on the Sabbath. Secondly, the women would not have been able to buy and prepare spices after the Sabbath, Sunday morning, and still get to the grave with the prepared spices at dawn.

The real explanation is very simple. Christ was buried Wednesday afternoon, just before sunset. The women hurried home as the special Sabbath, Thursday, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, started. On Friday the women bought and prepared the spices. Then they rested on Saturday, the regular weekly Sabbath. Then, at dawn on Sunday morning, they brought the spices they had prepared to the tomb.

A key to realizing that the women could not have bought and prepared the spices between the time they saw Joseph bury Jesus without spices and when the Sabbath started that night is to realize what was involved in buying and preparing spices. Scripture says when Joseph buried Jesus the Sabbath was close and the women were still there, watching. But for the women to buy the spices meant going into the city to the spice merchants and haggling with them over the different spices, then walking home with them. But the spice merchants would not have been open Friday night at sunset. It is a long-standing custom that merchants close early before the Sabbath because they have to go home and prepare for their own Sabbath meal and celebration. Even the shops in modern Israel close early before the Sabbath begins. But even if the women had found a spice merchant open, they would not have had the time to walk home and prepare the spices before the Sabbath began. To prepare the spices the women would pulverize them and mix them together. Then, many times, they would mix them with olive oil to bring out the aromatic aroma and so they could more easily and effectively spread them on the body. The fact that both Luke 23:56 and 24:1 specifically mention that the women had “prepared” the spices shows they did not just buy them and plan to spread them in that raw state on Jesus’ body. The point is that the women could not have bought and prepared spices on Friday evening before the Sabbath started at sunset, there just was not enough time. But neither could they have bought and prepared spices on Sunday morning because they brought the prepared spices to the tomb at dawn, which means they would have had to have bought the spices in the dark of night to have the time to prepare them and have them at the tomb around dawn, and no merchant would be open at night.

[For more on the burial of Jesus and the spices, see commentaries on Matt. 27:57 and Mark 16:1.]

**“on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.”** The women rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment, and although they would have rested on both the Special Sabbath and the regular weekly Sabbath, because of the chronology, we can tell that this verse in Luke refers to the regular weekly Sabbath. Mark 16:1 makes it clear that the women bought the spices after the Sabbath, but in this verse, they had already bought the spices when they rested on the Sabbath, so this Sabbath is the regular weekly Sabbath, Saturday, Nisan 17 (see commentary on Mark 16:1).

The commandment in the Law of Moses about resting on the weekly Sabbath is Exodus 20:8-10, and about resting on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is Leviticus 23:4-8. According to the Law of Moses, walking was not considered work so the women could have walked to the tomb on the Sabbath without breaking the Sabbath. However, by the time of Jesus, Jewish traditional law had imposed limits on how far a person could walk on the Sabbath without it being work. The limit was called “a Sabbath day’s journey” and was 2,000 cubits, or just over one-half mile (see commentary on Acts 1:12). So the women still could have “rested” on the Sabbath but still walked to the tomb (see commentary on Matt. 28:1).

Jesus’ resurrection, which would have occurred between Luke 23:56 and 24:1, is not specifically recorded.

**Luke Chapter 24**

Luk 24:1

**“on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb**.” This is Sunday, Nisan 18, and the sun had just risen, although it was still early. The text says literally, “deep dawn” (translated “early dawn”) so the sun had just recently come up. A group of women came to the tomb with spices. The spices were to properly bury Jesus. The women did not know Nicodemus had come and done that already (see commentary on John 19:40).

Mary Magdalene had come to the tomb earlier, while it was still dark (John 20:1). She had seen the empty tomb, and left to tell the disciples (see commentary on John 20:1 and Matt. 27:61). It is likely that she had planned to go to the tomb early so she could report back and tell the women if the guard had gone, but in any case, the events of the morning had altered any plans that she had made. She did not expect to find an empty tomb.

Because the empty tomb was a complete surprise to her, Mary would have wanted to tell Peter and the other apostles as soon as possible, so it would have been still dark when Mary went back to Bethany and told them (John 20:2). Peter and John doubted Mary’s story that the tomb was empty, but ran to the tomb to see for themselves. Upon arriving and seeing the tomb was empty, they “believed” her report that “they have taken away the Lord out of the tomb” (John 20:2, 8). They did not believe that the reason Jesus’ body was missing was because he had been raised from the dead, “for they did not yet know the Scripture, that he must rise from among *the* dead” (John 20:9). But they did now believe Mary that his body was indeed missing. Peter and John returned to Bethany (John 20:8), but later on, Peter was still “wondering within himself” what had happened (Luke 24:12).

Mary had followed Peter and John back from Bethany to the tomb (Peter and John had run to the tomb), and it was likely still dark because she was there alone when the Lord appeared to her (John 20:11, 14), the women had not yet come with the spices. After seeing Jesus, she left the tomb and went again to the disciples and told them she had seen the Lord (John 20:18). No doubt also at that time she told them the whole story, including that she had also seen angels in the tomb (John 20:12).

At some point while it was still very early in the morning, but after the sun had risen, the other women came to the tomb with the spices (Luke 24:1; Mark 16:2). This most likely happened after Mary met Jesus and then left the tomb to go back to Bethany and then the other women arrived at the tomb with the spices after Mary had left. The women did not know the stone had been rolled away from the door of the tomb (Mark 16:3), which tells us they had not been staying with the men, nor had they met Mary Magdalene or Peter and John. At the tomb, the women met an angel and then Jesus himself (Matt. 28:9-10), and went back and reported what they had seen to the disciples.

Luk 24:4

**“perplexed.”** The Greek is *diaporeō* (#1280 διαπορέω), to be perplexed, greatly perplexed, bewildered, totally at a loss. (See commentary on Mark 16:5).

**“behold”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“two men suddenly stood by them.”** The record of the women seeing two angels occurs only in Luke. Although the Bible calls these angels, “men,” that is only so we know the form they appeared in. When the women entered the tomb and saw one “young man” sitting there, they did not know he was an angel (Mark 16:5). Then, however, “two men” suddenly appeared out of nowhere in the tomb with the women, and these angels were wearing gleaming clothing (the only other use of this word “gleaming” in the NT refers to the gleam and flash of lightning). There was now no doubt in the minds of the women that they were in the presence of angels, so they became frightened and bowed down in reverence. The angel who appeared to the shepherds at the birth of Christ stood in front of them suddenly also (Luke 2:9).

[For more on the translation “suddenly stood by them,” see commentary on Luke 2:9, “suddenly stood before them.”]

**“gleaming clothing.”** The Greek is *astraptō* (#797 ἀστράπτω), and it means “to light up,” thus, to gleam or to flash. In Luke 17:24 it is used of the flash of lightning. The young man (the angel) the women first met when going into the tomb was in a white robe, but that would not have been uncommon. However, when these two angels suddenly appeared, their clothing gleamed like lightning. The women were frightened by these angels that appeared.

Luk 24:5

**“the *men*.”** The Greek reads “they” spoke to the women, but the REV and many other English versions have “the men” because the text says “men” in Luke 24:4, and it avoids the ambiguity in “they said to them,” which is the reading of the Greek. From comparing the verses that have this record (Matt. 28:5; Mark 16:6) it seems clear that only one angel did the actual speaking, the others were in agreement with what he said, and thus the “they” in the verse.

The record of these two angels appears only in the Gospel of Luke, but it is vital because according to the Law of Moses there had to be two witnesses for something to be considered true, but now we can see that there were three angels who witnessed to the fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead (Matt. 28:6; Mark 16:6; and Luke 24:6).

Once the angel reminds the women that Jesus said he would rise from the dead, they remember that he said that (Luke 24:8).

Luk 24:6

**“has been raised.”** The Greek is *egeirō* (#1453 ἐγείρω), and it is in the passive voice, so it is not “he is risen,” or “he has risen,” but rather “he was raised,” or “he has been raised.”

Luk 24:7

**“on the third day to rise.”** This is not saying that Jesus raised himself from the dead, but instead, only that Jesus would rise from the dead. The person who would raise him is not specified in this verse.

Jesus prophesied of his death and resurrection clearly in Luke 9:22, but also in Luke 11:30.

[For more on this phrase, see commentary on Mark 8:31.]

Luk 24:8

**“And they remembered his words.”** Luke, written from the perspective of the Lord as a human being, has more about women than any of the other three Gospels. Luke is the only Gospel that specifically credits the women with remembering the words of Jesus. Matthew says the women had “great joy” (Matt. 28:8).

[For the reason for Four Gospels, see commentary on Mark 1:1.]

Luk 24:9

**“And they returned from the tomb and told all these things​.”** The “they” in this verse is all the women who came to the tomb with spices after the sun had risen (Luke 24:1, Mark 16:2). It does not include Mary Magdalene, who had gone on her own very early to the tomb (see commentary on John 20:1). Mary had seen the open tomb before these women, met the Lord before these women did (cf. Matt. 28:9), and reported back to the disciples separately, before these women did (John 20:18).

Luke is the only Gospel that records the women actually returning and telling “the Eleven” (Judas had already hanged himself) and the disciples that Jesus was raised from the dead. Matthew 28:8 says the women left the tomb to go tell the disciples, but never says they actually told them. Mark 16:7 implies they were going to tell the disciples as the angels told them to, but Mark, like Matthew, never specifically says the women told the disciples. Luke, however, specifically says the women told the disciples. It is possible that because a woman’s testimony was not allowable in a court of law in the ancient Jewish culture, that Matthew and Mark omit this detail, but Luke, written from a human point of view, includes it and gives the women credit for their faithfulness to follow through with what the angels and Jesus said to do.

**“the Eleven.”** The apostles are now called “the Eleven” because Judas had hanged himself. The phrase “the Eleven” is used as a title for the apostles in Luke and Mark (Luke 24:9, 33; Mark 16:14), while Mathew says, “the eleven disciples” (Matt. 28:16). Acts also refers to “the eleven” (Acts 1:26; 2:14). The contrast between Luke 24:9 and 24:33 shows us that “the Eleven” was being used as a title. Here in Luke 24:9, the women go and tell “the” Eleven, not just “11 apostles,” or “the apostles,” or “some apostles.” Later that day, in Luke 24:33, the apostles are still referred to as “the Eleven” even though Thomas was not with them at that particular time (John 20:24). The natural reading of Matthew 27:1-5 shows us why the twelve apostles were called “the Eleven.” It indicates that Judas went and hanged himself right after Jesus was condemned. Thus, Judas did not even live to see Jesus die, much less get up from the dead. But Judas was not expecting Jesus to get up from the dead; none of the apostles were expecting that.

“The Eleven” was a natural title to give the apostles after Judas betrayed Jesus. The other eleven apostles were in the Garden of Gethsemane when Judas betrayed Jesus (Luke 22:48), and there is no doubt they would have been caught off guard by his actions and stunned at what he did, enraged at him, and even afraid of him. They were afraid of the Jews after Jesus was arrested, which is why they stayed behind locked doors (John 20:19), and it was now painfully obvious that Judas, who had been a troublemaker and thief while he was alive and with them (John 12:4-6), was now aligned with the Jews and thus was an enemy. In fact, it is likely that the eleven apostles now remembered that Jesus had told them from early on that one of them was a “devil” (John 6:70), and at the Last Supper he had announced that one of them would betray him (John 13:21), but they did not know who and quite possibly found that hard to believe until it actually happened. The apostles would not have let Judas back into their company, and it is easy to see how when word of Judas’ suicide got back to the believers, the apostles were then called, “the Eleven.”

Jesus and the angels told the apostles to go to Galilee; in fact, Jesus had told the apostles that even before he was arrested (Matt. 26:32; 28:7, 10; Mark 14:28; 16:7). But when they went, which was most likely only a little more than a week after Jesus was raised from the dead, Judas was not with them (Matt. 28:16; cf. John 21:1). The apostles had stayed in Jerusalem for two Sundays (John 20:19, 26), but since they had been told to go to Galilee by both Jesus and the angels, it seems they would have left shortly after his second appearance to them, which was when Thomas was present, saw the Lord, and believed he had been raised from the dead. Thus, the record in Matthew shows us that the apostles were counted as “eleven” likely just over a week after Jesus’ resurrection, which helps us to conclude that the natural reading of Matthew 27:1-5—that Judas gave back the money he was paid for betraying Jesus and then went out and hanged himself—is correct.

Luk 24:10

**“Mary Magdalene.”** Mary is called “Magdalene” because her hometown was Magdala, on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee.

[For more information on Mary Magdalene see commentary on Luke 8:2.]

**“told these things to the apostles.”** This verse is a summary verse. It mentions all the women who reported to the apostles that Jesus was raised from the dead. The subject of the verse is what the various women said to the apostles, and this is the key to understanding the verse. All of these women had seen Jesus alive (Matt. 28:9; John 20:16) and testified to that fact, but the disciples did not believe any of them. These verses are not saying that Mary Magdalene was physically with the women when they carried the spices to the tomb. It is saying that all the women had the same testimony about Jesus being alive. Mary Magdalene’s testimony agreed with the testimony of the women who went to prepare the body of Jesus.

Luk 24:12

**“Peter got up and ran to the tomb.”** If Luke 24:12 is original, then this is a second trip that Peter made to the tomb, and he made it by himself. The two trips of Peter occur in totally different circumstances. Much earlier on that Sunday, Mary Magdalene had gone to the tomb alone while it was still dark. Seeing that the body of Jesus was gone, she went and told John and Peter, who then went to the tomb, followed by Mary Magdalene. After Peter and John saw the empty tomb, they left, but Mary stayed at the tomb crying and it was there that Jesus appeared to her alone (John 20:1-9). In contrast to that event described in the Gospel of John, this event mentioned in Luke 24:12 occurred much later in the day and involved a whole group of women. The group of women, which included Mary Magdalene (who after meeting Jesus (John 20:14-18) would have gone back to the other women), came to the tomb “at early dawn.” They brought spices and were surprised when they found the tomb empty. Then the group met angels who spoke with them about what had happened and that Jesus was raised from the dead and reminded the women about what Jesus had said. It makes sense that Mary Magdalene did not try to stop this group of women from going to the tomb, but simply went along with them. After talking with the angels, the group of women went to tell all the apostles (Luke 24:1-9).

Sometime after the women reported that they had seen the Lord, but before Cleopas and the other disciple returned from seeing the Lord on their trip to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), the Lord appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34). There is no verse in the Gospels that describes the meeting of the Lord and Peter, but it is clear that there had to be a time on Sunday when Peter was alone, apart from the other disciples. By the time Cleopas and his friend, who saw the Lord on the road to Emmaus, join the apostles and the others, “Simon,” a common name for Peter, had already seen the Lord (Luke 24:34). Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 15:5 says that the Lord appeared to Peter and *then* to the apostles. If this verse is original, it is Peter’s second trip to see the empty tomb and would have been the time that Jesus appeared to Peter alone.

What we learn from studying the resurrection records in all of the Gospels is that John 20:1-9 does not contradict Luke 24:1-12, but rather that both Gospels have details that the other Gospel does not have.

It is also worth noting that Luke 24:12 is omitted in some early manuscripts but contained in others, so there is a chance it is not original. However, overall, the evidence supports its being original. It seems much more likely that a scribe wanting to protect Peter’s reputation would omit the verse than that a scribe would simply invent this story about Peter. Veneration of Peter started very early, and so there would have been a lot of reason to omit things that tended to lessen his status in the eyes of the Church. That Peter would question his first trip to the tomb and make a second trip, but still not believe in the resurrection was a very human thing to do, especially given Peter’s strong-willed nature. However, for people who were venerating Peter as the leader of the apostles, one can see how there would have been a temptation to omit the verse. The NASB puts the verse in brackets to indicate that it is doubtful.

**“stooping down.”** The Greek word is *parakuptō* (#3879 παρακύπτω), and it means to stoop toward something in order to look at it (see commentary on John 20:5).

Luk 24:13

**“look.”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“two of them were going.”** Jesus Christ appeared to two disciples, Cleopas and an unnamed disciple, as they walked to Emmaus, which is about seven miles (11 km) from Jerusalem (the location of Emmaus is unknown, but Luke 24:13 lets us know it was about seven miles from Jerusalem). When Jesus made his identity known to them, they hurried back to Jerusalem.

**“about seven miles.”** The Greek text reads “60 stadia.” The identification of Emmaus is unknown, and has been made more uncertain because a few ancient texts read, “160 stadia,” but that seems very unlikely, especially since the disciples, after realizing they had met Jesus, went back to Jerusalem and seemed to have gotten there fairly soon (even if they walked, they would have walked the 60 stadia in about two hours). A “stadion” was a measurement used by the Greeks and then the Romans, and was roughly equal to 600 feet (in ancient times, the stadion varied slightly from city to city). Thus, 60 stadia was some 6.8 miles (about 11 km).

Luk 24:21

**“it is now the third day since these things came to pass.”** Jesus died on the day of the week we call Wednesday (the Jews would simply say the fourth day of the week). These disciples were speaking to Jesus in the afternoon of the “first day of the week” (Luke 24:1), which we call Sunday. At first glance, and according to many translations, if these two disciples said that it was now the third day since “these things have happened,” that would make Jesus crucified on Friday, or the earliest Thursday. But Jesus was crucified Wednesday, was buried just as Wednesday became Thursday (the Jews started their day at sunset, not midnight), and Jesus was in the grave “three days and three nights” (Matt. 12:40). Wednesday sunset to Thursday sunset is one day and one night, Thursday to Friday is two, and Friday to Saturday is three, and Jesus got up as night fell on Saturday. When Sunday morning came, all the angels said was, “He is not here, but has been raised” (Luke 24:6), but they did not say how long he had been up. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark and he was already up.

Given that information, how do we understand what these men were saying? The answer is provided in the fact that they were speaking Aramaic, not Greek. In 1851 James Murdock did a translation of the New Testament from the available Aramaic text which reads, “But we expected that he was to deliver Israel. And lo, three days [have passed], since all these things occurred.”[[144]](#footnote-15844) Then in 2006 Janet Magiera did a translation from the Aramaic and arrived at basically the same translation: “But we had hoped that he was going to deliver Israel and behold, three days [have passed] since all these [things] happened.”[[145]](#footnote-17329)

If Jesus was not buried until the end of Wednesday, then three days passed (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday) and the disciples spoke to Jesus on Sunday, which is exactly what the Scripture records. That a period of “three days” was specifically mentioned is important, because it seems logical that the disciples would have just said, “These things happened five days ago” (i.e., counting inclusively, which was the culture: Sun, Sat, Fri., Thurs. and Wed., equals 5 days. We might say, “Four days have passed”). The mention of three days is important because Rabbinic literature from after the time of the New Testament shows that the rabbis taught that a person’s soul stayed around the dead body for three days looking for an opportunity to reenter it, but when decomposition set in on the fourth day, the soul left.[[146]](#footnote-19212) Although that particular rabbinical commentary post-dates the New Testament, it is common knowledge that Jewish traditions were very stable and lasted for centuries. The fact that we have Rabbinic literature about the soul staying around the body for three days before leaving, taken together with evidence from the New Testament, such as this verse in Luke and the record of Lazarus in John 11, is excellent evidence that the belief existed at the time of Christ.

The men on the road to Emmaus had already heard from the women that Jesus was alive (Luke 24:23), but left Jerusalem, believing he was dead in spite of their report. But it seems likely that if Jesus had not been dead for a full three days and nights, these disciples might have believed there was a chance that Jesus was alive after all, and have stayed in Jerusalem. In telling this stranger that three days had passed since Jesus’ death, they were in part explaining why, even though they had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah and the women said he was alive, they were giving up on that vision and going home.

Even the Greek text can be understood to read in such a way as three days had passed since “all these things happened.” For example, *The Holy Bible: The New Berkeley Version in Modern English*, Revised Edition, reads: “...Moreover, three days have already passed since all those things occurred.” The point is that, by Sunday, three whole days (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday) had passed since Jesus had been buried at nightfall Wednesday night.

Luk 24:23

**“angels who said that he was alive.”** The two men obviously did not believe the women, because they were leaving Jerusalem, looked discouraged (Luke 24:17), and said they had hoped Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21). That the men did not believe the women is not surprising in the culture at that time, because women were thought to be emotional and excitable, and therefore not reliable witnesses. It would have been easy for the men to think the women had so wanted Jesus to be the Messiah that they had some sort of collective imagination about angels.

However, it is also interesting to note what the men did not tell this stranger on the road. They told him that the women said they saw angels, but they did not tell him they even claimed to have seen Jesus himself (but they had seen him; Matt. 28:8-9). Jesus gave the same basic message to the women that the angel had given them: go and tell the disciples to go to Galilee where they would see Jesus. It is likely that the two men on the road to Emmaus did not want to embarrass the women by reporting such “nonsense,” and/or they thought that if they told this stranger that the women had also claimed to see Jesus alive that he might have thought their entire group was crazy and to be avoided.

It would be wrong to assume that perhaps the women did not tell the disciples that they saw Jesus. They were overjoyed when the angel said Jesus was alive (Matt. 28:8), and when they saw Jesus they came right up to him, fell down, grabbed his feet, and worshiped him (Matt. 28:9). They would have certainly told the disciples all of what had happened to them.

Luk 24:24

**“him.”** This refers to Jesus. The women said they saw an empty tomb and an angel told them Jesus was alive, and so there was reason to believe that if the disciples went to the tomb area they would see Jesus. However, they came back without seeing him.

Luk 24:25

**“O *you* senseless people.”** The word translated as “senseless” indicates that there had been a lack of thinking and recognizing what was foretold to happen to the Messiah, and worse, that Jesus himself had been speaking of his death for months.

[See Word Study: “Fool.”]

Luk 24:26

**“necessary.”** The suffering of the Messiah had been a part of biblical prophecy from Genesis 3:15 and thus was a “necessary” part of his redemptive work.

Luk 24:27

**“in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”** The Old Testament points to Jesus Christ in different ways such as direct prophecy (cf. Isa. 53, Mic. 5:2) and “types” (cf. the Passover Lamb; the sin offering; Abraham and Isaac, Gen. 22). John 5:39 also says the scriptures testify about Jesus Christ. Often the types of the Messiah that are in the Old Testament were not recognized as types until after the life and ministry of Jesus.

For example, Jesus compared himself to Jonah the prophet in two different ways (cf. Matt. 12:40-42 and Luke 11:29-30). Jesus compared his second coming to the time of Noah (Matt. 24:36-42; Luke 17:26-27). Jesus also compared his second coming to Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28-30. Peter (2 Pet. 2:6), Jude (Jude 1:7) also used Sodom as a type).

Luk 24:31

**“and they recognized him.”** Jesus Christ appeared to two disciples, Cleopas (Luke 24:18) and an unnamed disciple, as they walked to Emmaus, which is about 7 miles (11 km) from Jerusalem. When he made his identity known to them, they hurried back to Jerusalem, only to find the disciples saying that the Lord had also appeared to Simon, i.e., Simon Peter (Luke 24:34).

Luk 24:33

**“the Eleven.”** The reason the apostles were now called “the Eleven” was that Judas had committed suicide. The title, “the Eleven,” was being used for the apostles in general. This is clear from both Luke 24:9 and the wording of the text: “they found the Eleven and those who were with them.” The fact that the text calls the remaining apostles, “the Eleven,” shows that after Judas committed suicide, the Twelve were referred to as “the Eleven.” That title applied even though at this particular time on Sunday evening the apostle Thomas was not with them, as we learn from John 20:24-29.

[For more information on the Eleven, see commentary on Luke 24:9.]

Luk 24:34

**“was really raised.”** The verb is an aorist passive; that Jesus “was raised” or “has been raised” (cf. Luke 24:6).

**“has appeared to Simon.”** Jesus Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene close to where he was buried (John 20:16). Then he appeared to the rest of the women who had come to wrap his body with spices (Matt. 28:9, 10). Then later that day, but before he appeared to the two men on the road to Emmaus (who knew the tomb was empty; Luke 24:24), Jesus appeared to Peter. None of the Four Gospels record this meeting, but the disciples spoke of it (Luke 24:34), and 1 Corinthians 15:5 mentions it also.

There is an apparent contradiction between Mark 16:13 and Luke 24:34. Mark says that when Cleopas and his friend came to Jerusalem and told the apostles and disciples, they did not believe. Luke, however, says that when they came and reported, the disciples already believed because the Lord had appeared to Simon (Peter). Some have tried to solve this by saying that “Simon” is the name of the other disciple who was going to Emmaus, but the proper reading of the Greek text makes that impossible. The better solution is that the last 12 verses of Mark are not original, and the “apparent contradiction” is caused by adding the verses in Mark to the text.

[For more on Mark 16:9-20 not being part of the original text of the Bible, see commentary on Mark 16:9.]

Luk 24:35

**“*then* they related.”** When the two men arrived from the road to Emmaus, they found the people joyfully speaking of Jesus’ resurrection and how he had appeared to Peter, and then they too shared their own story of meeting the resurrected Lord. The Greek is *exēgeomai* (#1834 ἐξηγέ⁡ομαι) and means in secular Greek, to lead out, be the leader, or go before. In the Bible, it is used as to lead out or unfold a narrative, to relate or set forth in detail. Thus, it means unfold, relate, or set forth in detail, expound, describe, recount.

Luk 24:39

**“Touch.”** The Greek word translated “touch” is *psēlaphaō* (#5584 ψηλαφάω). This is the only time it occurs in the Four Gospels. The meaning of *psēlaphaō* in this context is to feel around on, touch all over, grope around on, all with the idea of touching and finding what you are looking for, and thus being completely convinced that Jesus is real and physically present, not just a vision or a ghost. The word “touch” does not communicate the depth of the meaning of the Greek, but the English vocabulary is limited due to sexual idioms that occur in English. For example, it would be wrong to translate the Bible such that Jesus said, “Grope me,” or “feel me,” although in technical dictionary English, those meanings would be proper. However, due to English sexual idioms, they are improper. Somewhat similarly, the translation in many of the older versions, “handle me,” gives the wrong impression today also. Jesus was telling the disciples to touch him until they were convinced he was a real person in a real body. He wanted them to be convinced he was real and never doubt his resurrection again.

We should not miss the contrast between Luke 24:39 and John 20:17. Here in Luke, Jesus invites the disciples to touch him all over if necessary (*psēlaphaō*) until they are convinced he is the real Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead. In contrast, much earlier that day, while it was still quite dark, Jesus told Mary Magdalene not to touch him at all (*haptomai* #680 ἅπτομαι) because he had not yet gone up to the Father and presented himself in the Temple as the firstfruits (see commentary on John 20:17). Once Jesus presented himself before the Father in the Temple, his disciples could touch him as much as necessary to get themselves to the point they knew it was the real Jesus Christ raised from the dead.

Luk 24:44

**“the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms.”** The focus of the whole Bible is God’s Messiah, Jesus Christ, so it makes perfect sense that Jesus would say that there were things about him in every part of the Bible: the Law, the Prophets, and the “Psalms.”

The Hebrew Bible contains 24 books, and the Jews divided those books into three sections, the Torah (generally known as “Law”), the Prophets (the Nevi’im), and the “Writings” (the Ketuvim), which in Luke 24:44 Jesus summarized by using the word “psalms.” The Jewish “Prophets” contain books that we today generally think of more as books of history, such as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, but omits the book of Daniel, which the Jews considered part of the “Writings” (Ketuvim).

So, in the Hebrew canon, the Torah is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy. The “Prophets” are Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and then all the books we today generally consider prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, etc., except for the book of Daniel. Then, in the Hebrew canon, the “Writings” (Ketuvim) include the rest of the books of the Bible that are not Torah or Prophets: Ruth, Job, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. God’s Messiah is in view in some way in every one of the books of the Bible.

Luk 24:45

**“Then he opened up their minds.”** Jesus taught about his suffering, death, and resurrection many times. He taught about it right after the disciples recognized him as the Christ (Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31, 32; Luke 9:22). Then he taught about it again immediately after the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:9-12; Mark 9:9-13); then again when he was in Galilee shortly after the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:22, 23; Mark 9:31, 32; Luke 9:43-45), then again at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 8:21, 28); then again while he was going up to Jerusalem for the Passover, at which time he would be killed (Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34); and then again when he was in Jerusalem for the Passover (Matt. 26:2; cf. John 12:7). In spite of all his teaching, the disciples never really understood what Jesus meant until after his resurrection when he opened up their minds to understand the Scriptures. The prophecy in Isaiah 49:2 was that many things about the Messiah would be hidden.

[For more information on the disciples’ understanding of Christ’s suffering and death, see commentary on Luke 18:34.]

Luk 24:46

**“from among the dead.”**[[147]](#footnote-30419) See commentary on Romans 4:24.

**“rise from among the dead.”** This is not saying that Jesus raised himself from the dead, but instead, only that Jesus would rise from the dead. The person who is doing the raising is not specified in this verse.

[For more on this phrase, see commentary on Mark 8:31.]

Luk 24:49

**“look!”** The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδού), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20.

**“I am going to send the promise of my Father upon you.”** The Greek is more literally, “I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.” The present tense, “I am sending...” is a “prophetic present,” a future event that is spoken of in the present tense for emphasis (see commentary on Eph. 2:6). In this case, the present tense emphasized both that the event was certain and that it was close at hand. Also, Jesus did not actually send “the promise,” he sent “what had been promised,” the holy spirit (cf. Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27), so this is an example of the figure of speech metonymy where “the promise” is put for what was promised. Also, Jesus did not tell the apostles when the promised spirit was coming, he just told them to wait for it. As the Bible reveals, the gift of holy spirit is given by God to Jesus Christ, to be administered or given to others (Luke 24:49; John 15:26; Acts 2:33; Titus 3:6. John the Baptist also said it would be Jesus that would baptize in holy spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16).

[See Word Study: “Metonymy.”]

**“As for you, stay in the city.”** The city is Jerusalem. Luke omits the disciples’ trip to Galilee (Matt. 28:10, 16; Mark 16:7; John 21:1-23), and just focuses on Jesus and the disciples in Jerusalem, and that is where the book of Acts, written by Luke, picks up the record. It was in Jerusalem that the apostles and disciples were clothed with power from on high, the gift of holy spirit, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

**“are clothed with power from on high.”** Jesus is here referring to the gift of holy spirit that we know was poured out upon believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Pentecost was the first time the gift of holy spirit was “born” in a person (see commentary on 1 Pet. 1:3; “New Birth”). It was the giving of the gift of holy spirit in the form of the New Birth that began the Christian Church.

The apostles had already been given the gift of holy spirit in the way that it had been available in the Old Testament and had been upon people such as Moses, Miriam, David, and Deborah. But the holy spirit that was poured out on the Day of Pentecost did not exist before that day (see commentary on John 7:39). The holy spirit that was given on the Day of Pentecost had been foretold and “promised” (Joel 2:28; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27; John 16:13; Eph. 1:13), but it did not come until the Day of Pentecost.

That Jesus used the phrase “clothed with power from on high” should not surprise us. The terminology of being “clothed” with the holy spirit was in the Old Testament, and the presence of the spirit always then showed itself outwardly in some manifestation of power. For example, when the spirit came suddenly on Gideon and “clothed” him, he blew his shofar and organized his army. When the holy spirit clothed Amasai and Zechariah, they both prophesied (cf. ESV translation: Judg. 6:34; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 24:20). As we see from Acts 2, when the holy spirit was poured out upon the apostles, they spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4).

Although the Christian Church was a Sacred Secret, it was known that the holy spirit would be poured out in the Millennial Kingdom, and by this time after his resurrection, Jesus knew it would be given before then, as indicated here in Luke 24:49 and also in John 20:22 and Acts 1:8.

The New Testament has a number of verses that connect the gift of holy spirit with power (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:6; 21:4; 1 Cor. 2:4; 12:7-11; 1 Thess. 5:19), and it is sad that so many Christians do not understand the spiritual power that they have. Like the disciples in Ephesus, Christians have the holy spirit born in them but many of them do not know how to tap into the power it gives us (Acts 19:1-6). If a person is a Christian and does not know how to manifest the spirit in ways such as speaking in tongues or prophecy, they should find someone who can teach them how to do it. Every Christian has that power (1 Cor. 14:5, 23, 24). Notice that when Paul got to Ephesus and met disciples there, he did not ask “Who has the gift of tongues?” He expected them all to manifest holy spirit because he knew they could, and they all did.

Luk 24:52

**“after paying homage to him.”** See commentary on Matthew 2:2. It should be noted that this phrase is omitted in many excellent Greek texts; however, it is possible that it was accidentally dropped from those rather than being added by a later scribe. Textual critics are divided over the issue. Whether the phrase is original or not, it seems likely that it would have been cultural for the disciples to pay some kind of homage to Jesus in these final moments, so the phrase is included in the REV.

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2. Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Luke, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-20592)
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4. Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2:137 [↑](#footnote-ref-15202)
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7. R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-13170)
8. A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 2:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-16055)
9. R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-14366)
10. See Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Luke, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-16670)
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12. Bargil Pixner, Paths of the Messiah, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-31165)
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18. Thayer, Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. “διαλογίζομαι.” [↑](#footnote-ref-27459)
19. Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, St. Luke’s Gospel, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-24058)
20. R. C. H. Lenski, St. Luke’s Gospel, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-11836)
21. David Fiensy, The Archaeology of Daily Life, 150-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-22696)
22. BDAG, s.v. “ῥῆμα.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13930)
23. R. C. H. Lenski, St. Luke’s Gospel, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-23624)
24. Lenski, Luke, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-25403)
25. Cf. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 538, “metonymy.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16424)
26. Cf. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 131, “zeugma.” [↑](#footnote-ref-30447)
27. BDAG, s.v. “ἀνατολή.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19621)
28. Wright, Luke for Everyone, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-21941)
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30. Louw and Nida. [↑](#footnote-ref-10682)
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