

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

## Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

---

Doctor of Theology Dissertation

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

---

6-1-1959

### The Parable of the Unjust Manager in the Light of Contemporary Economic Life

Erich Kiehl

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir\_kiehle@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/thd>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Kiehl, Erich, "The Parable of the Unjust Manager in the Light of Contemporary Economic Life" (1959).

*Doctor of Theology Dissertation*. 56.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/thd/56>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Theology Dissertation by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST MANAGER  
IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS LIFE

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST MANAGER

1911

*Wm. A. Rorer*  
1911



34  
4070  
1607

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST MANAGER  
IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIC LIFE

---

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Theology

---

by  
Erich H. Kiehl

June 1959

1607

Approved by

Walter A. Schaumann  
Advisor

Carl Kiehl

Reader



BV  
4070  
C69  
D6  
1959  
no.1  
C.2

1607

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter                                              | Page |
|------------------------------------------------------|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .                            | 1    |
| II. THE PARABLE . . . . .                            | 5    |
| $\xi\psi\varphi$ . . . . .                           | 5    |
| <i>παραβολή</i> and <i>παροιμία</i> . . . . .        | 7    |
| The Parabolic Method of Jesus . . . . .              | 10   |
| Parables Remain Enigmatic for Unbelievers . . . . .  | 14   |
| Interpretation of the Parables . . . . .             | 18   |
| Summary . . . . .                                    | 21   |
| III. THE CONCEPT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD . . . . .     | 23   |
| Definition . . . . .                                 | 23   |
| God Established His Covenant at Sinai . . . . .      | 26   |
| From the Judges to the New Testament Era . . . . .   | 34   |
| At the Time of Christ . . . . .                      | 40   |
| Jesus' Concept of the Kingdom of God . . . . .       | 42   |
| The Marks of the Kingdom of God . . . . .            | 46   |
| Culmination in Heaven . . . . .                      | 49   |
| Summary . . . . .                                    | 50   |
| IV. LUKE 16:1-13: A PARABLE OF THE KINGDOM . . . . . | 52   |
| Evidence of Context . . . . .                        | 52   |
| "Sons of Light" . . . . .                            | 54   |
| "This Age" . . . . .                                 | 57   |
| Kingdom of Glory . . . . .                           | 59   |
| Summary . . . . .                                    | 61   |
| V. THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST MANAGER . . . . .       | 63   |
| The Setting . . . . .                                | 63   |
| The Context of Luke 16:1-13 . . . . .                | 65   |
| Varying Views on Luke 16:9-13 . . . . .              | 67   |
| The Central Thought of the Parable . . . . .         | 77   |
| Translation . . . . .                                | 78   |
| Exegetical Study . . . . .                           | 79   |
| VI. THE SETTING OF THE PARABLES . . . . .            | 91   |
| Estates and the Mosaic Law . . . . .                 | 91   |
| During the Hellenistic Period . . . . .              | 93   |
| In the Reign of King Herod . . . . .                 | 96   |
| Estates in the Time of Christ . . . . .              | 98   |
| Terms of Land-Lease . . . . .                        | 102  |
| Estate Organization . . . . .                        | 102  |



|                                                            |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| VII. THE PROBABLE SOLUTION TO THE PARABLE . . . . .        | 105 |
| A <u>Cruz Interpretum</u> . . . . .                        | 105 |
| An Absentee Landowner . . . . .                            | 106 |
| The Manager's Dealings . . . . .                           | 108 |
| The Manager's Dismissal . . . . .                          | 113 |
| The Manager's Solution . . . . .                           | 115 |
| The Verdict of Jesus . . . . .                             | 119 |
| VIII. THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE . . . . .                 | 122 |
| The Central Thought . . . . .                              | 122 |
| Charity . . . . .                                          | 122 |
| Manage Your Possessions . . . . .                          | 126 |
| The Summary of Jesus . . . . .                             | 129 |
| IX. CONCLUSION . . . . .                                   | 131 |
| APPENDIX A. Suzerainty Covenants . . . . .                 | 135 |
| APPENDIX B. The Origin of the Qumran Community . . . . .   | 138 |
| APPENDIX C. The Covenant of the Qumran Community . . . . . | 140 |
| Entering the Covenant . . . . .                            | 140 |
| Oath of Admission . . . . .                                | 141 |
| A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .                          | 142 |



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The parables of Jesus, generally speaking, give only those details which are necessary for the point of a parable and also those which provide verisimilitude. We today who are centuries removed from the Oriental setting of Jesus' day, may sometimes wish that the parables would give additional details to help us in determining more exactly the social and economic conditions of a parable in its Oriental setting.

The parable of the Unjust Manager is a case in point. For Jesus and His hearers the story of the parable presented no difficulty since the various methods of managing the large estates of that time were known to them. For us today, several centuries later, the parable presents a difficult problem. When the unjust manager reduced the amount of the debts of the debtors, did he give away his master's property and thereby "add insult to injury"? Or, did he forfeit his own income? On what basis did Jesus commend the prudence of the manager to His hearers?

Commentators have considered the parable of the Unjust Manager a crux interpretum. The prevailing view has been that the manager crowned his previous dishonesty with an act of larceny. This view made the task of the commentator extremely difficult. Commentators, as it were, twisted and squirmed to avoid having Jesus commend prudence based on an act of larceny. They often took refuge in the statement that this was only a parable.



New light on this problem was shed by a series of short articles in the "Expository Times" immediately after 1900. In the April, 1950, issue of "The Catholic Biblical Quarterly," Paul Gaechter called attention to these articles and, after careful research, expanded on their basic suggestions to offer a new solution to the problem of the parable of the Unjust Manager. The present writer, in his study of this problem, is indebted to these articles.

The solution to the problem of the parable of the Unjust Manager lies in determining the possible provisions in the contract of the landowner with his manager. If the manager's contract was similar to those common to our western experience, then the manager's final act was one of larceny. However, the parable was spoken by Jesus, an Oriental, to hearers who were also Orientals and who lived in an Oriental setting. The solution lies in trying to determine as carefully and as closely as possible what the contractual arrangements between landowner and manager of that day were.

To discover this, the present writer searched through the pertinent resources of a number of libraries, as the selected bibliography at the end indicates. This included the specialized resources of the library of the Oriental Institute and the extensive Classical Library of the University of Chicago. Although the various papyri finds provide much detail about managing estates in Egypt, there is much less material available on Syria and Palestine. This is especially true of the essential details of the contractual relationship between manager and landowner on the Palestine scene of Jesus' day.

On the basis of such research, the writer highlights the general economic and social setting with special reference to the prevalence



and administration of estates in Palestine. The following chapter suggests the probable provisions of the contract between the landowner and manager and their bearing on the action of the manager in reducing the debts of the various tenants.

Preliminary to all this, we present a study of the nature of the term "parable" and the parabolic method, with special reference to Mark 4:11. Chapter III attempts to describe the nature of the kingdom of God. "Luke 16:1-13 is a parable of the kingdom" is the subject of Chapter IV. Because the terms "sons of light," "sons of this world" ("sons of this age") are used by St. Luke and also the Dead Sea scrolls, the use of these terms in the Scrolls is analyzed to support the view that the parable of the Unjust Manager is a parable of the kingdom.

Chapter V presents an exegetical study of the parable, of which the problem of the identification of *ὁ κύριος* is perhaps the most important. Chapter VI highlights the general economic and social setting of the parable. On the basis of this discussion, the probable solution to the problem of the parable is suggested in the following chapter. Chapter VIII discusses the application of the parable, followed by a summary of the key points of the parable of the Unjust Manager in the concluding chapter.

A few details should be noted. Except for the translation of the parable of the Unjust Manager in Chapter V, and, unless otherwise noted, Bible references are taken from the Revised Standard Version. The various quotations from the Dead Sea scrolls are from the translation by Millar Burrows, as found in his book "Dead Sea Scrolls" (1955). The quotation from "The Book of Mysteries" is taken



from Dr. Burrow's recent volume, "More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls" (1958).

THE PARABLE

פָּרָבֵל

A parable is generally thought of as a story that teaches a religious truth. This is perhaps the most common conception of the word "parable." However, a careful analysis of the usage of the Greek word and its Hebrew equivalent in the Old Testament reveals that this common conception represents only one phase of its wide range of meanings.

The Septuagint uses mainly the Greek word *parabola* for the Hebrew פָּרָבֵל. Although scholars are somewhat disagreed as to the original meaning of פָּרָבֵל, they are agreed that, in the course of time, this word developed a variety of meanings: namely, proverbial utterance, a dark saying, by-word, prophetic or figurative discourse, simile, parable, poem, and metaphors of ethical character.<sup>1</sup>

Probably in its earliest use, פָּרָבֵל denoted a proverbial utterance or a proverb saying.<sup>2</sup> I found 1913 to be an illustration of this: "Therefore

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1913, p. 100.



## CHAPTER II

### THE PARABLE

פֶּסֶק

A parable is generally thought of as a story that teaches a religious truth. This is perhaps the most common conception of the word "parable." However, a careful analysis of the usage of the Greek term and its Hebrew antecedent in the Old Testament reveals that this common conception represents only one phase of its wide range of meanings.

The Septuagint uses mainly the Greek term *παραβολή* for the Hebrew פֶּסֶק. Although scholars are somewhat disagreed on the original meaning of פֶּסֶק, they are agreed that, in the course of time, this word developed a variety of meaning;<sup>1</sup> namely, proverbial utterance, a dark saying, by-word, prophetic or figurative discourse, similitude, parable, poem, and sentences of ethical wisdom.<sup>2</sup>

Probably in its earliest use, פֶּסֶק denoted a common proverb or a popular saying.<sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 10:12 is an illustration of this: "Therefore

---

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Hauck, "παραβολή," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d.), V, 744; and W. J. Moulton, "Parable," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, edited by James Hastings et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), II, 312.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Brown, et al., "פֶּסֶק," A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the O. T. with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as Translated by Edward Robinson (Corrected edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 605.

<sup>3</sup>B. T. D. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels--A Critical Study (New York: MacMillan, 1937), p. 3.



it became a proverb (שֵׁשׁ־עֵד), 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'" The book of Proverbs carries the title אֵלֶּיךָ יְהוָה שֵׁשׁ־עֵד. שֵׁשׁ־עֵד is also used as a taunt or a byword.<sup>4</sup>

Other meanings of the term שֵׁשׁ־עֵד usher in its enigmatic quality. In Proverbs 1:6, Psalm 49:5 (4), 78:2 respectively, שֵׁשׁ־עֵד is used seemingly synonymously with אֵלֶּיךָ יְהוָה (riddle);

To understand a proverb (שֵׁשׁ־עֵד), and a figure, the words of the wise, and their riddles (אֵלֶּיךָ יְהוָה).

I will incline my ear to a proverb (שֵׁשׁ־עֵד); I will solve my riddle (אֵלֶּיךָ יְהוָה) to the music of the lyre.

I will open my mouth in a parable (שֵׁשׁ־עֵד); I will utter dark sayings from of old. (אֵלֶּיךָ יְהוָה).

In Ezekiel 17:2f., 20:49, 24:3f., the enigmatic quality of שֵׁשׁ־עֵד is prominent. שֵׁשׁ־עֵד is also used of the dark, prophetic oracles of Balaam.<sup>5</sup> Hauck emphasizes that שֵׁשׁ־עֵד is a manner of speech with a hidden meaning.<sup>6</sup> A שֵׁשׁ־עֵד challenges the hearer to ponder and meditate on its meaning.<sup>7</sup> Thus, שֵׁשׁ־עֵד designates especially brief sayings of wisdom with an enigmatic or hidden meaning.<sup>8</sup> שֵׁשׁ־עֵד often reveals and conceals at the same time.<sup>9</sup> The enigmatic and prophetic element is

<sup>4</sup>Deuteronomy 28:37; Jeremiah 24:9, et al.

<sup>5</sup>Numbers 23:7,19; 24:3,15,20-23. See also Hauck, op. cit., p. 745, and Smith, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Hauck, op. cit., pp. 744-45.

<sup>7</sup>Julius Schniewind, "Das Evangelium nach Markus," Das Neue Testament Deutsch, edited by Paul Althaus and Johannes Behm (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), II, 77.

<sup>8</sup>Otto A. Piper, "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God," Interpretation, A Journal of Bible and Theology, I, 2 (April, 1947), 192.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 195.



dominant in its meaning.  $\xi\psi\varphi$  is part of the terminology of God's revelation of Himself and of His ways.

*παραβολή and παροιμία*

The Septuagint translators usually used the Greek word *παραβολή* for  $\xi\psi\varphi$ . *παραβάλλειν* literally means "to place beside." In Hellenistic usage, it is used, for example, by Polybius of lining up ships in battle formation. It also had the meaning of comparing one thing with another in order to teach a truth.<sup>10</sup> In his "Rhetoric" Aristotle refers to the analogy which Socrates used, as follows:

Public officials ought not to be selected by lot. That is like using the lot to select athletes, instead of choosing those who are fit for the contest; or using the lot to select a steersman from among a ship's crew, as if we ought to take the man on whom the lot falls, and not the man who knows most about it.<sup>11</sup>

It is rather important to note that the Septuagint, by way of contrast, uses *παραβολή* for the various uses and meanings of the Hebrew  $\xi\psi\varphi$ . We saw before that the dominant meaning of this word is that of the enigmatic, the dark prophetic saying which is to challenge the hearer to thought. This meaning was carried over into the Greek *παραβολή*.

The Synoptic writers use the word *παραβολή* in the same way. It

<sup>10</sup>Henry George Lidell and Robert Scott, "*παραβάλλω*," A Greek-English Lexicon, a new edition, revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 130. See Polybius 15. 2. 12, where *βαλίττες τῆ πεντήρεσ* is used.

<sup>11</sup>W. Rhys Roberts, "Rhetorica," The Works of Aristotle Translated into English, edited by W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), XI, II, 20; see sections 1393 a-b.



is true that *παραβολή* is used also for a short, descriptive saying such as Matthew 15:11,15. Jesus refers to the proverb, "Physician, heal yourself" as a parable.<sup>12</sup> Several times Jesus said, "What is the kingdom of God like?"<sup>13</sup> "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?"<sup>14</sup> or "It is like . . . ."<sup>15</sup> Although these phrases carry with them the suggestion of a comparison, the dominant note is that of  $\xi\psi\rho$  as enigma.

Outside of the Synoptics, *παραβολή* is used only twice. In Hebrews 9:9 and 11:19, it is used typologically. In the former, the tabernacle with its sacrifices pointed to the Christ to come; in the latter, the reference to Abraham's faith speaks of God's power over death.

*παραομιλία* is the other Greek term used in the Septuagint for  $\xi\psi\rho$ . *παραομιλία* literally denotes "something by the way."<sup>16</sup> In the Septuagint, *παραομιλία* is used as a subtitle for Proverbs, and in Proverbs 1:1 and 25:1 for "proverbs of Solomon" ( $\epsilon\lambda\delta\epsilon\psi\psi\ \epsilon\psi\psi\rho$ ). In the New Testament, 2 Peter 2:22 uses *παραομιλία* and then quotes a saying which refers back to Proverbs 26:11. The evangelist John uses

---

<sup>12</sup>Luke 4:23.

<sup>13</sup>Luke 13:18.

<sup>14</sup>Luke 13:20.

<sup>15</sup>Luke 13:19, et al.

<sup>16</sup>James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, "*παραομιλία*," The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 496.



*παροιμία* three times in its enigmatic sense.<sup>17</sup> The first use is that of John 10:6 in the allegory of the Good Shepherd. The next two instances occur in John 16:25,29.

I have said this to you in figures (*παροιμίας*); the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures (*παροιμίας*) but tell you plainly of the Father.

His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure (*παροιμίας*)!"

These passages betray the enigmatic character of *παροιμία* as spoken by Jesus.

Jesus made abundant use of picture language to illustrate His teaching. It was after Jesus had begun His Great Galilean Ministry that He began to emphasize the parabolic method with its enigmatic quality in His teaching. Opposition to His teaching had developed. Especially the Jewish leaders had discovered that Jesus' conception of the kingdom of God was much different from that which they themselves held.<sup>18</sup> With His miracles, His conception of the kingdom of God, of the Law, and His manner of teaching, Jesus got to be an enigma to the crowds who came to hear Him. The scribes and Pharisees accused Jesus of being in league with Beelzebub; they tried hard to show that His teaching was contrary to the true religion of God and hence subversive.<sup>19</sup> Opposition to Jesus increased. It was then that Jesus spoke the first

---

<sup>17</sup>Friedrich Hauck, "*παροιμία*," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d.), V, 354-55.

<sup>18</sup>The concept of the kingdom of God will be discussed in greater detail on pages 23-51.

<sup>19</sup>Piper, op. cit., p. 192. See also Mark 3:19-30 and Matthew 12:22-37.



series of parables.

### The Parabolic Method of Jesus

All three Synoptists refer to the same outcome of the parabolic teaching method of Jesus. Although we shall refer to all, we shall make special reference to the words of Mark 4:11-12.

Mark uses the term *μυστήριον* which is derived from *μύειν*, meaning originally "to shut the mouth" and thus "that which was not spoken to others."<sup>20</sup> The use of *μυστήριον* here has little connection with the understanding of this term by the Hellenistic Roman world. Mark's use of *μυστήριον* is intimately associated with divine judgment as we shall see.<sup>21</sup>

*μυστήριον* here is to be understood in terms of "secret purpose made known," as Daniel, enabled by God, is described as interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream and thereby revealing God's purpose in the history of that time.<sup>22</sup> St. Paul refers to the secret purpose of God made known when he writes, in speaking of Christ,

according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about obedience to the faith.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, "*μύειν*," A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti Translated, Revised and Enlarged (Corrected edition; Chicago: American Book Company, c.1839), p. 419.

<sup>21</sup>Guenther Bornkamm, "*μυστήριον, μύειν*," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d.), IV, 824.

<sup>22</sup>Daniel 2:25.

<sup>23</sup>Romans 16:25-26a.



Of this secret purpose of God made known, St. Peter says: "He (Christ) was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake."<sup>24</sup>

The *μυστήριον τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ*, as the evangelist Mark expresses it, is Jesus Himself as the Anointed.<sup>25</sup> In Colossians 1:27, St. Paul speaks of "the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." He defines "mystery" in the same way in Colossians 2:2-3, where the apostle speaks of "the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ." In 1 Timothy 3:16, the identification of Christ as the mystery is pointed out: "Great . . . is the mystery of our religion (the faith): He was manifested in the flesh."<sup>26</sup>

Here, as in Col. 1:27, Paul uses the relative pronoun in the masculine referring to *τὸ μυστήριον* which is neuter, whereas, according to the grammatical rule, the relative pronoun should agree with the antecedent in gender. In both passages, Paul wants by this grammatical irregularity to express the fact that Jesus Christ himself is the secret purpose of God. The secret is not a doctrine concerning Christ but, rather, the Son of God himself in his incarnate life as he has entered into the lives of his followers. It is through actions primarily that God both carries out and reveals his purpose . . . . In our Lord, he [God] reveals the deepest secret of his reign, which is grace—grace that enables us to share in his rule (Matt. 5:3,10; James 2:5; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup>1 Peter 1:20.

<sup>25</sup>Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, pp. 824-25. The concept of *Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ* will be discussed in detail on pages 23-51.

<sup>26</sup>Piper, *op. cit.*, p. 190. See also William A. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, "*μυστήριον*," A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 531-32.

<sup>27</sup>Piper, *op. cit.*



When Jesus asked His disciples, "Will you also go away?", Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."<sup>28</sup> Christ's person was "the secret of the kingdom of God."

Jesus told His disciples, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God."<sup>29</sup> The "you" refers to the Twelve and those with Jesus and the Twelve. These were His followers, those who believed in Him. It is God who gives, for God is the subject of the passive voice used absolutely here. Jesus emphasized later to His disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you."<sup>30</sup> St. Paul emphasizes this same fact when he writes:

even as he [God] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.<sup>31</sup>

It is God who bestows the secret of the kingdom, Christ, on those who become His children.

Instead of τὸ μυστήριον of Mark 4:11, Matthew and Luke both have the plural τὰ μυστήρια . Piper comments:

Whereas the variants in the parallel texts of Matthew and Luke suggest that Jesus discussed here the knowledge of esoteric, speculative truths, Mark rightly lays stress on the givenness

<sup>28</sup>John 6:68-69.

<sup>29</sup>Mark 4:11.

<sup>30</sup>John 15:16.

<sup>31</sup>Ephesians 1:4-6. See also 2 Timothy 1:8-9.



of the mystery of the Kingdom, i.e. on the fact that the mystery is present to the disciples' inner perception and intuition. They are the ones who see that Jesus Himself is the very center of His parables.<sup>32</sup>

Having received Christ, the secret (*μυστήριον*) of the kingdom, the disciples are given the mysteries of the kingdom. Zahn explains these as "the things and truths of the kingdom of God."<sup>33</sup> These mysteries are those that belong to, or have to do with the kingdom; they are divine truths that have to do with Christ and His work.<sup>34</sup> These mysteries are intelligible only to those who have the secret of the kingdom.

This underlines, as has been pointed out before, that the parables are enigmatic. God is the Wholly Other One. There can be no analogy or comparison between God and us. But the link between the two is found in the work and the person of Christ, who is both Creator and Redeemer. The divine purpose of redemption brackets the divine work both in nature and in the establishment of the kingdom. In the person of Christ, the point of contact between God and us is brought into comparison in a parable.<sup>35</sup> More than Jesus' plain teaching, the parables call for the need of a greater and higher knowledge, through a closer

<sup>32</sup>Otto A. Piper, "The Understanding of the Synoptic Parables," Evangelical Quarterly, XIV, 1 (January 15, 1942), 52-53.

<sup>33</sup>Theodor Zahn, "Das Evangelium des Lucas," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Dritte u. vierte durchgesehene Auflage; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl; 1920), III, 341.

<sup>34</sup>William F. Arndt, Bible Commentary—The Gospel According to St. Luke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), pp. 230, 27.

<sup>35</sup>Piper, "The Understanding of the Synoptic Parables," op. cit., pp. 50, 53.



relationship with the author of the parables. The parable confronts the hearer with a challenge to learn its meaning or suffer the consequences. Only to those to whom the "secret of the kingdom" has been given can the meaning of the parables become known.

The Synoptists bring out another fact. When Jesus had spoken the parable of the Sower, the disciples asked Him the meaning of the parable. Later we read in Mark 4:34 that Jesus explained "all things" to His disciples. Even though they had received the *μυστήριον*, had accepted Christ, the disciples felt it necessary to ask for the meaning when Jesus began to teach mainly in parables. After this, very few instances are recorded that Jesus had to explain the parables to His disciples. We note Matthew's words: "For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance."<sup>36</sup> Jesus later said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth."<sup>37</sup> It is significant to note that, aside from the few parables which Jesus explained to His disciples, the New Testament and the Early Church had no official interpretations of the parables.<sup>38</sup>

#### Parables Remain Enigmatic for Unbelievers

The Synoptists all record that to "those outside" Jesus chose to speak only in parables. Mark uses the term *ἐκείνοις τοῖς ἔξω* while

---

<sup>36</sup>Matthew 13:12a. See Piper, "The Understanding of the Synoptic Parables," *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>37</sup>John 16:13a. See also Piper, "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God," *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>38</sup>Piper, "The Understanding of the Synoptic Parables," *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45, 53. See also Matthew 13:12.



Matthew uses ἑκείτους and Luke τοὺς ἀπίστον. These terms are actually synonymous. Mark's term τοὺς ἔξω was a technical term for those "outside of the kingdom."<sup>39</sup> It was a designation in the rabbinical literature for "heretics" or "unbelievers." The Synoptists refer to those who would remain "outside of the kingdom of God," who would not accept Jesus as their Savior.

In Mark 4:33 and Matthew 13:34, the two evangelists record that Jesus continued to speak in parables, that is, enigmatically, when He spoke of the kingdom of God and its nature. In Matthew 13:35, Matthew refers to this as a fulfillment of Psalm 78:2, spoken by Asaph, who is described as a "prophet" here and also in 2 Chronicles 29:30. Asaph spoke enigmatically for those who were not members of the kingdom of God. Jesus through His parabolic method spoke enigmatically for those who were τοὺς ἔξω, when He spoke of "what had been hidden since the foundation of the world." Those who know not Christ as the "secret of the kingdom" are those without, to whom the parables of Jesus remain enigmatic.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup>Johannes Behm, "ἔξω," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935), II, 572; and Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, "Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas und Johannes und Die Apostelgeschichte erlaeutert aus Talmud und Midrasch," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), II, 7.

<sup>40</sup>Adolf Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthaeus: seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbststaendigkeit (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1929), p. 444. See also Marie Joseph Lagrange, Evangile selon Saint Matthieu (Seventh edition; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1948), p. 272; and Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Psalms, translated from the second edition revised of the German by Francis Bolton (Second edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), II, 363. See also Theodor Zahn, "Das Evangelium des Matthaeus," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Vierte Auflage; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1922), I, 479-82.



All three Synoptists refer to the rebelliousness of God's people at the time of Isaiah. Mark uses the paraphrase of Isaiah 6:9-10 commonly used in the synagogues and known to us through the Jerusalem Targum and the Peshitta.<sup>41</sup> Matthew holds to the Greek version, while Luke gives a paraphrase shorter than that of Mark. Even though Israel refused to listen and to heed God, Isaiah kept on preaching, reminding them of their covenant status as God's chosen people. The more Isaiah preached, the more the people hardened their hearts against God, the more they refused to listen and to heed the word of God as spoken by Isaiah. Because of the hardness of Israel's heart and its unwillingness to hear Him, God pronounced His judgment upon Israel.

The Synoptists report that Jesus experienced the same opposition resulting from the same hardness of heart which the prophet Isaiah had experienced. By and large, those who heard Jesus were among those "on the outside" of the kingdom of God. To them, the words and work of Christ were enigmatic. They knew that something important was going on wherever Jesus was: they had enjoyed listening to Him; they were attracted by His miracles; something about Him and His activity aroused their great interest. The scribes and Pharisees, sensing the extraordinariness of Jesus, tried hard to discredit His teaching and to link His miracles to satanic powers.<sup>42</sup>

The difficulty in the supernatural blindness and deafness of most of Jesus' hearers lay in their natural unwillingness to see the need to

---

<sup>41</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, translated by S. H. Hooke from the third German edition (London: SCM Press, 1955), pp. 12-13.

<sup>42</sup>Piper, "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God," op. cit., p. 192.



be forgiven. The emphasis in Jesus' day was on outward, formal conformity to ceremonial and Pharisaic laws, which only served to inflate the ego and to stimulate self-pride and soul-arrogance. The Jewish conception of the kingdom of God was that of a demand or obligation which man had to take upon himself; putting on the phylacteries and reciting the Jewish creed every morning was considered taking on oneself the obligation of the kingdom of God and fulfilling its demands. The thought of the kingdom of God as a divine gift of grace was far removed from the Jewish thought and mind. The nationalistic idea of the coming of the kingdom of God by the Messiah was diametrically opposed to the conception of the kingdom as evidenced especially by the parables of Jesus. The Jews kept on rejecting the challenge that confronted them in the parables of Jesus, and, hence, these remained obscure and enigmatic to them.

The conditions of Isaiah's time as described and prophesied by him were repeated and fulfilled in the time of Jesus. As in the time of Isaiah, so in Christ's time God's judgment was to follow. This brings us to the  $\delta\tau$  of Matthew 13:13, the  $\dot{\iota}\nu\alpha$  of Luke 8:10 and of Mark 4:12. These key words which seemingly make God the cause of people not accepting Christ, have caused much difficulty. Jeremias follows the rabbinical exegesis of Isaiah 6:10 in preferring "unless" for the  $\mu\eta\ \kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon$  of Mark 4:12 and Matthew 13:15.<sup>43</sup>

Jesus continued to speak in parables. The judgment of God as

---

<sup>43</sup>Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 15. See also Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, Grammatik des Neutestamentlichen Griechisch (Neunte Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), p. 300, section 471:1, where  $\mu\eta\ \kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon$  is translated with the German "falls."



experienced at the time of Isaiah was experienced by the *τοῖς ἔθου* at the time of Jesus.

We recall that the person of Christ as the "mystery (secret purpose) of the kingdom of God" is the point of contact between the heavenly and the earthly realms brought into comparison in a parable. The parables have to be understood in the light and scope of the total ministry of Christ, His activity and message as Prophet, Priest, and King. A parable confronted the hearer with the need for decision, whether or not he wished to know the meaning of its language. If so, this meant that he must come into close relationship with the author of the parable, that is to say, he must accept Christ as His Savior and Lord. If the person accepts Christ, then he would experience the words of Christ: "For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance." If the person rejected Christ, then he would experience the remaining words of this passage: "but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."<sup>44</sup>

#### Interpretation of the Parables

Throughout the ages, the church has paid considerable attention to the parables and their interpretation. Four different principles have been advanced, generally speaking. The first is that of analogy which, beginning in the period of the Early Church, resulted in allegorizing. The principle of analogy declares a similarity between the earthly and

---

<sup>44</sup>Matthew 13:12.



heavenly realms, thereby ignoring that God is "the Wholly Other One."

C. H. Dodd is the representative of this school of thought.<sup>45</sup>

Adolf Juelicher is the proponent of the second principle of interpretation. In his monumental two volumes, "Die Gleichnisreden Jesu," Juelicher pointed out the fallacy of the method of analogy with its allegorizing results, but fell into the pitfall of generalization. The earthly and heavenly levels of the parable are treated as two modes of experiences. Through his method of interpretation, only general truisms can result.<sup>46</sup>

Martin Dibelius advanced a third principle of interpretation, that of the "Sitz im Leben." Although Dibelius and his "disciples" urge that the parables be considered in their context in the ministry of Christ, they emphasize more the setting in the Early Church. The problem is to discover what Jesus said and what the Early Church added to fit the needs and problems of their day. If consistently and seriously applied, this method destroys every feeling of certainty as to what part Jesus Himself spoke. When parables are interpreted in this way, they yield little more than historical information.<sup>47</sup>

The fourth principle of interpretation has been advanced by

<sup>45</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (Revised; London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1950).

<sup>46</sup>Adolf Juelicher, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (Zweite, neubearbeitete Auflage---zweiter Abdruck; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1910).

<sup>47</sup>Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, translated from the revised second edition of Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums by Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935); see also Vincent Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition (London: MacMillan, 1935).



Dr. Otto Piper, who holds that the parables must be studied and analyzed in the light of the divine purpose of redemption. This principle of interpretation has been followed in this chapter.

The important task in interpretation is to find the tertium comparationis. This requires at least some knowledge of the life and customs of Jesus' day. It is important to study a parable in its context; the purpose of the parable is often given just before or after the parable. These must be noted carefully. It is essential to remember that a parable cannot be used as a sedes doctrinae, that is, the key passage for a doctrine. Since Jesus spoke the parables to varied audiences, ranging from the Pharisees and scribes to crowds including the common folk of His day, and the parables were understood by them if they had received "the mystery of the kingdom," the interpretation of the parable should not become involved and complicated.<sup>48</sup>

It should be noted that the parables were spoken chiefly in three clusters. The first was spoken toward the end of Jesus' Great Galilean Ministry; in these parables Jesus emphasized the nature and growth of the kingdom of God. The second cluster was spoken during His Later Judean and Perea Ministries and speaks of the Christian life. The third cluster was spoken during Holy Week and deals mainly with judgment.

We should also note that the parables can be divided into four main groups. The first group has few or no details of significance. The parable of the Mustard Seed falls into this category. The parables of the second group have details with greater meaning; the parable of the

---

<sup>48</sup>Piper, "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God, op. cit., pp. 182-200; and "The Understanding of the Synoptic Parables," op. cit., pp. 42-53.



Vineyard and the Wicked Husbandmen is an example. The parable of the Sower and the Fourfield Field is an example of the third group. In the parables of this group, nearly all of the details have meaning for the chief thought of the parable. The fourth group features parables which have a primary and a secondary thought. We think of the parable of the Prodigal Son, where the reaction of the older brother is the important secondary thought, almost on the same level as the primary thought.

#### Summary

The dominant note of the Greek term *παραβολή* is that of *ἔψφ* as enigma. Jesus used the term *παραβολή* in its enigmatic sense. To understand the parable, it is necessary to have "the secret of the kingdom," that is, to be a believer in Jesus as Savior and Lord. The parables of Jesus are and can be meaningful only to believers; they experience the words of Jesus, "For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance."<sup>49</sup> The term, "parable," then, is a kerygmatic term; it is a word of the revelation of God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus.

Luke 16:1 informs us that Jesus spoke the parable of the Unjust Manager for the benefit of His followers while the Pharisees and scribes were listening in. The latter did not have "the secret of the kingdom." Their hearts were closed to the message of this parable. Luke 16:14 tells us that they scoffed at Jesus. On the other hand, the followers

---

<sup>49</sup>Matthew 13:12a.



of Jesus received the message of Jesus in this parable, for to them had been given the "secret of the kingdom." For them, this parable was not enigmatic but meaningful.

#### Definition

A study of the parabolic method of Jesus inevitably involves a consideration of the concept of the kingdom of God as described in the Gospels and as it was understood by the Jews of Jesus' day. The misapprehensions by the Jews in part gave rise to their opposition to Jesus and His message. Their deep-seated unwillingness to hear Jesus of Nazareth speak caused Jesus to speak increasingly in parables, in which He gave instruction of the true nature and meaning of the kingdom of God.

The Greeks primarily use the term *Basileia tou Theou* and *Basileia tou Christou*. These go back to the Hebrew terms *מלכות* and *מלכות*. In the abstract sense, *מלכות* means "kingdom," "kingly rule," "reign." *מלכות* means "the specific activity of God, in which He is revealed as King or sovereign Lord of His people, or of the universe which He created."<sup>1</sup> As Creator, God is the King King over all the earth. If one may say so, God is the Father King only for those who in word and deed acknowledge Him as King.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), II, 378-79; and C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (Revised edition: London: Faber & Co. Ltd., 1930), pp. 24-25.

<sup>2</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 372.



## CHAPTER III

### THE CONCEPT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

#### Definition

A study of the parabolic method of Jesus inevitably involves a consideration of the concept of the kingdom of God as described in the Scriptures and as it was understood by the Jews of Jesus' day. The misconceptions by the Jews in part gave rise to their opposition to Jesus and His message. Their deep-seated unwillingness to hear Jesus with open hearts caused Jesus to speak increasingly in parables, in which He gave instruction on the true nature and meaning of the kingdom of God.

The Gospels primarily use the term *Basileia τῶν οὐρανῶν* and *Basileia τοῦ Θεοῦ*. These go back to the Hebrew terms *מַלְכוּת* *ד' וְשָׁמַיָּה* and *מַלְכוּת* *יְהוָה*. In the abstract sense, *מַלְכוּת* means "kingship," "kingly rule," "reign." *מַלְכוּת* *יְהוָה* means "The specific . . . activity of God, in which He is revealed as King or sovereign Lord of His people, or of the universe which He created."<sup>1</sup> As Creator, God is *de jure* king over all the earth. If one may say so, God is *de facto* king only for those who in word and deed acknowledge Him as King.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, The Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), II, 371-72; and C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (Revised edition; London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1950), pp. 34-35.

<sup>2</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 372.



In addition to  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$ , the Old Testament uses the terms  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$  and  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$ . These two terms have almost the same meaning. In the religious sense,  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$  is used only in Psalm 22:29 and Obadiah 21 of God's royal rule in the present and future.  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$  is used in the religious sense especially in Exodus 19:6, where the Lord says through Moses, "And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

At the time of Jesus, the Jews habitually used "kingdom of heaven" ( $\text{Βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν}$ ) to avoid saying or using the name of God. <sup>4</sup> The term  $\text{Βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν}$  used by Matthew has the same meaning as  $\text{Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ}$  as used by Mark and Luke. This is also true respectively of the Hebrew terms  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$  and  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$ . <sup>5</sup>

The Greek word  $\text{Βασιλεία}$  means primarily "rule," "dominion," "reign." It also means "the area of people ruled over by a king."  $\text{Βασιλεία}$  is sometimes used in the abstract sense of God reigning as King, with His will being the sole determining factor. <sup>6</sup> This corresponds to the meaning of  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$ .  $\text{Βασιλεία}$  is also used in the concrete sense of those who acknowledge God as king and in whose midst God

<sup>3</sup>Gerhard von Rad, "B.  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$  and  $\text{מְלָכּוּת}$  im AT," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 569, fn. 28.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, His Life, Times, and Teaching, translated from the original Hebrew by Herbert Danby (New York: MacMillan, 1945), pp. 245-46.

<sup>5</sup>Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, "Das Evangelium nach Matthaeus erlaeutert aus Talmud und Midrasch," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), I, 172.

<sup>6</sup>See Matthew 6:10.



reigns. This latter meaning corresponds to that of the Hebrew  $\text{מְלֻכָּוּת}$ .<sup>7</sup> In making a careful study of these two meanings and their use in the New Testament, Dr. Arndt concludes that the abstract and concrete notions are so closely related, that it at times becomes difficult to differentiate between the two and in some instances should perhaps not be attempted.<sup>8</sup> Dodd defines the kingdom of God as "God exercising His kingly rule among men."<sup>9</sup> We think of those activities in history by which God discloses Himself as king.

In the Scriptures God reveals Himself as the Lord of action. In view of this, a more adequate description of the kingdom of God might be all the trouble that God went to in order to reestablish His kingdom over and among men through His redemptive work. "Before the foundation of the world"<sup>10</sup> God determined to call us to salvation in Christ Jesus.<sup>11</sup> From eternity it was God's will that no one should perish, but that all should become members of the community of believers, the kingdom of God.<sup>12</sup> In Ephesians 2:19, He terms all such members of the kingdom "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God," and in 1 Peter 2:9, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." For the last phrase, the Greek uses  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma$

---

<sup>7</sup>M. Reu, "Der biblische Begriff des Reiches Gottes," Kirchliche Zeitschrift, LV, 8 (August, 1931), 459. See also Matthew 5:20; 7:21; John 3:5.

<sup>8</sup>William F. Arndt, Bible Commentary--The Gospel According to St. Luke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), p. 151.

<sup>9</sup>Dodd, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>10</sup>Ephesians 1:4.

<sup>11</sup>Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9.

<sup>12</sup>1 Peter 3:9.



περὶ ἑαυτῶν, "a people that has become (God's own) possession."<sup>13</sup>

### The Uniqueness of Israel's Monotheism

The God of Israel was absolutely unique in the polytheistic milieu of the ancient world--"one God--invisible, Creator of all things, Ruler of nature and history."<sup>14</sup> The other ancient peoples had a pantheon of gods and divinities. The Canaanite pantheon, for example, was in varying degrees and at different times parallel to the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Anatolian, and Aegean pantheons. The Canaanite pantheon was probably more primitive than some of the others.<sup>15</sup> The God of Israel stood in contrast to this. In Deuteronomy 6:4, He is confessed as "The Lord our God is one Lord." God Himself said at Mount Sinai; "You shall have no other gods before me."<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that the Hebrew contains no word for goddess.<sup>17</sup> The nearest parallel to monotheism was the short-lived attempt of Amenophis IV, more commonly known as Akhnaton, to foist on the Egyptians a solar monotheism centered about Aten, the

---

<sup>13</sup>William A. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, "περὶ ἑαυτῶν," A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 646.

<sup>14</sup>John Bright, The Kingdom of God--The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1953), p. 230.

<sup>15</sup>William Foxwell Albright, "Archaeology and the Religion of the Canaanites," Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), pp. 63-94.

<sup>16</sup>Exodus 20:3.

<sup>17</sup>G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment--Studies in Biblical Theology (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950), p. 23.



solar disk.<sup>18</sup>

God also said, "You shall not make yourself a graven image."<sup>19</sup> This is in stark contrast to the many representations of the various members of the heathen pantheon which have been found. Many of these statues and images indicate the basic element of sensualism in heathen worship.

In the Creation story of Genesis 1 and 2, God alone, without help from any functionary or intermediary, creates the universe; this is in direct contrast to the mythology of heathen peoples. A case in point is the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic. The name Jehovah (Yahweh) possibly means "He who causes to be what comes into existence."<sup>20</sup>

God directs the laws and forces of nature. He rules the universe and controls the events of history, and in this reveals His righteous judgment and saving power. Members of the heathen pantheon were mostly personifications of forces of nature or other cosmic functions. The representations of these gods were often very sensual, which betray the sensuality in the worship of these gods. This was true especially of the Canaanites. The hopeless sensuality and perversion of the inhabitants of Canaan caused God to command their utter destruction at the time of the Conquest.<sup>21</sup> The heathen pantheon knew no morality. We remember

---

<sup>18</sup>Albright, The Biblical Period, reprinted by permission from The Jews; Their History, Culture and Religion, edited by Louis Finkelstein (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 9.

<sup>19</sup>Exodus 20:4a.

<sup>20</sup>Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity--Monotheism and the Historical Process (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), pp. 197-99.

<sup>21</sup>Exodus 23:31-33; 34:12-16; Deuteronomy 7:2-41.



also the do ut des principle in heathen worship, which was entirely foreign to the religion of Israel.<sup>22</sup>

#### God Establishes His Covenant at Sinai

When God appeared to Abram at Haran, God indicated to Abram that He had planned to establish a special relationship with Him. When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God expressed this covenant relationship:

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.<sup>23</sup>

Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants lived in this covenant relationship with God.

At the burning bush, God called Moses to become the leader of His oppressed people of Israel. God led them out of Egypt with a mighty hand into the wilderness to Mount Sinai, where they formally became His chosen people. God, through Moses, told them:

Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and all you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The people answered, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."<sup>24</sup> We note that Israel as a "kingdom of priests"  $\text{מְלִכְוֹת כֹּהֲנִים}$  and an

<sup>22</sup>Bright, op. cit., pp. 24-26; and Wright, op. cit., pp. 9-41.

<sup>23</sup>Genesis 17:7-8.

<sup>24</sup>Exodus 19:5-6, 8.



"holy nation" (  $\text{קֹדֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל}$  ), was to stand in a special relationship (  $\text{עַם לְפָנָי}$  ). Israel was to be God's firstborn,<sup>25</sup> God's holy nation.

As God's people, Israel's will was ever to be in complete harmony with God's divine will. God spelled out His will in the Moral Law (the Ten Commandments), the Civil Law, and the Ceremonial Law. Aside from the provisions of the Ten Commandments, God spelled out in great detail His will to protect the rights of all and to provide a fair hearing and just punishment for wrongdoing. God gave detailed instructions for what we today would call health laws to safeguard the health of the individual and the community. God also provided detailed instructions which the children of Israel were to observe in worshipping God with their heart and with their substance. Israel was to be a holy nation, God's own people.

Six distinguishing marks of this "kingdom" relationship should be noted. The first mark is that God established His kingdom in grace alone. The Exodus account in no way suggests that Israel merited the special favor of God. To the contrary, it depicts a cowardly, ungrateful, and unworthy people. We remember the reaction of the people at the Red Sea, at Marah, in the Wilderness of Sin, to mention just several instances. The fact that God chose Israel to be His people was an act of pure grace.

The second mark is that God lived among them as Lord and King. To demonstrate this tangibly, God went before them by day in a pillar of a

---

<sup>25</sup>Exodus 4:22.



cloud and at night in a pillar of fire. When the Egyptians came near Israel at the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud went between the Egyptians and Israel. God led Israel through this pillar of cloud from Egypt to Mount Sinai. When the tabernacle had been built, the pillar of cloud rested over it to indicate to the people that God was present.

God's will was supreme; this is the third mark. We have seen how God spelled out His will in great detail, covering every phase of Israel's life. Israel was to be God's holy nation, a kingdom of priests. To be that, God's will must always be supreme in the hearts and lives of the children of Israel. Through various sacrificial offerings, God provided for a symbolical "atonement" for disobedience so that the children of Israel, collectively and individually, could remain God's people.

A fourth mark of the kingdom of God is that of the community. This mark is closely related to the others. Those among whom God lived, in whose heart God's will was supreme, would form a new community, a group, a fellowship, or as God termed it, "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Israel was to be a select people, God's "own possession among all peoples."<sup>26</sup> Israel was chosen to be a select community above all people.

As a fifth mark of the kingdom of God, Israel was to tell other nations how they too might enter into such a special relationship with God. At this stage in Israel's history, this mark was not so clearly emphasized as in later stages. However, we should not forget that

---

<sup>26</sup>Exodus 19:5.



Israel had been able to leave Egypt, that part of Pharaoh's mighty army was ignominiously drowned in the Red Sea while in pursuit of Israel, that Israel had beaten the Amalekites in battle, and that God had promised to give them Canaan as their homeland. All this became known to the neighboring peoples; it was a telling witness for the God of Israel. Fear for the God of Israel filled their hearts.

A sixth mark of the kingdom of God is that of judgment. This mark is evident in the giving of the Law. After giving the first commandment and spelling out its meaning in some detail, God said:

for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.<sup>27</sup>

In His mercy, through sacrificial offerings, God provided for typological atonement for the sins of His people. We remember among other incidents how Moses pleaded with God not to destroy His chosen people when they worshipped the golden calf and, later, when the people rebelled against God after the report of the spies. At Mount Sinai, God spoke of His judgment against the inhabitants of Canaan:

And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.<sup>28</sup>

These, then, are the marks of the kingdom of God, which God had formally established out of pure grace at Mount Sinai. As Lord and King

---

<sup>27</sup>Exodus 20:5.

<sup>28</sup>Exodus 23:31-33.



He lived in their midst; His will was supreme in the community of God's holy nation. Israel was to tell other nations how they too might enter into such a special relationship with God. God's judgment would follow on those who would refuse to accept His gracious offer of membership in the kingdom of God.<sup>29</sup>

God's covenant with Israel was a unilateral one. It was a suzerainty covenant following in general the pattern familiar throughout the Mediterranean coastal lands in the general period of Moses.<sup>30</sup> As divine sovereign Lord, God spoke to those who were to become His people. He spoke to them as a king to his subjects or vassals. After very briefly reminding the children of Israel what He had done for them, God made the stipulations to which they had to agree to become His people.<sup>31</sup> To this the people agreed when Moses as God's messenger repeated God's terms to them; the people trusted that God would keep His promises. In the Ten Commandments, God spelled out His stipulations in greater detail.<sup>32</sup> The two tablets of stone on which these commandments were later written were deposited in the ark of the covenant which was kept in the holy of holies of the tabernacle. Near the end of his career as Israel's leader, Moses repeated these stipulations to Israel.<sup>33</sup> In the

---

<sup>29</sup>Reu, *op. cit.*, pp. 451-53.

<sup>30</sup>George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XVII, 3 (September, 1954), 50-76. For details on the nature of the suzerainty covenant of this time, see Appendix A.

<sup>31</sup>Exodus 19:3-6.

<sup>32</sup>Exodus 20:1-17.

<sup>33</sup>Deuteronomy 4ff.



vale of Shechem, under Joshua's direction, "the blessings and cursings" of the law were read to the people.<sup>34</sup> The covenant was renewed at Shechem just before Joshua's death.<sup>35</sup>

God's covenant with Israel demanded grateful and complete loyalty to God and strict obedience to His will. Israel could never rightfully take her status as God's chosen people for granted. At several times, God wanted to deprive Israel of its covenant-status and destroy it because of breaches of covenant. It was only the determined pleading of Moses that saved it from God's righteous judgment. We recall that Israel experienced God's judgment after the rebellion which followed the report of the spies; we remember that God sent fiery serpents to punish Israel for forgetting that He, God, was divine sovereign God and Lord. Israel suffered defeat at Ai after Achan's crime. During the period of the Judges, Israel repeatedly experienced the judgment of God for breaking its covenant with God by worshipping the gods of the Canaanites.

Through the years, Israel failed to learn that it lived continually in judgment. Israel was reminded of this fact again and again by the prophets. Because of Israel's confidence in its status as God's chosen people, the prophets' warnings of doom, as the years went on, seemed to be nonsense to them. God's covenant with Israel gave Israel a great sense of destiny which no tragedy, however great, could defeat.

Israel's faith was strongly eschatological in orientation, because history itself was to the Hebrew mind eschatologically orientated: it was guided to a destination by God. And this gave to the Israelite a robust confidence in the future.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Joshua 8:30-35.

<sup>35</sup>Joshua 24.

<sup>36</sup>Bright, op. cit., pp. 31-32.



## From the Judges to the New Testament Era

In the days of the Judges, Israel was an amphictyonic league or federation, perhaps similar to the Delphic League of several centuries later. The tabernacle with its sacrifices and worship was a strong, unifying force. The tabernacle was first located at Shechem and later on at Bethel, Gilgal, and Shiloh. Whether the tribes gathered here only once a year<sup>37</sup> or three times a year for the three great festivals, we are not told. We can only assume, based on the amphictyonies of several centuries later, that a council of elders met to discuss the affairs of such a federation or league.<sup>38</sup>

Several factors had their negative effect on such a tribal league. The geography of Canaan and the areas controlled by the Canaanites made political unity difficult and favored cantonization within the league. Another decisive factor was Israel's tendency to break its covenant with God by worshipping local Canaanite gods. To call Israel back to Him and to remind it of its covenant with Him, God sent periods of great stress. In due time, God sent Israel a leader, who rallied the people about himself, and defeated the enemy. Such a gift of leadership was looked upon as a charisma.

The greatest challenge to Israel came from the Philistines. To meet this challenge, Israel asked Samuel for a king. Chosen to be king, Saul was regarded as having this particular charisma. This was

---

<sup>37</sup>1 Samuel 1:3.

<sup>38</sup>Martin Noth, The History of Israel, translated from the second edition of Geschichte Israels by Stanley Godman (London: Adam & Charles Black, c.1958), pp. 85-103. See also Albright, The Biblical Period, pp. 18-23 and Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, pp. 102-10.



especially true of his successor, David, who brought Israel into its golden age. It was David, who, through the establishment of his capital at his own personal city of Jerusalem and the transfer of the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant to Mount Zion, began to weld Israel's hope to Jerusalem as a holy city. It must have seemed to many, and among them many pious souls, that God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled in David and in the extension of his realm over the surrounding nations.<sup>39</sup> The Israelite began to think of the coming Messiah as a son of David, as a new David. As state and religion were integrated with each other, there was growing danger of placing religion at the service of the state, of supposing: The state supports religion; religion supports the state. As time went on, the conclusion was reached: "God will eternally defend the state!"<sup>40</sup>

With the crowning of Solomon, the charismatic principle of leadership became one of dynasty. Tremendous economic, social, and political changes took place, which resulted in the Divided Kingdom. The feeling that Israel's destiny could be realized through political action grew. The church was totally at the service of the state, and would not permit criticism. The covenant idea was perverted into one of blood and faith, a faith with the pagan principle of do ut des.

It was Amos who emphasized that God can and will cast off His people: The Kingdom of Israel is not the kingdom of God! Israel is under God's judgment! The concept of the kingdom of God as divorced

---

<sup>39</sup>Reu, op. cit., p. 453.

<sup>40</sup>Bright, op. cit., pp. 34-44.



from Israel's political destiny was emphasized by the prophets of the latter half of the eighth century. Their message was: An apostate nation cannot be the people of God! Isaiah emphasized that God is the Lord of history; He will work His purpose in history; He will save some of Israel, the Remnant, for His purpose. Coming in the latter days, the kingdom of God might be defined in this way: Only those can be members, who in faith wait on God, and who willingly and gladly observe His will as sovereign Lord in their lives. The kingdom of God cannot be established without judgment over Israel, without atonement for Israel's sin and guilt, and without an outpouring of the Spirit into the hearts of the people.<sup>41</sup>

In the minds of the people, the messianic hope of Israel was tied firmly to David's line, to Jerusalem and the temple; it was given a form which it never lost. This meant that each king, as long as the state lasted, was a potential Messiah in the popular mind. This conception helped to give rise to the national delusion that Jerusalem and the Davidic state could never be destroyed even though Judah might be decimated. This delusion later broke the heart of Jeremiah.<sup>42</sup>

Soon after the people of the Northern Kingdom were taken into exile, Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant which God would make with the "house of Israel, and with the house of Judah."<sup>43</sup> The marks of the internal character of this new covenant essentially paralleled those of the covenant at Sinai.

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-92; and Ren, op. cit., p. 454.

<sup>42</sup>Bright, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

<sup>43</sup>Jeremiah 31:31-34.



The first mark would be the forgiveness of sins through God's grace. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."<sup>44</sup> Out of pure grace, God will forgive the sins of Israel. The Hebrew for "I will forgive" and "remember no more" are in the imperfect, which denote an on-going process. God daily forgives and forgets the sins of those who are members of His kingdom.<sup>45</sup> God will establish His kingdom, not because of Israel's merit, but only out of His grace alone.

Communion of God with man will be the second mark. God says, "I . . . will be their God, and they shall be my people."<sup>46</sup> God will live in their midst as Lord and King. This will not be in a fixed place, such as the tabernacle and later the temple at Jerusalem. God will dwell within the heart of each member of His kingdom, so that there will be constant communion between God and man. Each member of the kingdom will grow in such daily communion with God.

This close communion with God will result from this, that God's will will be supreme in the heart of each member of the kingdom. "I will put my law in them, and I will write it upon their hearts . . . they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord."<sup>47</sup> The term "I put" means an accomplished fact. "I will write" being in the Hebrew imperfect, denotes an action that is continually going on in

---

<sup>44</sup>Jeremiah 31:34b.

<sup>45</sup>Theodore Laetsch, Bible Commentary--Jeremiah (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1952), p. 257.

<sup>46</sup>Jeremiah 31:33c.

<sup>47</sup>Jeremiah 31:33b,34b.



the hearts of the members of the kingdom.<sup>48</sup> Enabled by God, each member of the kingdom gladly, willingly, and earnestly will seek to heed God's will in all phases of daily living. In his heart, God's will is supreme.

The idea of the community, the fourth mark, is expressed in these words:

I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.<sup>49</sup>

As sovereign Lord of the kingdom, God says that such people, as described, will be "My people." Collectively, each member of the kingdom with the others will form a communion, a fellowship, God's own people. "Neighbor" and "brother" refer to those who are members of the kingdom, who have saving faith; they are fellow-citizens with the saints, "brethren" in the household of God, as St. Paul describes this relationship in Ephesians 2:19.<sup>50</sup> This recalls God's description at Sinai.<sup>51</sup>

A fifth mark is that other nations would become members of the kingdom of God. This mark was not specifically mentioned, but it was expected that, from Jerusalem, David's city, the message of the kingdom would sound forth to nations which knew it not. The phrase, "Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, says the Lord" occurs in Jeremiah 48:47. The same phrase is used of Elam in Jeremiah 49:39. The words recall the glorious message of Isaiah 60, as summarized in

---

<sup>48</sup>Laetsch, op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>49</sup>Jeremiah 31:33c, 34.

<sup>50</sup>Laetsch, op. cit., pp. 256-57.

<sup>51</sup>Exodus 19:6a.



verse 3: "And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." Of equal, grand impact are the words of Isaiah 19:23-25:

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage."

We recall the picture of St. Paul in Romans 11: Israel is the stem, into which branches (Gentiles) are grafted.

By implication, the sixth mark, that of judgment, is found in verse 34. Those who know not God, who persist in their own sinful will, will not have forgiveness. They will not experience the blessing of membership in the kingdom of God. Jeremiah, as God's prophet, speaks of the terrible judgment of God on those who refuse to recognize Him as divine Lord and King. This judgment would be pronounced on Jew and Gentile alike.

In this connection, reference should be made to the words of Daniel 2:44:

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.

From these words, the thought developed that God would destroy heathen nations and would establish His eternal kingdom here on earth. This thought remained alive through the centuries. At the time of Christ, it was the universal hope of the Jews that God would soon establish His kingdom of heaven on earth. The Jews understood this to mean that Jerusalem would be the capital and center of God's kingdom. This thought



must be kept in mind as we discuss the concept of the kingdom of God at the time of Christ.<sup>52</sup>

#### At the Time of Christ

The Jews learned the lesson of idolatry from the experiences of the Exile and its causes. Whereas during the centuries before the Exile, they had so often fallen away from God and had worshipped heathen gods, they now worshipped God only. They would not tolerate graven images. We recall their reaction several centuries later to the Roman standards brought in by Pontius Pilate, and their willingness to die rather than endure this violation of God and His law.<sup>53</sup>

Judaism became a law community. To know the law, to study it, to keep it according to the letter rather than in the spirit of the law, this was the purpose of religion.<sup>54</sup> Everytime a Jew prayed the Shema, he renewed his personal acknowledgment of God as his King.<sup>55</sup> Since the Jew alone had taken on himself the yoke of God's rule, he claimed for himself preferential treatment.<sup>56</sup> As for the universality of true religion, the Jews felt that it would be centered in the temple-worship

---

<sup>52</sup>Reu, op. cit., pp. 455-57.

<sup>53</sup>Flavius Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," The Works of Flavius Josenhus, translated by William Whiston (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publishers, n.d.), XVIII, iii.

<sup>54</sup>Bright, op. cit., pp. 174-75.

<sup>55</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 372.

<sup>56</sup>B. T. D. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels--A Critical Study (New York: MacMillan, 1937), p. 77. See also Moore, op. cit., p. 545.



at Jerusalem. Perhaps the most grandiose expression of this hope is found in Ezekiel's Civitas Dei, chapters 40 to 48. The Jews felt that Judaism would be international, accepted by all nations. This fact calls to mind the words of Daniel 2:44.<sup>57</sup>

At the time of Christ, there were three dominant views of the kingdom of God and its coming. Those who held the political view dreamed of independence from Rome through military action led by the Messiah. The nationalistic party of the Zealots were especially the proponents of this view. Hopeless as it was in view of the firm grip of Rome on Palestine, it was a chronic sickness which proved to be without cure. Roman military might suppressed one rebellion after the other. In the end, this political view brought about the bloody struggle which ended in the terrible destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D., and culminated in the total destruction of Jerusalem by Hadrian's legions in 132-135 A.D.

The moral view is also known as the "ideal of the Holy Commonwealth." This view was held especially by the Pharisees and scribes. They looked forward eagerly to the coming of the Messiah and the exaltation of God's people under His rule. They felt that this could not be achieved by military action, and, therefore, avoided messianic pretenders and tried to negate their influence. The Pharisees and scribes believed that the ideal of a holy people of God could be achieved through a strict observance of the law and its interpretation by the elders. This would prompt God to send the Messiah and to exalt Him and His people in a Holy Commonwealth.

---

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 373-74.



The third view was that of the apocalyptic hope. According to this, God would establish His Kingdom through a catastrophic intervention. The Son of God would come in the clouds and in glory to receive His eternal kingdom, as prophesied in Daniel 7:13-14. This apocalyptic hope is best expressed in Daniel and I Enoch. Although this hope was not realized, the Gospels give evidence of the intense interest in the coming of the kingdom.<sup>58</sup>

#### Jesus' Concept of the Kingdom of God

"In the fulness of time," God sent the long-awaited "Elijah" in the person of John the Baptizer to prepare for the coming of His Anointed. John exhorted his hearers, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>59</sup> Although most of the Jews considered the coming of the Messiah, the coming of the kingdom, a national and political event, there were still those who felt that only through repentance could they become members of the coming kingdom of the Messiah. This is indicated in the words of Zacharias, spoken at the circumcision of John.<sup>60</sup>

Jesus declared the kingdom of God as a present fact: "The kingdom of God is at hand."<sup>61</sup> Through Jesus' coming to earth, the kingdom of God had come into the world. Although defined in the opening paragraphs of our chapter, we might describe the kingdom of God through Jesus'

---

<sup>58</sup>Bright, op. cit., pp. 191-92.

<sup>59</sup>Matthew 3:2.

<sup>60</sup>Luke 3:67-79, but especially verses 76-79. See also Reu, op. cit., p. 457.

<sup>61</sup>Mark 1:15.



parable of the Mustard Seed. Even though a mustard seed is a very tiny seed, if planted, it will become ". . . the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."<sup>62</sup> Like the mustard seed, the kingdom of God is a power. However tiny its beginnings might have been, it will grow as the mustard seed and fill the earth. It will encompass the entire world; its members will come from all over the world. The end of the world will usher in its culmination in heaven. The parable of the Mustard Seed and its picture of the kingdom of God recall the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation, as found in Daniel 2.

Through God's grace, men become citizens of the kingdom of God.<sup>63</sup> Those who are chosen, that is, those who accept this free gift of God's grace, are members of the kingdom of God.<sup>64</sup> He who is of the kingdom of heaven "does the will of my Father who is in heaven."<sup>65</sup> This is the natural result of having entered into and having become members of the kingdom of God. St. Paul says:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.<sup>66</sup>

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed how the will of God should be expressed in the attitudes and lives of those who are "citizens of

---

<sup>62</sup>Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32. See also Harold N. and Alma L. Moldenke, "51. *Grassica Nigra*," Plants of the Bible (Waltham, Mass.: Chronica Botannica Company, 1952), pp. 59-62.

<sup>63</sup>Ephesians 2:8-9.

<sup>64</sup>John 3:16-18.

<sup>65</sup>Matthew 7:21.

<sup>66</sup>Ephesians 2:10.



heaven." In the epistle to the Romans, Paul characterizes the kingdom of God as consisting in "righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."<sup>67</sup> In His parables, Jesus gave instruction on the nature of the kingdom of God and the meaning of membership in this kingdom.

There is another facet to Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God which should be considered. Jesus speaks of the kingdom as being here and as coming in the future. This is most clearly brought out in Luke 17:20-37. Jesus told the Pharisees that it is most important to recognize that the "kingdom of God is in the midst of you," in the person of Jesus Christ. Turning to His disciples, Jesus spoke of the future coming of the kingdom. Jesus emphasized that sometime in the future, the kingdom will come suddenly. It will come with judgment, separating those who had been intimately associated with each other in life. This fact of a kingdom which is present and which is still to come can hardly be stated clearer than in this passage.

For the nationalistically-minded Jews, such a kingdom of God with its exclusive emphasis on the spiritual had little appeal. Jesus studiously avoided giving the Jews any reason to think of Him as a political Messiah. When He made clear to them that He, Jesus, was the "bread of life" and not a political figure, His following melted away, even though the day before they had intended to proclaim Him king.<sup>68</sup> The nationalistic concept of the kingdom of God with its political emphasis would not permit its leader to say, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup>Romans 14:17.

<sup>68</sup>Mark 6:30-56; Matthew 14:24-36; John 6.

<sup>69</sup>Mark 12:17.



The Gospels speak much of the conflict of Jesus with the scribes and Pharisees, who were proponents of the moral view of the kingdom of God. Zealously promoting the ideal of a holy people through the observance of the law and the interpretations of the elders, the scribes and Pharisees found Jesus well-versed in them. When Jesus was criticized for failing to observe these minutely, He observed, "the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath."<sup>70</sup> In direct contrast to the emphasis of the Pharisees and elders on the letter of the law, Jesus emphasized the spirit of the law. It was Jesus who declared,

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>71</sup>

Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees publicly in a court of the temple when it was crowded with passover pilgrims.<sup>72</sup> The Pharisees and scribes, too, were looking for the Messiah's kingdom to be established here on earth, but Jesus and His teaching on the kingdom of God had no place in their cherished ideal of this kingdom and its coming.<sup>73</sup>

As for those who awaited an apocalyptic appearance of the kingdom of God, Christ could not satisfy their expectation. Christ simply did not come down from heaven as King to receive the kingdom from the

---

<sup>70</sup>Mark 2:28.

<sup>71</sup>Matthew 5:20.

<sup>72</sup>Matthew 23. The word *οὐαί* expresses both anger and sorrow; see Adolf Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthäus: seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbstständigkeit (Stuttgart: Calvar Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1929), pp. 671-74.

<sup>73</sup>Strack-Billerbeck, op. cit., pp. 182-83.



"Ancient of Days" and to establish a glorious, earthly kingdom. What is more, a suffering Messiah was entirely out of keeping with the apocalyptic figure.

#### The Marks of the Kingdom of God

During His ministry, Jesus reiterated the distinguishing marks of the kingdom of God. Jesus emphasized that God had established His kingdom through pure grace alone, not because of man's merit in any way. An outstanding example of this was the gracious reply of Jesus to the penitent thief on the cross, "today you will be with me in Paradise."<sup>74</sup> We remember the words of John the Baptizer, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"<sup>75</sup>, and the words of Jesus spoken sometime later: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."<sup>76</sup> Jesus' parables of the Pharisee and Publican<sup>77</sup> and of the Prodigal Son<sup>78</sup> speak of God's grace. In John 3:15-16, Jesus underlines the decisive importance of faith in becoming a member of God's kingdom.

In the person of Jesus, the kingdom of God had come to earth. John the Baptizer told his hearers, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>79</sup> After reading from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus told His hearers, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your

---

<sup>74</sup>Luke 23:43.

<sup>75</sup>John 1:29.

<sup>76</sup>Mark 2:17.

<sup>77</sup>Luke 18:9-14.

<sup>78</sup>Luke 15:11-32.

<sup>79</sup>Matthew 3:1.



hearing."<sup>80</sup> To the disciples, Jesus said, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God."<sup>81</sup> As we saw above, Jesus Himself is this "secret of the kingdom of God." Replying to the inquiry of the Pharisees about the time of the coming of the kingdom, Jesus replied, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."<sup>82</sup> The centurion under the cross of Jesus confessed, "Truly this man was the son of God."<sup>83</sup>

Jesus characterized the members of the kingdom of God as those, in whose heart the will of God was supreme. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasized that only "he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" will enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>84</sup> At another time, Jesus said, "Who are my mother and my brothers? . . . . Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."<sup>85</sup> This point is strongly brought out in Jesus' description of the criterion for judgment on Judgment Day.<sup>86</sup>

In various ways, Jesus described those who believe in Him as forming a community of believers. This is a fourth mark of the kingdom of God. In Mark 3:34-35, Jesus uses the picture of a family--brother, sister, mother. In John 10, the picture changes to that of a flock of

---

<sup>80</sup>Luke 4:21.

<sup>81</sup>Mark 4:11.

<sup>82</sup>Luke 17:20.

<sup>83</sup>Mark 15:39.

<sup>84</sup>Matthew 7:21.

<sup>85</sup>Mark 3:33,35.

<sup>86</sup>Matthew 25:31-46.



sheep; this same picture is used by Jesus in Luke 15:4-7. The picture of those on the right hand of Jesus is that of a community of believers.<sup>87</sup> Jesus gave His great commission to "more than five hundred" believers, who formed a fellowship of the followers of Jesus.<sup>88</sup>

As a fifth mark of the kingdom of God, Jesus emphasized that the Gospel is for all people. When Jesus healed the centurion's servant, He told those who were with Him, "I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>89</sup> The universality of the Gospel is the heart of the great commission. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, Jesus instructed His disciples, "you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."<sup>90</sup>

Jesus also spoke of the mark of judgment. After informing His hearers that Gentiles will enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus said, "the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth."<sup>91</sup> Jesus emphasized the importance of doing the Father's will to escape judgment.<sup>92</sup> Jesus underlined this fact when He spoke the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican<sup>93</sup> and

<sup>87</sup>Matthew 25:31-34.

<sup>88</sup>1 Corinthians 15:6; Matthew 28:16-20.

<sup>89</sup>Matthew 8:11.

<sup>90</sup>Acts 1:8.

<sup>91</sup>Matthew 8:12.

<sup>92</sup>Mark 7:21.

<sup>93</sup>Luke 18:9-14.



later exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes.<sup>94</sup> To Nicodemus Jesus said, "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."<sup>95</sup> As we have seen before, judgment on the last day will be made on the basis of the fruits of faith.<sup>96</sup>

#### Culmination in Heaven

The final coming of the kingdom of God will take place sometime in the indefinite future. Christ spoke of signs which would take place before the final coming of His kingdom.<sup>97</sup> Humanly speaking, these signs have all taken place, and the final coming of God's kingdom is imminent. We should note that God alone knows when this will take place.<sup>98</sup> When the Last Day does come, all people of all time will stand before Jesus. To the members of His kingdom, the community of faithful believers, Jesus will say, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."<sup>99</sup> In the apocalyptic language of Revelation, St. John speaks of his vision of the Lamb of God<sup>100</sup> and the marriage of the Lamb.<sup>101</sup> In Revelation 20 and 21, St. John

---

<sup>94</sup>Matthew 23.

<sup>95</sup>John 3:18; see also verses 19-21.

<sup>96</sup>Matthew 25:31-46.

<sup>97</sup>Mark 4:21-27; Matthew 24:23-31; Luke 21:25-27.

<sup>98</sup>Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32.

<sup>99</sup>Matthew 25:34.

<sup>100</sup>Revelation 5.

<sup>101</sup>Revelation 19.



describes a new heaven and a new earth. In describing the blissful joy of heaven, he writes:

And I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."<sup>102</sup>

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.<sup>103</sup>

#### Summary

As we have seen above, through the centuries the Jews had held, generally speaking, an erroneous conception of the kingdom of God. This was also true at the time of Christ. The mistaken concepts of the Jews resulted in their opposition to Jesus and caused Him to speak increasingly in parables. This opposition was especially true of the Pharisees and scribes, who felt that through righteousness, God would be prompted to send the Messiah to usher in the Holy Commonwealth. In their thinking, righteousness consisted in outward, formal observance of the law and the traditions of the elders. As will be pointed out in detail below, the Pharisees and scribes felt that God rewarded righteousness with

---

<sup>102</sup>Revelation 21:3-4.

<sup>103</sup>Revelation 22:1-5.



wealth. Luke 16:14 describes them as "lovers of money."

Whereas the Jews and especially the Pharisees and scribes felt that the kingdom of God was yet to come, Jesus had declared "the kingdom of God is at hand" in His person.<sup>104</sup> Those to whom God in grace had given the "secret of the kingdom," in whose hearts God's will was supreme, these were members of the kingdom. It was for their benefit that Jesus spoke this parable. We shall see below that Jesus describes them as "sons of light" in distinction from the non-members, "the sons of this age."

In the parable of the Unjust Manager, Jesus had words of instruction for those who were members of the kingdom, in whose hearts God's will was supreme. As we shall see later, Jesus gave them instruction on the prudent and sacrificial use of money. The Pharisees and scribes, who were listening in, were not members of the kingdom. Their hearts were closed to the words of Jesus. In fact, Luke 16:14 informs us that they scoffed at Jesus. As non-members of the kingdom, they put their will above the will of God. In their hearts, God's will was not supreme.

---

<sup>104</sup>Mark 1:15.



## CHAPTER IV

### LUKE 16:1-13: A PARABLE OF THE KINGDOM

#### Evidence of Context

We have suggested in the previous chapter that the kingdom of God is all the trouble God went to in order to reestablish His kingdom here on earth through His redemptive work. All those who through repentance and faith in Christ have become members of this kingdom form a community of believers. St Peter very beautifully describes such a community and indicates what it means to be a member of the kingdom of God:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.<sup>1</sup>

Members of the kingdom are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> They are to grow in an understanding of the nature of the kingdom of God. Their will is to conform more and more to God's will, which is to be more and more supreme in their hearts. Members of the kingdom are a "holy nation," "God's own people."

In the parables, Jesus gives instruction on the nature of the kingdom of God and its meaning in terms of the lives of its members. Through the parabolic method, Jesus shows how the will of the members of the kingdom of God is to conform to the will of God in all the varied

---

<sup>1</sup>1 Peter 2:9-10.

<sup>2</sup>2 Peter 3:18.



instances of life's experiences.

A survey of the context of the parable of the Unjust Manager bears this out. We note that the context of the parable is found entirely in the Gospel according to St. Luke. In the parables preceding this one, Jesus emphasizes that humility characterizes the members of the kingdom of God,<sup>3</sup> that true love is unselfish,<sup>4</sup> that only those who heed God's gracious invitation will enter the kingdom of God.<sup>5</sup> Jesus describes the cost of discipleship,<sup>6</sup> and, in three parables, speaks of God's loving concern for the lost and selfish.<sup>7</sup> In the verses immediately following the parable of the Unjust Manager, Jesus further emphasizes the right use of money and earthly possessions.<sup>8</sup>

The parable of the Unjust Manager is one of the parables of the kingdom. In this parable, Jesus gives instruction to the "children (sons) of light," members of the kingdom, on the right use of money and earthly possessions; He emphasizes that the way we use our earthly possessions is of far-reaching significance. He asks pointedly,

If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Luke 14:7-11.

<sup>4</sup>Luke 14:12-14.

<sup>5</sup>Luke 14:15-24.

<sup>6</sup>Luke 14:25-35.

<sup>7</sup>Luke 15:1-32.

<sup>8</sup>Luke 16:19-31.

<sup>9</sup>Luke 16:11-13.



## "Sons of Light"

Jesus uses the term "sons of light" to refer to those who have been enlightened by the "light of the world," and who "will have the light of life."<sup>10</sup> The sons of light walk in light.<sup>11</sup> Their ultimate destiny is in eternal light, which is the kingdom of glory. According to Strack-Billerbeck, the term, "sons of light;" seemingly was not used by the rabbis in the sense of those who are actively concerned about their own salvation.<sup>12</sup>

The term, "sons of light," figures very prominently in the Dead Sea scrolls as the name for the Qumran community.<sup>13</sup> One manuscript uses this term for the community in its title, "The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness." This manuscript gives detailed instructions to the sons of light for their ultimate, victorious battle with the sons of darkness, those who are of this age. The opening lines of the "Manual of Discipline" speak of entering the covenant of the Qumran community. The candidate for becoming a son of light, a member of the community, promises "to love all the sons of light," all members of the community. "And all who have offered themselves for his [God's] truth shall bring all their knowledge and strength and wealth into the community

<sup>10</sup>John 1:9; 8:12.

<sup>11</sup>John 12:35; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; Ephesians 5:8.

<sup>12</sup>Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, "Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas, und Johannes u. die Apostelgeschichte, erlaeutert aus Talmud u. Midrasch," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), II, 219.

<sup>13</sup>For a brief sketch of the possible origin of the Qumran community see Appendix B.



of God . . . ."<sup>14</sup> The same term, sons of light, is used for the Qumran community in describing the judgment over one who becomes a son of darkness.<sup>15</sup> The Dead Sea scrolls use sons of light as a community term.

The Qumran community considered itself to be the Remnant, the only, true Israel. The community understood itself as an anticipation of the age to come, a community of the end-time, with the coming of the two Messiahs, that of Aaron and of Israel. Its members lived a solitary life, removed from the temptations of the world, to be ready for the Lord's coming.<sup>16</sup>

The acceptance of and obedience to the teaching of the sect constituted the factor which sanctified the members of the community. Evidence indicates that members of the community as the sons of light felt that only they could do what God wanted, since they alone were acquainted with the torah as explained by their community.<sup>17</sup> Since only those who were members of the community could know the correct interpretation of the torah and, hence, obey God's will as expressed in the torah, only

<sup>14</sup>The Manual of Discipline, i, 9, 11b-12a. See Appendix C for the opening lines, giving requirements for membership, and the oath of admission.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., ii, 16. Although all of The Manual of Discipline speaks of the life of the sons of light as the Qumran community, we should note especially the following references which emphasize the community sense of this term: "the Common Life" (vi, 1-9a), "the Meeting" (vi, 9b-13), and the "Penal Code" (vi, 24-vii, 25).

<sup>16</sup>Geza Vermès, Discovery in the Judean Desert (New York: Desclee Company, 1956), pp. 10, 36. See also The Manual of Discipline, viii, 1-10a, ix, 5b-11.

<sup>17</sup>Raymond Brown, "Johannine Gospel and Epistles," The Scrolls and the New Testament, edited by Krister Stendahl (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1957), pp. 192-93. See also The Manual of Discipline, i, 1-18a; iv, 1-3; v, 1-11; 20b-vi, 23.



members of the community, the sons of light, were predestined to be saved. To be a son of light, a member of the community, meant "election, predestination, and the token of salvation."<sup>18</sup>

To those whom God has chosen he has given them for an eternal possession;  
 he has given them an inheritance in the lot of the holy ones and with the sons of heaven has associated their company for a council of unity and a company of a holy building, for an eternal planting through every period that is to be.<sup>19</sup>

The sons of light of the Qumran community entered on this status by their acceptance of the community's interpretation of the law, whereas, according to the Scriptures, we become children of God, sons of light, through faith in Jesus Christ. Whereas Qumran emphasized works, the Scriptures emphasize salvation as a free gift of God, "not because of works, lest any man should boast."<sup>20</sup> The basic difference between the two is Christ.<sup>21</sup>

there remains a tremendous chasm between Qumran thought and Christianity. No matter how impressive the terminological and ideological similarities are, the difference that Jesus Christ makes between the two cannot be minimized. Therefore, we would do well to avoid any policy of hunting for Christian parallels to every line of the Qumran texts. The Essene sectarians were not Christians, and the recognition of this will prevent many misinterpretations. On the other hand, it is even more incorrect to turn the early Christians into Essenes . . . . Christianity is too unique to be classified as any earlier "isms."<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>Vermès, *op. cit.*, p. 110. The expression "called of God" is used in The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness, iii, 2; iv, 10f. See also The Manual of Discipline, i, 4; v, 9-10.

<sup>19</sup>The Manual of Discipline, xi, 7-9. See also Thanksgiving Hymn III, 1-6; IV, 12-13; VII, 29-31.

<sup>20</sup>Ephesians 2:8-10.

<sup>21</sup>Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-95.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 205.



It is extremely important, however, to remember that the term sons of light was used to describe the community at Qumran, as was shown in the preceding paragraphs. The Dead Sea scrolls use sons of light synonymously for the community and its members, in distinction from those who were not members of the community. Luke 16:8b uses the same term, "sons of light," to distinguish them from the "sons of this age," as we shall see below. The kingdom of God is a community of the sons of light. Because of this, the parable of the Unjust Manager is a parable of the kingdom.

#### "This Age"

We should note another parallel term in the parable of the Unjust Manager and the Dead Sea scrolls. Luke 16:8b contrasts the phrase "sons of this world" or "sons of this age" with the sons of light. The term, sons of this age, refers to those who are not sons of light. We recall the earnest exhortation of Jesus:

Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.<sup>23</sup>

In His parables, Jesus has much to say about the kingdom of God and the conduct of its members as sons of light. In His high-priestly prayer, Jesus prays for all who are and will be sons of light, in order that, although they live in the world, they may not succumb to the temptation to be of the world.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>John 12:35b-36.

<sup>24</sup>John 17.



Among the various terms used in the Scrolls for the "sons of this age," is "sons of darkness." This term is part of the title of the scroll, "The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness," and is used in the scroll itself. This same term is used in The Manual of Discipline.<sup>25</sup> Among other terms used are "men of Belial's lot,"<sup>26</sup> "wicked,"<sup>27</sup> "men of destruction,"<sup>28</sup> and "sons of error."<sup>29</sup>

Reference must also be made to the phrase "this age." The Qumran community considered the "present age" an on-going struggle between the two spirits of good and evil.

In the hand of the prince of lights is dominion over all sons of righteousness; in the ways of light they walk. And in the hand of the angel of darkness is all dominion over the sons of error; and in the ways of darkness they walk. And by the angel of darkness is the straying of all the sons of righteousness, and all their sin and their iniquities and their guilt, and the transgressions of their works in his dominion, according to the mysteries of God, until his time, and all their afflictions and the appointed times of their distress in the dominion of his enmity. And all the spirits of his lot try to make the sons of light stumble; but the God of Israel and his angel of truth have helped all the sons of light.<sup>30</sup>

For God has established the two spirits in equal measure until the last period, and has put eternal enmity between their divisions. An abomination to truth are deeds of error, and an abomination to error are all ways of truth. And contentious jealousy is on all their judgments, for they do not walk together.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>The Manual of Discipline, i, 10.

<sup>26</sup>The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness, i, 5; see also The Manual of Discipline, ii, 4.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., viii, 6f.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., ix, 21f.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., iii, 20.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., iii, 20-25a.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., iv, 16b-18a.



The present age is also termed "the dominion of Belial,"<sup>32</sup> and "the period of wickedness."<sup>33</sup> As noted in the above quotation, during this age the sons of light may be led astray by the spirit of darkness and suffer affliction "in the dominion of his enmity." But "the God of Israel and his angel of Truth have helped all the sons of light."

### Kingdom of Glory

The present age of the dominion of Belial will come to an end.

The Manual of Discipline states:

But God in the mysteries of his understanding and in his glorious wisdom has ordained a period for the ruin of error, and in the appointed time of punishment he will destroy it forever. And then shall come out forever the truth of the world, for it has wallowed in the ways of wickedness in the dominion of error until the appointed time of judgment which has been decreed.<sup>34</sup>

This is the struggle described in "The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness"; it will end in victory for the sons of light. The end result will be that

wickedness will depart from before righteousness as darkness departs from before light; and as smoke is destroyed and is no longer, so will wickedness be destroyed forever. And righteousness will be revealed like the sun, the fixed order of the world; and all who hold back the wondrous mysteries will be no longer. Knowledge will fill the world, and folly will be there no more forever.<sup>35</sup>

The Scrolls speak of the final and eternal bliss of the righteous as a worshipping community. There seems to have been an expectation of

---

<sup>32</sup>The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness, xiv, 9; The Manual of Discipline, i, 13-19, 23f.; ii, 18.

<sup>33</sup>The Damascus Document, vi, 10, 14; xv, 7, 10.

<sup>34</sup>The Manual of Discipline, iv, 13b-20a.

<sup>35</sup>The Book of Mysteries.



a new temple, built in "the period which has been decreed,"<sup>36</sup> going back perhaps to the idea of "the new heavens and the new earth" promised in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22. Another reference speaks of God's true sons standing before God with the eternal host "to be made new together with all that is to be."<sup>37</sup>

According to The Manual of Discipline, the individual members of the sons of light will be refined and purified "with a holy spirit from all wicked deeds," and sprinkled "with a spirit of truth." They will "perceive the knowledge of the Most High and the wisdom of the sons of heaven . . . for God has chosen them for an eternal covenant . . . ."<sup>38</sup> One of the Thanksgiving Psalms says that these will stand before God with the eternal host<sup>39</sup> and will take their place with the "army of the holy ones" and will come together "with the congregation of the sons of heaven" to praise God and to speak of His wonders.<sup>40</sup> The sons of light belong to God, who, "with a living stylus" has engraved for them the covenant of His peace "to reign over them in all the seasons of eternity."<sup>41</sup>

In the application of the parable of the Unjust Manager, Jesus used the expression, "that they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (*εἰς τὰς αἰώνιους οἰκίας*). The emphasis of this expression

---

<sup>36</sup>The Manual of Discipline, iv, 25.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., xi, 13f. See here the section "Culmination in Heaven" in the discussion of the kingdom of God as found on pages 49-50.

<sup>38</sup>The Manual of Discipline, ix, 20-23.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., xi, 11f.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., iii, 19-23.

<sup>41</sup>The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness, xii, 3.



referring to heaven is on the *αἰώνιος*, which is in contrast to the uncertain and transitory houses of the debtors. Plummer says: "The combination of 'eternal' with 'tabernacles' is remarkable because *σκηναι* is commonly used of dwellings which are very temporary."<sup>42</sup> In Revelation 13:6, *τὴν σκηνὴν* is used in the sense of God having His dwelling in heaven.<sup>43</sup> At death, the souls of the sons of light are taken to heaven.<sup>44</sup> The term *αἰώνιος σκηνάς* recalls that the kingdom of God is now in our midst, but that it will have its culmination in the "age to come," when the sons of light will "inherit the kingdom prepared" for them from the foundation of the world.<sup>45</sup> In heaven, the sons of light will be privileged to be ever with God and to praise Him with the heavenly hosts. Among the sons of light, the community of God, will be people from the "four corners of the earth."

#### Summary

In the parable of the Unjust Manager, Jesus as the light of the world uses the term "sons of light" to distinguish members of the kingdom from the "sons of this age," the non-members of the kingdom. As we saw in some detail, the Qumran community used the term "sons of

---

<sup>42</sup>Alfred Plummer, "The Gospel According to St. Luke," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, edited by Charles A. Briggs, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), XXVIII, 386.

<sup>43</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, "*σκηνή*," A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c.1957), p. 762.

<sup>44</sup>Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:43; Revelation 14:13.

<sup>45</sup>Matthew 25:34.



light" as a synonym for the community and used various terms similar to "sons of this age" for those who were non-members of the community. As we shall see in greater detail below, this parable speaks of the possibility of losing the status of a son of light, a member of the kingdom, and becoming again a son of this age.

As a parable of the kingdom, the parable of the Unjust Manager has an important message for the sons of light, living in this present age with its enticing temptations also for those who are sons of light.

Like most of them occurring in Luke and devoted to aspects of life in the Kingdom.

Jesus spoke this particular parable for the benefit of His disciples (Lk. 16:1-13), who must have to be understood in the general sense of followers of Jesus rather than in the restricted sense of the Twelve.<sup>1</sup> We should note that the relationship of Jesus to His disciples, His followers, was personal; it was centered in His person. This recalls the previous reference to Mark 4:11, where, by the term "the secret of the Kingdom of God," Jesus Himself is meant. Those who have this "secret of the Kingdom" believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, as we have seen above.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Van Hooker, "The Gospel According to Luke," translated from the Revised German Edition, with additions, original and selected by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Scriven, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Exegetical, and Homiletical, edited by John Peter Lange (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1887), 271, 282. See also Marie Joseph Lagrange, *Évangile de Luc*—*Évangile selon Saint Luc* (Paris: Librairie Lethielleux, 1912), p. 123; William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, "Luk 16:1-13," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 473-74.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 11:17; 12:1-5. See also Luke, pp. 12-13, and *Selected Sermons*, "Luk 16:1-13," *Exegetical, Homiletical and Devotional*, edited by Heinrich Michel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, ca. 1902), 19, 44-46.



## CHAPTER V

### THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST MANAGER

#### The Setting

Jesus and His disciples were traveling about in Perea during His later Perean Ministry when Jesus spoke the parable of the Unjust Manager. This parable is part of what might be called the second cluster of parables, most of them occurring in Luke and devoted to aspects of life in the kingdom.

Jesus spoke this particular parable for the benefit of His disciples (*τοῖς μαθηταῖς*), who must here be understood in the general sense of followers of Jesus rather than in the restricted sense of the Twelve.<sup>1</sup> We should note that the relationship of Jesus to His disciples, His followers, was personal; it was centered in His person. This recalls the previous reference to Mark 4:11, where, by the term "the secret of the kingdom of God," Jesus Himself is meant. Those who have this "secret of the kingdom" believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, as we have seen above.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel According to Luke," translated from the Second German Edition, with additions, original and selected by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical, edited by John Peter Lange (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1869), XVI, 245. See also Marie Joseph Lagrange, Etudes Bibliques--Évangile selon Saint Luc (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1941), p. 430; William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, "*μαθηταῖς*," A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c.1957), pp. 436-37.

<sup>2</sup>John 3:16-17; 6:67-9. See also *supra*, pp.12-14; Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "*μαθηταῖς*," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhardt Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, ca 1942), IV, 444-64.



According to Luke 15:1-2 and 16:14, publicans and sinners and Pharisees and scribes were listening in. Whether some of the former had become followers of Jesus, we are not told. Luke does tell us that they drew near to hear Jesus. Publicans as tax-collectors were social outcasts, because they collected taxes for the Roman government and for Herod Antipas, who ruled over Galilee and Perea. The Jews considered the supremacy of the heathen Romans illegal and presumptuous. This raised the question of the legality of paying tribute to Caesar.<sup>3</sup> Customs collectors were especially despised. According to the Mishnah, people were permitted to lie in order to evade paying revenue to them.<sup>4</sup> Publicans were placed in the same category as robbers.<sup>5</sup> Publicans were also classed with sinners, prostitutes, and heathen.<sup>6</sup> Publicans were thought to be outside of the commonwealth of Israel and not part of God's people. As the Jews envisioned the kingdom of God, publicans had no part in it. But Jesus associated with the publicans. He had accepted some of them as God's people, as members of the kingdom of God. Jesus had even called Matthew, a publican of Capernaum, to become one of

---

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 22:15-22. See also Flavius Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," The Works of Flavius Josephus, translated by William Whiston (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publishers, n.d.), XV, x, 4; XVIII, xxiv; Emil Schuerer, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, translated by John MacPherson (Second and revised edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1916), I, ii, 70; II, ii, 18.

<sup>4</sup>Herbert Danby, translator, The Mishnah, translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 267.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>6</sup>Matthew 9:11; 11:19; 21:31-32; 17:17.



the twelve disciples.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Context of Luke 16:1-13

In Luke 15:2, the Pharisees and scribes murmured against Jesus, "this man receives sinners and eats with them." This was a protest against the claim of Jesus, that He was the Messiah,<sup>8</sup> and, as such, the example of perfect righteousness. In their viewpoint, Jesus' claim and His association with publicans and sinners were incompatible, for these were considered outside of the kingdom of God. To answer these objections, Jesus spoke three parables, which emphasize the "joy in heaven over one sinner that repents." Through repentance, sinners become righteous before God and members of the kingdom of heaven. These parables are an invitation to rejoice that, through Jesus, the righteous God makes it possible for sinners to enter into fellowship with Him and to cover their unrighteousness with His righteousness. Since the Pharisees and scribes did not have the "secret of the kingdom," these parables remained enigmatic for them and served to harden their hearts more against Jesus.<sup>9</sup>

In the third parable, Jesus spoke about the younger son who had squandered (Σικεσκόπησεν) that part of the property of his father, which he had prematurely demanded and received as his share of the

---

<sup>7</sup>Matthew 9:9-13; 10:3; 11:19; 21:31-32; Luke 7:29; 18:9-14.

<sup>8</sup>Luke 5:29-32.

<sup>9</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "Das Evangelium nach Lukas," Das Neue Testament Deutsch, edited by Paul Althaus und Johannes Bahm (5. neu-bearbeitete Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), III, 178.



inheritance. The older son reminded his father that he had spent his years working to protect and to increase his father's possessions, while "this son of yours" had wasted his inheritance, which had been part of his father's possessions. In the reply of the father, Jesus had some very pertinent and yet very harsh words to speak to the Pharisees and scribes.

In the following parable of the Unjust Manager Jesus continued speaking about the proper use of possessions. Here Jesus uses again the word "to squander" (σκατοκοπιεῖν); this term provides the connection between the two parables. Although the parable of the Unjust Manager was spoken for the benefit of Jesus' followers, Jesus did have much to say to the Pharisees and scribes in this parable and in its application.

The Pharisees and scribes reacted against Jesus. Luke tells us: "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him."<sup>10</sup> In Luke 20:47, Jesus accused the Pharisees of devouring widows' houses. The Pharisees felt that God always rewarded virtue on earth, and especially with money. Wealth came to be regarded as a sign of divine favour, and a reward for virtue. This view provided a fine cloak for avarice.<sup>11</sup>

The publicans and sinners presumably also heard what Jesus said to the disciples. The methods of the manager, especially as these will be developed below, were familiar to them. This would be especially

---

<sup>10</sup>Luke 16:14.

<sup>11</sup>Marie Joseph Lagrange, The Gospels of Jesus Christ (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1938), II, 70-71.



true of those who were collectors of custom, for custom collectors were under contract to pay the Roman government or, in the case of Galilee and Perea, Herod Antipas, a fixed fee and were permitted to keep all they could exact beyond this amount as their own fee.<sup>12</sup>

#### Varying Views on Luke 16:9-13

Jesus gives the central thought of the parable of Luke 16:1-13 in verse 9 and elaborates on this thought in verses 10-13. Before developing this, however, it should be noted that for some men verses 9-13 present a problem. They feel that the parable itself ended with verse 7 and that in verse 8 Jesus gives His verdict.<sup>13</sup> Juelicher feels that verse 8 does not fully reflect the verdict of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Others feel that this verse was added by an editor whose material Luke used in writing this Gospel.<sup>15</sup>

Juelicher feels that verse 9 was added by someone unknown, who was unmindful of the difficulty this would cause the traditional interpretation of verse 8. Juelicher terms verse 10 a maxim. He thinks that

<sup>12</sup>Luke 3:12-13; 19:1-10.

<sup>13</sup>The identification of *ὁ κύριος* and its bearing on verse 8 will be discussed in detail in the exegesis of verse 8 below.

<sup>14</sup>Adolf Juelicher, "Auslegung der Gleichnisreden der Drei Ersten Evangelien," Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (Zweite, neu bearbeitete Auflage--zweiter Abdruck; Tübingen: J. G. B. Mohr, 1910), II, 512.

<sup>15</sup>Burton Scott Easton, The Gospel According to St. Luke--A Critical and Exegetical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 244. See also Burnett Hillman Streeter, "VIII. Proto-Luke," The Four Gospels (Fourth impression, revised; London: MacMillan & Co., 1930), pp. 199-222; and S. MacLean Gilmour, "Introduction," "The Gospel According to St. Luke," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1952), VIII, 1-26.



Luke added verses 11-12 to safeguard the interpretation of verses 1-9. In Juelicher's view, these two verses fit well after verse 9. Verse 13 is considered an isolated logion, conveniently placed in its present position, even though originally it was not found in this context. Both Juelicher and Easton reject the suggestion of B. Weiss that these verses at one time followed the parable of the Talents.<sup>16</sup>

Those who hold the view of form criticism also have difficulty with verses 9-13. Form criticism holds that, in studying the Gospels, one must always remember the influence of the primitive Church in the transmission of the Gospels. One must, for example, keep in mind the original historical setting when Jesus spoke the parables and the later situation of the primitive Church. According to this view, a strong tendency was at work in the primitive Church to shift the audience. Parables which Jesus had spoken to a mixed crowd or to opponents were changed to fit the early Christian community. In this shift of audience, the emphasis of the parables was changed to meet the needs of the primitive Church. The warning or threatening nature of the emphasis of the parables is conjectured to have been changed to one of a hortatory nature.<sup>17</sup> F. C. Grant states

---

<sup>16</sup>Juelicher, op. cit., pp. 512-14; Easton, op. cit., p. 246.

<sup>17</sup>See Martin Dibelius, Form Tradition to Gospel, translated from revised second edition of Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums by Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935). See also Vincent Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition (London: MacMillan & Co., 1935); Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, translated by S. H. Hooke from the third German edition (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1955), pp. 20-31.



The concluding verses [of a parable] sometimes read like the notes of an early church preacher or teacher, who used the parables for Christian indoctrination and exhortation.<sup>18</sup>

According to the view of form criticism, the parable of Luke 16: 1-13 was affected by this trend in the primitive Church. To the original parable of verses 1-8, emphasizing the resolute behavior of the manager in time of crisis, verses 9-13 were added to give instruction to the members of the primitive Church on the wise and efficient use of money and other possessions (verse 9). The logion of verses 10-12 warns against the grave danger of an unwise, unfaithful use of money and possessions, thereby guarding against any misunderstanding of the parable. The closing verse summons man to decide between God and mammon.<sup>19</sup>

Before evaluating these views, it is necessary that we consider Luke's testimony as found in Luke 1:1-4. In his classical preface, dedicated to Theophilus, Luke sets forth certain facts about his purpose for writing his account of the life and work of Christ and describes his research in order to present a historically accurate document. Luke's purpose is that Theophilus may more fully understand the certainty of the things in which he has been instructed. The term

*ἐπιγινώσκω* means "know exactly, know completely or through and

---

<sup>18</sup>Frederick C. Grant, "A New Book on the Parables," Anglican Theological Review, XXX, 2 (April, 1948), 120.

<sup>19</sup>Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 31-36. See also Walter Russell Bowie et al., "Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1952), VIII, 283; C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (Revised; London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1950), pp. 21ff.



through."<sup>20</sup> ἀσφαλεία means "truth, certainty."<sup>21</sup> This term has the most emphatic position in the sequence. To translate it as "certainty" would seem best.<sup>22</sup> Theophilus is to know that the Christian faith has an impregnable, historical foundation, not based on speculation or inaccurate tradition.<sup>23</sup> This is the purpose for which Luke wrote on the basis of careful investigation.

In verse 1, Luke informs us that many had undertaken to write what eyewitnesses had proclaimed about the life and message of Jesus. Luke tells us only that the many (πολλοί) were not eyewitnesses. He indicates that the scope of their writings was similar to what he was contemplating.<sup>24</sup>

Before speaking of the relationship between Luke and the eyewitnesses, we should hear what Luke tells us about his method of research. Luke tells us that he has investigated everything very carefully from the beginning. He uses the term παρακολουθήσει. Literally this word means "to follow" and then, "to follow, trace or investigate a thing."<sup>25</sup> Combined with ἄνωθεν, it means "follow from the beginning."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "ἐπιγινώσκω," op. cit., pp. 290-91.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., "ἀσφαλεία," p. 118.

<sup>22</sup>William F. Arndt, Bible Commentary--The Gospel According to St. Luke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1956), p. 41.

<sup>23</sup>Alfred Flummer, "The Gospel According to St. Luke," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, edited by Charles A. Briggs, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), XXVIII, 5.

<sup>24</sup>Arndt, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>25</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "παρακολουθῶ," op. cit., p. 624.

<sup>26</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "ἄνωθεν," op. cit., p. 76.



To this, Luke adds *πᾶν*. He stresses that he investigated everything, going back to the announcement of the birth of the Forerunner, as we know from the Gospel according to Luke. Luke adds the term *ἀκριβῶς*, which emphasizes that this was done carefully, accurately, precisely.<sup>27</sup> His use of *Σαούλ* for "Saul, Saul" in the conversion account of Saul indicates his precision. In other references to Saul, he uses the Greek form *Σάουλος*, but here, in the direct speech of the voice from heaven, he uses *Σαούλ*, a transliteration of the Aramaic name since Jesus spoke Aramaic.<sup>28</sup> Luke further says in Luke 1:3 that he proposes to present his account of the life and work of Christ in an orderly fashion. He presents his account in a general chronological framework, beginning with the announcement of the birth of the Forerunner and continuing to the ascension of Jesus, on the basis of painstaking research.

Although Luke himself was not an eyewitness, he had very good opportunities to consult eyewitnesses to learn from them directly and also to check the accuracy of the existing accounts. As the companion of Paul, Luke had much opportunity to hear Paul, who had seen the risen Christ,<sup>29</sup> and had rather frequent contacts with the Apostles and the early Christians. Acts 21:18 indicates that Luke met James the Less. Luke may have been in Antioch when Peter was rebuked by Paul.<sup>30</sup> Colossians 4:10-14 and Philemon 23-24 indicate that Luke was acquainted

---

<sup>27</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "*ἀκριβῶς*," *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>28</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "*Σαούλ*," *op. cit.*, p. 749; Acts 9:14; 26:14.

<sup>29</sup>1 Corinthians 9:1.

<sup>30</sup>Galatians 2:11ff.



with Mark. Luke evidently also knew Barnabas. He traveled with Silas, another companion of Paul.<sup>31</sup> At Caesarea, at the close of the Third Missionary Journey, Luke met Philip the Evangelist and Agabus, a prophet.<sup>32</sup> Arriving at Jerusalem, Luke stayed with an "early disciple" named Mnason of Cyprus, and was received with Paul by the church at Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> While in Jerusalem and later for two years with Paul at Caesarea, Luke had many opportunities to speak to eyewitnesses, to question them, and to check the accuracy of the extant writings and oral reports. That Luke carefully checked everything is indicated in the preface of Luke 1:1-4.

Both the Acts and the Gospel according to Luke attest that Luke was a historian of rank.<sup>34</sup> Ramsay comments:

Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense; he fixes his mind on the idea and plan that rules in the evolution of history; and proportions the scale of his treatment to the importance of each incident. He seizes the important and critical events and shows their true nature at greater length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely much that was valueless for his purpose. In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.<sup>35</sup>

To summarize, Luke tells us that many had undertaken to draw up an

---

<sup>31</sup>Acts 15:22,27,32.

<sup>32</sup>Acts 21:8,10.

<sup>33</sup>Acts 21:16-17.

<sup>34</sup>Arndt, *op. cit.*, p. 28. See also Plummer, *op. cit.*, pp. xlvi-viii; A. T. Robertson, Luke the Historian in the Light of Research (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).

<sup>35</sup>W. M. Ramsay, The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament (Fourth edition; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920), p. 222.



account of what eyewitnesses had told them about the life and message of Christ. Luke himself, after talking with eyewitnesses and checking the accuracy of written accounts and oral reports, wrote down in an orderly fashion his account of the life and work of Christ. Luke's purpose is that Theophilus and others who read his account will be more firmly convinced of the certainty (*ἀρβἀλεια*) of their faith and its historical foundation. On the basis of careful research and by divine inspiration, Luke wrote a faithful account which we know today as the Gospel according to St. Luke.

Before evaluating the views described above, we should note that the basic and decisive evidence is that given us by Luke. We have noted Luke's purpose and careful method of research in order to give a faithful account in his Gospel. Plummer observes:

This prologue contains all that we really know respecting the composition of early narratives of the life of Christ, and it is the test by which theories as to the origin of our Gospels must be judged. No hypothesis is likely to be right which does not harmonize with what is told us here. Moreover, it shows that an inspired writer felt that he was bound to use research and care in order to secure accuracy.<sup>36</sup>

Now to return to the views of Juelicher that verse 9 was added by someone unknown and that Luke added verses 11-12 to safeguard verses 1-8. In his preface, Luke speaks of his careful research involving actual eyewitnesses, preparatory to writing his Gospel narrative in order to present a faithful account, so as to assure Theophilus of the certainty of his faith and its historical foundation. Luke indicates that Jesus spoke this parable as we have it in verses 1-13. Whereas Jesus' words

---

<sup>36</sup>Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 2.



are given in indirect speech in verse 8, beginning with verse 9 through 13, we have the words of Jesus in direct speech. Plummer emphasizes that the words of Luke must be considered decisive.

Juelicher feels that Luke could not have written verse 9, because of the difficulty this would create for verse 8. Although traditionally considered difficult, verse 8 need not be, as will be pointed out in detail below in the discussion of the manager's action to solve his dilemma.<sup>37</sup>

Juelicher finds difficulty with the thought sequence of the verse in question. He considers verse 10 a maxim, more or less tacked on. Verses 11-12 in his view fit with verse 8. The closing verse is termed an isolated logion, conveniently tacked on.

Reading again the parable as recorded by Luke brings out the following: First of all, in verse 8, Jesus praised the prudence of the manager. Sacrificing his own gain, the manager makes a wise and sacrificial use of his goods to provide for himself in the future. Jesus adds that prudence in dealing with their own kind is characteristic of the sons of this age. Secondly, in verse 9, Jesus is quoted in direct speech. He urges His hearers to make a God-pleasing, wise use of their possessions. Thirdly, in verses 10-12, Jesus urges that the attitude toward money and possessions is extremely important. We must realize, that all of our possessions are actually a loan from God, to whom we must give an account. Next, Jesus emphasizes that how we handle our earthly possessions has a very direct bearing on our spiritual well-being. Fourthly, in the final verse, Jesus states categorically that

---

<sup>37</sup>Infra, pp. 115-19.



singleness in service is decisive; we can serve only God or our possessions, not both at the same time. The economic status of a *Sōdos* allowed for no part-time job with others. As recorded by Luke, Jesus makes a cohesive, smooth-flowing application, detailing the specific meaning of this parable for those who have the secret of the kingdom.

Before passing on to another difficulty presented by Juellicher's view, we should recall that the manuscripts have the parable as we know it in Luke 16:1-13.

Juellicher's view presents another difficulty. Each supposition of an editorial construction allows other suppositions equally as valid. All of such suppositions, however, are inferior to the present structure of the parable as found in the primary evidence of Luke as is emphasized by Plummer above.<sup>38</sup>

We must also note the view of those who feel that verses 1-8 represent the original parable and that verses 9-13 represent a later, hortatory addition by the primitive Church to meet its specific needs. This view changes the basic evidence as recorded by Luke. Luke records all of Luke 16:1-13 as the parable spoken by Jesus Himself, whereas form criticism describes verses 9-13 as an addition of the primitive Church. Dr. Aradt points out:

Unfortunately, in Form Criticism, speculation takes on a destructive character, because the trustworthiness of the accounts which we possess in the Gospels is largely challenged. The research is conducted with much learning, it is true; but its chief means is a lively fancy. What is really known, the importance of the role played by Apostles like Peter, James, and John, the teaching

---

<sup>38</sup>See the comments of Adolf Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthaeus: seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbstständigkeit (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinbuchhandlung, 1929), p. xi.



which they engaged in day in, day out, the constant repetition of the story of Jesus on the part of the first ambassadors of Christ as they went from one community to the other, are factors which in this sort of speculation are largely submerged.<sup>39</sup>

Dr. Albright comments on the extensive disagreements between the leading exponents of form criticism<sup>40</sup> and observes:

only modern scholars who lack both historical method and perspective can spin such a web of speculation as that with which form-criticism have surrounded the Gospel tradition. The sureness with which early Christian leaders distinguished between normative and aberrant sayings of Jesus becomes very clear when we analyze the so-called agrapha, or apocryphal logia, collected from extant and from recently excavated documents. The agrapha generally express gnostic or antinomian ideas which are foreign to the Gospels . . . .<sup>41</sup>

We should note another fact. The words of Jesus as found in verses 9-13 had a direct bearing for all of His hearers. Although Jesus spoke this parable for the benefit of His disciples, among His hearers were publicans and sinners, also Pharisees and scribes. The Gospels indicate, and history records that tax-collectors or publicans were guilty of extortion for the sake of gain. Money often managed them and made them servants of mammon. Verse 14 records the effect of this parable on the Pharisees, whom Luke describes as lovers of money. The Bible provides abundant evidence that the love of money has been a problem through the centuries: it was a problem in the time of the Old Testament; it was a

---

<sup>39</sup>Arndt, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>40</sup>William Foxwell Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity--Monotheism and the Historical Process (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), p. 293. See also Dibelius, op. cit.; Taylor, op. cit.; William Manson, Jesus the Messiah--The Synoptic Tradition of the Revelation of God in Christ: with Special Reference to Form Criticism (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1952).

<sup>41</sup>Albright, op. cit., p. 298.



problem in the time of the Christ; it was a problem in the time of the primitive Church; it is still a problem today!

Jesus recognized this problem of money, not only in this parable, but in the preceding and in that which followed.<sup>42</sup> Jesus talked about money and its wrong and unwise use at other times during His ministry, notably also in His sermon on the mount. Luke records rather frequently the comments of Jesus on money and wealth.

To summarize, Luke carefully describes in Luke 1:1-4 his purpose and method of research before proceeding to record his faithful account of the life and work of Jesus in his Gospel narrative. Plummer underlines, as quoted above, that the words of Luke must be considered the primary and basic evidence. Evaluating the various views on Luke 16:9-13 in the light of the above evidence results in the conclusion that these verses were part of the original parable of Jesus and were spoken by Him.

#### The Central Thought of the Parable

Jesus gives the central thought of the parable of the Unjust Manager in verse 9, and elaborates on this thought in verses 10-13. We may express it in this way, "Use your earthly means wisely and sacrificially in order to provide benefits for yourselves in the life to come!" Jesus refers to the prudence of the manager in solving his dilemma. Jesus urges that we use the same prudence to make a wise use of money. The matter of a sacrificial use of money is also part of the picture. As we shall see below, the manager made a substantial sacrifice in reducing

---

<sup>42</sup>Luke 15:11-32; 16:19-31.



the amount due from the various debtors. A wise use of money involves a sacrifice in sharing with God what He has given us. Jesus emphasizes that we are only managers or trustees of our possessions. We must manage well the possessions God has given us in trust; our possessions must not manage us! The central thought and its development in verses 10-13 will be discussed in greater detail below.

#### Translation

Then He (Jesus) went on to say to His disciples: There was a rich man who had a manager, and the latter was accused of squandering his possessions. He summoned him and said, "Why do I hear this about you? Give an account of your office, for you can no longer be manager!"

Then the manager said within himself, "What shall I do, because my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; to beg I am ashamed!" "I've got it! I know what I shall do, so that, when I am removed from office, people will receive me into their homes."

So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first one, "How much do you owe my master?" He answered, "One hundred measures of olive oil." The manager said to him, "Take your bill, sit down, and quickly write 'fifty.'" Then he asked another, "How much do you owe?" "A hundred measures of grain," he answered. "Take your bill and write 'eighty.'"

The Lord praised the dishonest manager, because he had acted prudently. -- For the sons of this age are wiser toward their own type of people than the sons of light.

And so I say to you, "Make for yourselves friends with the unrighteous mammon, so that, when it fails, God may receive you into the eternal tents. He who is faithful in what is very little is faithful also in what is much; and he who is dishonest in what is very little is dishonest also in what is much. Therefore, if you have not been faithful in your handling of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust you with the genuine riches? But if you have not been faithful in that which belongs to someone else, who will give you that which is ours? No one can serve two masters; for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will cling to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon!"



## Exegetical Study

## Verse 1

"Ἐδεγεν δὲ καὶ , "Then He (Jesus) went on to say . . ."

connects the parable of the Unjust Manager with the preceding parable of the Prodigal Son, so that the parables of Luke 15 and 16 form part of one discourse. The manager is accused of squandering; the prodigal son was guilty of the same. The term "squandering" carries through in both parables. The word *διασκορπιῖν* is descriptive. It means "to squander or scatter abroad." In Matthew 25:24,26, this word is used for winnowing.<sup>43</sup>

*οἰκονόμος* , "manager," a free man who served as manager of the landowner's estate.<sup>44</sup>

*διαβῆθαι* < *διαβάλλω* , the root meaning is "to bring apart," "to divide, to separate"; Foerster feels that the element of slander need not enter in.<sup>45</sup> "Malice need not be assumed in Lk 16<sup>1</sup> any more than falsehood."<sup>46</sup> Arndt and Gingrich feel it means to "bring about change with hostile intent, even if charge is just."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "*διασκορπιῖν* ," op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>44</sup>Juelicher, op. cit., p. 496. See also Otto Michel, "*οἰκονομία, -μος* ," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d.), V, 152.

<sup>45</sup>Werner Foerster, "*διαβάλλω* ," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935), II, 70.

<sup>46</sup>James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, "*διαβάλλω* ," The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949), p. 146.

<sup>47</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "*διαβάλλω* ," op. cit., p. 130.



ὡς indicates that the following participle is part of the accusation.

τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, "property, possession." A careful check of passages listed in the various lexicons indicates no distinction between property and real estate. τὰ ὑπάρχοντα is equal in meaning to the intensive ὄντα, "that which is to me."<sup>48</sup> This general meaning is supported by the Septuagint and its Hebrew equivalents.<sup>49</sup>

#### Verse Two

ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας σου, "give an account of your management!"<sup>50</sup>

#### Verse Three

σκάπτειν οὐκ ἴσχύω, ἐπαιτεῖν ἀισχύρομαι are the two alternatives open to the manager. Because of the circumstances of his dismissal, he could hardly expect to get a position similar to the one he was being forced to vacate. A real dilemma confronts him as to his future.

#### Verse Four

ἔγρω, dramatic scrist in the sense of "I have it!" A ray

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., "ὑπάγω," p. 845. See also Moulton-Milligan, "ὑπάγω," op. cit., pp. 650-51; Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, a new edition revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 1853-854.

<sup>49</sup>Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament including the Apocryphal Books (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), II, 1406-407.

<sup>50</sup>Infra, pp. 113-15.



of light has just penetrated into the darkness of the dilemma as to what the manager should do after his dismissal. Now he knows what to do, at least for the immediate future!

Σέξωνται, "they" must be supplied from verses 5-7, where, by reducing their debts or lease obligations as we shall see below, the manager places the debtors under obligation to himself.

#### Verse Five

χρεοφειδῶν/χρέος, "loan, debt," and ὀφειλέτης, "debtor." This interesting word is used only twice in the New Testament, here and in Luke 7:41. The meaning underscores "debtors."

τῷ πρῶτῳ and ἑτέρῳ will be discussed in greater detail below.

#### Verse Six

Βάτους, bath, a Hebrew liquid measure, containing approximately nine gallons.<sup>51</sup> Plummer suggests the exact figure of 8 3/4 gallons for the bath.<sup>52</sup> Jeremias suggests around eight gallons.<sup>53</sup>

τὰ γράμματα, the bill or lease contract. This, together with the χρεοφειδῶν will be discussed in greater detail below.

---

<sup>51</sup>A. R. S. Kennedy, "Weights and Measures," A Dictionary of the Bible, dealing with its Language, Literature and Contents, including the Biblical Theology, edited by James Hastings, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), IV, 912.

<sup>52</sup>Plummer, op. cit., p. 355.

<sup>53</sup>Jeremias, op. cit., p. 127.



## Verse Seven

$\kappa\acute{o}\pi\upsilon\sigma$  , a Hebrew Measure of approximately eleven bushels.<sup>54</sup> Jeremias suggests ten bushels.<sup>55</sup>

## Verse Eight

$\delta \kappa\acute{o}\pi\upsilon\sigma$  , "the lord." The identification of  $\delta \kappa\acute{o}\pi\upsilon\sigma$  has caused much difficulty. There are those who feel that it refers to Jesus. Among them, Juelicher and Jeremias feel that the parable as recorded in Luke is not the original parable. It is conjectured that the parable as such may have ended with verse seven, and that Jesus gives His judgment in verse eight. The remaining verses are considered a "join" or a later addition of the "primitive Church."<sup>56</sup>

B. T. D. Smith feels that  $\delta \kappa\acute{o}\pi\upsilon\sigma$  refers to the employer if there was at one time a break at verse nine. If not, then Christ is meant. Seemingly Smith prefers this latter view. Possibly "to get around" having Jesus commend unethical prudence, he suggests that the parable was addressed to the unconverted.<sup>57</sup> Montefiore, likewise, feels that "in the source" Jesus was "the lord" who praised the manager simply for being so clever.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup>Kennedy, op. cit.

<sup>55</sup>Jeremias, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-36; Juelicher, op. cit., pp. 503-4.

<sup>57</sup>B. T. D. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels--A Critical Study (New York: MacMillan Co., 1937), pp. 109-10.

<sup>58</sup>C. G. Montefiore, The Synoptic Gospels, Edited with an Introduction and a Commentary (Second revised edition; New York: MacMillan & Co., 1927), I, 528-29.



Some commentators identify "the lord" with the master of the manager, but, in explaining the side remark of Jesus as he speaks the parable, go to some lengths to erase any possibility that Jesus in verse 8b compliments what, according to their Occidental interpretation of the manager's action, constituted larceny.<sup>59</sup> As we shall see below, a study of the social conditions of Jesus' day removes the difficulties imposed on this parable by the traditional, Occidental interpretation.

Wherever Luke uses *ὁ Κύριος* in his Gospel, he uses this term to refer to Christ. This is true also of its use here in verse 8. Seemingly because of the traditional, Occidental interpretation, this passage is omitted in listings of Luke's use of *ὁ Κύριος*.<sup>60</sup> We should note that Luke reports the comment of Jesus in indirect speech and in the following verses reports Jesus' interpretation of the meaning of the parable in direct speech.

τὸν ὀκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας, Hebraism, a descriptive genitive.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Theodor Zahn, "Das Evangelium des Lucas," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Dritte u. vierte durchgesehene Auflage; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1920), III, 572-73. See also Rengstorff, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>60</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "*Κύριος*," op. cit., p. 460. See also Werner Foerster, "*Κύριος* . . . 3. Jesus der Herr," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938), III, 1092; and Hermann Gremer, "*Κύριος*," Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, translated from the German of the second edition with additional matter and corrections by Wm. Urwick (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878), p. 383.

<sup>61</sup>Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch (Neunte Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), p. 109, sec. 165,1; p. 110, sec. 165.



The first ὅτι may be considered causal. Gaechter considers this ὅτι a hoti recitativum, which would put φρονίμως ἐποίησας into direct speech: "He has acted prudently."<sup>62</sup> Since both of these explanations give the reason for the Lord's praise, both are possible.

φρονίμως, used only here in the New Testament.<sup>63</sup> Zahn makes reference to Matthew 10:16 and suggests "serpentine wisdom" ("Schlangenklugheit").<sup>64</sup>

οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, "sons of this age." Expressions such as this and that following

are explained by Winer Luenemann as 'Hebrew-like circumlocution, which however is no mere idle circumlocution, but is due to the more vivid imagination of the oriental, who looked upon any very intimate relationship--whether of connection, origin or dependence--as a relation of sonship, even in the spiritual sphere.'<sup>65</sup>

Deissman strongly feels that such expressions should not be looked upon necessarily as Hebraisms, but rather at most as "Hebraism of translation" and that not in every case, since υἱός is found in a number of formal titles of honor in inscriptions and on coins.<sup>66</sup>

οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, "sons of this age." We would

---

<sup>62</sup>Paul Gaechter, "The Parable of the Dishonest Steward after Oriental Conceptions," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XII, 2 (April, 1950), 130.

<sup>63</sup>Aradt-Gingrich, "φρονίμως," op. cit., p. 874.

<sup>64</sup>Zahn, op. cit., pp. 572-73.

<sup>65</sup>Adolf Deissmann, Bible Studies--Contributions chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity, translated by Alexander Grieve (2nd edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), p. 161.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 162-66. Supra, pp. 54-57.



say "worldling." Strack-Billerbeck inform us that this term was not used by the rabbis, even though "sons of the coming age" in the sense of "one who will have eternal life" is frequent.<sup>67</sup>

ἐὶς τὴν γενεὰν τὴν ἑαυτῶν, "in relation to their own clan (i.e. people of their own kind)."<sup>68</sup> The worldling knows how to treat his own kind of people, how to manage them and use them for his own purpose.<sup>69</sup>

#### Verse Nine

ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ, Genitive of source; μαμωνᾶ in form is a Doric Genitive with the ablative singular ᾶ.<sup>70</sup>  $\aleph \quad \zeta \quad \eta \quad \theta \quad \rho$  is derived from  $\eta \theta \rho$  (  $\aleph \quad \zeta \quad \eta \quad \theta \quad \rho$ , the emphatic state), which is again derived from  $\eta \theta \rho$ .<sup>71</sup> Although it seems to signify that "in which one trusts," some feel that it means "things deposited." It became the term used for money and is used as such in the Targums.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup>Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, "Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas, und Johannes u. die Apostelgeschichte, erläutert aus Talmud u. Midrasch," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen: G. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), II, 219. Supra, pp. 57-59 for discussion of such terms as "sons of darkness," "sons of error," "men of destruction" occurring in the Dead Sea scrolls.

<sup>68</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "γενεά," op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>69</sup>Zahn, op. cit., p. 574.

<sup>70</sup>A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (4th edition, revised; New York: George H. Doran Co., c.1923), p. 254.

<sup>71</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "μαμωνᾶς," op. cit., p. 491; Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti Revised and Enlarged (Corrected edition; Chicago: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 388.

<sup>72</sup>Arndt, op. cit., p. 357.



μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας , "mammon of unrighteousness" or "unrighteous mammon," genitive of definition;<sup>73</sup> Blass-Debrunner consider it a "descriptive genitive."<sup>74</sup> It is not termed "unrighteous," because this is an inherent characteristic of money or wealth. It is termed "unrighteous mammon," because money too often becomes the master rather than that man is the master of his wealth. Strack-Billerbeck feel that mammon is described as unrighteous, when it is acquired or used in a sinful manner.<sup>75</sup> "Wealth is commonly a snare and tends to promote unrighteousness."<sup>76</sup>

The statement frequently made that "mammon of unrighteousness" was a current phrase is misleading. It is true that we find phrases like "mammon of dishonesty," but not as descriptive of all wealth --only of wealth dishonestly or unrighteously acquired.<sup>77</sup>

ὅταν ἐκλίπῃ , "when it (wealth) fails" (at death), an event in the indefinite future but definite as an event.

δοῦναι , "they may receive you." To whom does "they" refer? This has been variously answered. The usual and almost universal suggestion is that "they" refers back to φίλους , friends who are made by a wise and sacrificial use of mammon. How is this done? By investing a part of our income in charitable endeavors. Those who have been brought to faith, and those who have been helped will testify to God

---

<sup>73</sup>C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 38.

<sup>74</sup>Blass-Debrunner, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>75</sup>Strack-Billerbeck, op. cit., p. 220.

<sup>76</sup>Plummer, op. cit., p. 385.

<sup>77</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 111.



that their benefactors have shown themselves children of God by their conduct. Because of such evidence of faith, God will receive the benefactors into the heavenly mansions, where those who have been helped will welcome them.<sup>78</sup> If we translate  $\delta\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\tau\alpha\iota$  as "they may receive you," the word takes on the meaning of "welcome." One should then translate, "they may welcome you."<sup>79</sup>

The "they" of  $\delta\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\tau\alpha\iota$  may have another meaning. The "they" refers back to God. Strack-Billerbeck emphasize that a construction designed to circumvent the pronunciation of God's name is frequent in the rabbinical writings and conclude that this is true also in the case of  $\delta\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ .<sup>80</sup> Jeremias concurs with this conclusion.<sup>81</sup> A similar construction is found in Luke 12:20, in the verb  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\iota\tau\omega\sigma\iota\tau\iota$ ; here it is God who calls back the soul of the rich fool. The present writer feels that God is meant as the subject of  $\delta\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ . It is God who will receive into heaven those who, in faith, make a wise and sacrificial use of their earthly possessions. This is in harmony with Matthew 25:40, where Christ says: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." Although those who have been benefited may welcome their benefactors, it is God who receives them into the eternal tents. The meaning of this verse will be developed in greater detail below.

---

<sup>78</sup>Plummer, op. cit., pp. 385-86; See also Arndt, op. cit., pp. 357-58; Zahn, op. cit., pp. 576-77.

<sup>79</sup>Moule, op. cit., p. 28; See also Arndt-Gingrich, " $\delta\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ ," op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>80</sup>Strack-Billerbeck, op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>81</sup>Jeremias, op. cit., p. 34.



## Verse Ten

ὁ πιστός , "he who is faithful," is equal to ὁ ὤν πιστός .  
 ἑλαχίστω , "in a very little," "in which is very little,"  
 since the superlative does not have an article, it has the meaning of  
 the elative.<sup>82</sup>

## Verse Eleven

τὸ ἀληθινόν , "genuine," "real," "true."<sup>83</sup> μαμωνᾶς  
 is masculine; ἀληθινόν is neuter. These two terms are to be con-  
 sidered opposites. Mammon is transitory and fleeting, untrustworthy  
 and deceitful. The true riches are trustworthy and eternal, spiritual  
 and heavenly. The thought is that if we put too high a value on  
 transitory mammon (earthly possessions), we have no interest in nor do  
 we truly care for the heavenly treasures. This means that we are not  
 true believers.<sup>84</sup>

## Verse Twelve

ἐν τῷ ἀλλοτριῷ , "in that which is not yours," "that  
 which belongs to another." Montefiore suggests: "but in Luke's inter-  
 pretation, we must render it 'that which is not your own,' 'that which  
 does not really belong to you.'<sup>85</sup> These words recall the words of

<sup>82</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "ἑλαχίστος" , op. cit., p. 243.

<sup>83</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "ἀληθινός" , op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>84</sup>Arndt, op. cit., pp. 353-59; Plummer, op. cit., p. 386. See  
 Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 248.

<sup>85</sup>Montefiore, op. cit., p. 532.



David as recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:14. God, as it were, loans us money. We are managers of it and must give an account as to how we have used it. In the words of verse 10, money is ἐλαχίστη. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

ἡμέτερον . This reading is supported by BL and Origin. Tertullian has meum. The ὑμέτερον reading is attested by ΝΑΔΡΚΧΠΔΥ etc. Since B is the most important manuscript, and the reading of ἡμέτερον is more difficult than ὑμέτερον, the former seems to be the more probable reading.<sup>86</sup>

In this verse, Jesus continues the antithetical parallelism. The transitory mammon He terms "that which belongs to someone else," that which is only on loan. The abiding "true riches" Jesus terms "ours." These spiritual, heavenly riches become ours through Christ. But Luke indicates that if we do not use well that which is on loan to us, we will not receive that which should be "ours." They cannot be ours, because we are then not believers who receive these riches through Christ.<sup>87</sup>

#### Verse Thirteen

οἰκέτης is a household servant; δουλεύειν means "serve, obey, perform the duties of a slave."<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup>Plummer, op. cit., p. 387. See also Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, editors, Novum Testamentum Graece cum apparatu critico (17th edition; Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1941), p. 199.

<sup>87</sup>Arndt, op. cit., p. 359; Rengstorff, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>88</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "δουλεύω," op. cit., p. 204.



ἀνθέξεται ἅντ' ἔχω, "cling to, be devoted to," in the middle only in "our literature."<sup>89</sup>

οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεῦειν καὶ μαμμωνᾷ emphasizes that only singleness of purpose in service is possible. We either serve God through our use of money or serve money as our good. "It is precisely this service of Mammon which stands in the way of its true use, that use which redounds to the glory of God."<sup>90</sup> Jesus demonstrates that dual service is impossible. First, He points to the emotions: either God or mammon will be loved more than the other; it is impossible to love each in the same measure. Then, He refers to the evaluation by the intellect: it is only possible to honor one more than the other; it is not possible to give the same amount of honor to both.<sup>91</sup> Although not expressed here, it is God who expects to be loved and honored above everyone or everything else.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup>Arndt-Gingrich, "ἅντ' ἔχω," *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>90</sup>Van Osterzee, *op. cit.*, p. 248. See also Matthew 6:24.

<sup>91</sup>Arndt, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

<sup>92</sup>Luke 14:26.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SETTING OF THE PARABLE

In His parables, Jesus shows His intimate knowledge of life and of nature. He draws rapid, vivid, and sympathetic sketches of the common life of men with an unerring instinct for the essential points to bring out the truth in His teaching. Only Jesus' parables give an idea of the life and manners of a small estate on the confines of the Roman empire, as they appeared to persons living in that society.<sup>1</sup> Herz emphasizes that Jesus was well acquainted not only with the life of those who farmed small plots of ground, but also with life on large estates.<sup>2</sup> From the parables of Jesus, we have perhaps a more complete picture of petit-bourgeois and peasant life than we have for any other province of the Roman Empire except of Egypt, where the papyri come to our help.<sup>3</sup>

#### Estates and the Mosaic Law

In this parable, as well as in others, Jesus makes reference to wealth which, wholly or in part, was based on the possession of land. Jesus draws on this phase of life about Him to illustrate a definite

---

<sup>1</sup>E. S. Bouchier, Syria as a Roman Province (Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, 1916), p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Johannes Herz, "Groszgrundbesitz in Palaestina im Zeitalter Jesu," Palaestina-Jahrbuch des Deutschen evangelischen Instituts fuer Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem, edited by Albrecht Alt (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Son, 1928), XXIV, 101-2.

<sup>3</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (Revised; London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1950), pp. 18-21.



point He wishes to make on His hearers, to drive home a spiritual lesson.

The question has been asked, "Did God not provide a safeguard in the Mosaic laws, so that land would stay within the relationship or at least within the tribe, and would this not have prevented the formation of large estates?" This is true. Centuries before at Sinai, God did make such provisions in the Mosaic law.

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the country you possess, you shall grant a redemption of the land. . . . But if he has not sufficient means to get back for himself, then what he sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until the year of jubilee; in the jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his property.<sup>4</sup>

In delineating the law regarding the inheritance of land, God said:

The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another; for every one of the people of Israel shall cleave to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.<sup>5</sup>

When Boaz bought the field of Naomi, it was in keeping with God's landlaw.<sup>6</sup> When Naboth refused to sell his field to King Ahab, he was obedient to this law of God.<sup>7</sup>

When the people asked for a king, Samuel warned them:

He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Leviticus 25:23-24, 28; see also Leviticus 25:23-34.

<sup>5</sup>Numbers 36:7; see also verses 8-13.

<sup>6</sup>Ruth 4:1-12.

<sup>7</sup>1 Kings 21:3ff.

<sup>8</sup>1 Samuel 8:14-15.



These words of Samuel were fulfilled. The Bible speaks specifically of Ahab and the manner in which he secured the desired vineyard of Naboth.<sup>9</sup> Social injustice on the part of kings, his nobles and favorites, and others who dealt unscrupulously with their fellowmen grew. Amos, Isaiah, and Habakkuk especially raised their voices in protest and in condemnation against the unscrupulous amassing of wealth and possessions at the expense of others.<sup>10</sup> After the return from the Exile, Nehemiah found it necessary to point a wrathful finger at the same evil.<sup>11</sup> Wealth in Palestine meant ownership in land, often dishonestly and unrighteously acquired.<sup>12</sup>

#### During the Hellenistic Period

Through the changing tides in the fortunes of their overlords, the Jews learned the bitter truth of landownership.

the root of land ownership, in the East as in the West, was military conquest, forcible seizure by a group, tribe, or people with superior power.<sup>13</sup>

We shall highlight this in the following paragraphs.

The Zenon papyri shed light on what appear to have been extensive

<sup>9</sup>1 Kings 21:3ff.

<sup>10</sup>Isaiah 3:12-15; 5:8; Amos 4:1; 5:7-12; Habakkuk 3:14; Micah 2:1ff.

<sup>11</sup>Nehemiah 5. See also George Adam Smith, Jerusalem--the Topography, Economics and History from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), 1, 279-82, 288-96, 367-68.

<sup>12</sup>Louis Finkelstein, "The Pharisees: Their Origin and Their Philosophy," The Harvard Theological Review, XX, 3 (July, 1929), 189-90.

<sup>13</sup>A. Granott, The Land System in Palestine--History and Structure, translated from the Hebrew by M. Simon (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1952), p. 15.



holdings in Palestine by Apollonius, treasurer of state under Ptolemy II Philadelphos of Egypt, 261-246 B.C.<sup>14</sup> These documents also shed light on conditions in Palestine and the extensive trade of Egypt with Palestine and the regions beyond the Jordan.<sup>15</sup> PIS 594 speaks of the estate of Apollonius at Baitianata in Galilee, which presumably was a revocable gift (*δωρεά*) of the king to his favorite.<sup>16</sup>

In commenting on Rostovtzeff's Note on the Economic Policy of the Pergamene Kings in Anatolian Studies Presented to Sir W. M. Ramsay, Herz concludes that, although conditions in the above area were somewhat different, there was a definite similarity to Egypt in the development of land ownership, estates, and taxes in the various hellenistic countries. This is especially true of Palestine, which for sometime was ruled by the Ptolemies. Unfortunately, the source materials, giving the details, are not nearly as numerous as in Egypt. The difference between Egypt and Palestine was mainly in two points: a. In view of the changing climate and its effect on the yield in crops, the land-tax was one-tenth (*δεκάτη*) of the crops and fruits; b. The Greek cities, such as those of the Decapolis, controlled the land around them, and very likely, at most, paid a specified sum to the state (*οὐκ ἐν φόρῳ*) rather than a percentage land-tax. The balance of the land which was not privately owned, became "crown lands" and were under the supervision

---

<sup>14</sup>William Linn Westermann, et al, editors, Zenon Papyri--Business Papers of the Third Century B. C. Dealing with Palestine and Egypt (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), I, II.

<sup>15</sup>Herz, op. cit., pp. 107-8.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 109.



and control of those who contracted to collect taxes.<sup>17</sup>

The Zenon papyri discuss only the landholdings and affairs of non-residents of Palestine. Unfortunately, these papyri do not speak about the life of the native population and the frequency of large and small estates. But they do indicate that, already in this early part of the hellenistic era, the Egyptian king made land-gifts (*Supea*) in Palestine; this had the effect of shrinking the amount of land available to the small, independent farmer. Herz feels that the latter was not as numerous as is sometimes supposed. There was little change during the following decade. The little information which has come down indicates that the number of estates and the size of estates increased during the changing fortunes of the various rulers of Palestine into the period of the Roman occupation.<sup>18</sup> In discussing finds of vineyard leases from the first century B.C. in the Parthian village of Kopanis, Deissmann concludes:

In form and contents these Parthian texts are rich in parallels to the legal documents that come to us from Egypt. They symbolize the triumphant march of Western civilization, and prove that the Hellenisation of the Parthian kingdom must have been greater than had hitherto been assumed. The contracting parties and the witnesses are all (to judge from the names) non-Greeks (no doubt Parthians) belonging to a small village; the names of places and persons are of the highest interest to students of Iranian etymology, but the documents are of great value to the historian in general, being dated by the reigns of Arsacidae and their consorts, with the Seleucid era as basis.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>19</sup>Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East, the New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World, translated by Lionel E. M. Strachan (New and completely revised edition; New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), p. 34.



Alt concludes that, beginning with the early Hellenistic period, the Upper Jordan area and that of Lake Huleh were the king's domain. The same was true of the Plain of Esdraelon, of Acre, and also of the hilly portion of Galilee well into the Roman period.<sup>20</sup>

In the Maccabean days, allotments of land were made to Jews in Galilee.<sup>21</sup> The books of the Maccabees and other sources indicate that Palestine had a wealthy aristocracy of hellenized Jews, headed by the high priest; the wealth of these Jews was due partially to large land estates.<sup>22</sup> Later, Julius Caesar conferred on Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean high priest and ethnarch of the Jews, certain tribute benefits, and confirmed to Hyrcanus and his family the villages in the Esdraelon Plain and all the land, villages, and places which had formerly belonged to the kings of Syria and Phoenicia.<sup>23</sup>

#### In the Reign of King Herod

Aside from hereditary estates, Herod became immensely wealthy in

---

<sup>20</sup>Albrecht Alt, Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953), II, 394-95.

<sup>21</sup>Frederick C. Grant, The Economic Background of the Gospels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 65-66.

<sup>22</sup>M. Rostovtzeff, The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World (Corrected first edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), III, 1165; Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, His Life, Times, and Teaching, translated from the original Hebrew by Herbert Danby (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1945), p. 180.

<sup>23</sup>Flavius Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," The Works of Flavius Josephus, translated by William Whiston (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publishers, n.d.), XIV, x. See also Alt, op. cit., pp. 391-92; Herz, op. cit., p. 111.



riches and in estates during the years of his reign over Palestine. Heichelheim estimates that from one-half to two-thirds of the kingdom was Herod's private domain.<sup>24</sup> Augustus, for example, returned to Herod the land which Antony had given to Cleopatra: the district of Jericho, Gadara, Hippos, Samaria, Gaza, Anthedon, Joppa, and Strato's Tower.<sup>25</sup> Later, Augustus gave to Herod the tetrarchy of Zenodorus, the districts of Ullatha and Parias, and the surrounding territories north and north-west of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>26</sup> Not to be overlooked was Herod's propensity to enrich himself by using false pretenses to put away many of the nobility and confiscate their territories.<sup>27</sup>

Herod used some of his wealth and estates to build up a new aristocracy, indebted to him. Thus, Josephus writes:

Now of the people of the country, some joined him because of the friendship they had had with his father, and some because of the splendid appearance he made, and others by way of requital for the benefits they had received from both of them; but the greatest number came to him in hopes of getting somewhat from him afterward, if he were once firmly settled in the kingdom.<sup>28</sup>

Herod gave extensive gifts to members of the imperial family. His last will and testament bears eloquent testimony of this fact: to Caesar, Herod bequeathed 10,000,000 drachma of coined money; to Julia, Caesar's

---

<sup>24</sup>F. M. Heichelheim, "Roman Syria," An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome, edited by Tenney Frank (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), IV, 161.

<sup>25</sup>Josephus, "The Jewish Wars," op. cit., I, xx, 3; "Antiquities," op. cit., XV, vii.

<sup>26</sup>Josephus, "Wars," op. cit., I, xx, 4-5.

<sup>27</sup>Josephus, "Antiquities," op. cit., XVII, xii; XV, i. See also A. H. M. Jones, The Herods of Judea (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 84.

<sup>28</sup>Josephus, "Antiquities," op. cit., XIV, xv.



wife, he gave gold and silver vessels and costly garments.<sup>29</sup> During his lifetime, Herod carried on extensive building operations in his realm (e.g. Samaria, Caesarea) and beyond his realm; many of these were named to flatter the imperial family. Herod also undertook to rebuild the Temple at a tremendous cost to endear himself to the Jews.

To do all this, Herod had sources of income in addition to the taxes he exacted from his subjects. His estates provided him with his greatest source of income; his commercial and industrial ventures also provided him with much money.<sup>30</sup> The will of Herod gives some indication of the great extent of his estates and of his financial resources.

#### Estates in the Time of Christ

At the time of the ministry of Jesus, the over-all picture in regard to large estates and land-holdings had not changed considerably. Days of turmoil such as characterized the reign of Archelaus and the transfer of Judea and Samaria into a province ruled by a Roman governor had made some changes. In banishing Archelaus to Vienna in Gaul, Caesar Augustus is said to have taken over his possessions.<sup>31</sup>

In speaking of conditions in this era, we should distinguish between the Greek cities, such as, Gaza, Anthedon, Askalon, Joppa, Ptolemais, Caesarea, Samaria-Sebaste, and the cities of the Decapolis. Some

---

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., XVII, viii.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>A. Momigliano, "Chapter XI. Herod of Judea," The Cambridge Ancient History, edited by S. A. Cook, et al (New York: MacMillan, 1934), X, 331.



of these cities, especially those of the Decapolis, were under special protection and rule of Rome. They all had a large territory surrounding them which was under their own control. The land was either owned by the cities themselves and leased out to its citizens or the land was owned in large estates by large landowner citizens.<sup>32</sup>

The Gospels and the report of Josephus picture Judea, Samaria, and Galilee as a land of many villages inhabited by peasants

above whom---just as in the late Hellenistic period under the Maccabees---stands a native aristocracy of large landowners, who are patrons of the villages, men like Josephus himself and his rival John of Gischala, Philip son of Jakimus, and others. These men are not only rulers of the land and leaders in its religious life, but capitalists and merchants on a big scale, who sometimes add to their wealth by daring speculations (such as John of Gischala's sale of oil to the city of Caesarea) and keep their money in the national bank---the temple at Jerusalem. Still more opulent are the officials of the kings and tetrachs, and the kings and tetrachs themselves and their families. Lastly, we find estates of the Roman emperor himself and the imperial family, and even a Roman military colony established by Vespasian at Emmaus after the Jewish War. Such were the conditions of life in Palestine, and in later times there was clearly no change, except that landed proprietors of other than Jewish origin, like Libanius, increased in number.<sup>33</sup>

Rostovtzeff notes that the Jewish aristocracy "consisted mostly of large landowners who exercised a kind of protectorate over whole villages and smaller towns."<sup>34</sup> Herz feels that the large estates were in the smaller and larger plains of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.<sup>35</sup> Jeremias, Alt, and Avi-Yonah contend that a large part of the Galilean

---

<sup>32</sup>M. Rostovtzeff, The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), pp. 245-46.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 568.

<sup>35</sup>Herz, op. cit., p. 112.



uplands, the Upper Jordan area, and that of Lake Huleh were under direct imperial administration in the form of latifundia, in the hands of foreign landlords.<sup>36</sup> Klausner admits the existence of the latifundia, but feels that they were not a prominent feature of life in Palestine in the days of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

Klausner contends that the bulk and mainstay of Palestine were small owners of land. Together with their families they worked their own land, used most of what they raised, and bartered or sold the rest to secure absolute necessities. Illness or unfavorable seasons often reduced such small landowners to poverty. Through borrowing money or seed from landowners with larger means at high rates of interest and then defaulting, they often lost their land.<sup>38</sup> In borrowing, they would give what we today would term "notes"; these were recorded in the government bureaus and were to have been returned as soon as the debt had been paid. Too often it happened, that such notes were not returned. This would, then, give the person who had loaned the seed or money a certain "hold" on the borrower. Josephus records that, at the beginning of the revolution in 66 A.D., the government archives were burned to destroy especially the record of such notes.<sup>39</sup> One cannot but wonder

---

<sup>36</sup>Alt, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-95. See also Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, translated by S. H. Hooke from the third German edition (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1955), pp. 58-59; M. Avi-Yonah, "Map of Roman Palestine," The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine, V (1935), 175.

<sup>37</sup>Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 179-80. See also Heichelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>39</sup>Josephus, "Wars," *op. cit.*, II, xvii, 6. See also Adolf Buechler, "Der galilaeische Am-ha-Ares des zweiten Jahrhunderts," Beitraege zur innern Geschichte des palaestiniischen Judentums in den ersten zwei Jahrhunderten (Vienna: Alfred Hoelder, 1906), pp. 247-49.



whether in a similar way the Pharisees "devoured widows' houses."<sup>40</sup>

Klausner concludes that

Thus, apart from the comparatively few large landowners with great estates ('fathers' houses' . . . ), and the more numerous well-to-do peasant class, we find a multitude of small-holders and a complete "proletariat" of every kind . . . ."<sup>41</sup>

Dalman cautiously suggests that it is impossible to state the extent of the small independent farmer (Kleinbauer) in herodian Palestine, and if this type of farming was as extensive as Klausner assumes.<sup>42</sup>

It was to the interests of the Roman government to favor the more extensive ownership of land, and to protect the large landowner.

The policy was dictated less by any regard for the interests of the populace than by the desire to see the financial responsibilities of the cultivators backed by guarantees; for land was the most concrete and most accessible form of property.<sup>43</sup>

For obvious reasons, the great landowners were prepared to swallow their national pride and to live on terms with the Roman government.

The matter of land-distribution was a cause of discontent and ill-feeling between the upper and lower classes in Palestine. The latter wished to see land redistributed in accordance with the Mosaic law.<sup>44</sup> This discontent becomes especially meaningful when we remember that large estates were often held by foreigners, who cared little about the

---

<sup>40</sup>Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47.

<sup>41</sup>Klausner, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>42</sup>Gustaf Dalman, "Der Ackerbau," Arbeit und Sitte in Palaestina (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1932), II, 157.

<sup>43</sup>H. Idris Bell, "Chapter X. Egypt under the Early Principate," The Cambridge Ancient History, edited by S. A. Cook, et al. (New York: MacMillan, 1934), X, 293.

<sup>44</sup>Leviticus 25:23-24, 23; 25:23-34; Numbers 36:8-13.



Jewish law. In the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, Dodd sees evidence of the kind of a thing that may have happened many times, especially after the revolt of Judas the Gaulonite in 6 A.D., and which continued until the final rebellion in 66 A.D., culminating in the disastrous defeat and destruction of the Jews in 70 A.D.<sup>45</sup>

#### Terms of Land-Lease

Several different kinds of leases were common in the time of Christ. Although some would speak of four kinds, it would seem that basically three different types of rentals or lease fees were in use. In the first kind, the lessee gave the owner, or, if a sub-lessee, the sub-lessor, a certain percentage of the crop. This varied from one-half to one-fourth. In the second kind, the lessee agreed to pay a set amount of the produce. In the third kind, the lessee agreed to pay a set amount in money. In both the second and third instances, the lessee was the loser if he grew less and made less money than the amount set in the lease. If he grew more and hence made more money, he was by far the better off. The risk in both instances was strictly his.<sup>46</sup> Sub-leasing of ground by a sub-lessee was not uncommon.

#### Estate Organization

An important fact must be remembered in attempting to reconstruct

---

<sup>45</sup>G. H. Dodd, op. cit., pp. 125-26.

<sup>46</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 158. See also Samuel Krauss, Grundriss der Gesamtwissenschaft des Judentums---Talmudische Archaeologie (Leipzig: Buchhandlung Gustav Fock, 1911), II, 110-11; Herbert Danby, translator, The Mishnah, Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 25-26, 93, 363.



details of estate organization and administration. Mommsen reminds his readers that Palestine, after all, was variously dominated by Egyptian, Syrian, and Roman influences.<sup>47</sup> Olmstead renders this verdict:

Our conclusion must be that there is no simple formula that will explain the whole development of land tenure in the ancient Orient. A large part of this territory was indeed farmed under conditions approaching those found on the manors of medieval Europe, but there was no little ownership in fee simple. . . . We can be sure that the land system of the Hellenistic and the Roman world goes back to those of the ancient Orient, and that there is to be sought the source of the serf estate. But it should also be remembered that other systems of tenure remained in the Orient until the time of Alexander and that they have survived to the present day in Arabic and Turkish law.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, as far as can be ascertained, Olmstead never spelled out his findings and opinions on land tenure in detail.

Heichelheim has recorded in summary form his findings and suggestions as to estate organization. Many estates in the Roman Middle East under a single administration were more often worked by tenants or serfs than by slaves or hired laborers. Sometimes not only the produce, but also the products of an estate were sold on the market. Two types of hired laborers occur: "the *ἐργάται* operarii (probably 'paid by the task')" and the "*μισθωταί* mercennarii (probably 'paid by time')." In discussing the *μισθωταί*, Heichelheim suggests that many of these agricultural laborers were often also small tenants. The estates also employed specialized workers as tenants. There were several types. One of these is the aris (gardener), substantially the same as

---

<sup>47</sup>Theodor Mommsen, The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian, translated by William P. Dickson (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1909), II, 162.

<sup>48</sup>A. T. Olmstead, Land Tenure in the Ancient Orient (New York: MacMillan, 1926), p. 9.



the *μετοχος*. He was a free man who was paid a certain part of the harvest. A tenant with a fixed rent, the *hoker* (*μισθωτής* in widest sense) was less frequently found. The most important type of tenant was the *ghatla*, identical in meaning and etymology with *γεωργός* and *colonus*.

The *γεωργός* remained for life, unless he gave notice to his landlord or was dismissed. The father was often succeeded by his son as a *γεωργός*. The *γεωργός* had certain rights such as the right to claim compensation for improving the soil.

The *aris* could work on a larger scale; he employed sub-tenants to work his holdings. The Roman veterans, found throughout the Roman Near East, used the *aris* to till their land-grants.<sup>49</sup>

As the Gospels indicate, Palestine in the time of Christ was well acquainted with small and large estates. Some details which are interesting and very important from our point of view, are not spelled out. In referring to life on estates, Jesus made reference only to those features which were necessary for the parable in question. We shall reconstruct below as accurately as possible the important details in the parable of the Unjust Manager, based on a careful study of the social and economic conditions of Jesus' day.

---

<sup>49</sup>Heichelheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-50.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE PROBABLE SOLUTION TO THE PARABLE

#### A Crux Interpretum

The previous chapter gives a survey of the economic and social setting of land tenure at the time of Christ. Although the Gospels provide information and the parables of Jesus offer unique and interesting insights, we do lack definite information on important details. The temptation arises to supply these on the basis of our western experience rather than to find more probable solutions, based on eastern life and customs. Gaechter suggests:

That a parable, coming from an Oriental (Jesus) and being addressed to Orientals (Jews) should be understood in the light of Oriental customs, is a truism.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional interpretation of the parable of the Unjust Manager is a case in point. By foisting our Occidental experience on an Oriental parable, this parable has become a "crux interpretum," giving rise to the ominous question: "Is Jesus here commending dishonesty?"

As indicated above, Dr. Olmstead has pointed out that the land tenure system of the ancient Orient, including Palestine, is very complex. In the instance of our parable, St. Luke gives only highlights necessary for the parable, without adding details which for us today seem to be of critical importance. An intensive study of the economic

---

<sup>1</sup>Paul Gaechter, "The Parable of the Dishonest Steward after Oriental Conceptions," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XII, 2 (April, 1950), 124.



and social background of the Roman world in the light of available resources and probing into Oriental customs with special reference to Palestine, suggest an interpretation rather different from the traditional. Because of the paucity of definite information, the specific mode of land administration involved in this parable rests somewhat on conjecture, however, less so than the traditional view.

#### An Absentee Landowner

In telling this parable, Jesus implies that the owner of the estate was an absentee landowner. He does not tell us whether he was a Jew or a Gentile. If a Jew, he possibly would have joined the landed aristocracy at Jerusalem. If a Gentile, he may have been a resident of one of the Greek cities of the Decapolis or of the Coastal Plain. The system of extensive estates, owned by absentee landowners, is still a problem of the Middle East today, and is the cause of much discontent, as it was in Jesus' day.

To manage his estate and to be assured of an orderly income from his holdings, the landowner made a contract with a free man to serve as manager (*οἰκονομῶς*). This was not at all uncommon, but sometimes a slave rather than a free man served as manager or representative of the landowner. Such an arrangement made it possible for the landowner to live in a city of his choice and to be relieved of the tedium of estate management.

As outlined above, the contract between landowner and manager could provide for one of the three types of land leases. Judging from verses five through seven, it would seem probable that the contract provided



for a fixed amount of produce since wheat and olive oil are mentioned. A fixed amount would enable the landowner to live untroubled, certain of his annual income. The risk would be entirely that of the manager and the lessees of the ground.

Such a contract provided for another genuinely Oriental touch: the landowner need not be troubled in anyway. The eastern reluctance to be troubled or bothered is a factor which must not be discounted. This is true perhaps more of the Near East than of the Far East. The absentee landowner did not wish to be bothered with the cares and trivia of estate management, but preferred to live away from his estate, leaving all this to his manager.<sup>2</sup>

Most probably, the contract between landowner and manager failed to mention any remuneration for the manager's efforts. It was simply taken for granted that the manager would look out for himself. Whatever he could get from the estate over and above the amount fixed in the contract for the landowner would be his gain. We recall that certain forms of tax collection were farmed out by the Roman government on this basis. This system of tax collection was also used by the Ptolemies in Palestine.<sup>3</sup>

Anyone who has been in either the Near or the Far East has become acquainted with the Oriental propensity for extortion. While in the

---

<sup>2</sup>W. D. Miller, "The Unjust Steward," Expository Times, XV, 333.

<sup>3</sup>Flavius Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," The Works of Flavius Josephus, translated by William Whiston (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publishers, n.d.), XII, iv. See also Marie Joseph Lagrange, The Gospels of Jesus Christ (London: Burns, Oates & Washburne Ltd., 1938), II, 68.



Near East some years ago, the writer experienced attempts to "squeeze" extra money, purportedly for legitimate reasons. These attempts for additional, and, in our mind, unwarranted gain were taken for granted by inhabitants of the area. A missionary in India reported that, when he explained this parable in terms of the "squeeze" of the Orient, it was considered the natural thing by his native hearers.<sup>4</sup> Mindful of their weakness for "squeeze," John the Baptizer told the tax-collectors, "Collect no more than is appointed you."<sup>5</sup> When Herod Agrippa borrowed money through an agent from a banker in the East, the agent received only 17,500 drachmas, but had to sign a receipt for 20,000.<sup>6</sup> We shall return to the matter of the "squeeze" later on in this present discussion.

#### The Manager's Dealings

Luke 16:6 tells us that the manager called in the *χρεοφειλετῶν* of his master. Some feel that these were merchants who had failed to make payment in full for produce purchased.<sup>7</sup> Others feel that the debtors were farmers or lessees who were in arrears in meeting the

---

<sup>4</sup>E. Hampton-Cook, "The Unjust Steward, I," Expository Times, XVI, 44.

<sup>5</sup>Luke 3:13.

<sup>6</sup>Josephus, op. cit., XVIII, vi, 3.

<sup>7</sup>Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1936), II, 273. See also Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, translated by S. H. Hooke from the third German edition (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1955), p. 127; and Theodor Zahn, "Das Evangelium des Lucas," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Dritte u. vierte durchgesehene Auflage; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1920), III, 573.



requirements of their leases.<sup>8</sup> Rengstorf and Juelicher are among those who feel that the identification of the debtors is of little consequence.<sup>9</sup> Viewed in the light of the social and economic conditions of Jesus' day, the identification of the debtors is important.

Among the reasons given for identifying the debtors with merchants is the size of the debts mentioned in verses 5-7: the first debtor owed a hundred measures of oil; the second a hundred measures of wheat. It is thought that the quantity is too great to permit identification with a lessee, and hence must refer to merchants who had bought the grain and fruit of the estate. This suggestion ignores social and economic conditions with special reference to estates in Jesus' day, as sketched above.

Luke 16:6-7 provides an interesting insight into the size of the estate. The first debtor owed 100 baths or measures of olive oil. According to Dalman, the average yield of an olive tree in Palestine today is 120 kilos of olives or 25 litres of oil. Converting this into our system of measurement suggests that it would take the fruits of

---

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Plummer, "The Gospel according to St. Luke," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, edited by Charles A. Briggs, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), XXVIII, 283. See also J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel according to Luke," translated from the Second German Edition, with additions, original and selected by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical, edited by John Peter Lange (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1869), XVI, 245.

<sup>9</sup> Adolf Juelicher, "Auslegung der Gleichnisreden der Drei Ersten Evangelien," Die Gleichnisreden Jesu (Zweite, neu bearbeitete Auflage, zweiter Abdruck; Tuebingen: J. C. E. Mohr, 1910), II, 500. See also Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "Das Evangelium nach Lukas," Das Neue Testament Deutsch, edited by Paul Althaus und Johannes Behm (5. neubearbeitete Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), III, 185.



about 120 trees to make the 100 baths or about 300 gallons of olive oil.<sup>10</sup> Jeremias suggests 146 olive trees.<sup>11</sup> Dalman reports that olive trees are planted in rows about 20 feet apart with the rows being about 40 feet apart. This would vary somewhat, depending on whether the orchard is on level ground or terraced up the slopes, as is so often the case.<sup>12</sup> Olive trees are found in almost all sections of Palestine, except in the tropical Jordan Valley, where the heat is too great.<sup>13</sup>

In turning to wheat, we find that the second debtor owed a hundred measures of wheat. Converting this figure into our system of measurement would give us a figure of about a thousand bushels. According to a study made by Dalman, the average yield of wheat in modern Palestine is around 10 bushels per acre; this depends somewhat on where the wheat is raised. On the average, it would take about a 100 acres of land to raise the 1000 bushels of wheat.<sup>14</sup>

Another factor must be considered. Admittedly the fertility of Palestine has declined since the New Testament day. The ravages of war through the centuries, the oppressive taxation and policies of the Turks, and the resultant neglect have left their tragic mark. The studies of

---

<sup>10</sup>Gustaf Dalman, "Brot, Oel und Wein," Arbeit und Sitte in Palaestina (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1935), IV, 192. See also Johannes Herz, "Grossgrundbesitz in Palaestina im Zeitalter Jesu," Palaestinajahruch des Deutschen evangelischen Instituts fuer Altertumswissen des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem, edited by Albrecht Alt (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Son, 1928), XXIV, 100.

<sup>11</sup>Jeremias, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>12</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>14</sup>Gustaf Dalman, "Von der Ernte zum Mehl," Arbeit und Sitte in Palaestina (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1933), III, 152.



Dalman, referred to above, were made during the first part of the British mandate over Palestine with the centuries of Turkish misrule and oppression still recent in memory. The effect of the latter still lingers on in the problems of Palestine today.

As seen above in discussing the setting of the parable, large estates were common in Palestine at the time of Christ. The estate managed by the *οἰκονομὸς* about to be dismissed was at least somewhat extensive; the parable implies that more than the two debtors specifically mentioned were involved in the maneuver of the manager to gain favor with them.

The manager leased the estate to a number of lessees, each of them leasing a considerable portion of ground. Each lessee, in turn, probably subleased his leased ground to those who actually tilled the soil. These were very likely the <sup>shaykh</sup> *γεωργοὶ*. Such an operation was common in the Roman provinces as we saw above. The Mishnah also mentions subleasing. It must be remembered that the sublessees, the lessees, and the manager each received his stipulated share of the harvest. The manager's share included the fixed amount due the landowner plus whatever amount the manager had set to cover his administration expenses and his personal profit.

Papyri finds in Egypt give some indication as to how the estate might have been divided. A papyrus speaks of a man named Panouphis who held a primary lease on  $200 \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{16}$  arouras (around 69 acres) of an area of 10,000 arouras or 3443 acres. Panouphis in turn sublet this land to tenants who tilled the soil. Each sublessee tilled from 18 to 25



arcouras or from 6.2 to 8.7 acres.<sup>15</sup> Dalman reports that, in his day, the amount of land which could be worked with one yoke of oxen and which was allotted to a farmer to work in the area of the Central Range of Palestine amounted to 9 hectare or 22.239 acres; in the coastal plain at Haifa and the plain of Nazareth this increased slightly to 9.45 hectare or 23.35 acres. In the Hauran, where farmers often worked with two yoke of oxen, the allotment was 18 hectare or 44.468 acres.<sup>16</sup> In the time of Christ, the population of Palestine was denser than it was in Dalman's day. It is probable that the amount of land worked by a farmer or sublet to him was less.

As time went on, the manager may have become more and more demanding in renewing the leases of his lessees. The latter had little recourse but to renew their leases at the manager's terms. The Roman government, as indicated before, favored the large landowners, because they were a stable source of tax income. As the absentee landowner's representative, the manager could count on the government's favor. The manager's reduction of the lease terms as given in Luke 16:6-7, indicate that he had been demanding an exorbitant share for himself. In this connection, we should note that the Zenon Papyri indicate that Zenon, the manager of the extensive estate of Appolonius,

---

<sup>15</sup>William Linn Westermann and Clinton Walker Keyes, et al., editors, "78. Fragment of Register of Land Leased from the 10,000 Arcouras," Zenon Papyri--Business Papers of the Third Century B.C. Dealing with Palestine and Egypt (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), II, 58-59. See also John Gardiner Wilkinson, The Manners & Customs of the Ancient Egyptians, a new edition, revised and corrected by Samuel Birch (New York: Scriber & Welford, 1879), I, 323.

<sup>16</sup>Gustaf Dalman, "Der Ackerbau," Arbeit und Sitte in Palaestina (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1932), II, 48.



became independently wealthy.<sup>17</sup>

#### The Manager's Dismissal

The term *δουλοκopia*<sup>wasting</sup> in Luke 16:1 notes that the manager was wasting his master's property.<sup>18</sup> Some urge that this consisted in withholding some of the landowner's share to help cover the costs of high living. That the manager would dip into his master's share is possible, but would seem rather unlikely, for, as long as he sent the absentee landowner the stipulated amount, he could be relatively secure in his position as manager. As long as his master received the set income, he would remain untroubled and tend to show little interest in reports which might filter to him about the conduct of his manager. The income was evidence to the absentee landowner that his manager was on the job. Furthermore, when dismissed, the manager is not concerned about this final report to his master, but shows an intense concern for his own personal welfare in the immediate future. As far as can be ascertained, the manager had no fears of prosecution.

The manager qualified as an *οἰκονομος τῆς ἀδικίας*<sup>steward of unrighteousness</sup> because he neglected his master's property. He probably began to live in "grand style as a gentleman."<sup>19</sup> As his standard of living rose higher and higher, he needed more and more. He may have been forced to

<sup>17</sup>M. Rostovtzeff, The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World (Corrected first edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), I, 411, 1153.

<sup>18</sup>Supra, pp. 66, 79.

<sup>19</sup>Marie Joseph Lagrange, Études Bibliques—Évangile selon Saint Luc (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1941), p. 431.



divert what he had intended to spend to maintain his master's property (building maintenance and land improvement) to cover his living costs. Seemingly he began to insist on more and more "squeeze" in his renewal of leases. The lessees in turn would demand more of their sublessees.

In Egypt it was often customary for the lessee or sublessee to spell out the care, maintenance, and improvements he contracted to make part of his lease terms.<sup>20</sup> It may be that, because of the increased demands, the lessees or sublessees found it impossible to follow through on this part of their lease or sublease. As a result, for example, terraced slopes on which especially grapes and olives were raised might have fallen into disrepair. The sublessees and lessees may have counted on the preoccupation of the manager to keep him from finding out or insisting on full performance. As long as they delivered produce reasonably in keeping with their lease terms, they could feel fairly safe.

Engrossed in "living as a gentleman," the *oikonomos* had no time for the thorough and faithful supervision he should have given as manager. At best, he had to be satisfied with minimum performance. And, as a result of the manager's preoccupation and his increased needs to cover the costs of high living, the landowner's estate fell into decay. Probably also in this way, through such dereliction, the manager squandered his master's property and became a *oikonomos tēs adikias*.

Jesus indicates in the parable that the terms of the leases had not been met. One lessee still owed a hundred measures of oil; the

---

<sup>20</sup>C. H. Roberts and E. G. Turner, "583. Lease of a Vineyard (170 B.C.)," Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library at Manchester--Documents of the Ptolemaic, Roman, and Byzantine Periods (#552-717) (Manchester: University Press, 1952), IV, 39-45.



other a hundred measures of wheat. It is possible that the negligent administration of the manager and its effect on the landowner's property in part accounted for this. Terraced slopes, not kept in good repair, soon decrease in yield. Unkept terraces on denuded slopes in sections of Palestine today are tragic witnesses of this fact.

"Make your report," the landowner told the manager, "for you can no longer be manager!" As part of his final accounting, the manager would be obliged to give the landowner the leases for the various parts of the estate. Whether or not this included what we today would term a financial statement is uncertain. Detailed accounts of estate operation have been found among the Egyptian papyri. Jeremias and Juelicher both feel that a detailed accounting was not part of the custom of the day. "The East," says Jeremias, "knows nothing of book-keeping or audit."<sup>21</sup> Juelicher maintains that the manager's final report did not consist in a detailed balance sheet as we would conceive of it today.<sup>22</sup> We should note that our parable indicates no fear on the part of the manager that his master might discover a deficit or prosecute him. Be that as it may, the master had decreed, "You may no longer be manager!" Through neglect, the manager had become an *οἰκονόμος τῆς ἀδικίας* and was facing imminent dismissal.

#### The Manager's Solution

With his imminent dismissal an irrevocable fact, the manager faced a serious dilemma. "What shall I do, because my master is taking the

---

<sup>21</sup>Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 127; Juelicher, *op. cit.*, pp. 497-98.

<sup>22</sup>Luke 16:3.



management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig: to beg I am ashamed!" For one accustomed to live without physical exertion, the prospect of becoming a tiller of the soil, a γεωργός, was forbidding. "I am not strong enough to dig," the manager concludes. A second alternative was also out of question, namely, that of begging. For the manager of an estate, accustomed to high living, to become a beggar was totally unthinkable. The loss of face would be just too great! "To beg I am ashamed!" was his determined conclusion. "What to do now?" Having failed the landowner as a responsible manager would make it hard for him to find a similar position of trust. Even though he seemingly had exacted much from his lessees, he evidently had nothing or very little left. The dilemma was real and difficult!

"I've got it! I know what I shall do!" breaks the silence of his gloom. A promising idea has come to him: He will obligate himself to those whom he had only so recently "squeezed" to provide additional income. His erstwhile lessees would take care of him until such time that he might find a suitable position.

As an Oriental, he well knew the Oriental sense of obligation. A gift is never considered a pure gift "without strings attached." A gift always places the person receiving it under obligation. One favor calls for a return favor. The manager intended to ingratiate himself to his lessees and obligate them to himself.<sup>23</sup>

The manager called in privately each one (ἐν ἑκάστῳ) of the lessees in arrears with their lease deliveries (κρεοφειλιετών). It was important for the manager that this be done privately. This

---

<sup>23</sup>Gaechter, op. cit., p. 130.



gave him the opportunity to give this activity, so crucial for his personal welfare, an atmosphere of friendly intimacy.

The manager's strategy was designed to make the most of the opportunity. "How much do you owe my employer?" he asked the first. The manager, of course, knew; he had the lease (*γράμματα*). By speaking the exact amount due, the lessee would be impressed again with the amount of his debt. The lessee would be better prepared for the maximum effect of the manager's instruction, "Take your bill, sit down, and write quickly, 'Fifty!'" He would realize more fully how much the manager was doing for him!

"Take your bill" brings up an interesting question. "What did these leases look like? Were new leases written or was the old lease altered to the new terms?" The term *τὰ γράμματα* covers a wide range of meaning; "it may have been a paper or document of any kind."<sup>24</sup> Some of the grammata found in papyri form are single copies only.<sup>25</sup> Others seemingly had the agreement on one side with additional notes on the other.<sup>26</sup> Some were double copies--an inner and outer *γράμματα*. An Egyptian vineyard lease, dated 170 B.C., is of this kind. The inner document was written by one hand, the other by another. The inner was sealed and attested by six people on the "verso" side of

---

<sup>24</sup>James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, "*γράμμα*," The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 131.

<sup>25</sup>A. S. Hunt and G. C. Edgar, Select Papyri with an English Translation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), I, 191-93.

<sup>26</sup>Roberts and Turner, op. cit., p. 39.



the fold.<sup>27</sup> Deissmann records the find of a similar double document, drawn up in 88 B.C. in the Parthian village of Kopanis. In this case, the inner and outer text do not fully agree. The most striking difference is in the purchase price, but Deissmann feels that forgery, in this instance, was not involved.<sup>28</sup>

Edersheim draws extensively on the Mishnah to show that wooden tablets were widely used among the Jews. There were three kinds: wood covered with papyrus, wood covered with wax, and wood only--the writing being done with ink directly on the wood. The wax-covered tablets seemingly were preferred for recording agreements, acknowledgements of debts, and similar documents. The Mishnah also provided for the varying requirements in regard to witnesses, forms, and the like.<sup>29</sup>

The manager may have instructed each  $\chi\rho\epsilon\omicron\phi\epsilon\iota\lambda\acute{\iota}\tau\alpha\varsigma$  to alter the original document. This would have made it easy for the landowner to detect what the manager had done. Each lessee may have rewritten his lease, incorporating the new figure. Although this would have taken more time, it would appear to be the correct suggestion. The manager may well have said "quickly," for sake of the psychological effect on the lessee.

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>28</sup>Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East, The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World, translated by Lionel R. M. Strachan (New and completely revised edition; New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), p. 33.

<sup>29</sup>Edersheim, op. cit., pp. 270-73. See also Herbert Danby, translator, The Mishnah, translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 380-81.



Jesus indicates that the manager reduced the first lessee's amount by half, the second by one-fifth. The manager knew his men and acted accordingly. Seemingly he handled others of the *χρικοφειδῆτων*, as he handled the two mentioned in the parable.

By instructing each one to lower the amount on his *τὰ γράμματα*, the manager reduced the amount of his own, the manager's share, at quite a sacrifice to himself. It was not the landowner's but the manager's share which was being reduced considerably. The lessees would grasp this quickly. It was he who was making this gift as it were to them; they quickly grasped their obligation to him. Whether or not they knew as yet that he was being dismissed, Jesus does not tell us in the parable. They were, however, aware that this action represented quite a sacrifice for the manager.

Another important truth dawned on the lessees, namely, that for some time to come they had a degree of protection against a higher "squeeze." When a new manager would take over, it would be hard for him, at least for a while, to attempt to "squeeze" more. For the first, at least, the lessees could feel fairly secure against the rather heavy "squeeze" which they had endured prior to this event. Hence, their sense of obligation to the outgoing manager was deepened and their inclination quickened to be of help to him when he was dismissed.<sup>30</sup>

#### The Verdict of Jesus

"The Lord praised the dishonest manager, because he had acted

---

<sup>30</sup>Gaechter, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-30.



prudently!"<sup>31</sup> As we have seen above, Luke here gives the verdict of Jesus in indirect speech. Confronted by the dilemma of the hopelessness of his future, the manager acted wisely. As a son of this age, the manager had maneuvered to ingratiate himself to those who were also sons of this age. By his wise and sacrificial action, his debtors, the lessees whom he had "squeezed," became obligated to take care of him after his dismissal. By sacrificing his own short-term gain, the manager secured a long-term gain. Jesus praises the prudence, the efficiency of the manager in solving his dilemma at a sacrifice to himself. Jesus commends this prudence to His hearers and spells out its meaning in some detail as we shall see below.

In conclusion, we recall the statement of Gaechter:

That a parable, coming from an Oriental (Jesus) and being addressed to Orientals (Jews) should be understood in the light of Oriental customs, is a truism.<sup>32</sup>

Studying the crux interpretum of the parable of the Unjust Manager in the light of Oriental custom, in the light of the social and economic conditions of the New Testament time, sheds a rather decisive light on the unjustness of the manager and the interpretation of the parable and validly removes the latter from its present "difficult" status. The unjustness of the manager lay in his neglect of the property of the landowner. The demands in time of his high living kept him from being faithful to the needs of good management of the estate entrusted to him by his master. The economic demands of his high living caused him to

---

<sup>31</sup>Luke 16:8.

<sup>32</sup>Gaechter, op. cit., p. 124.



"squeeze" his lessees to a point where the estate began to suffer. The manager was guilty of *διακοπή*, of squandering his master's property through neglect. He was summarily dismissed. The manager's wise and sacrificial action obligated his debtors (lessees) to him, so that they would take care of him after his dismissal.

The parable of the Faithful Manager refers primarily to the problem which the manager as a son of this age exhibited in solving the dilemma of his immediate future. The manager took a practical, forward-looking view of his situation. He sought to free his debtors in order to obligate them to provide him with their houses after his dismissal. Jesus commended the manager for his wise and sacrificial action.

In discussing the meaning of this parable, Jesus gave instructions to us as sons of light so how we can prudently and sacrificially use the resources God has given us. "Use your earthly assets wisely and sacrificially," he says to us, "in order to provide benefits for yourselves in the life to come!" This is the central thought of the parable. In developing this thought, Jesus, as it were, suggests two sub-thoughts which illustrate the central thought: a. "To make a sacrificial use of your possessions in present"; b. "Manage your possessions so that you can take care of yourselves."

#### Charity

Jesus has previously indicated with the unrighteous steward, at that, time to those who are invited into the eternal tent. "Is this



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE

#### The Central Thought

The parable of the Unjust Manager refers pointedly to the prudence which the manager as a son of this age exhibited in solving the dilemma of his immediate future. The manager made a distinct, personal sacrifice, when he reduced the amounts due him from his debtors in order to obligate them to receive him into their homes after his imminent dismissal. Jesus praised the manager for his wise and sacrificial action.

In discussing the meaning of this parable, Jesus gives instructions to us as sons of light on how we can prudently and sacrificially use the possessions God has given us. "Use your earthly means wisely and sacrificially," He says to us, "in order to provide benefits for yourselves in the life to come!" This is the central thought of the parable. In developing this thought, Jesus, as it were, suggests two sub-thoughts which illustrate the central thought: a. "To make a sacrificial use of your possessions is prudent"; b. "Manage your possessions; don't let them manage you!"

#### Charity

"Make for yourselves friends with the unrighteous mammon, so that, when it fails, God may receive you into the eternal tents."<sup>1</sup> In this

---

<sup>1</sup>Luke 16:9.



parable of the Unjust Manager, Jesus changes the worldly wisdom to make friends for self into heavenly wisdom.<sup>2</sup> Plummer suggests that the position of the *favvris* is to emphasize, "In your own interest make friends . . . ."<sup>3</sup> Jesus expressed the thought of verse nine in a similar way:

Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.<sup>4</sup>

The thought of sharing freely with the poor and, if done for Christ's sake, receiving a blessing is one which is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. Proverbs says, "The liberal man will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."<sup>5</sup> Again, "He who has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor."<sup>6</sup> "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed."<sup>7</sup> "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Halge Almqvist, Plutarch und Das Neue Testament, Ein Beitrag zum Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamentum (Upsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri A-B, 1947), p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Alfred Plummer, "The Gospel According to St. Luke," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, edited by Charles A. Briggs, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), XVIII, 335.

<sup>4</sup>Luke 12:33.

<sup>5</sup>Proverbs 11:25.

<sup>6</sup>Proverbs 22:9.

<sup>7</sup>Proverbs 19:17.

<sup>8</sup>Ecclesiastes 11:1.



In spelling out His will for His chosen people, God provided for the poor. He forbade His people to harvest their fields cleanly and completely; this was also true of their vineyards and orchards. The poor had the right to come and glean what the harvesters had left.<sup>9</sup> How this worked out is seen in the story of Ruth.<sup>10</sup> Isaiah reminded the people of their obligation to help the poor and needy.<sup>11</sup> We note how St. Paul was concerned that the churches which he had founded should remember the poor, and especially those of the "mother church" of Jerusalem.

Saint Paul reminds the Corinthians: "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."<sup>12</sup> Whoever is unwise in the use of his possessions and only grudgingly and sparingly gives to the poor will "reap only sparingly." He will only "sparingly" experience the promises of blessings mentioned above.

Saint Paul urges the Corinthians to give bountifully,<sup>13</sup> as God has blessed them.<sup>14</sup> Such wise and proportionate sharing with God involves sacrifice, as Jesus pointed out in the example of the widow's mite.<sup>15</sup> Such sacrificial giving brings with it blessings. St. Paul says:

<sup>9</sup>Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22.

<sup>10</sup>Ruth 2:2,8,23.

<sup>11</sup>Isaiah 58:7.

<sup>12</sup>2 Corinthians 9:6.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>1 Corinthians 16:2.

<sup>15</sup>Luke 21:1-4.



He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity through us will produce thanksgiving to God; for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you.<sup>16</sup>

We note here especially the thought that the recipients of generosity pray that God will shed His blessings on their benefactors already here in this life. St. Paul indicates that God, who loves the cheerful giver, sheds His blessings upon them.

In our parable, Jesus speaks of the final blessing resulting from such a wise and sacrificial use by the sons of light. This is indicated by Strack-Billerbeck, who feel that *δεξιωνται* means that God will receive them. In the present writer's translation, Strack-Billerbeck comment:

Alms and deeds of love speak to God for man (Fuersprecher); they make man worthy to stand before God; they safeguard him against hell and make him a partaker of the age to come.<sup>17</sup>

It should be emphasized that this will be true only of those who as sons of light are believers in Christ and members of the kingdom of God. Their deeds of love are evidence of their faith and trust in Christ as their only hope of salvation.

---

<sup>16</sup>2 Corinthians 9:10-14.

<sup>17</sup>Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, "Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas, und Johannes u. die Apostelgeschichte, erlaeutert aus Talmud u. Midrasch," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), II, 220-21.



Nevertheless, the truly beneficent use of wealth is a powerful means of grace, and source of salvation; and this our Savior doubtless means to teach.<sup>18</sup>

Although we are saved because of our faith in Christ, we are reminded that the Scriptures do speak of a "reward" for a "good work."

Jesus says:

For truly, I say unto you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward.<sup>19</sup>

For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.<sup>20</sup>

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish.<sup>21</sup>

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . . . And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'<sup>22</sup>

Making a wise and sacrificial use of our possessions brings with it heavenly blessings.

#### Manage Your Possessions!

The key thought of the remaining verses of our parable emphasize

<sup>18</sup>J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel According to Luke," translated from the second German Edition, with additions, original and selected by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical, edited by John Peter Lange (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1869), XVI, 247.

<sup>19</sup>Mark 9:41.

<sup>20</sup>Romans 2:6-7.

<sup>21</sup>Luke 6:35.

<sup>22</sup>Matthew 25:34,40.



the thought: "Use your possessions wisely by managing them; do not let them manage you!" If our possessions manage us, then they may rightly be termed "unrighteous mammon."

In verse ten, Jesus lays down a general principle which also applies to the use of our possessions. Faithfulness in what is very little is decisive for faithfulness in what is much. Careful attention to what appear to be insignificant and irksome details is crucial for faithfulness. Not to be faithful in "what is very little" means not to be faithful at all. Jesus here lays down this important principle before spelling out the application He wishes to make.

"Therefore, if you have not been faithful in your handling of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust you with the genuine riches?" Here, in verse eleven, Jesus reiterates in principle the words He spoke during the Sermon on the Mount: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."<sup>23</sup>

Jesus refers again to "unrighteous mammon." Money or earthly possessions may become "unrighteous mammon" if they are used or if they are secured in a dishonest manner. But there is another meaning of "unrighteous mammon." As Plummer expresses it, "Wealth is commonly a snare and tends to promote unrighteousness."<sup>24</sup> Because of human weakness, the heart may become attached to it or to that which it makes possible. This condition leads to the misuse of money. It results in placing too high a value on that which is earthly and fleeting, and

---

<sup>23</sup>Matthew 6:21.

<sup>24</sup>Plummer, op. cit.



overlooking the "genuine riches," those, which are heavenly and lasting. It results in giving only sparingly or, too often, nothing at all of our possessions. Our obligations toward God and neighbor are totally ignored because of such earthly and selfish values. Lagrange ably expresses this condition:

If the things that are external to themselves lead them astray, they will be incapable of guarding the treasure that is part of themselves; hence that treasure, which is their only true good, God's destiny for them, their real possession, will not be entrusted to their care. For in that case it will be money which rules them, the money which they turn into an instrument of pleasure or power. In so far as they are unwilling to strip themselves of it in order to strive after a more noble end, they become slaves to money.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, mammon becomes an instrument of unrighteousness. The son of light becomes again a son of this age; the son of this age remains a son of this age. Temporal, transitory treasures are valued above eternal, lasting treasures. To such an one, God will not entrust these eternal treasures of life and salvation.

"But if you have not been faithful in that which belongs to someone else, who will give you that which is yours?" Jesus in verse twelve emphasizes that money and possessions actually do not belong to us; they are on loan from God. David expresses this fact in his prayer,

But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from thee, and of thy own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Marie Joseph Lagrange, The Gospels of Jesus Christ (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1938), II, 70-71.

<sup>26</sup>1 Chronicles 29:14-15.



God loans us money and possessions on our journey through this world; we are to use it wisely and sacrificially; we must render an account to Him of our management. That which is loaned to us is not to manage us, but we are to manage these entrusted possessions well.

If, as sons of light, we use earthly possessions wisely and sacrificially, God will give or bestow on us that which is truly ours. We will receive eternal treasures as children of God and sons of light.

St. Paul reminds the Romans:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God . . . and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ . . . .<sup>27</sup>

St. Peter terms those possessions which are truly "ours" as co-heirs with Christ: "to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you . . . ." <sup>28</sup> These heavenly possessions God will bestow on all those who, as sons of light make a wise and sacrificial use of the earthly possessions which He has loaned them.

#### The Summary of Jesus

In verse thirteen, Jesus summarizes the significance of the parable of the Unjust Manager for those who are sons of light, members of the kingdom of God. "No one," says Jesus, "can serve two masters; for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will cling to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon!" Jesus emphasizes that sons of light must be single-minded in their service of God.

---

<sup>27</sup>Romans 8:14,17.

<sup>28</sup>1 Peter 1:4.



In the preceding verses, Jesus had used a threefold contrast between earthly treasures and the treasures of the kingdom of God. In verse ten, Jesus contrasted "what is very little" with "what is much"; in verse eleven, that which is false with that which is genuine; in verse twelve, that which is fleeting and temporal with that which is lasting and eternal. In His summary, Jesus contrasts to illustrate the significance of the wise and sacrificial use of our possessions in single-minded loyalty and service to God. Jesus first contrasts the two extremes of emotion, those of hate versus love; then He draws on intellectual evaluation, cling to versus despise, to make His point.<sup>29</sup>

Jesus emphasizes that the wise and sacrificial use of our earthly possessions involves single-minded loyalty to God. He points out the delusion to which the Pharisees in their covetousness held that it was possible to cherish riches and still love God. To try to serve both is impossible. We cannot divide our affections. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."<sup>30</sup> If we love money, we cannot love God. If we love God, we will not and cannot love money. We will use the money and possessions God has loaned us wisely and sacrificially in single-minded loyalty to God.

---

<sup>29</sup>William F. Arndt, Bible Commentary--The Gospel According to St. Luke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), p. 359.

<sup>30</sup>Matthew 6:21.



## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to determine in what the "unjustness" of the unjust manager in the parable of Luke 16:1-13 consisted.

"Did his unjustness or unrighteousness consist only in squandering his master's property before his master told him that he would be dismissed?

Or, did the manager's action to reduce the amount due from the debtors add to his unrighteousness? And, if so, did Jesus here praise prudence based on unrighteousness?"

"Need this parable be a crux interpretum as it has been in the past by virtue of the traditional interpretation which follows the reasoning that the manager's final action contributed to his unjustness?"

The answer to these questions lies in a careful study of the economic conditions contemporary to the parable of the Unjust Manager. Of paramount importance is the guiding principle:

That a parable, coming from an Oriental (Jesus) and being addressed to Orientals (Jews) should be understood in the light of Oriental customs, is a truism.<sup>1</sup>

The present writer kept this guiding principle in mind in searching through and in evaluating available resource material on the social and economic background of Jesus' day with special reference to estate administration.

The key to the problem of the parable lies in the provisions of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Paul Gaechter, "The Parable of the Dishonest Steward after Oriental Conceptions," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XII, 2 (April, 1950), 124.



contract between manager and master. As we saw above, the contract very likely provided only for a set amount of annual income to be delivered by the manager to his master. The master assumed that his manager would provide for himself from the produce of the estate. The guarantee of the contract made it possible for the master to live in a city to his liking, untroubled by the cares and trivia of estate administration and certain of his annual income.

When the manager, facing imminent dismissal, reduced the amount of the debts of his debtors in order to obligate them to himself, he reduced his own income accordingly. Although he seemingly had "squeezed" his lessees considerably before, he now remits some of this "squeeze" in varying amounts in order to provide for himself in the future. By his action, he deprived himself of income. He personally sacrificed in order to reduce the debts of the debtors and thereby to ingratiate himself to them. The manager's final action did not involve unjustness or dishonesty over against his master.

The manager's unjustness consisted in squandering his master's property through negligent administration. Because of the demands of high living on his time, the manager neglected the administration of the estate. Because of the economic demands of his high living, he was unable to do what efficient administration required in order to protect and improve his master's property. The same was very probably true of the lessees and sublessees: the manager's heavy "squeeze" kept them from maintaining properly the land and property they had leased and subleased, respectively.

When Jesus praised the unjust manager, he praised him for his



efficient and prudent action, whereby he sacrificed his own gain to assure his own future. In the central thought of the parable, Jesus urges us to make a wise and sacrificial use of our earthly means in order to provide benefits for ourselves in heaven. In verses 9-13, Jesus carefully develops this to show that to make a sacrificial use of our possessions is wise (verse 9) and to emphasize that we must manage our possessions--these must not manage us (verses 10-13). To summarize His parable, Jesus illustrates His categorical statement: "You cannot serve God and mammon!" Single-mindedness in service is decisive. We either serve God or mammon. We cannot serve both.

Jesus spoke this parable for the benefit of His followers. The relationship between Jesus and His followers was personal; it was centered in His person. According to Mark 4:11, they had the "secret of the kingdom of God," whereby Jesus Himself was meant. Those who have this "secret of the kingdom" believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, as we saw above. For them, the parable of Jesus is not enigmatic but very meaningful.<sup>2</sup>

For the Pharisees and scribes, this parable was enigmatic. Luke 16:14 tells us that they reacted against Jesus. They knew that, in this parable, Jesus said some very hard words to them who were lovers of money. But, not having the "secret of the kingdom," their hearts were closed against the meaning and message of the parable. For them, this parable of Jesus remained enigmatic. They scoffed at Jesus and His conception of the kingdom of God. Their hearts remained closed to

---

<sup>2</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "μαθητῆς," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, ca 1942), IV, 444-64.



Jesus and His message of the kingdom.

To those who are members of the kingdom of God, sons of light, Jesus has some very important and compelling things to say. As Jesus emphatically points out in this parable of the kingdom, the wise and sacrificial use of possessions is of decisive importance for members of the kingdom.

Their conclusion is based on a careful study of some ancient texts by the disciples in the period of the Mosaic Law, as recorded in the Bible. Although the source material is from this period, this form of covenant theology is much older, originating perhaps in the pre-Mosaic period. Mandelstam concludes that this form of international covenant was common property of "any number of peoples and states in the ancient Middle East."

The primary purpose of the suzerainty treaty was to protect the interests of the Mosaic sovereign by establishing a close relationship of mutual support between the sovereign and his vassal. This treaty was unilateral since its stipulations were binding only on the vassal, who alone bore an oath of obedience. There was no legal possibility by which the Mosaic king bound himself to any specific obligation. The vassal was under obligation of the crown to render to the sovereign of the king.

The suzerainty treaty or covenant was designated by a Hebrew verb, translated literally, would read "to take and make." In analysis of the structure of the various ancient covenants now being studied the

<sup>1</sup>Walter E. Mandelstam, "Covenant Form in Jewish Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XVII, 3 (September, 1955), 59-76.



## APPENDIX A

### SUZERAINTY COVENANTS<sup>1</sup>

According to Mendenhall, as indicated in Chapter III, the covenant which God made with the children of Israel was a suzerainty covenant. This conclusion is based on a careful study of such covenants made by the Hittites in the period of the Hittite Empire, 1450-1200 B.C. Although the source material extant is from this period, this form of covenant seemingly is much older, originating perhaps in Mesopotamia. Mendenhall concludes that this form of international covenant was common property of "any number of peoples and states in the second millenium B.C."

The primary purpose of the suzerainty treaty was to protect the interests of the Hittite sovereign by establishing a firm relationship of mutual support between the sovereign and his vassal. This treaty was unilateral since its stipulations were binding only on the vassal, who alone took an oath of obedience. There was no legal formality by which the Hittite king bound himself to any specific obligation. The emphasis was on the obligation of the vassal to trust in the benevolence of the king.

The suzerainty treaty or covenant was designated by a phrase which, translated literally, would read "oaths and bonds." An analysis of the structure of the various extant covenants near always yielded the six

---

<sup>1</sup>George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," The Biblical Archaeologist, XVII, 3 (September, 1954), 50-76.



elements listed in the following paragraphs.

The preamble identified the author of the covenant together with his titles, attributes, and genealogy. The emphasis was always on the majesty and power of the king, who is here conferring this suzerainty relationship on his vassal.

A historical prologue followed. This spoke of the benevolent deeds which the Hittite king had performed for the vassal, thereby emphasizing the obligation of the vassal to the king as a basis for the specific obedience required of him in the future. The "I-Thou" form of address is characteristic of this section.

The stipulations detailed the obligations which were imposed on the vassal and accepted by him. These included such requirements as prohibiting the vassal from entering into any other foreign relationships outside of the Hittite Empire, prohibiting any enmity against anything under the king's sovereignty, requiring the vassal to answer any call to arms and to have unlimited trust in the king. The vassal was enjoined against giving asylum to any refugees and was required to appear once a year before the king, possibly at the time of the annual tribute. Any controversies between vassals must be submitted unconditionally to the king for judgment. The interests of the king were always foremost in these stipulations.

The suzerainty covenant made provision for deposit of the covenant in the temple and for a periodic public reading. This served to acquaint the subjects of the vassal with his obligations to the king, and to increase the respect of the vassal for the king. The intention was also perhaps to emphasize that local deities could and would not help in case of a breach of covenant.



The gods acted as witnesses to the covenant by being enumerated in the covenant. The gods of the Hittite state and of the local pantheon were included. Also mentioned in deified form were the mountains, rivers, sea, springs, heaven, earth, clouds, and winds. For a parallel, see Deuteronomy 32:1 and Isaiah 1:2.

Perhaps the most interesting feature was the "curses and blessings" formula. This emphasized that the covenant was strictly in the realm of sacred law. An interesting parallel is found in Deuteronomy 28.

In addition to these features of the written text, we must remember that the vassal pledged his obedience by a formal oath, accompanied by some solemn ceremony. Seemingly also there was some form for initiating action against a rebellious vassal.



## APPENDIX B

### THE ORIGIN OF THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY

In tracing the possible origin of the Qumran sect, Vermès suggests that the Damascus Sect had a common origin with the Essenes. If this is true, then the Qumran "Manual of Discipline," the "Damascus Document," and available information on the Essenes demonstrate three phases of development.

The first, the Damascus stage, resulted from a rupture within the ranks of the Jewish priesthood. Although striving after the strictest ceremonial purity, it entailed neither communal ownership nor celibacy.

The second, the Qumran stage, saw a more marked separation from the bulk of Judaism. Qumran featured a highly developed communal organization, actual renunciation of private property, and possibly also of marriage, although this is far from certain.

The third, the last state, brings us to the middle of the first century A.D. In the opinion of Vermès, this stage is the Essenism of Philo, Josephus, Pliny and Hippolytus. Vermès feels that little change is evident since the Qumran period.<sup>1</sup>

This is one of a variety of theories on the origin of the Qumran community. In his very recent book, Millar Burrows examines the data and the various theories in great detail.<sup>2</sup> A perusal of this presentation

---

<sup>1</sup>Geza Vermès, Discovery in the Judean Desert (New York: Desclee Company, 1956), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>Millar Burrows, "Part Four: The Origin of the Qumran Sect," More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls—New Scrolls and New Interpretations with Translations of Important Recent Discoveries (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), pp. 191-250.



will show how difficult it is at the present time to do more than make tentative suggestions as to the possible origin of the Qumran community.

The center of the community was a group of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets.

They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets.

They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets. They were a community of men and women who were devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets.

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Numbers, 1, 1-22.



## APPENDIX C

### THE COVENANT OF THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY

#### Entering the Covenant<sup>1</sup>

the order of the community; to seek God . . . ; to do what is good and upright before him as he commanded through Moses and through all his servants the prophets; to love all that he has chosen and hate all that he has rejected; to be far from all evil and cleave to all good works; to do truth and righteousness and justice in the land; to walk no longer in the stubbornness of a guilty heart and eyes of fornication, doing all evil; to bring all those who have offered themselves to do God's statutes into a covenant of steadfast love; to be united in the counsel of God and to walk before him perfectly with regard to all the things that have been revealed for the appointed times of their testimonies; to love all the sons of light, each according to his lot in the counsel of God, and to hate all the sons of darkness, each according to his guilt in vengeance of God.

And all who have offered themselves for his truth shall bring all their knowledge and strength and wealth into the community of God, to purify their knowledge in the truth of God's statutes, and to distribute their strength according to the perfection of his ways and all their property according to his righteous counsel; not to transgress in any one of all the words of God in their periods; not to advance their times or postpone any of their appointed festivals; not to turn aside from his true statutes, going to the right or to the left.

And all who come into the order of the community shall pass over into the covenant before God, to do according to all that he has commanded, and not to turn away from following him because of any dread or terror or trial or fright in the dominion of Belial. And when they pass into the covenant, the priests and the Levites shall bless the God of salvation and all his works of truth; and all those who are passing into the covenant shall say after them, Amen! Amen!

---

<sup>1</sup>The Manual of Discipline, i, 1-20.



Oath of Admission<sup>2</sup>

And as for these, this is the regulation of their ways concerning all these ordinances. When they are gathered together, every one who comes into the council of the community shall enter into the covenant of God in the sight of all who have offered themselves; and he shall take it upon himself by a binding oath to turn to the law of Moses, according to all that he commanded, with all his heart and with all his soul, to all that is revealed of it to the sons of Zadok, the priests who keep the covenant and who seek his will, and to the majority of the men of their covenant, who have offered themselves together to his truth and to walking in his good will; and that he will take it upon himself in the covenant to be separated from all the men of error who walk in the way of wickednesses. For these are not reckoned in his covenant . . . .

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., v, 7b-11a.



A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albright, William Foxwell. Archaeology and the Religion of Israel.  
Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946.
- . From the Stone Age to Christianity--Monotheism and the Historic Process. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940.
- . The Biblical Period. Reprinted by permission from The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion. Edited by Louis Finkelstein. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949.
- Almqvist, Helge. Plutarch und Das Neue Testament, Ein Beitrag zum Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamentum. Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri A-B, 1946.
- Alt, Albrecht. Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel. II. Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953.
- Arndt, William F. Bible Commentary--The Gospel According to St. Luke. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956.
- , and F. Wilbur Gingrich. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Avi-Yonah, M. "Map of Roman Palestine," The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine, V (1935), 139-214.
- Baird, J. Arthur. "A Pragmatic Approach to Parable Exegesis: Some New Evidence on Mark 4:11, 33-34," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXVI, iii (September, 1957), 201-207.
- Barrett, C. K. The New Testament Background: Selected Documents. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1956.
- Behm, Johannes. "-----," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. II. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935. Pp. 572-573.
- Bell, H. Idris. "Chapter X. Egypt under the Early Principate," The Cambridge Ancient History. X. Edited by S. A. Cook, et al. New York: MacMillan, 1934. Pp. 235-294.
- Bertholet, Alfred. Kulturgeschichte Israels. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1919.
- Blass, Friedrich, and Albert Debrunner. Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch. Neunte Auflage. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1954.



- Bornkamm, Guenther. "μυστήριον, κ.τ.λ.," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. IV. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d. Pp. 309-334.
- Bouchier, E. D. Syria as a Roman Province. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, 1916.
- Bowie, Walter Russell, et al. "Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke," The Interpreter's Bible. VIII. Edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1952. Pp. 1-434.
- Bright, John. The Kingdom of God--The Biblical Concept and its Meaning for the Church. Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1953.
- Brown, Francis, et al. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as Translated by Edward Robinson. Corrected edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.
- Brown, Raymond. "Johannine Gospel and Epistles," The Scrolls and the New Testament. Edited by Krister Stendahl. New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1957. Pp. 183-207.
- Bruce, Alexander Balmain. The Parabolic Teaching of Christ, A Systematic and Critical Study of the Parables of Our Lord. Third Revised edition. New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1890.
- The Synoptic Gospels. Vol. I in The Expositor's Greek Testament. Edited by W. Robertson Nicoll. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.
- Buechler, Adolf. "Der galilaeische Am-ha-Ares des zweiten Jahrhunderts," Beitraege zur innern Geschichte des palaestiniischen Judentums in den ersten zwei Jahrhunderten. Vienna: Alfred Hoelder, 1906.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," translated by F. C. Grant. Part I of Form Criticism, A New Method of New Testament Research. Chicago: Willett, Clarke & Co., 1923. Pp. 7-75.
- Burrows, Millar. More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls--New Scrolls and New Interpretations with Translations of Important Recent Discoveries. New York: The Viking Press, 1958.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls with Translations by the Author. New York: The Viking Press, 1955.
- Gremer, Hermann. Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek. Translated from the German of the 2nd edition with additional matter and corrections by William Urwick. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878.



- Dalman, Gustaf. Brot, Oel und Wein. Vol. IV in Arbeit und Sitte in Palaestina. Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1935.
- . Der Ackerbau. Vol. II in Arbeit und Sitte in Palaestina. Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1932.
- . Jesus--Jeshua, Studies in the Gospels. Translated by Paul P. Levertoff. New York: MacMillan, 1929.
- . Von der Ernte zum Mahl. Vol. III in Arbeit und Sitte in Palaestina. Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1933.
- Danby, Herbert, translator. The Mishnah, Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes. London: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Daube, David. Studies in Biblical Law. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947.
- . The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism. London: University of London, 1956.
- Deissmann, Adolf. Bible Studies--Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity. Translated by Alexander Grieve. 2nd edition. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909.
- . Light from the Ancient East, the New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World. Translated by Lionel R. M. Strachan. New and completely revised edition. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1927.
- Dalitzsch, Franz. Biblical Commentary on the Psalms. II. Translated from the second edition revised of German by Francis Bolton. Second edition. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889.
- Dibelius, Martin. From Tradition to Gospel. Translated from the revised second edition of Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums by Bertram Lee Woolf. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.
- Dodd, C. H. The Parables of the Kingdom. Revised. London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1950.
- Easton, Burton Scott. The Gospel According to St. Luke--A Critical and Exegetical Commentary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.
- Ederheim, Alfred. The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah. 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1936.
- Eiger, Otto. Zum Aegyptischen Grundbuchwesen in Roemischer Zeit, Untersuchungen auf Grund der griechischen Papyri. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1909.



- Farrar, F. W. The Gospel According to St. Luke, with Maps, Notes and Introduction. Vol. XXIV in The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Edited by J. J. S. Perowne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889.
- Fiebig, Paul. Die Umwelt des Neuen Testaments--Religionsgeschichtliche und geschichtliche Texte, in deutscher Uebersetzung und mit Anmerkungen versehen, zum Verstaendnis des Neuen Testaments. Goettlichen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1926.
- Finkelstein, Louis. "The Pharisees: Their Origin and Their Philosophy," The Harvard Theological Review, XXII, 3 (July, 1929), 185-261.
- Foerster, Werner. "Σιναβαλλω," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. II. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935. Pp. 69-70.
- "Κύριος . . . 3. Jesus der Herr," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. III. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938. Pp. 1037-1094.
- Frank, Tenney. A History of Rome. New York: Henry Holt & Co., c.1923.
- Furrer, Konrad. Die Bedeutung der biblischen Geographie fuer die biblischen Exegese. Zuerich: Orell, Fuessli, 1870.
- Gaechter, Paul. "The Parable of the Dishonest Steward after Oriental Conceptions," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XII, 2 (April, 1950), 121-131.
- Gibson, Margaret D. "On the Parable of the Unjust Steward," The Expository Times, XIV (October, 1902-September, 1903), 334.
- Gilmour, S. MacLean. "Introduction--The Gospel According to St. Luke," The Interpreter's Bible. VIII. Edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1952. Pp. 1-26.
- Godet, F. A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke. Translated from 2nd French edition by E. W. Shalders & M. D. Cusin. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1887.
- Graetz, Heinrich. History of the Jews. II. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America. 1941.
- Granott, A. The Land System in Palestine: History and Structure. Translated from the Hebrew by M. Simon. London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1952.
- Grant, Frederick C. "A New Book on the Parables," Anglican Theological Review, XXX, 2 (April, 1948), 118-121.



- . The Economic Background of the Gospels. New York: Oxford University Press, 1926.
- Hampden-Cook, E. "The Unjust Steward, I," The Expository Times, XVI (October, 1904-September, 1905), 44.
- Hardy, Edward Rochie Jr. The Large Estates of Byzantine Egypt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931.
- Harper, George McLean Jr. "Village Administration in the Roman Province of Syria," Yale Classical Studies. I. Edited by Austin M. Harmon. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928. Pp. 105-168.
- Hatch, Edwin, and Henry A. Redpath. A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament Including the Apocryphal Books. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897.
- Hauck, Friedrich. "παράβολή," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. V. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d. Pp. 741-759.
- . "παροικία," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. V. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d. Pp. 852-855.
- Heichelheim. Roman Syria. Vol. IV in An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome. Edited by Tenny Frank. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1938.
- Hertz, Johannes. Grossgrundbesitz in Palaestina im Zeitalter Jesu. Vol. XXIV in Palaestinajahrbuch des Deutschen evangelischen Instituts fuer Altertumsuissenschaft des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem. Edited by Albrecht Alt. Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Son, 1928.
- Hitti, Philip K. History of Syria, Including Lebanon and Palestine. New York: MacMillan, 1951.
- Hunt, A. S., and C. C. Edgar. Select Papyri with an English Translation. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934.
- Jeremias, Joachim. Die wirtschaftlichen Verhaeltnisse. Vol. I in Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu. Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1923.
- . Die sozialen Verhaeltnisse. Vol. II in Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu. Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1924.
- . The Parables of Jesus. Translated by S. H. Hooke from the third German edition. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1955.
- Johnson, J. de M., Victor Martin, and Arthur S. Hunt, editors. Catalogue of the Greek Papyri in the John Rylands Library--Documents of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods (Nos. 62-456). II. New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1915.



- Jones, A. H. M. The Herods of Judea. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938.
- Josephus, Flavius. The Works of Flavius Josephus. Translated by William Whiston. Philadelphia: David McKay, Publishers, n.d.
- Juelicher, Adolf. Die Gleichnisreden Jesu. 2 vols. in one. Zweite, neubearbeitete Auflage—zweiter Abdruck. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1910.
- Kennedy, A. R. S. "Weights and Measures," A Dictionary of the Bible, Dealing with its Language, Literature and Contents, Including the Biblical Theology. IV. Edited by James Hastings, et al. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902. Pp. 901-913.
- Klausner, Joseph. Jesus of Nazareth, His Life, Times, and Teaching. Translated from the Original Hebrew by Herbert Danby. New York: MacMillan, 1945.
- Klein, Samuel. Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte und Geographie Galilaeas. Vol. I in Palaestina-Studien. Vienna: Menorah, 1923.
- , Galilaea von der Makkabäerzeit bis 67. Vol. II in Palaestina-Studien. Vienna: Menorah, 1928.
- Kleinknecht, Hermann, et al. "Βαριδούς, Βαριδεία . . .," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament. V. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d. Pp. 562-592.
- Krauss, Samuel. Grundriss der Gesamtwissenschaft des Judentums—Talmudische Archäologie. II. Leipzig: Buchhandlung Gustav Fock, 1911.
- Laetsch, Theodore. Bible Commentary—Jeremiah. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1952.
- Lagrange, Marie Joseph. Études Bibliques—Évangile selon Saint Luc. Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1941.
- , Évangile selon Saint Matthieu. Seventh edition. Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1948.
- , The Gospels of Jesus Christ. 2 vols. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1938.
- Lange, John Peter. The Gospel According to Mark. Revised by William G. T. Shedd. Sixth edition. New York: Scribner's, 1873.
- Liddell, Henry George, and Robert Scott. A Greek-English Lexicon. A New Edition revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, et al. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.



- Lobel, E., and C. H. Roberts, editors. The Oxyrhynchus Papyri. XXII. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1954.
- Manson, T. W. The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospel According to St. Matthew and St. Luke, Arranged with Introduction and Commentary. London: SGM Press Ltd., 1954.
- Manson, William. Jesus the Messiah—The Synoptic Tradition of the Revelation of God in Christ: with Special Reference to Form Criticism. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1952.
- . The Gospel of Luke. Vol. III in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary. New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.
- McNeile, A. H. An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament. Second edition revised by G. S. C. Williams. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.
- Mendenhall, George E. "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," The Biblical Archaeologist, XVII, 3 (September, 1954), 50-76.
- Michel, Otto. "οὐκ ἔρομαι, -μοσ," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament. V. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, n.d. Pp. 151-155.
- Miller, W. D. "The Unjust Steward," The Expository Times, XV (October, 1903-September, 1904), 332-334.
- Moldenke, Harold N. and Alma L. "51. Grassica Nigra," Plants of the Bible. Waltham, Mass.: Chronica Botannica Co., 1952. Pp. 59-62.
- Momigliano, A. "Chapter XI. Herod of Judea," The Cambridge Ancient History. X. Edited by S. A. Cook, et al. New York: MacMillan, 1934. Pp. 316-339.
- , and G. H. Stevenson. "Chapter XXV. The Roman Government of Palestine," The Cambridge Ancient History. X. Edited by S. A. Cook, et al. New York: MacMillan, 1934. Pp. 849-855.
- Mommsen, Theodor. The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian. II. Translated by William P. Dickson. New York: MacMillan, 1909.
- Montefiore, C. G. The Synoptic Gospels, Edited with an Introduction and a Commentary. Second edition, revised. New York: MacMillan, 1927.
- Moore, Frank Gardiner. The Roman's World. New York: Columbia University Press, 1936.
- Moore, George Foot. Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927.



- Moule, C. F. D. An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1953.
- Moulton, James Hope, and George Milligan. The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949.
- Moulton, W. J. "Parable," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels. II. Edited by James Hastings, et al. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917. Pp. 312-317.
- Nestle, Eberhard, and Erwin Nestle, editors. Novum Testamentum Graece cum Apparatu Critico. Seventeenth edition. Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1941.
- Noth, Martin. The History of Israel. Translated from the second edition of Geschichte Israels by Stanley Godman. London: Adam & Charles Black, c.1958.
- Olmstead, A. T. Land Tenure in the Ancient Orient. New York: MacMillan, 1926.
- Pfeiffer, Robert H. History of New Testament Times, with an Introduction to the Apocrypha. New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1949.
- Piper, Otto A. "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God," Interpretation, A Journal of Bible and Theology, I, 2 (April, 1947), 182-200.
- . "The Understanding of the Synoptic Parables," Evangelical Quarterly, XIV, 1 (January 15, 1942), 42-53.
- Plummer, Alfred. The Gospel According to St. Luke. Vol. XXVIII in The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and New Testaments. Edited by Charles A. Briggs, et al. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.
- Preisigke, Friedrich. Woerterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden mit Einschluss der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder, usw. aus Aegypten. 3 vols. Bearbeitet u. herausgegeben von Emil Kieszling. Berlin: Selbstverlag der Erben, 1931.
- Rad, Gerhard von. "B. ⲉⲛⲟⲩ und ⲛⲁⲓⲟⲩ im AT," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. I. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933. Pp. 563-569.
- Radin, Max. The Jews among the Greeks and Romans. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1915.
- Ramsay, William M. Asiatic Elements in Greek Civilization--The Gifford Lectures in the University of Edinburgh, 1915-16. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928.



- . Luke the Physician and Other Studies of Religion. New York: Geo. H. Doran Co., n.d.
- . The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament. Fourth edition. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920.
- Rengstorff, Karl Heinrich. "μαθιταίς," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. IV. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, ca.1942. Pp. 444-464.
- . "Das Evangelium nach Lukas." Vol. III in Das Neue Testament Deutsch. Edited by Paul Althaus und Johannes Behm. 5. neubearbeitete Auflage. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949.
- Reu, M. "Der biblische Begriff des Reiches Gottes," Kirchliche Zeitschrift, LV, 8 (August, 1931), 449-470, 487.
- Riggs, James Stevenson. A History of the Jewish People during the Maccabean and Roman Periods, including New Testament Times. Vol. IV in The History Series for Bible Students. Edited by Charles F. Kent and Frank K. Sanders. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.
- Roberts, C. H., and E. G. Turner. "533. Lease of a Vineyard (170 B.C.)," Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library at Manchester--Documents of the Ptolemaic, Roman, and Byzantine Periods (#552-717). IV. Manchester: University Press, 1952. Pp. 39-45.
- Roberts, W. Rhys. Rhetorica. Vol. XI in The Works of Aristotle, Translated into English. Edited by W. D. Ross. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.
- Robertson, A. T. A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research. Fourth edition, revised. New York: Geo. H. Doran Co., c.1923.
- . Luke the Historian in the Light of Research. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920.
- Rostovtzeff, M. The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World. 3 vols. Corrected first edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.
- . The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926.
- Salmon, Edward T. A History of the Roman World from 30 B.C. to A.D. 138. Third edition. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1957.
- Sanford, Eva Matthews. The Mediterranean World in Ancient Times. New York: The Ronald Press, c.1938.



- Schlatter, Adolf. Der Evangelist Matthaeus: seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbstaeendigkeit. Stuttgart: Galvar Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1929.
- Schniewind, Julius. Das Evangelium nach Markus. Vol. II in Das Neue Testament Deutsch. Edited by Paul Althaus und Johannes Behm. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949.
- Schuerer, Emil. A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ. 2 divisions in 5 vols. Translated by John MacPherson. Second and revised edition. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1916.
- Schrenk, Gottlob. "ἁδικία," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. I. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933. Pp. 152-157.
- Smith, B. T. D. The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels--A Critical Study. New York: MacMillan, 1937.
- Smith, David. The Days of His Flesh--The Earthly Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914.
- Smith, George Adam. Jerusalem--the Topography, Economics and History from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70. 2 vols. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907.
- Smith, J. B. Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament (K.J.V.). Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1955.
- Sprenger, Ferner. "Jesu Saee- und Ernte-gleichnisse aus dem palaestnischen Ackerbauverhaeltnissen dargestellt," Palaestina-Jahrbuch des Deutschen evangelisches Institutes fuer Altertums-wissenschaft des heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem. IX. Edited by Gustaf Dalman. Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1913. Pp. 79-87.
- Stendahl, Krister, editor. The Scrolls and the New Testament. New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1957.
- Strack, Hermann, and Paul Billerbeck. Das Evangelium nach Matthaeus Erlaeutert aus Talmud und Midrasch. Vol. I in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch. Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922.
- , Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas, und Johannes u. die Apostelgeschichte Erlaeutert aus Talmud und Midrasch. Vol. II in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch. Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924.
- Streeter, Burnett Hillman. The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins. Fourth impression, revised. London: MacMillan., 1927.



- Taubenschlag, Raphael. The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri (332 B.C. - 640 A.D.). New York: Herald Square Press, Inc., 1944.
- Taylor, Vincent. The Formation of the Gospel Tradition. London: MacMillan & Co., 1935.
- Thayer, Joseph Henry. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti Translated, Revised and Enlarged. Corrected edition. Chicago: American Book Co., c.1889.
- Thiessen, Henry Clarence. Introduction to the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1943.
- Toutain, Jules. The Economic Life of the Ancient World. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1951.
- Trench, Richard Chenevix. Notes on the Parables of our Lord. Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.
- Van Oosterzee, J. J. The Gospel According to Luke. Translated from the Second German edition, with additions, original and selected by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck. Vol. XVI in A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical. Edited by John Peter Lange. New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1869.
- Vernès, Géza. Discovery in the Judean Desert. New York: Desclée Co., 1956.
- Westermann, William Linn, et al., editors. Zenon Papyri--Business Papers of the Third Century B.C. Dealing with Palestine and Egypt. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1940.
- Wilkinson, John Gardiner. The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians. I. A new edition, revised and corrected by Samuel Birch. New York: Scribner & Walford, 1879.
- Winer, George Benedict. A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament, Prepared as a Solid Basis for the Interpretation of the New Testament. Seventh edition, enlarged and improved by Gottlieb Luenemann--revised and authorized translation. Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1839.
- Winter, John Garrett. Life and Letters in the Papyri--Jerome Lectures. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1933.
- Wohlenberg, Gustav. Das Evangelium des Markus. Vol. II in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Edited by Theodor Zahn. 1. u. 2. Auflage. Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1910.



Wright, G. E. The Old Testament Against its Environment—Studies in Biblical Theology. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1950.

Yadin, Yigael. The Message of the Scrolls. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.

Zahn, Theodor. Das Evangelium des Matthaeus. Vol. I in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Vierte Auflage. Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1922.

----- . Das Evangelium des Lucas. Vol. III in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Dritte u. vierte durchgesehene Auflage. Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1920.

----- . Introduction to the New Testament. 3 vols. Translated from the third German edition by John Moore Trout, et al. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.