

already urged the lawyer to *do* what he *knows* is right (v. 28). As if driving the point home, he repeats it again here. His words are pragmatic, because he reminds the lawyer (and the reader) that correct theology is insufficient for inheriting eternal life. If we don't *do* what we know is right, then all our correct answers to Bible questions won't get us one step closer to the Kingdom of God.

§ 104
Jesus' Visit
with Mary and
Martha
 (Lk 10:38-42)

Any average “Joe” can correctly choose between bad and good. The real challenge is to choose the best over the better. Martha is a mirror image of many of our best church workers. She is actively engaged in good work to the neglect of more important priorities. The story is simple; its lessons run deep.

Lk 10:38-40

³⁸As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

The setting is the village of Bethany. It was a suburb less than two miles east of Jerusalem, on the other side of the Mount of Olives. This is the first time (mentioned) that Jesus is in the home of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. This is surely not the first time they have met. They are close friends of Jesus (Jn 11:1-3). We suspect then, that Jesus had an open invitation to the home of his friends Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.³³ For the past year and a half, Jesus has been traveling in Galilee and its surrounding areas. Now he is back down in Judea and he can rekindle this friendship.

We would like to imagine Lazarus meeting Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles and telling Mary and Martha about it. They send Lazarus back to Jerusalem the next day to invite Jesus to come over for dinner. He is too busy to come during the feast. When it is over, though, Jesus makes his way over to Bethany for a meal with these dear friends. Since Lazarus is not mentioned, we suggest perhaps he was one of the seventy-two Jesus sent out.

Mary and Martha have worked together³⁴ to prepare a banquet for their friend and famed rabbi, Jesus. That was no small task, considering his smallest entourage consisted of the Twelve. Mary and Martha apparently have a large home, representing some degree of wealth. We wonder what kind of business Simon (the Leper, Mt 26:6) is engaged in and how his sickness affects his standard of living. Or perhaps it is Lazarus who is the main bread-winner of the

³³ It is possible that Simon the Leper (Mt 26:6) is a fourth member of the family. If so, then we might suspect that he is married to Mary or Martha. It is also possible that Mt 26:6 took place in an entirely different home, or that Simon the Leper is Lazarus.

³⁴ Martha uses the melodramatic word “abandoned” (v. 40), indicating that at first Mary was helping her.

home. If that is the case, then his raising, a mere two months from now, will be a considerable favor for the family.

Once Jesus finally arrives, Mary walks out and leaves her sister to do all the work while she sits down at Jesus' feet and listens to him teach. Not only is this rude to leave her sister, it is culturally inappropriate. She is assuming the role of a disciple, a characteristically male position (cf. Lk 8:1-3). As Martha races back and forth between the kitchen and the banquet hall, she gets more and more upset with her sister. Finally, she spews out her frustration all over Jesus with these words: "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" With this, she not only blames her sister, but Jesus for her frustration.

Although Martha is somewhat rude (due to her frenzy) and a bit presumptuous to tell Jesus what to do, her request is still reasonable. She wants Mary to *help* her [*synantilambanō*]. The word means "to do her fair share." It is the kind of word you would use to describe two oxen in the same yoke, both pulling their own weight. Now that's just good old Judeo-Christian work ethic.

⁴¹"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴²but only one thing is needed.^a Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Lk 10:41-42

^a42 Some manuscripts *but few things are needed—or only one*

We can almost hear the chuckle as Jesus corrects Martha: "You are worried and upset about many things." Isn't this a sound-bite from our own morning news?! We are a frantic and frenzied people. And like Martha, most of what we worry over are just dishes.

There are some manuscripts at verse 42 which read: "There are only a few things that are needed." If this is the correct reading, Jesus could be speaking about the dinner preparations. He is telling Martha that she is making too much of a "to-do." But the present text is most likely correct. Jesus is not talking about the meal but about his teaching: "The only thing necessary is the Word of God."³⁵

The conclusion is clear. Martha had the sublime privilege of sitting at Jesus' feet listening to him, but she is worried about getting the meal "just so." She missed him. In five short months he will be gone. Likewise, we often go through life worrying about trivial matters and missing our divine appointments. Mary, on the other hand, takes advantage of God-incarnate in her living room.³⁶ Because her ears are open now, the Friday before Jesus is crucified she will be perceptive enough to anoint him for his burial (cf. § 141).

³⁵ R.W. Wall suggests that this links Jesus' words to the Manna of Deut 8:3. He proposes that the three pericopes of Lk 10:25-28, 29-37, and 38-42 are linked consecutively to Deut 5-6; 7; and 8, showing that Jesus is to the church what Moses was to Israel. ("Martha and Mary [Luke 10:38-42] in the Context of a Christian Deuteronomy," *JSNT* 35 [1989]: 19-35).

³⁶ We will find these same two women again in John 11 demonstrating the same characteristics: Martha taking care of business and Mary offering Jesus worship.



§ 105a
A Model Prayer
 (Lk 11:1-4)

Prayer is so important and powerful. Why is it that we know so little about it and do it so poorly? We're not alone. Jesus' first followers struggled with prayer too. As the Master prayed, they watched with admiration and perhaps even a bit of envy. He prayed so well and so often! Luke, particularly, stresses Jesus' prayer life (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:32, 41; 23:34). On this occasion, when Jesus returns from one of these stolen moments with the Father, his disciples come with a request: "Teach us to pray." They too wanted the intimacy Jesus had with God.

Lk 11:1

¹One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Most of this section sounds familiar. In fact, verses 2-4 and 9-12 are lifted straight out of the Sermon on the Mount. This does not mean Luke edited and rearranged Matthew's material.³⁷ After the tour of the 72, there would be crowds of unfamiliar faces. What the Twelve heard a year ago up in Galilee, these Judeans may be hearing for the very first time today.

The crowd remembers well how John taught his disciples to pray. It was not uncommon for a rabbi in those days to teach certain emphases and even liturgies of prayer. John apparently taught certain features of prayer which were uniquely his. This student seems to be asking Jesus to point out his unique strategies and emphases of prayer. After all, they seem to work pretty well. One striking feature of Jesus' prayers is that he always refers to God as Father (cf. Jn 20:17; Rom 8:14-17), with one notable exception in Mark 15:34. While Palestinian Jews did consider God their "Father" (cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 103:13), they were reluctant to address him as "Abba." Thus, Jesus opened up a new intimacy between his disciples and their God.³⁸

³⁷A. J. Banstra, "The Original Form of the Lord's Prayer," *CTJ* 16 (1981): 15-37, evaluates five different suggestions concerning the two versions of this prayer. (1) Jesus gave a similar prayer on two different occasions, faithfully recorded by Matthew and Luke. (2) Matthew's version is more original and Luke edited it down. (3) Luke's version is more original and Matthew expanded it liturgically. (4) The prayer, in both forms, was created by the early church and not actually original with Jesus. (5) Both Matthew and Luke changed the actual words of Jesus to fit their own "worshiping communities." Banstra accepts this fifth solution, suggesting that Matthew's version is more appropriate to Jewish Christians and Luke's version is more appropriate to Gentile Christians. However, several cautions are in order. First, Banstra's conclusions are based on his presuppositions of redaction criticism and literary borrowing between the Gospels, neither of which has been adequately proven. Second, both versions of the prayer show signs of careful poetic composition. Thus, it is impossible (and precarious) to identify one as "more original." Third, Jesus was an itinerant preacher. One would expect variant forms of similar addresses.

³⁸Cf. J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (Naperville: Allenson, 1967), p. 97. However, W.A. VanGemeren, "'ABBA' in the Old Testament?" *JETS* 31/4 (1988): 385-398, points out that an intimate relationship with a "Father-God" is found in the OT as well as in the NT. Thus, we don't have a dichotomy between the two testaments. But Jesus certainly heightens our relationship with God.

There are several lessons here in verse 1. (1) Written or memorized prayers, and especially the Lord's prayer, should still be practiced alongside extemporaneous prayer. They are focused; each line is packed with meaning. They generally contain deep theology in beautiful language. They are well-rounded, and thus can become a springboard for extemporaneous prayers. They are also communal. That is, they belong to the church. Thus, we are reminded that we do not pray in isolation from other believers. (2) We would do well to seek out and imitate "prayer masters." They may guide us in our journey toward the face of God. (3) Prayer can be taught. It does not always come naturally. It may require practice and perhaps a bit of experimentation.

²He said to them, "When you pray, say:

'{Our^{MT}} Father,^a {in heaven^{MT}}

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come.^b {Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.^{MT}}

³Give us each day {today^{MT}} our daily bread.

⁴Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.^c

And lead us not into temptation^d {but deliver us from the evil one.^{MT}}"

Lk 11:2-4 *with*
Mt 6:9-13

^a2 Some manuscripts *Our Father in heaven* ^b2 Some manuscripts *come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* ^c4 Greek *everyone who is indebted to us* ^d4 Some manuscripts *temptation but deliver us from the evil one*

[vv. 2-4 = Mt 6:9-13, see comments on § 54f]

There are very few differences between the Lord's prayer in Matthew and in Luke: (1) Matthew's version is longer and more liturgical (see text above for Matthew's additions). (2) Matthew uses "bread today," Luke uses "daily bread." Thus, in Matthew the request for bread seems more immediate. (3) The forgiveness of our fellows in Matthew is past tense "as we have forgiven;" whereas in Luke it is present/future, "for we also forgive." And (4) Matthew uses the word "transgressions" whereas Luke uses "sins."

Jesus has just told the disciples how to pray. Now he encourages them to do it. Sometimes it is difficult to believe God will actually listen to us. After all, can my puny little prayers actually move a sovereign God? Apparently they do. That's the point of this parable.

§ 105b
Exhortation
to Pray
(Lk 11:5-13)



⁵Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'⁷ Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'

Lk 11:5-8

⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness^a he will get up and give him as much as he needs."

^a8Or *persistence*

This parable made a lot more sense in Palestine than it does to us. For instance, we would consider it rude for a friend to show up at our house in the middle of the night. But if you are traveling a long distance by foot, it may be unavoidable. Furthermore, if you want to avoid the oppressive Palestinian heat, you would purposely travel at night. It may also sound rude to wake up a neighbor in the middle of the night. This is especially true when we consider the fact that many Palestinian families slept together in the same room on a single mat. If the father gets up to get the bread, he would rouse the wife and kids. Part of their culture, however, was the understanding that a visitor was not simply hosted by a family, but by the whole community. Therefore, this neighbor would have the right to ask his friend to provide for the visitor even if he was a bit put out by the request. And in smaller communities, he could hardly hide the fact that their family had just done their baking for the week.

This parable is similar to the one found in Luke 18:1-8 about the unjust judge who was pressured into giving in to a persistent widow. So what is Jesus saying? Is it that we must be pushy and persistent before God will give us what we ask? Certainly not! This is not a parable of comparison, but one of contrast. It is the classic Jewish logic, from lesser to greater: if even a tight-fisted neighbor will give in to your bold request, how much more will God delight in giving good gifts to his children. We can approach God with confidence because he is our loving father who delights in granting our requests.³⁹ This matches exactly what follows in verses 9-13.

Lk 11:9-13

⁹"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for^a a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

^a ¹¹ Some manuscripts *for bread, will give him a stone; or if he asks for*

³⁹ Klyne Snodgrass, "Anaideia and the Friend at Midnight (Lk. 11:8)," *JBL* 116/3 (Fall 1997): 505-513, correctly points out that *anaideia*, in the LXX, Greek and early Christian literature always meant "shamelessness" or "impudence" (with one possible exception of "persistence" in Jer. 8:5). Furthermore, this "impudence" may be a characteristic of the sleeper rather than the knocker. That is, he may get out of bed, not because his friend kept knocking but because he wants to avoid being shamed by the community the next day (cf. Nolland, pp. 625-626). Nevertheless, the primary thrust of this parable is not persistent prayer, but bold prayer. See also A.F. Johnson, "Assurance for Man: The Fallacy of Translating *Anaideia* by 'Persistence' in Luke 11:5-8," *JETS* 22/2 (1979): 123-131.

[vv. 9-13 = Mt 7:7-11, see comments on § 54h]

Luke differs only slightly from Matthew's wording. In verse 11, Matthew uses the bread/stone illustration, whereas Luke uses the egg/ scorpion illustration. Viner suggests that the curled up scorpion perhaps looked like an egg.⁴⁰ Luke also uses the singular "heaven" (classic Greek description), while Matthew uses the plural "heavens" (classic Hebrew description). Both of these are only minor differences. There is one other difference of a bit more substance. Instead of the Father giving "good gifts" as in Matthew, Luke says he will give the "Holy Spirit." Now that is the best gift we could get (cf. Acts 1:4; 2:33; Lk 24:49)!

The point is obvious. You expect even a stingy neighbor to give you what you need to entertain guests, even if you ask in the middle of the night. How much more will God, our loving Father, be willing to give us everything we need for nourishment, especially his Holy Spirit. So go ahead and ask! You are sure to get what you need.

We've read these words before (§ 61-62). Matthew and Mark used them to describe a nasty confrontation in Galilee. Luke uses the same words to describe a similar skirmish in Judea. We shouldn't be too surprised. Luke and Matthew also use the same words to describe the sending out of the seventy-two in Judea (Lk 10) and the sending of the Twelve in Galilee. We will notice this phenomenon throughout Luke's "central section." He points out the fact that many of the events of Jesus' earlier ministry in the north were replicated in his later ministry in the south.

§ 106
Beelzebub
and the Sign
of Jonah
(Lk 11:14-36,
cf. § 61-62,
Mt 12:22-45;
Mk 3:20-30)

The religious leaders, even here in Judea, can no longer deny that Jesus has done great miracles. Nor can they afford to ignore this man and his movement. They can either admit Jesus' power is from God and submit to his Lordship, or relegate his miraculous power to Satan. But they are not about to admit Jesus was right. Their only alternative is to lambaste him. As they do, Matthew records for us Jesus' warning. Blasphemy against the incarnate Christ is somewhat excusable. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not. They are dangerously close to the point of no return.

JESUS AND BEELZEBUB

¹⁴Jesus was driving out a demon that was {blind and^{MT}} mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. ¹⁵But some of them {Pharisees^{MT}} {and teachers of the

Lk 11:14-23 *with*
Mt 12:22-25,
Mk 3:22-23



⁴⁰T. Viner, "Stories Jesus Told: The Friend at Midnight," CS (Feb. 3, 1991): 17.



law^{MK}} said, “{He is possessed;^{MK}} By Beelzebub,^a the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.”¹⁶Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.

¹⁷Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them {in parables^{MK}}: “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house {or city^{MT}} divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁰But if I drive out demons by the finger {Spirit^{MT}} of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

²¹“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. ²²But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

²³“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.”

^a ¹⁵Greek *Beezeboul* or *Beelzeboul*, also in verses 18 and 19

[vv. 14-23 = Mt 12:22-30; Mk 3:22-27, see comments on § 61]

Matthew describes a couple of things that Luke does not. First, the attack is led by the Pharisees. Second, it ends with a discussion on the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, a frightening and powerful narrative. Luke’s rendition, however, is a bit more vivid, especially in describing the plunder of a strong man’s house.

The Pharisees accuse Jesus of being Satanic. It is a serious charge and potentially true. Jesus cannot ignore it. In fact, he musters some of his best logic to answer this accusation.

ARGUMENT #1: “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined.” Jesus’ power is being used against Satan’s kingdom. If he belongs to Satan, he would be working for him, not against him. This would be like cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face. It is not that Satan *couldn’t* order out a demon but that he *wouldn’t*.

ARGUMENT #2: “By whom do your followers drive them out?” Let’s say, for the sake of argument, that Jesus was Satanic because he cast out demons. Would this same argument not also apply to the other Jewish exorcists (cf. Acts 19:13-14)? Their hypocrisy is evident. Their condemnation of Jesus falls back upon themselves.

ARGUMENT #3: “The kingdom of God has come to you.” If they follow Jesus’ logic, they have to be pierced with fear at this point. If there is even a remote possibility that Jesus’ power is from God, they have just committed fierce blasphemy. “Has come” is not the normal verb for “come.” It means to “arrive, catch up” or even, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, “preceded.” Bottom line: God’s kingdom is sitting on their doorstep!

This becomes all the more striking when we consider Jesus’ metaphor “the finger of God.” Clearly this phrase refers to God’s power. However, in light of Exodus 8:19 (Moses and Aaron’s plague of gnats), it seems to indicate God’s power *through a human agent*. “At the very least, Jesus is indicating by the

phrase that he places himself alongside Moses and Aaron, genuine messengers from God who were empowered by him to perform symbolic miracles connected with Israel's liberation from slavery."⁴¹ What is more, just as the magicians of Pharaoh could not reproduce this plague as they had the previous two, so Jesus stands superior to the Pharisees who accuse him falsely of "cheap magic." Now the accusers stand condemned.

ARGUMENT #4: "*When someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor . . .*" This too is a frightening proposition for Jesus' critics. He has just disarmed Satan and divided up his spoils. He has entered Satan's domain, beat him, stripped him of his power, and robbed him of his possessions. Who's next?!

DEMONS IN ARID PLACES

^{24m}When an evil^a spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' ²⁵When it arrives, it finds the house {unoccupied,^{MT}} swept clean and put in order.⁴² ²⁶Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. {That is how it will be with this wicked generation.^{MT}}

Lk 11:24-26 with
Mt 12:44-45



^a24 Greek *unclean*

[vv. 24-26 = Mt 12:43-45, see comments on § 62]

This whole argument started when Jesus cast a demon out of this mute man. He has become the center of attention. Jesus even uses him to illustrate the desperate situation of the entire nation. Jesus does the guy a favor. He cleans him up by casting out the demon. That is good. But if this fellow doesn't fill his body with something else, the demon, unsatisfied being a vagabond, is likely to return with his buddies to their newly renovated abode. Then this man will be even worse off. Likewise, Jesus' countrymen receive a great blessing because of his presence. But if they don't accept him as Lord, they are in for a rude awakening. Their plight will be worse than it was before he came.

²⁷As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

Lk 11:27-28

²⁸He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

This woman actually blesses the body of Mary, specifically her womb and her breasts. She was blessed with the privilege to bear Jesus and to raise him as

⁴¹ Paul Meier, p. 411.

⁴² The word for "put in order" [*kosmeō*] might be understood as "decorated" or "furnished." The picture is not of a house that is desolate with bare walls and no furniture. Rather, the opposite is true. It is ready to be lived in. Such is the nature of our human hearts. They are prepared for spiritual habitation.

a son (Luke 1:28-35, 42-55). God certainly respected her faith and piety. Yet she, like John the Baptist, was less than the least in the kingdom of God. Jesus' introductory conjunction, *menoun*, is a way of saying, "Yes, BUT." Jesus affirms what she has said, but points out its inadequacy. True blessedness is in hearing and keeping the word of God. There is no spiritual blessing apart from obedience to the word. This is like Matthew 12:46-50 (§ 63) — Jesus' family seeking him. Both sections say that Jesus' true family, those who listen and obey, stand in stark contrast to the Pharisees.

SIGN OF JONAH

Lk 11:29-32
with Mt 12:39

²⁹As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked (and adulterous^{MT}) generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one^a greater than Solomon is here. ³²The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here."

^a31 Or *something*, also in verse 32

[vv. 29-32 = Mt 12:38-42, see comments on § 62]

Things are really heating up now. The crowds gather around to check out the hubbub. Jesus has just answered the accusation made about him in verse 15. Now he gets back to the request that some others in the crowd made — for a sign from heaven, v. 16.

How dare they ask for a sign from heaven! Oh, there is nothing wrong with wanting a little verification. That was the whole purpose of miracles (cf. Jn 20:31). Jesus has already done a slug of miracles. Why on earth would they ask for more? Precisely because they are bent on unbelief.

Now, this is surprising since they are supposedly the people of God. Even pagans know better than that. For instance, the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba knew a good thing when they heard it. Yet these folks stand here blaspheming Jesus. Their shameful behavior will be exposed on judgment day even by these pagans. They will get a sign, alright. It won't be from heaven. It will be from the belly of the earth when Jesus resurrects.⁴³

Lk 11:33-36

³³"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. ³⁴Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also

⁴³ E.H. Merrill, "The Sign of Jonah," *JETS* 23/1 (1980): 23-30.

is full of darkness. ³⁵See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. ³⁶Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.”

[v. 33 = Mt 5:15, see comments on § 54c]

[vv. 34-36 = Mt 6:22-23, see comments on § 54g]

Jesus teaches that the lamp of the body is the eye. Yet eyes don't produce the light.⁴⁴ Rather, they are the vehicle through which light enters the body. Jesus is the light. And he's right before their very eyes. Most people love light. In fact, they put lamps on stands so they can light up the whole house. These guys are trying to “put him out.” Their eyes are beholding the light of the world, yet their bodies are not being enlightened because their eyes are bad. They have blinders on. Their shades are pulled to keep out the light. They demonstrate their blindness by seeking yet another sign and ignoring those already given.⁴⁵ In a nutshell Jesus says, “Open your eyes and take an honest look at me! I will shine in you if you allow me in” (cf. Eph 5:13,14). We can either open our eyes and be enlightened (v. 36), or we can shut our eyes and become blind and dark (v. 34). “There is none so blind as those who will not see.”

With this, Jesus concludes his argument. Luke ends with talk about light. Matthew's presentation ends with talk about fruit (Mt 12:33-37). In both narratives, Jesus ties a knot on the encounter by distinguishing between the motives of those who listen and those who won't.

This is now the third event in Jesus' later Judean ministry which parallels an event in his Galilean ministry (cf. § 102a & 106). It would appear that Jesus is now doing in the southern country what he did up in Galilee. Since his time is running out, he must move more quickly.

In section 77 we watched as Jesus quarreled with the Pharisees about this very issue of ceremonial washing up in Galilee. Matthew 15:1 and Mark 7:1 identified them as Pharisees from Jerusalem. Therefore, this may very well be the same group of guys that accosted Jesus before, only this time they have home-court advantage.⁴⁶

§ 107
Woes to
the Pharisees
and Teachers
of the Law
(Lk 11:37-54;
cf. § 77 & 137a)

⁴⁴The ancient Greek and Hebrew understanding of vision was that the eye did, in fact, produce light (cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 45b-46a). For a summary of ancient testimony see D.C. Allison, “The Eye is the Lamp of the Body,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 61-83.

⁴⁵S.R. Garrett, “Lest the Light in You be Darkness”: Luke 11:33-36 and the Question of Commitment,” *JBL* 110/1 (1991): 93-105.

⁴⁶There are approximately nineteen pericopes in which Jesus confronts the Pharisees (Mt 9:32-34; 12:22-24; 21:33-46; 22:31-40; 22:41-46; 23:1-36; Mk 2:15-17; 2:23-26; 3:1-6; 7:1-8; 8:11-13; 10:2-9; 12:13-17; Lk 5:17-26; 7:36-50; 14:1-6; 15:1-7; 16:14-15; 17:20-21; 19:37-40). These controversies

The Pharisees were the religious right-wing. Originally they were a group of laymen who sought to separate themselves from the impurity of their society by applying OT principles to all aspects of their lives. Their motives, at first, were very good. However, in their zeal for purity they built a “hedge about the law” through many and minute oral traditions. Unfortunately, the further they went, the more interested they became in rituals and the less interested they became in people. This led to the kind of corruption that Jesus is about to rebuke.

Because Jesus did not follow their rules (i.e., the oral traditions) in Sabbath regulations, ritual washings, and fasting, he became a frequent target for their criticism and schemes:

1. They charged Jesus with blasphemy when he claimed to forgive sins (Mt 9:3ff; Mk 6:2ff; Lk 5:21).
2. They scorned his frequent friendship with sinners (Mt 9:11; Mk 2:16; Lk 5:30; 15:1).
3. They accused him of breaking their oral traditions by not fasting (Lk 5:33); violating Sabbath regulations (Mt 12:2, 10; Mk 2:23; 3:2; Lk 6:5-7; 13:14ff; Jn 5:10-18; 9:13); and not washing (Mt 15:1-20; Mk 7:1-23; Lk 11:37-41).
4. They accused Jesus of working for/under Satan (Beelzebul) (Mt 9:34; 11:19; 12:24ff; Mk 3:22; Lk 11:14).
5. They charged him with deception (Mt 27:62ff; Jn 7:12), sedition against Rome (Mt 27:18; Lk 23:1-2), and threatening to destroy the temple (Mt 26:59-61; 27:39-40; Jn 2:19).
6. They mocked him (Jn 7:48), even calling him a Samaritan and demon-possessed (Jn 8:48).
7. They aligned themselves both with the Herodians (Mk 3:6) and with the Sadducees (Mt 16:1) to trap (Lk 11:53-54), arrest (Jn 7:30-32, 44-45; 8:20), and kill Jesus (Mt 27:62; Jn 8:59; 18:3).

Lk 11:37

³⁷When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table.

Jesus is invited to brunch.⁴⁷ This is somewhat odd considering the animosity between Jesus and the Pharisees. Perhaps he secretly desires to trap Jesus and hides his desire behind a hospitable invitation. After all, in just a little bit, the pharisaic party will openly attempt to trap Jesus (vv. 53-54). On the other hand, the Feast of Tabernacles had driven a wedge between the Jewish leaders. Many of them believe in Jesus and many others are taking an honest look at him (Jn 7:45-52; 10:19-21; cf. 12:42). We can't really be sure where this Pharisee is. He may not even know himself.

may reflect the continuing debate between Christians and the Pharisees after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (cf. R. A. Wild, “The Encounter between Pharisaic and Christian Judaism: Some Early Gospel Evidence,” *NovT* 27/2 [1985]: 105-124).

⁴⁷This *ariston* was likely served between 10 and 11 a.m., right after morning prayers (cf. Lk 14:12).

It seems kind of rude to be invited to someone's house for dinner and then rip his party apart like this. But based on their previous encounters, Jesus is more than justified for such a strong and straight discourse against the Pharisees. In about four months, Jesus will repeat, in almost identical words, much of this present rebuke in the temple itself, the Tuesday before he is murdered (Mt 23).

³⁸But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised.

Lk 11:38-41

³⁹Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹But give what is inside the dish,^a to the poor, and everything will be clean for you." [cf. Mt 23:25-26]

^a41 Or *what you have*

Jesus didn't wash before he ate. This washing was not for physical cleansing but for ceremonial cleansing. Furthermore, it was not a regulation of the Scriptures but a tradition of the Elders. All the Jews were supposed to wash their hands with at least a half an eggshell of water, poured over the hands with the fingers pointing down so as to wash the sin off the hands downward rather than washing them up your sleeves (cf. Butler, p. 239). They accuse Jesus of ritual uncleanness. Jesus accuses them of spiritual uncleanness. They are clean on the outside but filthy on the inside. Jesus' teaching is clear and simple: Clean up the inside and your outside will be clean too.⁴⁸

How do we clean up the inside? By giving our wealth to the poor. Jesus, sitting at this sumptuous banquet, suggests this Pharisee's time and money would be better spent on benevolence to the poor than ostentatious show. If you think that's rude, just wait until you hear what Jesus says next!

^{42a}"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. [cf. Mt 23:23]

Lk 11:42-44

^{43a}"Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces [cf. Mt 23:6-7].

^{44a}"Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it." [cf. Mt 23:27-28]

WOE #1: MAJORING IN THE MINORS, MINORING IN THE MAJORS. The Pharisees were careful to tithe even their garden herbs. The picture is ridiculous — a long-robed, phylactery-laden cleric out in his yard counting rue⁴⁹

⁴⁸ J. Neusner, "'First Cleanse the Inside,'" *NTS* 22 (1975-76): 486-495, explains the complex Halakhic background of this particular rule.

⁴⁹ "Rue was a small shrub about two feet high, and is said to have been used to flavor wine, and for medicinal purposes" (McGarvey, p. 313).

or mint leaves. Matthew 23:24 says it well, “You blind guides, you strain out the gnat and swallow the camel.” How proficient we often become in perfecting the little niceties and ignoring the major truths. There are no more important characteristics of God than his justice and his love. How often we ignore them for minutiae. We have perfected the use of the microscope and forgotten about the telescope.

WOE #2: SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT. These guys are concerned about titles. They love it when their very presence brings a hush over the crowd. They demand doors be opened to them and peons move out of their way to let them to the front of the line. They have worked hard for their places of honor and are going to see that they get it.

WOE #3: UNMARKED TOMBS. For a Jew, one of the quickest ways to become defiled is to touch a dead body. That includes stepping on a tomb (cf. Num 19:16). These Pharisees walk about defiling people as if they were unmarked tombs. The crowds encounter their religious leaders without ever knowing they are becoming defiled. Faithless clergy unwittingly spread their disease of unbelief. The laity trust in their leadership, but it leads them to destruction, not salvation.

Lk 11:45-46

⁴⁵One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.”

⁴⁶Jesus replied, “And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them” [cf. Mt 23:4].

The scribes, or lawyers, were usually also Pharisees. Just as cardiologists are specialized doctors, so the scribes were expert Pharisees. They were the upper crust. They felt superior, not only to the general populace, but even to the other Pharisees. It was their job to copy, interpret and answer questions about the Mosaic law. Since they spent so much time with the OT text, they were the scholars, the Bible answer men. As is often the case, this knowledge and intellect led to arrogance. Jesus is berating the Pharisees without making a distinction between them and the scribes. That is a little too close to home. So this scribe asks Jesus to differentiate between the two groups. Jesus never pulls a punch . . . watch!

WOE #4: LOADING BURDENS DIFFICULT TO BEAR. Since they know the law so well, they are the ones to enforce and bind the law on the general populace. Since they are experts, they can find loopholes for themselves. However, they won’t expend even the slightest effort to help others with their burden. Luke uses a medical term for “lift a finger,” which means to touch lightly a sore place or to touch to find a pulse. These scribes will not even lightly touch the loads they mercilessly cast on other people.

Lk 11:47-51

⁴⁷“Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. ⁴⁸So you testify that you

approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' ⁵⁰Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, ⁵¹from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all" [cf. Mt 23:29-36].

WOE #5: KILLING THE PROPHETS. Being a son implied taking on the same characteristics, occupation, and philosophy of your father. As their ancestors had killed and beaten many of the prophets, so these scribes would have done the same thing (cf. 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Jer 7:25-26; Mal 3:10). And in the case of Jesus, they will demonstrate the same hatred of truth and stubbornness of heart that their forefathers taught them.

They deny being prophet killers. They say, "We would never have killed the prophets. Indeed, we are honoring the prophets by building elaborate tombs in their memory." But Jesus says these elaborate tombs are extensions of their fathers' work, not an objection to it.

The words, "God in his wisdom said," are not found in the OT. Jesus is not quoting Scripture, but creating it. He is relating what God said to him personally. Because this generation killed Jesus, the fulfillment of all prophets, they stood guilty of the blood of Jesus as well as all the others.⁵⁰ By killing Jesus, they summarized all the murders and beatings of their forefathers. Their heinous act was the pinnacle of rebellion against God.

^{52a}Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering." [cf. Mt 23:13]

Lk 11:52-53

⁵³When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, ⁵⁴waiting to catch him in something he might say.

WOE #6: HIDDEN KEYS. The scribes had the keys of knowledge which allowed people to enter the kingdom. In other words, they knew (or should have known) the correct interpretation of the Scriptures. But they kept it hidden, neither entering themselves nor allowing others to enter.

Jesus identifies the Pharisees' major problems. These six pitfalls are not so different than those of today's clergy. One might call them "occupational hazards."⁵¹

As Jesus leaves the house, the Pharisees and scribes go after him. They are trying to defend their own intelligence and credibility, by discrediting Jesus.

⁵⁰Abel represents the first martyr. Zechariah represents the last OT martyr, according to the canonical order of the OT books (see notes on Mt 23:33-36, § 137a). It would be like us saying, "From Genesis to Revelation." Or we might use the English translation for our advantage and say, "All the prophets, from A-Z."

⁵¹Liefeld (p. 956) labels them as follows: hypocrisy (vv. 39-41), imbalance (v. 42), ostentation (v. 43), impossible demands (v. 46), intolerance (vv. 47-51), and exclusiveness (v. 52).

After all, he had no formal education. He should be easy to defeat. But Jesus defies their understanding and preconceived ideas. He wins at all levels.

§ 108a
Warnings and
Promises for
Disciples
(Lk 12:1-12)

Once again we notice that Luke's words are also found in Matthew (and Mark) in the Galilean ministry. This may mean Matthew and/or Luke edited some accounts together to come up with their own story line. But a more natural explanation is that Jesus said many of the same things at least twice. So the same words can describe equally well the gist of what he said in both Galilee and Judea.

Lk 12:1

¹Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

News spread fast of Jesus' big blowout at the Pharisee's house (§ 107). Often the community was allowed to sit in and observe these feasts. So it is no real surprise that a large crowd assembles when they hear the news of this heavyweight bout. The word Luke uses to describe this multitude (*myriadon*) is also found in Acts 21:20. (There it refers to many thousands of Jews who had accepted Christ.) This may be the largest crowd found in the Gospels. And they are not passive. They walk all over each other trying to get a front row seat.

Jesus first addresses his closest followers, warning them against the leaven of the Pharisees. He uses the same words which he spoke after a similar confrontation back in Galilee (Mt 16:5-6; Mk 8:14-15; § 81a). This leaven, pervasive in influence, is the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.⁵² McGarvey (p. 316) says hypocrisy "causes the bad man to hide his badness for fear of the good man, and the good man to hide his goodness for fear of the bad man."

Lk 12:2-9

²There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ³What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

⁴I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. ⁵But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the

⁵²C.L. Mitton points out that yeast and leaven are different. Leaven was a lump of dough with yeast in it. Part of it was saved and "cured" for the next baking. By that time it had fermented and could be mixed with the new batch of dough to cause it to rise. Each year, during the feast of unleavened bread, the entire community got rid of all their leaven. This "renewal" of leaven prevented disease from spreading. Based on this practice, leaven is used figuratively in four ways in the NT: (1) Leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herod (Mt 8:15; 16:6; Lk 12:1). (2) The kingdom of God grows like leaven (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:21). (3) "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Gal 5:9; 1 Cor 5:5). (4) Renewal of the Christian life (1 Cor 5:6-7). See C.L. Mitton, "Leaven," *ExpT* (1972-73): 339-343.

killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies^a? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ⁷Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

⁸"I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. ⁹But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God."

^a6 Greek *two assaria*

[vv. 2-9 = Mt 10:26-33, see comments on § 70b]

Verses 2-3 are identical to Matthew 10:26-27, but the setting is different. In Matthew, Jesus is saying, "Don't be afraid to speak out for me in the face of opposition and persecution." What Jesus told the Apostles in private they are now to preach publicly. Here in Luke, the subject is our "hidden commitments." The Pharisee in Luke 11 who invites Jesus to dinner acts like a friend. But his hidden commitments come out in verses 53-54. Likewise, the Pharisees will rally together with the Sadducees and Herodians to execute Jesus within four months. Since the crowds like Jesus, these Pharisees must treat him with civility in public. But their private animosity and criticism will not long be hidden.

Jesus knows about their death plots. But that is not so scary. All the Pharisees can do is kill the body. Eternity is still in the hands of the Father. The question is, do you cower to bullies who can kill you, or to God who can cast you into hell?⁵³ The disciples will have to answer that question for themselves soon enough. To help them make their decision, Jesus reminds them that God loves them immensely. In fact, he has even numbered the hairs of their heads. If God watches over the little sparrows, how much more will he protect his precious children? That's the promise. On the other side of the coin is a warning: If you choose to deny Jesus on earth, even because of lethal opposition, he will deny you in heaven. The conclusion: Don't fear men who hate you. Rather, fear the Father who loves you.

¹⁰⁴And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Lk 12:10-12

¹¹⁴When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

[v. 10 = Mt 12:31-32; Mk 3:28-30, see comments on § 61]

⁵³H.K. Moulton, "Luke 12:5," *BT* 25 (1974): 246-247, makes an interesting point. The word "He" (referring to God, RSV), is not in the Greek text. Hence this verse could be rendered, "Fear the one who can cast you into hell after *they have done* the killing." In other words, God is not responsible for the killing, wicked men are. This argument has some weight to it since "the verb *apokteino*, I kill, occurs 74 times, and never once is God the subject, except indirectly in Rev 2:23 and 19:21" (p. 247).

[vv. 11-12 = Mt 10:18-20 (cf. Mk 13:11 & Lk 21:14-15), see comments on § 70b]

We're still talking about choosing sides. Jesus gives another warning and another promise. Warning: If you speak out against Jesus, it is blasphemy. Fortunately, it's forgivable. You see, it is somewhat understandable that one would misunderstand the incarnation. It is, after all, an incredible concept. The problem is, they are not just rejecting Jesus, but the Holy Spirit who is validating Jesus through signs and wonders. Now we're going clear back to the exorcism of 11:14-15. Remember how some said Jesus did it by the power of Beelzebub? They said Jesus' works were done by an evil spirit when, in fact, they were done by the Holy Spirit. It's not that the Holy Spirit gets his feelings hurt and refuses to forgive anyone who insults him. Rather, they have already rejected Jesus and the Scriptures that speak of him. The last knot in their rope of hope is the Holy Spirit. If they dismiss him, it's a long way down!

So the Pharisees stand opposed to Jesus AND the Holy Spirit. On the other side of the fence were disciples who were ready to follow Jesus. If they do, they are walking into a hornet's nest. They will encounter the same violent opposition facing Jesus right now. They will be arrested and brought before religious and civil authorities. They are not prepared to handle that kind of confrontation. So, here's the promise: "Don't worry. The Holy Spirit will intervene and give you the right words at the right time."

§ 108b
Warnings on
Wealth and
Worry
(Lk 12:13-34)

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

¹⁴Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

It was not uncommon for great rabbis to be consulted about civil matters. After all, the Jews did not separate civil and religious affairs. Because Jesus was not officially part of the religio-political structure, he did not technically have the legal authority to order this man to pay his brother his share of the inheritance. However, Jesus did have both authority from God and credibility with the crowds. He could have forced this brother to pay. But that would have derailed his ministry.

Jesus is not unconcerned about finances or civil justice. But he is not willing for these things to take priority over his ministry as Messiah. He is unwilling to "take the case" which would almost surely result in an avalanche of similar requests and further the misconceptions of a political Messiah.⁵⁴

He speaks, rather, to the motive of the man, which is most likely evil. There were definite laws concerning the inheritance. If the man has a legitimate case

⁵⁴Cf. T. Gorringer, "A Zealot Option Rejected? Luke 12:13-14," *ExpT* 98 (1986-87): 267-270.

then it could most likely be won through the proper channels. Instead, it looks like the man is trying to swindle what is not his by making a boisterous demand for it. It is quite possible that he is a younger brother, protesting the eldest brother's double portion which was his God-given right.

Greed, or covetousness, is literally, "wanting-more-ish-ness." It is the insatiable desire for excess. How convicted must those of us be who fill our homes with trinkets and gadgets, all the while convincing ourselves that we must have them. As Jesus says, life does not consist of or stem from what we have, but from our relationship with God.

¹⁶And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'"

Lk 12:16-21

¹⁸"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

²⁰"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

Such are men who plan carefully, deal wisely, store shrewdly, but do not place investments in spiritual things. At just the time he can comfort himself in all his luxury (v. 19), God demands his soul. The Bible considers such a man a fool. It is not that he is stupid, but that his priorities are mixed around. Rather than investing in financial security, we ought to invest in eternity.

When he dies, all these stores of grain will go to his heir(s). Who knows whether they will be managed well or squandered? Many fortunes have been lost by the reckless management of an heir. Ecclesiastes 2:18-19 says, "I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless."⁵⁵ The quality of our earthly labors is most clearly seen with a tombstone in front of it.

²²Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?^a ²⁶Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

Lk 12:22-32

⁵⁵ This same sentiment is also found in Enoch, The Wisdom of Ben Sirach, and Seneca. This is *not* a new theme. Cf. W.R. Stacey, "Lk 12:13-31: The Parable of the Rich Fool," *RevExp* 94/2 (1997): 285-292.

²⁷⁴Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

³²⁴Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

^a25 Or *single cubit to his height*

[vv. 22-32 = Mt 6:25-34, see comments on § 54g]

The crowds are allowed to eavesdrop, but Jesus' words are directed primarily to his followers. Those who have been with him for a while have already heard this sermon.⁵⁶ Aside from a few minor variations, the words and message are identical to Matthew 6:25-34 in the Sermon on the Mount.⁵⁷ Simply put, we are not to worry about wealth but about the kingdom of God.

This young man who asks Jesus to settle his inheritance dispute is a good example of how NOT to live. The rich farmer in Jesus' parable is another good example of how NOT to live. Both of them are consumed with wealth rather than the kingdom. So Jesus said, "Don't worry about wealth, God will take care of it." He uses two illustrations to show just how. We worry so much about food. But take the ravens as an example. God even feeds these unclean birds! How much more will he feed the people he loves so dearly? We also fret over our clothes. But look at the wild flowers. They are beautiful! If God robes such transitory flowers with such beauty, how much more will he take care of you?!

We must not worry. Why? Well, for one thing, it is practical atheism. It shouts our doubts in the goodness of God. He says he will care for us out of his

⁵⁶ The identical wording of Mt 6:25-34 and Lk 12:22-34 does not necessarily indicate that one of them copied the other and changed the words around. (The words of Luke 12:22-31 follow those of Lk 12:32-34 in Matthew's arrangement). It is more likely that the words of Jesus were memorized and passed on orally with little or no variation. Then Matthew and Luke wrote these words down. But they are in two different sermons. This is not surprising. First, Jesus was an itinerant preacher, and money is a subject that merits repetition. Thus, Jesus said these same things on a number of occasions. Second, both sermons are too short to be word for word renditions of Jesus' entire sermon. Hence, both passages use identical words to give an accurate synopsis of what Jesus said on two different occasions.

⁵⁷ The following are the minor changes between Matthew and Luke:

1. Luke uses "consider" (v. 24) rather than "see." For Luke this is more than a casual glance. It requires contemplative meditation to understand God's care for humans above the birds.
2. Luke uses "raven" (v. 24) rather than "birds." A raven was an unclean animal in the OT (Lev 11:15). Perhaps Jesus' use of the word "raven" would subtly suggest God's care for even the unclean things of the world (i.e., people). Luke, as a Gentile, would be interested in that!
3. Instead of the talk about not worrying for tomorrow, Luke says, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." This is more tender and demonstrates Luke's characteristic concern for the least and the lost.

great love. But our worry calls him a liar. This makes us look like the pagans who do not know God (v. 30). Second, worry accomplishes nothing. It's like an old rocking chair that gives us something to do, but gets us nowhere. Jesus said it won't even add a single hour to your life. The figure of speech is literally, "It won't add 18 inches to your life-span." Mixing the metaphors of time and distance, we picture a man walking through life. He comes to the end. All his worry won't even give him one more step. In fact, it's likely to take a few steps off! Third, we can only pursue one thing at a time. When we run after wealth, we cannot pursue God (v. 31, cf. Mt 6:24).

³³"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Lk 12:33-34

[vv. 33-34 = Mt 6:19-21, see comments on § 54g]

Luke 12:33 complements Matthew 6:19. Instead of laying up treasures for ourselves (Mt 6:19), we are called to take those same possessions, sell them, and give the proceeds to the poor (Lk 12:33). That is the means by which we invest in our own account in heaven.

This is not the same as our garage sales. When we sell our goods, it is at severely reduced rates in pawn shops and auctions. For us, real financial security is in banks and bonds. In Jesus' day, their real financial security was in stores of jewels, cloth, precious metals, flocks and stores of food. When they sold these possessions it was at the current rate of exchange, not 10% of its original value.

Brought up to the twenty-first century, what Jesus is suggesting is that we don't keep stockpiling for our own financial future when there are people out there who need our help today. Furthermore, his words are not figurative. Jesus speaks literally when he says that we make financial investments into our eternal future through benevolence now. Truly, we can't take it with us, but we can send it on ahead (vv. 16-21)!

Is it primarily for the benefit of the poor that we sell our possessions? We think not. Our meager contributions will hardly eradicate poverty. It will always be around (Deut 15:11; Mt 26:11). Primarily, Jesus is speaking to the disciples for their own benefit. They need to be released from the encumbrance of material things. Wealth is a great danger to the Christian. It confuses the mind, blinds the heart and distorts proper priorities.

Now, Jesus did not say, or imply, that we are to sell all our possessions. But certainly we need to live by humble means, giving the rest to the poor. We are expected to earn our own living and work if we are able (Prov 6:6-8; 2 Cor 12:14; 1 Tim 5:8; 2 Thess 3:6-15; 1 Thess 4:10-12; Col 3:22-25; Eph 6:5-9). This would include providing for our own living: Home, clothes, transportation;

as well as that of our families (1 Tim. 5:8). We need a balance. As Proverbs 30:8-9 states, “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

In conclusion, we are not being called to monasticism or self-abnegation. What Jesus is saying is simple:

1. Real life is not in our stores of wealth (vv. 22-23).
2. Don’t worry about your basic needs, God will provide. He knows you need all these things (vv. 24-30).
3. Spend your time seeking spiritual things (vv. 31-32).
4. Give your excess away so that you can invest in eternal treasures (vv. 33-34).

§ 108c

Warning: Be Prepared for Jesus’ Coming
(Lk 12:35-48)

We can only give our attention to so many things. In the previous passage, Jesus warns about giving our attention to earthly wealth. Here he gives the positive alternative: Give your attention to Jesus’ coming. This material is similar to that found in the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24:45-51), which clearly speaks of the Second Coming of Christ. But here it may refer more immediately to the impending cross of Christ.

Lk 12:35-38

³⁵“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.”

To be “dressed ready for service” was more than wearing a cummerbund. The word “dressed” is actually “gird your loins.” The men in Palestine wore long, flowing robes which would get tangled up in their legs when they tried to work. The solution was to reach down between your ankles, gather up the bottom half of the robe and tuck it into the front of your sash (belt). It looked like a huge diaper. But at least you were then ready to work, run or fight (cf. 1 Kgs 18:46; also Eph 6:14 and 1 Pet 1:13). Furthermore, the verb “be” is a present imperative, indicating continued action. Thus, we are to continually be dressed — continually prepared — to serve the Master.

Not only are we to “gird our loins,” we are to keep our lamps lit (cf. Mt 25:1-13). These “lamps” were small dishes which could be held in the palm of your hand. You would simply fill the dish with oil and lay a wick in a groove made for the purpose. These little lamps were quite portable. But you had to take care to keep the wick trimmed and the bowl filled with oil.

Both being dressed and trimming your lamp was easy enough to do. But it did require diligence to stay prepared for the Master’s arrival from the wedding

banquet.⁵⁸ The word “return” (v. 36) means to “depart.” It carries the connotation of breaking up camp. In other words, the wedding party is over and he is coming home with his new bride. There was no way to tell when the man might come home. The party could last a few hours or a few days. Therefore, the return of the Master might be deep into the night — the second or third watch (9 p.m. to 3 a.m.). It wasn’t especially difficult, but it did take diligence. Likewise, those who wait diligently for Christ, even in the unexpected and uncomfortable times will receive a special blessing when he comes.

Once the Master of this parable does come home, there is an odd reversal of roles. The master was not supposed to serve the servants. That was just unheard of. But as a reward for their diligence, he does. This is precisely what Jesus did for us. The Son became the servant (cf. Lk 22:27; Jn 13:1-17).⁵⁹ This would only happen in the kingdom of God.

³⁹“But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Lk 12:39-40

The words “broken into” are literally “dug through.” Palestinian houses were built out of adobe-type bricks. Therefore it would be easier to dig through the wall than to break in the door. Now, if we knew when a thief was coming, it would be easy to keep him out (cf. Mt 24:42-44). Likewise, if we knew when Jesus was coming, it would be easy to be prepared for him. Our love for Jesus is not shown primarily in getting ready for his coming but in staying ready for his coming. He will come suddenly and unexpectedly (cf. Mt 24:36-25:30; 1 Thess 5:1-2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3). We had better be prepared.

⁴¹Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?”

Lk 12:41-46

⁴²The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.”

⁵⁸P.E. Deterding, in his provocative article, “Eschatological and Eucharistic Motifs in Luke 12:35-40” *CJ* (1979): 85-93, traces the motifs of Passover, the Messianic banquet, the parousia, and the Lord’s Supper. He believes that they can all be found in this text. Thus, (a) Luke 12:35-40 predicts the Lord’s Supper as well as the parousia, and (b) the Passover, Lord’s Supper, and the Second Coming should be viewed in light of one another since they share similar motifs and metaphors.

⁵⁹This is in contrast to Lk 17:7-10 where a different point is being made (Liefeld, p. 966).

Peter, in his typical style, acts as spokesman for the group. Jesus, in his typical style, answers Peter's question with a question (cf. Mt 24:45-51). Peter is really asking about position. That is, "Are we alone your special servants?" Jesus answers by speaking about responsibility. That is, "If I have given anyone responsibility he needs to see that it is carried out." It really does not matter if the servant is Peter alone, the Apostles alone or everyone standing there. The point is, if Jesus has given you a task, you'd better worry about keeping faithful to the task instead of worrying about what others are doing or have been given to do. Elsewhere, however, Jesus specifies that the command to watch applies to everyone (Mk 13:37).

In the kingdom of God, as in all successful organizations, those who execute responsibility well are given more and more responsibility. In a sense, Jesus is answering Peter's question about position. "Do your job well," says Jesus, "and you will be given more to do." As he says elsewhere, "He who is faithful in little will be given much" (Lk 16:10).

Responsibility is easy to carry out when the boss is watching and the first few minutes after he leaves. But when the boss is away for weeks or months at a time, it is easier to slip into irresponsibility. Then comes the true test of an employee's character. Likewise, in the realm of the kingdom of God, many have thought, "Jesus has been away so long. Surely I still have time to straighten up my life before the Lord returns." Read carefully and observe! Our love for Christ is not primarily shown in getting ready for his coming, but in staying ready for his coming.

This talk about cutting someone to pieces is surely hyperbole,⁶⁰ although it was not uncommon among ancient nations (cf. 1 Sam 4:12; Dan 2:5; Heb 11:37). Yet we must recognize that the characters in the story represent the false teachers and religious hypocrites who will endure eternal judgment (cf. Acts 20:29-30; Mt 7:15-23).

Lk 12:47-48

⁴⁷"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

High handed sin (cf. Num 15:30-31) will be severely punished. Those who know better and still do wrong, or who know what is right and do not do it, will

⁶⁰ P. Ellingworth, "Lk 12:46—Is There an Anti-Climax Here?" *BT* 31/2 (1980): 242-243, suggests that we soften such strong language by translating *dichotomesei* as: "Cut off from God's people." He suggests that this reflects Lev 17:10 and aligns better with the second half of Lk 12:46, "... and assign him a place with the unbelievers." But M. A. Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the N.T. Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Lk 16:1-8)" *JBL* 111/1 (1992): 37-54, shows that such savage language accurately describes the kind of treatment many slaves endured across the Roman Empire.

fall under heavy condemnation. Luke uses a savage word for “beat” which can also be translated “skin,” “flay,” or “flog.”

Sins of ignorance (Num 15:27-29; Ps 19:12) will be punished lightly but will still be punished.⁶¹ Why? Because the servant should have learned the master’s will. All people know something of God (Rom 1:20), and will be judged according to their level of understanding (Rom 2:12-13). Ignorance is no excuse.

⁴⁹“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! ⁵¹Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵²From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

**§ 108d
Warning:
Trouble is
Coming
(Lk 12:49-53)**

[vv. 51-53 = Mt 10:34-36, see comments on § 70b]

Jesus brought all kinds of good things to the earth. But it was not all picnics and rose gardens. In this passage Jesus counts the cost for the world and for himself.

The cost for Jesus will be Calvary and all it entails: alienation from the Father, becoming sin for us, rejection by his own people, physical torture, public abuse, etc. Jesus calls it a baptism (cf. Mk 10:38-39), that is, an inundation in suffering.

The cost to the world is both fire and division. This fire almost certainly refers to judgment. Because Jesus was tortured, Jerusalem comes under God’s curse (Mt 27:25; Lk 23:28-31). This will be clear enough in A.D. 70 when the city is destroyed. Even beyond that, Jesus is the judge (Jn 5:22, 27), and his

⁶¹ This does not imply that the punishment will be pleasant or tolerable. It is still hell. But this does clearly seem to teach degrees of punishment. Some theologians have taken this to indicate a position called annihilationism (e.g., Clark Pinnock, John Stott, Edward Fudge, Michael Green, Russell Boatman). Basically, this position asserts that God will punish evildoers for an appropriate time in a literal hell and then their souls will be extinguished forever. The arguments for this position include: (1) Based on 1 Tim 6:15-16, human immortality is found only in connection with God’s divine Spirit and a resurrected body (1 Cor 15:50-54). Thus, if humans are eternal in hell, God must sustain them there just as they are sustained here on earth. This would create an uncomfortable, eternal metaphysical dualism in which God would never completely redeem the universe. (2) The Bible teaches that sinners will be destroyed (Ps 37:2, 9-10, 20, 38; Mal 4:1-2; Mt 3:10-12; 10:28; Gal 6:8; 1 Cor 3:17; Rom 1:32; Phil 1:28; 3:19; 2 Pet 2:1, 3, 6; 3:6-7; etc.). While these passages may figuratively speak of eternal hell, so might the word “eternal” in other passages hyperbolically speak of utter and eternal annihilation (e.g., Mt 25:46; Mk 9:48; Rev 14:11). (3) Annihilationism pictures God as just, rather than a vindictive despot who creatively but sadistically tortures the damned well beyond any reasonable period of time. Thus, Annihilationism becomes an effective apologetic against those who charge God with being the author of an eternal Auschwitz.

words are the standard by which men are judged. While this fire signifies judgment, it can also include cleansing. That which is not burned by the fire will be purged by it.

The second cost to the world is that Jesus will cause divisions. Because there is no “neutral zone” with Jesus, he will divide even the most intimate family relationships. One must be decisively for him or against him. The result is tragic, but inevitable if we are to have the benefits he brings.

Jesus did bring peace on the earth (Lk 2:14; 7:50; 10:5), but his peace is only promised to Christians. Unbelievers can’t have it. Furthermore, it is a peace of the inner life (Jn 14:27; 16:33), since Christians are often roughly handled in this hostile world. According to this passage, that rough treatment will sometimes even come from family (cf. Micah 7:6).

§ 108e
Warning on
Interpreting
the Signs of
the Times
 (Lk 12:54-59)

⁵⁴He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. ⁵⁵And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. ⁵⁶Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?”

[vv. 54-56 = Mt 16:2-3, see comments on § 80]

In Judea, a cloud rising in the west means rain from the Mediterranean. A south wind coming up through the desert of the Negev brings a heat wave. Any amateur weatherman in Palestine knows that. Why are people so good at observing weather patterns but so poor at observing spiritual signs of the times? Anyone paying the least bit of attention will recognize Jesus, especially through his miracles and through the prophets. It’s not that tough. The signs are obvious.

These signs have direct reference to Jesus’ first coming, more than to his second. The emphasis on the Second Coming of Jesus is not to interpret the signs of the times but to live in readiness and hopeful expectation of the Master’s return.

Lk 12:57-59

⁵⁷“Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. ⁵⁹I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”^a

^a59 Greek *lepton*

[vv. 57-59 = Mt 5:25-26, see comments on § 54e]

While Matthew uses these words to talk about human relationships, Luke alludes to the divine. According to Matthew, we are to make friends with a liti-

gating neighbor. In Luke, we are to make friends with the Christ who will take us before the Father (cf. Ps 2:12), either for adoption or for judgment. Time is ticking away. We had better reconcile quickly. We had better settle out of court!⁶²

REPENT OR PERISH; TURN OR BURN! These slogans are harsh and narrow, even repulsive. But they are also true and straight from the lips of Jesus. His warning is both clear and merciful. If someone is driving his car off a cliff, who would not shout, “REPENT OR PERISH.” If the Scriptures are right, we must warn people about hell.

§ 109
Repent or
Perish
(Lk 13:1-9)

¹Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

Lk 13:1-5

²Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Outside of Luke, there is no record of Pilate’s massacre of these Galileans. Therefore, we have no specific details. We do know that Pilate governed Judea, a perilous area for revolt, from A.D. 26-36. He was in constant conflict with the Jews. Both Philo (*Embassy to Gaius* 38) and Josephus (*Antiquities* 18:55-62; *War* 2.169-174), contemporaries of Pontius Pilate, describe him as a cruel and violent man. He was no stranger to conflict with the Jews.

According to this passage, Pilate executed some Galilean rebels while they were in Jerusalem offering sacrifices.⁶³ That was done easily enough. The Roman garrison was stationed in the Fortress of Antonia at the N.W. corner of the temple. From their vantage point, they could survey the activities in the temple. Apparently these Galileans stepped out of bounds and the soldiers were ordered to slaughter them right inside the temple as they were performing their sacred sacrifices. That would be odious to the Jews. It sounds like these “tattle-tales” want Jesus to do something about it. After all, a real Messiah would certainly retaliate against Pilate.

Such an event would also be confusing to the Jews who believed that a person suffered because of sin. Perhaps they want Jesus to explain why such a bad thing happened to good people. Or perhaps they expect him to denounce his fellow Galileans as evil. But Jesus never does buy into that (cf. Jn 9:1-3). Rather, he teaches that judgment is universal and universally harsh. Jesus reiter-

⁶² B. Kinman argues that this parable is not about an individual’s eternal punishment, but about Israel’s temporal judgment for rejecting Jesus. “Debtor’s Prison and the Future of Israel (Lk. 12:57-59),” *JETS* 42/3 (1999): 411-425.

⁶³ Josephus states that Galileans, in particular, were prone to revolt (Josephus, *Life* 92.17).

ates the point with a second example of a structural catastrophe at the Pool of Siloam (the details of which we are equally ignorant). Neither of these groups suffered because God was punishing them for sin. They were simply at the wrong place at the right time. Nevertheless, all of us will come under God's judgment unless we repent. And that will be worse than being slaughtered by a sword or crushed by a building.



Lk 13:6-9

⁶Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

⁸"'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

Jesus illustrates his previous teaching with a parable: Once upon a time there was a farmer who owned a vineyard. He augmented his grape crop by planting a few fruit trees among the vines. So far so good. He waited for this one fig tree to mature. It did. He waited for it to produce figs. It didn't. He waited a second year, and even a third. Nothing! It's time to cut it out and replace it with something more productive. The farmer's hired hand, who cared for the tree all this time, hates to see his hard work go to waste. So he pleads for a stay of execution for this fruitless fig tree for just one more year. It's granted. But this will be its last chance.

Jesus uses this story of a fruitless fig tree to confront these faithless followers who accost him. They want Jesus to retaliate for Pilate's blood-bath against their people. Jesus calls them to repent before their own hourglass runs out. Surely these zealous "disciples" were caught off guard when their would-be king refused to vindicate their fallen fellows. Yet if they do not heed his call to repent, then they will be ultimately and fatally caught off guard.

Like the tree in the story, we have been placed in good ground. Added to that, God has nourished us like a fertilized tree. Then God waited patiently, beyond any reasonable time, for us to produce fruit. Now God's patience is immense but not inexhaustible. He will not allow the "Christian" to remain unfruitful. Thus we come full circle: "REPENT OR PERISH." Judgment is coming on all — the eighteen who died in the collapse of the Tower of Siloam, the Galilean rebels offering their sacrifices in the temple, and everyone who bears no fruit.



§ 110
Sabbath
Healing of a
Woman
Bowed Double
(Lk 13:10-21)

Here we go again. We have yet another Sabbath controversy (cf. § 49-51). Jesus is in the synagogue, teaching on the Sabbath. He sees a woman with a physical need and moves to meet that need. However, as we have seen, healing was not allowed on the Sabbath according to the oral tradition. Thus, another big blowup is just around the corner.

¹⁰On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, Lk 13:10-13
¹¹and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” ¹³Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

Jesus is apparently the guest lecturer for the day in this synagogue. It was common for the synagogue ruler to ask a guest, especially one as prominent as Jesus, to give the message of the day.

While Jesus preaches, he suddenly notices a “crippled” woman in the audience.⁶⁴ The word was a medical term for curvature of the spine.⁶⁵ Luke, the physician, notes that she has suffered this way for eighteen years. All of this seems normal enough. What is odd, however, is that this sickness is caused by a demon. We are not saying that this was the demon of “crippling,” as if curvature of the spine is its specialty. Nor are we saying this is an exorcism rather than a healing. What we are suggesting is that physical problems can be the work of evil spirits beyond mere natural causes. This doesn’t mean that we blame demons for every snuffle and hangnail, but the text seems clear enough. This problem is brought about by an evil spirit. And there are several examples in the OT of spirits controlling a particular condition of a human (spirit of a deep sleep, Isa 29:10; spirit of whoredoms, Hos 4:12, 19). If this is true, then healing of all types becomes a frontal attack of the kingdom of God against the work of the Devil (cf. Acts 10:38).⁶⁶

¹⁴Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.”

Lk 13:14-16

¹⁵The Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? ¹⁶Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?”

The ruler of the synagogue doesn’t have the guts to speak to Jesus directly. Instead, he yells at the crowd. It’s almost as if he is blaming the woman for coming and being healed. He is way out of line. First, the woman does not come to be healed. Jesus calls her out of the crowd. If anyone is to be blamed it is Jesus, not this poor woman. Second, he turns an occasion of celebration into a fight. Third, he is more concerned about nitpicky rules than the health and freedom of one of God’s precious children.

⁶⁴ The first word of this sentence *idou*, which means “behold,” is left untranslated by the NIV. It seems to imply that Jesus suddenly noticed this woman’s condition in the middle of his sermon. She was likely sitting with the other women, separated from the men.

⁶⁵ J. Wilkinson, “The Case of the Bent Woman in Luke 13:10-17,” *EvQ* 49 (1977): 195-205.

⁶⁶ J. B. Green, “Jesus and a Daughter of Abraham (Lk 13:10-17): Test Case for a Lucan Perspective on Jesus’ Miracles,” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 643-654.

The synagogue ruler is angry because the rules of the Sabbath, based on Exodus 20:9-10 — to do no work — have been violated. The traditions of the Pharisees clearly state that no action could be taken to heal on the Sabbath beyond what was necessary to save someone's life. So if a person fell down a flight of stairs, for instance, you could stop the bleeding on the Sabbath, but you could not set their broken bones until the sun had gone down. Such is the character of Law in the midst of human crisis.

There are several important injunctions concerning the Sabbath: (a) Do no work, Exodus 20:9-10. (b) Do not plow or harvest, Exodus 34:21. (c) Do not kindle a fire, Exodus 35:3; Numbers 15:32-36. (d) Do not prepare food, Exodus 16:23. (e) Do not prepare wine, Nehemiah 13:15. (f) Do not carry a load, Nehemiah 13:15. (g) Do not trade or sell, Nehemiah 13:16; Amos 8:5. These, however, were not to be negative but positive. The Sabbath was given to man as a gift, not a punishment. It had a twofold purpose. First, it gave people an opportunity to rest. This was especially appealing to women and slaves. Second, it gave people an opportunity to worship. They were to recognize God's providential care and to set aside a day specifically for him.⁶⁷

Jesus now moves from the lesser to the greater. If the Pharisees could work in order to preserve an animal, certainly Jesus could work to renew a "Daughter of Abraham." Of course, in a sense, Jesus is comparing apples to oranges. The Pharisees were doing only that which was necessary to preserve the life of their animals. And what Jesus does for this woman was nonessential. That is, it could have waited until the next day. So, according to pharisaic logic, Jesus is still guilty. But the whole point is that Jesus refuses to be subject to human logic and man-made traditions. He certainly would not forfeit an immediate opportunity to help someone in order to avoid offending a misguided and hypocritical system. It is incredible how insidious our hypocrisy can become in clerical robes.

Jesus also makes it clear that her sickness is being caused, or at least kept, by Satan. That is, one of his demons has held her captive for eighteen years in this physical infirmity. The fact that Jesus heals her points to the overpowering of Satan and the breaking in of the kingdom of God.⁶⁸

⁶⁷As Christians, we are not under the covenant of the law (Col 2:14; Gal 5:2-6; Eph 2:14-16; Rom 14:5-9). Therefore, we are not obligated to keep the Sabbath as a term of salvation. But it is still a gift to us, especially the continual Sabbath rest in the abiding presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ (Heb 4:9-11). Moreover, the Sabbath principle still applies to our lives. If we don't rest at regular intervals throughout our life, it will likely be taken off at the end in one lump sum.

⁶⁸Luke has carefully crafted this section to show that this incident is paradigmatic for the restoration of Israel through the coming kingdom of God. This woman represents the true Israel, which is about to flourish in a kingdom like a mustard seed (Lk 13:18-21), in contrast to the unfruitful fig tree of Israel's religious establishment (Lk 13:6-9). The careful chiasm of Lk 12:49-13:35 highlights many of Luke's favorite themes, such as the coming of Christ, the temple, demons, *dei*, divided response, etc. For more details, see D. Hamm, "The Freeing of the Bent Woman and the Restoration of Israel: Luke 13:10-17 as Narrative Theology," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 23-44 and R.F. O'Toole, "Some Exegetical Reflections on Luke 13:10-17," *Biblica* 73 (1992): 84-107.

¹⁷When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

Lk 13:17

This was such a sound victory for Jesus that his opponents were immediately humiliated. They tucked their tails between their legs and scampered off. We are not told, but surely they redoubled their efforts to eliminate this troublemaker. This is, after all, precisely what they did the last time Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath (Mt 12:14; Mk 3:6; Lk 6:11). The crowd, on the other hand, loved these “wonderful things” (lit., “beautiful things”). They delighted in the healing of this woman, the exposing of hypocrisy and the breaking in of the kingdom of God. All in all, it was a good day.

¹⁸Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? ¹⁹It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden {field^{MT}} {ground^{MK}}. {[I]t is the smallest seed . . . [y]et when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants.^{MK}} It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.”

Lk 13:18-21 with
Mt 13:31;
Mk 4:31-32



²⁰Again he asked, “What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? ²¹It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount^a of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

^a21 Greek *three satas* (probably about 1/2 bushel or 22 liters)

Now Jesus gives two similar illustrations of the kingdom. Both talk about something little growing big and having great effect. The kingdom of Christ is like that. It had humble beginnings, even going back to a manger. But today, there is no greater institution, no greater power, no greater army than that of the kingdom of God.



[vv. 18-19 = Mt 13:31-32 & Mk 4:30-32, see comments on 64e]

MUSTARD — This well-known garden herb has a minute seed, but in good soil it can reach a height of ten feet (the average being about four feet). Small birds can, in fact, rest in its branches. This may be a prophetic picture of protection in the Messianic kingdom (Ezek 17:23; 31:6, 12; Dan 4:12, 14, 21-22). Thus, two attributes of the kingdom are elucidated: Its incredible increase and its provision of protection.

[vv. 20-21 = Mt 13:33, see comments on 64f]

LEAVEN — Whereas the men did the planting of the seeds, the women did the baking of the bread. Jesus’ illustrations are from daily experiences of the working class. His audience would know exactly what he was talking about. The “large amount of flour” is literally “three *sata* — pecks.” That would make enough bread to feed a large family for more than a week. What woman had not marvelled at this incredible permeating power of yeast? The kingdom of God is

like that. Quietly, imperceptibly, it spreads, permeates and raises the whole lump. The Jews expected the Messianic kingdom to come with clashing cymbals and spectacular power. God chose quiet, subtle permeation.

§ 111
Feast of
Dedication
(Jn 10:22-39)

Jesus returns to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. He was here just two months ago for the Feast of Tabernacles. So he takes up the discussion right where he left off, talking about the Good Shepherd and his sheep (cf. Jn 10:1-21).

Jn 10:22-24

²²Then came the Feast of Dedication^a at Jerusalem. It was winter,
²³and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade.

²⁴The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense?⁶⁹ If you are the Christ,^b tell us plainly."

^a22That is, Hanukkah ^b24Or *Messiah*

The Feast of Dedication was celebrated on the 25th of Kislev, roughly equivalent to our December. It was an eight-day memorial celebrating the rededication of the temple in 165 B.C., 3 years to the day after it had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. 1 Macc 4:36-59; 2 Macc 10:1-8). Although it was not one of the official pilgrim feasts, it still drew a healthy crowd. The most notable feature of the feast was the special lighting of the temple and many of the private homes in Jerusalem. That's why they sometimes called it "The Feast of Lights."

Jesus is walking around the Portico of Solomon, which covered the east side of the temple (cf. Acts 3:11; 5:12). It would be a logical shelter from the cold winter wind and rain, as well as the largest place to gather a crowd. He is accosted (literally encircled) by the Jewish leaders. Their question appears reasonable enough, but is designed to trap Jesus. They want Jesus to confess clearly if he thinks he is the Messiah. That way they can accuse him openly of blasphemy (cf. Mk 14:60-64).



Jn 10:25-30

²⁵Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all^a; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."

^a29Many early manuscripts *What my Father has given me is greater than all*

Jesus has already clearly stated who he is. In fact, this was the purpose of his last three sermons in John (Jn 5:16-47; 6:32-59; 7:14-30). Furthermore, his

⁶⁹ Lit., "How long will you lift up our souls." It is equivalent to our idioms: "Keep us hanging" or "Hold us in suspense."