

A Literary Pattern of Discipleship with an Emphasis on Wealth and Possessions

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Senior Thesis Religion 499

May 4, 2005

Introduction

Luke-Acts is a beautiful literary work, in which Luke carefully organizes themes and brings them together to explain concepts in consecutive order. This is what makes Luke's gospel such an extraordinary piece of literature. After pouring over Luke-Acts, a pattern of discipleship was illumined by the text. The pattern describes the humble state of a person who decides to follow Christ and emphasizes their relationship with wealth and possessions, which is a common theme used by Jesus throughout Luke-Acts to describe the humble state of the disciple's heart.

Part I. Luke Lays the Foundation of His Gospel

Chapter I. The Prologue (Luke 1:1-4)

Luke 1:1-4

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

The preceding verses are the prologue of Luke's gospel. None of the other synoptic gospels begin like this. Why does Luke begin his gospel with an opening statement to a gentile listener? Is the prologue an apologetic statement as some think or an "internal exhortation" as Darrell L. Bock argues?² Bock gives strong evidence that Luke puts this at the beginning of his gospel intentionally as

¹ All of the bible passages that are in this paper have been taken word for word from the NASB 1995 Updated edition bible (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999).

² See Bock's commentary on Luke's gospel (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1994) p. 31.

a literary device used by many ancient writers.³ Robert H. Stein agrees with Bock and argues that the prologue was a literary device used in order to assert his credibility as a literary author of his day.⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer further elaborates by saying that Luke was showing he could write in a contemporary Hellenistic style providing a historical account in writing, but he had deeper purposes than simply recording events with this gospel⁵. I agree with all three of the commentators, who each argue that Luke was showing his qualifications in writing to a Hellenistic audience in their literary style and attempting something more than a nonchalant historical story of the life of Jesus Christ.

The literary content is an indicator of Luke's purpose in writing this gospel. I would argue that Luke is talking directly to Theophilus and instructing him in the way of the Christian faith. Theophilus, being a Roman official or some other gentile person in a position of authority,⁶ is confused about some details of the faith,⁷ and Luke feels the need to give answers to some of his questions.⁸ Therefore, Luke is asserting his authority in writing the gospel. He was not

³ See Bock's commentary p. 30. (2 Maccabees 2:19-31; Josephus *Antiquities* 1 proem. 1-4, and *Against Apion* 1.1 1-5; *Epistle to Aristeeas* 1-8; Lucian *How to Write History* 9, 39-40, 53-55).

⁴ See Robert Stein's *Commentary on Luke* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992) p.62.

⁵ See Joseph A. Fitzmyer's *commentary on Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1985) Page 289-290.

⁶ There is strong evidence in the text that Theophilus some type of Roman Official. The evidence lies with how Luke addresses Theophilus. The words "Most excellent Theophilus" are the same words Paul uses when addressing Festus and Felix, who were two Roman governors (Acts 24:3; Acts 26:25).

⁷ See Luke 1:4 "so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (NASB).

⁸ See Bock's commentary p.30. Bock agrees that Luke was trying to strengthen Theophilus' faith.

writing to defend his knowledge of what went on in the life of Christ, but instructing and encouraging Theophilus to hold fast to what he has been taught.⁹

We can now dig into the text to find out what Luke was implying in his prologue. Luke is careful to show that he will be very precise. He has done his research, and that means that he has interviewed eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry and read sources of Jesus' teaching. He was careful to make sure that the contents of his gospel were directly connected to Jesus. It is explicit that Luke had access to the Apostles because of his use of the words "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" in verse 2.¹⁰

Luke writes, "It seemed fitting for me as well having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order." I do not believe that he is talking about a chronological order when he mentions that he has put it in a "consecutive order."¹¹ I believe that Luke has put his gospel into a consecutive literary order to portray his themes accurately. Therefore, I will be exploring a thematic pattern I discovered in Luke that illumines Jesus' message about discipleship and his heightened concern with the attachment to material things.

Chapter II. The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

⁹ The references to a pattern of teaching for all Christians can be found in Paul's letters, which are congruent with the Gospels (Romans 6:17, 16:17, I Cor. 15:1-20). The pattern of teaching consists of Creation, incarnation, redemption, and resurrection (I Cor. 15:1-5, 11). This idea of Theophilus holding fast to what he has been taught is very Pauline in nature indicating that Paul was a great source for Luke.

¹⁰ See Stein's Commentary p.64. Stein states that this is so because Luke uses the same language for those who had been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry. See Acts 1:21-22.

¹¹ See Bock's commentary page 32-33. He makes this point also.

When I began studying Mary's hymn to God, I began to see why Luke put this important song in His gospel, and why he put it at the beginning with the birth narrative. The *Magnificat* is an overture to the theme of the humble state of a disciple of Christ in Luke's Gospel. Like an overture in a good symphony, it highlights the themes that will be revisited throughout the rest of the piece of music. Here, Luke is giving the reader a taste of what is going to be talked about in the body of his gospel. In Mary's hymn, she lays out some key ideas that Luke will keep revisiting in his gospel.¹² Throughout my paper I will show how Luke echoes back to these ideas Mary sings about in her hymn.

I want to focus on the theme of humbling oneself in order to exalt God. This concept of humility is a strong theme in Luke-Acts that we will see played out in Jesus' parables in Luke and the teachings of the apostles in Acts. Let us now look at Mary's message in the *Magnificat*.

In verses 46-49, Mary exalts the Lord for being her savior and for having, "regard for the humble state of His bondservant." In verse 48, she realizes she is blessed, that it is God who has blessed her, and it is because she has humbled herself before the Lord that these blessings have been bestowed upon her. Luke will continue to revisit this idea when he begins talking about what true discipleship is.¹³

¹² These key ideas are, the humble state of the disciple vs. 48, God's purpose vs. 51-55, Christ fulfillment as the messiah and God incarnate vs. 52-53 (this comes full circle with Jesus' pronouncement of his public ministry), and God's mighty deeds to those who are His disciples vs. 50-55.

¹³ See Luke 6:20-23, 18:9-27

In verse 49, she acknowledges that God has done great things for her. She is showing what it means to have an attitude of humility. After verses 46-49, she gives a conclusion to this idea of personal humility towards God. She quotes Psalm 103:17, “And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him.” She is saying here that humility involves the fear of God and not thinking one is blessed in any other way except by God’s mercy.

Following this idea, she then gives examples in verses 51-53 of what God has done to those with humility and to those with pride. There is a great contrast between the two. Each verse keeps expanding on the difference between humility and pride. God exalts the humble and feeds the poor. He has brought down those who thought they were untouchable due to their societal status and power, and He has scattered the proud, who thought in their hearts they had no need for God. He sends the rich away with nothing. These excerpts give you an idea of the humble disciple motif Luke will talk about in his gospel. For Luke, Mary is the prime example of a disciple.

There is something very important to notice about Mary’s hymn. In verses 51-54, she describes the certain works of God that will be proclaimed and fulfilled in the person Jesus.¹⁴ This section of high Christology is worth focusing on because it shows us the connection between Mary’s hymn and the significance of Jesus’ proclamation of His public ministry in Luke 4:18-21.

Chapter III. Jesus Announces His Public Ministry (Luke 4:18-21)

¹⁴ See Luke 4:18-21

Jesus stands in the synagogue of Nazareth full of the Spirit¹⁵ waiting to begin teaching the people, who have gathered on the Sabbath for worship.¹⁶ He was handed the scroll of Isaiah. We do not know if He intentionally read from Isaiah 61:1-2 or if the specific passage was the assigned reading of the day.¹⁷ However, it does not really matter because what is important is His statement in Luke 4:21.¹⁸

Let us explore Luke 4:18-21. Before we explore why Jesus is reading this certain passage from Isaiah, we must note that He is intentionally speaking of His identity as the Messiah, as revealed in verse 21. Knowing this, we can now proceed to talk about Jesus' message about His ministry. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor."¹⁹ Bock makes a great point here that is worth noting. He says that Jesus' anointing would have been understood by His audience as a divinely inspired call to ministry; however, Jesus is not talking about that, for through His baptism He was anointed by God as the Messiah.²⁰ Stein and Fitzmyer also agree with Bock on this issue.²¹

Let us now look back on the idea of Jesus bringing the gospel to the poor. Here is the evidence of a high Christology that I mentioned earlier. Bock points out that Mary had already spoke in her hymn about God's works to the poor and

¹⁵ See Luke 4:14.

¹⁶ See Luke 4:15-16.

¹⁷ See Fitzmyer's commentary p. 532. Fitzmyer makes a strong case, which says that Jesus sought out this passage. See Stein's commentary p. 155. Stein states that there may have been a fixed reading of Isaiah, but that it is clear in the text that Jesus sought out this particular passage. Bock is silent on this issue.

¹⁸ See Luke 4:21. "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"

¹⁹ See Luke 4:18.

²⁰ See Bock's commentary on Luke 3:22 p 88-89.

²¹ See Stein's commentary p. 156 and Fitzmyer's commentary p. 532.

humble.²² I would go even further than Bock seems to go and say that Jesus is asserting that He is the One who will bring this. Clearly, He is claiming He is YHWH come to the world to do these mighty works mentioned by Mary in her hymn. Luke here is continuing with this theme about God bringing satisfaction to those who the world says are worthless.

We must also note here that Jesus' description of who He has come to minister to will play an important role in how He talks about discipleship. This section being placed at the beginning of Luke's gospel reveals that Luke is setting up the reader to understand what Jesus' ministry will be. This idea will help when looking at the texts about discipleship. It will help in understanding who the disciples and the crowds were, as well as, the huge distinction between the two.

Jesus proclaims that He has come to "preach the gospel to the poor... proclaim release to the captive... recovery of sight to the blind... set free those who are oppressed."²³ The commentaries sum up this passage very clearly; they say that Jesus is not only talking in a literal sense but also in a metaphorical sense. Whether He is speaking literally or metaphorically, the important thing to understand is that Jesus is proclaiming that He has come for those who are in need of Him. This will become evident when I begin to explore the exact teaching that Jesus is pointing to here in Luke 4:18.

With a firm foundation of Jesus' purpose and ministry, we can now proceed to the bulk of my research.²⁴ Jesus' public ministry is a large part of

²² See Bock's commentary p. 89.

²³ See Luke 4:18.

²⁴ I will be connecting the things Jesus taught back to the introduction Luke gives to Jesus' ministry. The pattern will become more evident as

Luke. Jesus taught mostly through parables. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to explore Jesus' teaching, while focusing on some of His important parables. I will start with Jesus' beatitudes in Luke 6:20-26. Then, I will explore five other sections that speak of discipleship and how humbleness is an essential part of being a follower of Jesus.²⁵

Part II. Jesus' Public Ministry

Chapter I. The Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-26)

Section I. His Purpose

Here is a sermon given to His disciples.²⁶ Many people today look at this passage and want to make Jesus' words apply to society, or that Jesus is calling for a shift in the social class system. Luke makes it very clear that Jesus is not addressing the crowd. He is addressing His followers; thus, His sermon is a call to radical discipleship for those who follow Him. To say that Jesus is speaking somehow to society as a whole is to take the whole sermon out of its literary context. Therefore, when we read this passage we must be careful to pay attention to both what Jesus is saying and to whom he is addressing.²⁷

I make the connections and show how Luke echoes these ideas he laid out at the beginning of his gospel.

²⁵ This is especially evident in Jesus' teaching on possessions.

²⁶ See Luke 4:20. Vs. 20 says, "Turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say." This is a common thing for Jesus to do. We will see Him do it again in Luke 12:22 after he spoke to the crowd, and in Luke 18:31. Jesus seems to have different things to say to different people.

²⁷ See Stein's commentary p. 200. Stein in his commentary comes to the same conclusion I gave.

The fact that He even mentions the woes in contrast with the blessings shows that some among them were not living the life of a disciple. Moreover, we see that Jesus is talking within earshot of the crowds, so he could be making the distinction between Christ-like living and worldly living. He could be showing the contrast between the two. However, given the evidence in the text it could be either one or both. If it is both, it would make sense then when He goes into examples of Christian living.²⁸ This section is clearly not for those who did not even see Jesus as the messiah. This idea would also make sense in the scheme of Jesus' mission laid out in Luke 4:18-24. He came to preach to those who needed a physician, not those who thought they were well.²⁹ However, Jesus did not pull His disciples out of earshot of the crowds. He just turned "His gaze toward His disciples" as it states in Luke 6:20. His purpose was intentional and two-fold as it often was. He firstly wanted to instruct His disciples, but secondly He wanted to allow those around to hear His teaching on this new radical life-style. That could be why Jesus used language such as "But I say to you who hear."³⁰ Probably getting the attention of some of the crowd but still talking directly to the disciples He would proceed to give His radical instructions on how to live (i.e.... love your enemies, give to those who ask, etc...).

We cannot say that Jesus was not implicitly speaking to the crowds. As Richard Niebuhr sums up in the conclusion of his book Christ and Culture,

²⁸ See Luke 6:27-38. This section gives examples not to those who were blessed, for they were already living this way, but rather it was to those who were not living the Christian life.

²⁹ See Luke 5:30-32.

³⁰ See Luke 6:27

Christ's relationship with culture is more complex than often thought. I would agree, and I would add that if one looks deep into the Biblical text one will see a Christ that many times not only goes against culture but in many ways tries to transform it.

Finally, we cannot ignore Jesus' actions and words in that sermon on the plain. Yes, Jesus was directing His words to His disciples. However, we cannot restrict Jesus to a rustic preacher, for He knew what He was doing. We cannot ignore the undertones of this sermon that spoke to many people's hearts that day regardless of whether or not they believed this man to be the Messiah.

Section II. The Content of the Sermon

Let us now focus on the exact content of this sermon. These words are so deep that we could spend all day making connections to what Jesus is saying here. However, let us focus on His call to discipleship. According to Jesus' teaching here, what does it mean to be a true follow of Christ? To understand this we need to know the context in which Jesus is speaking. If we understand Jesus to be speaking to His disciples about radically following Him, even if it meant being hated, then we begin to see that He wants his disciples to live a certain way.³¹ We need to compare the blessings with the woes. If we do this, we see that Jesus is speaking of specific problems with wealth and greed. What do poverty, hunger, mourning, and persecution have in common with discipleship? Once again, Jesus is speaking of those whom He came to minister to.³² Those who want to follow Jesus have to humble themselves even if it means sacrificing their comfort. This

³¹ See Luke 6:22.

³² See Luke 4:18.

will become even clearer as we explore His parables. Therefore, I will leave this discussion about the beatitudes and will allude to these concepts later when I explore Jesus' parables.

Chapter 2: Greed and Want Condemned (Luke 12:13-34)

We will see Jesus, in this section, address the crowds with a parable³³ and then turn to His disciples to give them instruction.³⁴ It is clear through the context of this section in Luke that Jesus is speaking to two audiences.³⁵ Let us now allow the text to illumine the exact truth of what Jesus is saying.

Section I. The inattentive man and Jesus' warnings against greed (Luke 12:13-15)

Jesus is teaching the crowds once again, and a man interrupts Him. It seems that the man had not even been listening to what Jesus was taking about, because what he says had nothing to do with what Jesus had previously been teaching on. Jesus replies to this interruption with a parable. He uses this man as an opportunity to talk about the serious danger of wealth. Before we get into the parable, it is important to look at how Jesus sets up this parable. He states in verse 14, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." Clearly, Jesus is saying here that if one thinks that his life is about what he has then that person has fallen into greed. This verse is definitely a preface to the parable he is about to tell in verses 16-21. Note the severity in Jesus' words. He tells the people to be on guard against all forms of greed. He is no doubt giving

³³ See Luke 12:16-21.

³⁴ See Luke 12:22-34.

³⁵ These audiences are the crowds and his disciples.

special emphasis toward His disciples as was characteristic of Him, and we will see this played out later when we explore His commentary of the parable to His disciples in verses 22-34.

Section II. The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)

Let us explore this important parable Jesus teaches to His wider audience.³⁶ We will begin by talking about the context in which Jesus describes this man. According to Stein's commentary, the context is that this man is already rich.³⁷ With that in mind, Jesus begins talking about what this man's greed drove him to do. The rich fool looked at all that he had and did not know what to do with it. He had acquired too much mammon. Instead of giving the surplus away, he began to plan the tearing down of his storage barns in order to build new ones. However, the man did not know that he was about to die.

In this parable, Jesus really emphasizes his selfishness with all of the first person language.³⁸ Jesus is showing that the man is too greedy and full of pride to see that nothing is his own. He does not realize that the One who gave him all he had is coming to collect the debt. For this reason, Jesus warns the crowd not to be like this man, but to change their hearts to be rich towards God.³⁹

Section III. Jesus' Words to His Disciples (Luke 12:22-34)

In this passage, Jesus once again turns to His disciples and talks directly to them. However, as in Luke 6:20-26, He does not take them out of earshot of the

³⁶ The crowds.

³⁷ See Stein's commentary p. 352.

³⁸ Jesus uses the first person 11 times. He also uses selfish language to describe the man talking to his soul (Luke 12:19).

³⁹ See Luke 12:21.

crowd. He turns to his disciples and says, “For this reason I tell you, do not worry about your life.” Jesus is connecting what He is going to say next to what He has been talking about.

This passage is full of instructions about discipleship. A disciple of Christ does not need to worry about material things because the Father provides. We need to stop here and make some things clear. Jesus is not saying that God is going to make us rich in the sense of material possessions. Why is this not the case? Because, Jesus just told a story preaching against the acquirement of wealth. Jesus is saying something totally radical and different. As followers of Jesus, we are now God’s children, and we do not need to worry about material things because we have no control over what we can get. Furthermore, if we try to have control over what we get, we fall into greed and sin. Therefore, Jesus is telling us not to worry and put our trust in God. This is clearly a call to radical discipleship.

Section IV. Making the Connections (Luke 12:33-34)

In these passages, there are two messages that Jesus gives. He gives an invitation to the crowd to become disciples and follow God.⁴⁰ Here Jesus is telling the crowds to essentially make God their treasure and not their treasure a god. He then gives a call to discipleship.

His message to the disciples is a different message than the one we see him give to the crowds. After telling them not to worry about material things He says, “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts

⁴⁰ See Luke 12:21 and 34.

which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.” He tells them not to worry and to go sell their possessions, because it is God who provides for their lives. We see here a connection back to the *Magnificat*, when Mary talks about how God has given the hungry good things.⁴¹ We also see two connections to the beatitudes. The first connection is when Jesus tells His disciples not to worry reiterating what He told them in the sermon on the plain.⁴²

The second connection to the beatitudes is Jesus’ words in Luke 12:33. We need to note here the similarity between the language Jesus uses here in verse 33 and the language He uses in Luke 6:23. The ideas are the same. In 6:23, Jesus says that they should rejoice for the price of being a disciple of the “Son of Man” because they have a great reward waiting for them in heaven. Jesus says in 12:33 that as disciples they should store their treasures in heaven. Given these two passages, it is implicit in the text that Jesus is stating that the selling of one’s possessions is a part of the suffering of discipleship; however, as in His beatitudes He is telling His disciples not to worry.⁴³ It is astounding how all of the passages seem connected. This was Luke’s purpose in writing the Gospel.⁴⁴

Finally, we see Jesus wrap up this whole section of teaching by saying in verse 34, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This verse here seems to give an answer to both the crowds and the disciples. Jesus in verse

⁴¹ See Luke 1:53. The hungry.

⁴² See Luke 6:20-23. This is especially so in Jesus’ emphasis on the poor and hungry. Those who are in a humble state are blessed; therefore, they should not worry.

⁴³ See Luke 6:23 and Luke 12:22, 32.

⁴⁴ See Luke 1:3. “A consecutive order.

21 told the crowds to be rich towards God and make Him their treasures. Why does He say that? Because, where their treasure will be, there their hearts will be also⁴⁵ Jesus is giving a conclusion to His teaching about discipleship. The disciples should give away their possession and store up there treasure in heaven; the crowds need to come back to God and put their hearts in His care.

The final thing to note about this parable is that Jesus is not talking about what the man was doing but rather the state of his heart. He was living in selfishness, and his perspective on life was not right. He had put his heart with mammon, and not with God. Therefore, given Jesus' words in verse 21 and 34, those who are rich toward God put there hearts with God. That is why Jesus tells His disciples to radically follow God. This leads us to a three-part section in Luke's gospel about what it means to be a disciple. Jesus just warned against greed, but we are now going to see Him teaching about pride, humility, innocence, and attachment to wealth.

Chapter 3. The Discipleship Section⁴⁶ (Luke 18:9-27)

We have now reached the height of my research of Luke-Acts. This discipleship section offers the most evidence for how Christians are to live as followers of Jesus. In this section of Luke's gospel, we find the climax of the pattern that I have been showing about what it means to be a disciple. This section is broken up into three smaller teaching sections, with three different teachings on discipleship, but they are all portraying the same message. The first teaching section is about the Pharisee and the Publican, the second section is Jesus and the

⁴⁵ See Luke 12:34

⁴⁶ See Bock' commentary p. 295.

children, and the third section is about the rich ruler. I will explore the core message of

Section I. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)

This parable illumines this idea, as we have seen in Luke's gospel, which Jesus has been preaching about. Jesus tells us about a Pharisee and a tax collector going to the temple to pray.⁴⁷ He then portrays the attitudes of both. The Pharisee considers himself to be righteous and the tax collector cannot even face God and hides his face from God because of his sin.⁴⁸ Jesus then tells the crowd that the tax collector, not the Pharisee, was justified in his prayer.⁴⁹ This would have been a big surprise for the ancient listeners because the Pharisee had been showing his piety.⁵⁰

What is Jesus' message here? Firstly, Jesus is showing that even the Pharisees are sinners. Secondly, He is showing that we must humble our selves before God. This is the most important thing Jesus says. Of course, we are all sinners, but it is astounding what He is saying here. He is further speaking of what Mary was taking about in the Magnificat and what He was preaching in His beatitudes.⁵¹ The humble shall be exalted and those who exalt themselves will be humbled.⁵²

⁴⁷ See Luke 18:10.

⁴⁸ See Luke 18:11-13.

⁴⁹ See Luke 18:14.

⁵⁰ See Stein's commentary p. 450.

⁵¹ See Luke 2:51-52; Luke 6:20-26.

⁵² See Luke 18:14.

Jesus even shows an example of what it means to humble oneself or exalt oneself. The Pharisee exalted himself,⁵³ whereas, the tax collector humbled himself. The attitude of the tax collector shows the attitude that a disciple is supposed to have. Furthermore, it matches the description of discipleship in Mary's Magnificat, the beatitudes, Jesus instruction to His disciples about not worrying about material things.

This passage further adds to Luke's theme (the radical dependency of a disciple on God). Though Luke does not tie this parable into an idea about wealth and poverty, it is definitely connected, within the context of this section of Luke's gospel, to wealth and poverty. I will explain this point later in my paper.

Section II. The Children (Luke 18:15-17)

The previous section talked about the humble disciple of God. The next section talks about the innocence of children. Jesus said that one must enter the kingdom of heaven like a child.⁵⁴ What does He mean in this verse? It is quite clear given what He has been preaching about all throughout Luke. Jesus is talking about the trust that children possess and the total dependency that children have on their parents. Therefore, a disciple should not only be humble, as we saw in the previous section, but they must be trusting. This section echoes Jesus message in Luke 12:22-34. There He was telling the disciples to be totally dependent upon God. Here again Jesus is speaking to His disciples using the situation of the children as an example of how they should live their lives.

⁵³ See Luke 1:51 The Pharisee represents those who think proudly of themselves. See Luke 1:52 the tax collector is one who has humbled himself.

⁵⁴ See Luke 18:17.

Section III. The Rich Ruler (Luke 18:18-30)

Though the previous two sections did not focus on wealth, Jesus focuses on wealth in this section. This shows that wealth and poverty was an important part of discipleship. I would argue that Luke portrays it as one of the most important parts of discipleship; however, let us not focus on that. Rather, let us focus on how wealth and poverty fit into the theme of discipleship that Jesus is teaching.

We must put this section into its proper context. Jesus has been teaching on humility. This section also is about humility. Jesus is reiterating what He has been preaching on in the last two sections. The man asks what he can do in order to inherit the kingdom of God.⁵⁵ I want to explore something that I noticed about the man's question.

In the previous two verses leading up to this section, Jesus had already given an answer to the man's question before he asked it.⁵⁶ This leaves me with two logical conclusions, (i) the man was not paying attention to what Jesus had been saying, or (ii) the man needed further clarification about what Jesus was teaching.⁵⁷ I would be more comfortable, in light of my literary analysis of the text and the way the man asks the question, saying that he needed further

⁵⁵ See Luke 18:18.

⁵⁶ See Luke 18:16-17. ("Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all").

⁵⁷ See Bock's Commentary p. 299. Bock says that, "this passage reflects a theme that is central to Luke 18-19; the disciple's trust should lead to humble... the rich man's attitude is more like that of the Pharisee of 18:9-14... the rich man lacks the trust ". This further shows that he was either not paying attention to what Jesus had to say or he needed further details about how to receive the kingdom of God.

clarification. Moreover, I would say that the man probably wanted to know in his specific case what he should do. He had been listening to Jesus preaching about humility and trust, and now, as a good Jew who followed the law, he wanted to know how to inherit the kingdom of God.

Let us explore the perplexing answer Jesus gives to the rich ruler. He begins by reciting to the man five of the Ten Commandments.⁵⁸ The man answers by saying that he has followed all of these commandments.⁵⁹ Stein's commentary gives two different views about verse 22.⁶⁰ However, I follow a different view than what Stein does.⁶¹ I think the message Jesus is giving here is deeper than just that the man is not following the commandments; though, I can see where the two views Stein talks about are coming from. However, I think Jesus' message has to do with the extreme requirements of discipleship. Given all that I have explored about discipleship in Luke, it seems that this man's case fits right into Jesus' expectations of discipleship. This man had something in his life that kept him from following God, so Jesus calls him out on it, telling him how he can fix it and asking Him to come be a disciple.⁶² Jesus is calling the man to follow Him fully. Therefore, Jesus sees into the man's heart and shows him the one thing that is keeping Him from being able to be a disciple. Of course, Jesus'

⁵⁸ See Luke 18:20. (See Exodus 20:1-17 for all ten of the commandments).

⁵⁹ See Luke 18:21.

⁶⁰ See Stein's commentary p. 457. It says, "This (meaning this verse) has been interpreted in several ways. (1) Jesus agreed with the ruler and offered and additional suggestion that would enable the ruler to enter a higher stage in his discipleship... (2) Jesus sought to clarify the man's answer and show that he really had not kept the Commandments."

⁶¹ See Bock's commentary p. 300. His view is similar.

⁶² See Luke 18:22.

instruction to the rich ruler is different than His instructions to Zacchaeus in chapter 19. Therefore, that leaves us in understanding that Jesus sees into the hearts of people and knows what is keeping them from following God fully.⁶³ This also shows that Jesus is not commenting on the outward deed, but once again, He is talking about the state of the man's heart.⁶⁴

Section IV. Making the Connections

We saw three different instances where Jesus taught about what it meant to be a disciple. These three sections are all connected through this idea of discipleship. Therefore, it is appropriate to call this the discipleship section. It fits right into the pattern that has been laid out in this paper.

Humility binds all three of these sections together. The first section is about the humble recognition of one's unrighteousness. This prompts one to know that they need God. The second section shows how one goes about coming to God. In the first section, we see the two people coming to God, and the second section gives further instruction on how one comes to God. The third section shows the depth of coming to God, the extent of becoming humble, and the great cost of becoming a disciple.

This section connects back to all that we have been talking about. First, the Magnificat mentions the rich going away empty-handed.⁶⁵ We see the rich ruler go away empty handed.⁶⁶ He does not become a disciple, and he will not get

⁶³ See Jeremiah 17:9-11 to understand more about God's claims on our hearts.

⁶⁴ Like I said earlier in my section on Jesus' Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21), He is speaking about the state of the heart. This is evident because He does not give the same instructions to Zacchaeus.

⁶⁵ See Luke 1:53.

⁶⁶ See Mark 10:22.

to inherit the kingdom of God,⁶⁷ which is the only real treasure that will not wear out.⁶⁸

Second, the beatitudes mention how the poor will inherit the kingdom of God, and how the rich will be cursed.⁶⁹ Jesus talks about how hard it will be for the rich to inherit the kingdom of God.⁷⁰

Third, the rich man is clearly worrying about his material things.⁷¹ This is directly showing how he was acting contrary to what Jesus message about not worrying about one's material things.⁷² We see that Jesus gives the rich ruler the same instruction He gave to His disciples within earshot of the crowd.⁷³

The text illumines a very detailed pattern of Jesus' teachings in Luke. We have seen this pattern all throughout the text that I have mentioned above. Let us now turn to Acts and see how this pattern is shown in the life of the early church.

Part III. The Disciples He Left Behind

Chapter I. Possessions within the Community of Believers

I would like to give an introduction of my thoughts into this important section of Acts. I will highlight three parts of Acts in which Luke puts forth a picture of the early church and possession. My hope in showing this final part of the pattern, which the text has illumined in Luke-Acts, is to show how the early

⁶⁷ See Luke 18:24; Mark 10:22-23.

⁶⁸ See Luke 6:33.

⁶⁹ See Luke 6:20, 24.

⁷⁰ See Luke 18:24-25.

⁷¹ See Luke 18:23.

⁷² See Luke 12:22.

⁷³ See Luke 12:33 and Luke 18:22. These two passages are direct parallels.

church's praxis when it came to possessions was harmonious with what Jesus taught.

Here in Acts 1 through 8 Luke is doing something, which he did at the beginning of his gospel. Luke is introducing an idea. I feel Luke uses this theme of possessions to introduce the church of the first century. However, possessions are not the only way Luke introduces the early church.⁷⁴ Moreover, it is clear that possessions are not the key centerpiece for Luke's description of the early church.

I want to talk about what is the centerpiece of Luke's introduction of the early church. Let us explore what these three sections, shown above, have in common and what is lying at the core of Luke's message about who the early church was. The church was a Spirit Led church.⁷⁵ It is clear in the text of Luke that the Holy Spirit is what is guiding the Church of the first century. The way the church acted, their views toward each other, and their views toward possessions were all under the guide of the Spirit, in which they were united.⁷⁶ This is congruent with what Jesus had promised them.⁷⁷ It is important that we see the church as Spirit led people, because it will give us a much deeper understanding of the text.

⁷⁴ See Luke Timothy Johnson's *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* to see an in depth study on the details of this pattern that exists within Acts: 1-8 pp. 29-78 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977). I am going to show the evidence within the text of Acts that illumines this idea of who the early church was and why they were that way.

⁷⁵ See Acts 2:1-6. In addition, See Acts 2:38-39. This passage shows that the gift of the Holy Spirit came with conversion. The whole believing Church was a Spirit led church.

⁷⁶ See Acts 4:32. This passage gives testimony to the state of the early church.

⁷⁷ See Acts 1:5-8. Jesus is explicit that the Holy Spirit is going to come and guide the church.

We can now look at each of these passages within their proper context. This is the wonderful thing about Luke's style of writing. Just as it was at the beginning of his gospel, he lays the foundation, so we can read the text in its literary context. Now that we understand that the Holy Spirit was guiding the early church, let us look to see how these passages illumine the early churches view of possessions.

We will need to explore these passages with great consideration for the context of the surrounding passages, because this will allow us to see the pattern fully. Since Luke is introducing this idea of what the early church was like, it will be important for us to pay very close attention to the flow of this beginning section of Acts.⁷⁸ We will be focusing on three different instances where Luke talks about the idea of sharing within the church. The first two instances are clear signs of what Spirit led sharing looks like. The third example is a clear warning against non-Spirit led sharing. However, we will have to explore the third example thoroughly, with great consideration for its literary context, in order to clear up some of the ambiguity that arises in this particular passage. In addition to the three passages about sharing, we will explore this issue of possessions, as it is shown in the words and practice of Peter and John in Acts 3:6, and in the early ministry of the Church.

⁷⁸ This section includes Acts: 1-8. . See the table of contents in *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* p. v. In his book, Luke Timothy Johnson breaks acts up into two sections, which are Acts 1-8 and Acts 9-28. However, I do not know if he also makes the connection that Acts 1-8 is an introduction.

Section I. Sharing in the Church Part I (Acts 2:43-47).

We find Luke speak first about the sharing of believers in Acts 2:44-45. If we look at the surrounding context, the text will illumine Luke's message here. We see that earlier Peter had given a sermon to the crowd who had just witnessed Pentecost. Out of this crowd, the text tells us that three thousand souls came to believe.⁷⁹

What happened after they believed, were baptized, and received the Holy Spirit,⁸⁰ they sold all their possessions and shared amongst themselves so that no one would be in need.⁸¹ Here is the first example of this idea of a Spirit led church. It is clear in the way that Luke speaks of the apostles doing the wonders and signs⁸² by the Holy Spirit⁸³ that the church was acting also in the Spirit. This idea is further shown when Luke talks about the church being in one mind together.⁸⁴ In some later passages we will explore the importance of the Spirits unifying aspect within the Church, and how that is reflected in the Church's view of possessions. However, it is important to note right now that Luke is introducing this idea of Spirit led living in the Church, and how it is the Spirit that is at the core of the early Church movement.

Is Luke telling us more than just the Church was being led by the Spirit? I think we need to look at this passage in light of what we have been exploring all

⁷⁹ See Acts 2:41.

⁸⁰ See Acts 2:38.

⁸¹ See Acts 2:45.

⁸² See Acts 2:43.

⁸³ See Acts 1:8. Here we see that the apostles will receive power at an appointed time. This shows that from now on the apostles are acted by the authority of the Holy Spirit.

⁸⁴ See Acts 2:45-46.

throughout this paper. Discipleship is an important message Luke is giving within this particular passage. We are seeing Jesus' words and teachings fulfilled by the Church in Acts. We are seeing examples of pure discipleship,⁸⁵ humble submission to God,⁸⁶ and an attitude of prayer and trust that God will provide.⁸⁷ They were living what Jesus taught. This is important to see because it will help us understand why Peter and John did what they did.

Section I. Possession's of Peter and John (Acts 3:6)

According to Acts 3:6, Peter and John carried no money with them. This passage can be compared to Luke 10:4. There Jesus commands that those seventy that He sent out carry no money belts. This passage in Acts tells us some key things about the mentality of the Apostles.

First, their motivation was focused. They were going to the temple to pray.⁸⁸ If they were going to pray, then carrying money would only slow them down. They had no reason to carry any money. This passage shows us the understanding they had of true discipleship.

Second, what mattered to them was not money. This is evident; for Peter says what he had, he would give to the man. This points out that what was important was to show the power of Jesus. Giving the man money would not show him who Jesus was. It was only when Peter called on the Lord's name, that the man was healed. This showed Jesus' power more than money ever could. If

⁸⁵ See Acts 2:42. "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching.

⁸⁶ See Acts 2:47. They were continually praising God.

⁸⁷ See Acts 2:42-46. They were sharing with each other, devoting themselves to prayer, fellowshiping with thanksgiving, and loving everyone.

⁸⁸ See Acts 3:1.

Peter had said to the man, “In the name of Jesus Christ here is some silver”, the man would probably have thought nothing of it. If Peter had given the man alms, he would have seemed like just another person. However, Peter catches the man's attention and gives him something that was different, something not of this world. It is important to see the miracle in contrast to almsgiving. I think the text is making a strong statement. Peter is showing that what really matters is not money but the power of God. This power is the transmission of the Holy Spirit. Let us look further into the works of the Holy Spirit and see how it affected the early church directly.

Section II. Sharing in the Church Part II (Acts 4:32-5:11)

There are several points that are worth talking in depth about that arise out of this passage. I want to begin by exploring what happened to the Church in the immediate verse before Luke talks about the sharing amongst the believers. In Acts 4:23-30 the church holds an impromptu praise meeting to give God thanks for what happened with Peter and John. This leads to the whole place being filled with the Holy Spirit.⁸⁹ Why is it significant that what follows next is Luke's explanation of sharing amongst believers? Why does Luke revisit this idea?

There is something familiar about what Luke is doing here. He did it in chapter 2. We saw that Luke spoke about sharing in Acts 2:44-47. What preceded this was a huge Holy Spirit experience amongst the believers, a Sermon by Peter, and a great number of people saved. It is no surprise that Luke revisits the idea of sharing after Peter has delivered his second sermon, many people have

⁸⁹ See Acts 4:31.

been saved,⁹⁰ and there has been a great Holy Spirit experience among the believers.⁹¹ Luke once again talks about how the believers were united in sharing. I believe that the text shows us that Luke is using another literary device to show the reader, it is the Holy Spirit, which creates unity. That is why Luke uses the same pattern to set up both sections about sharing.

Another key insight to this passage is the contrast between the Spirit-led sharing of the congregation and Barnabas, and the sharing of Ananias and Saphira, which was not Spirit-led. Luke uses this section to talk about what was considered sharing and what was not. We see the direct comparison between Barnabas and Ananias. We can notice a few things about this passage that will give us great insight into Luke's message about sharing.

First, Luke emphasizes what happens to Ananias and Saphira, and he does not really tell us what happens to Barnabas. This is not a big problem. Luke mentions the congregations doing the same thing as Barnabas. However, it is important for Luke to emphasize the later example of bad sharing.⁹² This goes perfectly within the pattern Luke has been laying out in acts. We have had three different examples of the apostles and believers practices what Jesus taught. Then Luke gives us an example of a believer lying to the Spirit⁹³ He goes into great detail in this section. It is interesting how much more detail he gives to his example of selfish sharing than he does in any of the other sections about positive

⁹⁰ See Acts 4:4.

⁹¹ See Acts 4:31.

⁹² This could very well be directed towards Theophilus as a warning, but that is not explicit in the text.

⁹³ See Acts 5:3.

sharing. He is showing the huge contrast between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world, which is the spirit of Satan.⁹⁴

The second thing to notice about this section is the structure of it. Luke begins by talking about the unity among the believers. Then he gives and interlude to this idea and talks about what happens when there is dissension among the Church, but after that, he gives a conclusion about the unity.⁹⁵ This structure is important, because it gives illumination to what Luke and the early Church finds to be important and that is the power of God. The believers are sharing by the power of God, the apostles are doing signs of wonder by the power of God,⁹⁶ unity is being kept among the Church by the power of God,⁹⁷ and the death of Ananias and Saphira was done by the power of God.⁹⁸ This theme is very presenting this section.

We have seen Luke talk about how the early church acted together when it came to possessions. We have seen how the church viewed possessions. We will now turn to the final part of this Pattern in Luke-Acts, which is the ministry of the early church.

Section III. The Ministry of the Early Church (Acts 6:1-6)

If the acts of the apostles, the lives of the congregations, and the decisions made by the church were all Spirit-led, then leaves us with the conclusion that the church's ministry was Spirit-led also. We see this come out clearly in the text

⁹⁴ See Acts 5:3.

⁹⁵ See Acts 5:12.

⁹⁶ See Acts 5:12.

⁹⁷ See Acts 4:32; 5:12.

⁹⁸ See Acts 5:1-10.

when Luke talks about the seven being chosen to carry out the church's ministry to the poor. The way Luke has introduced this idea of possessions will enable the reader to understand fully the church's ministry to the poor. Let us now explore this important passage that will conclude our study of Luke-Acts.

We see in Acts 6:1-3 that the early church was involved in some kind of ministry to feeding the poor and widows. We find that there is a problem and a complaint is made that the "widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food."⁹⁹ How does the early church deal with this problem? They appoint "seven men of good reputation, full of the **Spirit** and of wisdom" to take charge of this ministry. Here is textual evidence that the ministry was Spirit-led.

What else can this passage reveal to us about the early church's view of possessions? Luke here is showing that it was important to the early church that they make sure everyone is taken care of. However, it is very plain in the text that there was a tension between the "ministry of the word", and the ministry to the poor.¹⁰⁰ The apostles did not want to neglect the ministry of the word in order to do the ministry to the poor. Therefore, we see the solution, which is the choosing of the seven. However, Luke does indicate to us the importance of the ministry to the poor. He tells us that the apostles did not chose ordinary men from the congregation. They chose men who were "of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom."¹⁰¹ Moreover, they did not just send them out. They

⁹⁹ See Acts 6:1. To get a fuller understanding of the early churches view of this specific ministry to the poor see I Timothy 5:1-16 and James 1:27.

¹⁰⁰ See Acts 6:2, 4.

¹⁰¹ See Acts 6:3.

commissioned them by praying and laying their hands upon them.¹⁰² The evidence of the early church's praxis here shows us that the ministry was extremely important and Spirit-led.

Section IV. My Final thoughts on Acts 1-8

I would now like to give my final thoughts on the importance of this introductory pattern Luke puts forth at the beginning of Acts. We saw how every decision made by the early church was Spirit led. It is imperative that we see that before we try to understand the praxis of the early church. We also must note that Luke is still writing to Theophilus, so we cannot overlook the instructional overtones of this section. Finally, we cannot ignore the implications of the actions of the early church. Therefore, I will proceed to conclude my study of Luke-Acts by giving a short message about the function of this pattern.

Part IV. My Conclusion

We must understand that Luke is instructing Theophilus. This is imperative in order to understand that Luke is instructing us. The way Theophilus, the recipient of Luke's letters, functions within the text is a representation of both himself and the church. With this understanding, let us conclude our exploration of the function of this pattern Luke puts forth and apply it to our lives in the 21st century.

¹⁰² See Acts 6:6.

Luke shows us clearly that we must be humble, we must exalt the Lord, and we must not be tied down to material things. He shows that discipleship is costly. It is not easy but it is possible, not by our power but by God's. We see this lived out in the early church and Luke is calling us to live it out today. To be a disciple of Jesus, one must radically change their lives. They must drop everything and do what the disciples did, which was following God. There is no other way. If we are not living for the kingdom of God, we are living for the kingdom of the world. Luke is clear in the text; there is no other way to see this without destroying Jesus' message. We can try to water down Jesus' message about discipleship, and if we do, we destroy the function and context of the biblical text. It is time we see Jesus teaching for what they are. Luke is showing that Jesus called us to radically change; therefore, we must change.