

IN THAT DAY

IN THAT DAY:  
THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN  
IN LUKE-ACTS

by

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#### ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the concept of the "Day of the Lord" as it comes to expression in Luke-Acts. In these books, this Old Testament concept is reinterpreted and used in conjunction with another Old Testament theme: the coming of the Son of man. An analysis of the Lukan passages about the coming of the Son of man (Luke 17:22-37; 21:5-36; 12:35-48) in the context of the contemporary historical situation of first-century Judaism reveals that when speaking of the coming of the Son of man, the Lukan Jesus is referring to a number of comings; namely, his own life (Luke 12) and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Luke 17 and 21). The Old Testament imagery of the Son of man is used to show the nature of this coming: a vindication of those suffering "for my name's sake" (Luke 21:17). In Luke this message of hope and judgment is brought to Israel; Acts shows how the final age has dawned, extending this message of hope and judgment to the gentiles. The suffering of Jesus and his resurrection of vindication become the suffering of the church to be ended by another day of vindication and resurrection. Luke-Acts, therefore, points out the eschatological character of the coming of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, for they are the

beginning of an event that will be consummated in the final coming. In the mean-time, those who eagerly await that coming can claim the already fulfilled promises and testify to the Spirit-filled restoration taking place already now, in the last days.

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## CONTENTS

Introduction	1
General Background	3
The First Century in Judea	3
A Note on Language	5
The Son of Man	7
The Day of The Lord	10
Lukan Background	13
The Composition and Date of Luke-Acts	13
Luke's Audience	16
The Lukan Context	18
Luke 17:22-37	23
Luke 21:5-36	38
The Eschatological Parables	54
Conclusions based on Luke	59
Acts	62
Conclusion	69
Works Cited	71
General Bibliography	75

## INTRODUCTION

Anguished criticism of the current world order and the energizing promise of a radically new future characterized the prophetic tradition from Moses to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> A wealth of symbols portrayed the ending of the old, worn ways and the dawn of a new time; one of these was the concept of "the day of the Lord".

As the story of Israel progressed this concept changed and grew. Its solid basis in Israelite history made the day of the Lord a symbol of Yahweh's involvement with his people. Prophetic application of it to specific periods and times infused the concept with new meaning and import. Jesus, too, adapted this motif in the message he delivered to first-century Israel. In doing so he affirmed the meaning that this symbol carried for Israel, reinterpreting it for his own time.

In this thesis I shall undertake an analysis of the prophetic day-of-the-Lord theme as it comes to expression in Luke-Acts.<sup>2</sup> In the body of the work I shall analyze the

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<sup>1</sup>See Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup>Mention should be made of Hans Conzelmann's Die Mitte Der Zeit; ET, The Theology of St Luke trans Geoffrey Boswell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961). Most studies of Luke and/or Acts since the publication of this book have focused on Conzelmann's assertion that Luke de-eschatologized the gospel in order to account for the delay of the parousia, a



theme of the day of the Lord as it is revealed in various passages, viz: Luke 17:22-37; 21:5-36; 12:35-48; Acts 2:17ff; 3:17-26; 17:30-31. These texts "do not carry their meaning within themselves",<sup>3</sup> nor do they derive their meaning from other similar texts. Therefore, I shall attend to the historical situation from which these sayings derive force, momentum and colour. To this end the first five sections of the thesis deal with the historical situation and Jewish eschatological expectation in first-century Palestine; the nature of apocalyptic language; the Old Testament themes of the Son of man and the day of Yahweh; and the composition and date of Luke-Acts.

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delay which caused a crisis in the early church. Conzelmann's position has been more than adequately refuted, most recently by Robert Maddox, The Purpose of Luke-Acts (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 100-157, and so will not be discussed in this thesis.

<sup>3</sup>Wayne A. Meeks, "A Hermeneutic of Social Embodiment" in Christians Among Jews and Gentiles ed G.W.E. Nickelsburg with G.W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 183.

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

### The First Century in Judea

First-century Judaism existed in a situation of crisis. Centuries of servitude to Babylon, to Persia, and then to the Hellenistic heirs of Alexandria had culminated in Roman rule. Under Roman control Jewish society settled down to stagnant routine characterized by inequality and exploitation. An underlying spirit of revolt threatened to erupt into action with every particularly oppressive act.<sup>4</sup> This political situation resulted in questions about the efficacy of Israel's God. As the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 and the subsequent exile had produced a crisis of faith in Yahweh, so Israel under the Romans split into diverse camps: pious quietists, disaffected skeptics, and, at least sporadically, revolutionaries.

If there was one creator God who had chosen Israel as the single people with whom he had entered into covenant, and if, contrary to her obvious destiny Israel languished in

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<sup>4</sup>See G. Theissen, The First Followers of Jesus: A Sociological Analysis of Earliest Christianity trans. John Bowden (London; SCM, 1978); Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), Introduction; Sean Freyne, Galilee, Jesus and The Gospels (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), which all do an analysis of the historical situation at this time.

servitude, it was to be expected--so Israel reasoned--that God would finally take the initiative, decisively vindicating his people in the sight of their enemies.<sup>5</sup> This expectation of intervention by the Lord of history, who made to live, and who made to die (Deut 32:39; cf. Job 34:14f; Ps 104:29f), is what is generally referred to as eschatology.

Since eschatological hope emerged in modes of action and forms of life that related variously to the ushering in of the great intervention, different groups within Judaism could be distinguished in accordance with their different eschatological hopes. Josephus attempted to describe to his gentile readership the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees. But he judged that the description would be intelligible only if eschatological expectation were translated into familiar philosophical terms. Accordingly, the Essenes, who thought God would act to establish his rule, became determinists; the Sadducees, who thought that it was up to them to establish God's rule, believed in free will; and the Pharisees, who entertained both policies, believed that fate and the human will cooperated. (JA

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<sup>5</sup>N. T. Wright, "Jesus, Israel and The Cross" in SBL 1985 Seminar Papers ed. Kent Howard Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press), 79. That this was ancient expectation is indicated by Klaus Koch, The Prophets: The Assyrian Period Trans. M. Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 96, "ancient tradition... assumed that God would intervene under all conditions on behalf of the only people on earth who belonged to him." See also J. Neusner, First-Century Judaism in Crisis (New York: Abingdon, 1975), 19f.

XIII.172-173; cf JA XVIII.12-18; BJ. 162-165).<sup>6</sup>

Luke also attempted to characterize the eschatological hope and expectation of Jesus and his followers, but was more successful than Josephus in maintaining the Jewish character of those beliefs. Our interpretation of eschatology, and specifically the theme of the day of the Lord in Luke-Acts, therefore, should bear in mind the specific historical circumstances and expectations to which that eschatological hope is tied.

#### A Note on Language

By and large, it was the prophetic literature which provided the framework within which Israel thought about God's historic action on her behalf. First-century Israel was a people once again in exile, waiting for the great day of Yahweh in which God would act on her behalf; when this day was spoken of, therefore, it was with the symbol-charged language of the prophets. In the last two centuries of the Second Temple (130 BCE-70 CE) prophetic language took on apocalyptic traits, which could be characterized as follows.

1. Apocalyptic literature and language were rooted in a concrete historical situation: at a fundamental level something was wrong.<sup>7</sup> The apocalyptic mode of speech

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<sup>6</sup>N. T. Wright, "The Battle For the Kingdom: Jesus and The Temple", lecture delivered at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, January 31, 1989.

<sup>7</sup>J. J. Collins, "The Jewish Apocalypse" in Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre ed. J. J. Collins, (NP: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), 27.

addressed and assessed this historical situation.<sup>8</sup>

2. Apocalyptic literature envisioned a decisive action by Yahweh by which oppressive enemies would be judged and the people vindicated and restored.<sup>9</sup> The apocalyptic writers envisioned this day in such a way that the present time was one of urgency and crisis.<sup>10</sup> In light of this it should be remembered that Judaism in general and Jesus in particular "read the Bible as if the mass of promise and prophecy referred to today and to a tomorrow on the point of dawning."<sup>11</sup>

3. Apocalyptic literature referred to God's action in end-of-the-world language. This did not necessarily suppose that this action would actually result in the end of the historical world.<sup>12</sup> Hence, apocalyptic imagery should be understood as "symbolic realism,"<sup>13</sup> which used the

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<sup>8</sup>Richard A. Horsley, Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 138.

<sup>9</sup>Horsley, 160; also Collins, 25, where the use of "wicked" and "good" place an unwarranted emphasis on the individual rather than the corporate emphasis found in most apocalyptic writing.

<sup>10</sup>G. B. Caird, The Language and Imagery of The Bible (London: Duckworth, 1980) 258; Collins, "The Jewish Apocalypse" 26.

<sup>11</sup>B. F. Meyer, The Aims of Jesus (London: SCM, 1979), 184.

<sup>12</sup>Caird, 256.

<sup>13</sup>A. N. Wilder, "Eschatological Imagery and Earthly Circumstance" NTS (1959), 235; see also C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons,

language of finality "not in the sense of 'last' or 'the end', but only in the sense of 'finally' or 'at last.'"<sup>14</sup>

4. The interpretation of apocalyptic language should therefore work on a level other than the literal, while allowing for literal interpretation on the part of hearers.<sup>15</sup> In the words of C H Dodd, "it is at least open to the reader to take the traditional apocalyptic imagery as a series of symbols standing for realities which the human mind cannot directly apprehend, and as such capable of various interpretation and re-interpretation as the lessons of history or a deepening understanding of the ways of God demand."<sup>16</sup>

The language and forms for speaking about God's action in history in the first century were those of apocalyptic literature. Our analysis of Jesus' sayings as recorded in the gospels, therefore, shall take into consideration the nature and purpose of apocalyptic literature in his time.

#### The Son of Man

Although the theme of the Son of man and Jesus' use of it have been the centre of much debate in recent scholarship, a number of points can be secured with high

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1961), 81.

<sup>14</sup>Horsley, 168.

<sup>15</sup>Caird, 256.

<sup>16</sup>Dodd, 81, see also Meyer, Aims, 245-259.

probability. These points shape the assumptions from which our analysis proceeds. The Old Testament basis for the Son of man imagery in the New Testament and other apocalyptic writings is Daniel 7.<sup>17</sup> In Dan 7:13-27, "one like a [Son of] man" (v 13) receives dominion and an everlasting kingdom (v 14). The subsequent interpretation (vv 17-27) reveals that the "one like a [Son of] man" is identified with the saints of the most high (v 18, 27),<sup>18</sup> who shall undergo a period of suffering under an unjust king (v 23-25). This king will then be judged and destroyed (v 26), and the saints of the most high shall receive the kingdom (v 27).

Central to this passage is the concept of the suffering of the people of God and their ultimate vindication with the coming of the "one like a [Son of]

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<sup>17</sup>See N. Perrin, Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 167-172; cf Donald Juel, Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 165f. The basis of the Daniel 7 imagery, according to J. A. Emerton, "The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery" JTS 9 (1958) 225-42, is an Israelite (formerly Canaanite) enthronement ritual.

<sup>18</sup>On the corporate interpretation of Dan 7, see M. D. Hooker, "Is the Son of Man Problem really Insoluble?" in E. Best and R. M. Wilson, Eds, Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 155-168; M. Casey, "The Corporate Interpretation of 'One Like a Son of Man' (Dan 7:13) at the time of Jesus" NT XVIII (1976), 167-180; C. F. D. Moule, "Neglected Features in the Problem of 'The Son of Man'", Neues Testament und Kirche: Festschrift fur Rudolf Schnackenburg ed. J. Gnllka, (Freiburg, 1974), 413-428; cf J. J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction To the Jewish Matrix of Christianity (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 82.

man".<sup>19</sup> This is also apparent in another Old Testament text, Psalm 80:17:

But let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,  
the Son of man whom thou hast made strong for  
thyself.

Here, too, one called the Son of man is a figure that has suffered.<sup>20</sup>

Mention should also be made here of the Similitudes of Enoch and 4 Ezra 13. Although the occurrence of the phrase Son of man in these two works may suggest the existence of a fixed Son-of-man figure in Jewish thought, it is more likely that both writings reflect the "varied use of Son of man imagery in Jewish writings."<sup>21</sup> Hence, although they are loosely based on the imagery of Dan 7, Enoch and Ezra move creatively beyond Daniel,<sup>22</sup> enlarging his imagery to encompass their own situation. The imagery of 4 Ezra, moreover, coincidentally touches that of Luke by reference to a "day" of the Son of man (4 Ezra 13:52). This document also draws upon the Old Testament theme of the day of the Lord.

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<sup>19</sup>Hooker, 1979, 167; see also E. Schweizer, Lordship and Discipleship (London: SCM, 1960), 22-31.

<sup>20</sup>Moule, "Neglected Features", 418.

<sup>21</sup>Perrin, Rediscovering, 166ff.

<sup>22</sup>See Perrin, 167ff; Collins, Apoc Imag, 148, 166.



### The Day of the Lord

The Old Testament day-of-Yahweh theme is first found in Amos 5:18-20. Although this is the first occurrence of this phrase, it is quite evident that the prophet is referring to a common concept, since the passage is concerned with the correction of a misconception of what this day will be like. It has been suggested, and seems likely, that the prophetic day-of-the-Lord concept had its pre-prophetic roots in an autumn festival which celebrated the Kingship of God, triumphant in the cosmic conflict.<sup>23</sup> A number of not-so-obvious characteristics belong to this day.

1. The Day is denoted not only by the phrase "day of Yahweh" but also by the editorial references "in that day", and "in those days."<sup>24</sup> A reading of the texts reveals that just as "day" refers to a period of judgement<sup>25</sup> as well as to a time of salvation<sup>26</sup> in the prophetic books so the term "days" refers to a period in the future which can

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<sup>23</sup>J. Gray, "The Day of Yahweh in Cultic Experience and Eschatological Prospect" Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok 39 (1974), 5-37. See also J. Gray, The Biblical Doctrine of The Reign of God (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979).

<sup>24</sup>Gray, 7.

<sup>25</sup>Eg. Amos 5:8-20; Hos 5:9; Micah 5:10; 7:4; Is 3:18-4:1; 10:3; 63:4; Jer 4:9; 18:17; 51:2; Zech 12:3-13:6; Mal 3:2; 4:1; Joel 1:15, 16; 2:1, 2, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Eg. Am 9:11f, Hos 2:21; Mic 4:6; Is 4:2ff; 11:10, 11; 29:18; Jer 27:22; 30:2; 39:17; Zech 2:10; 4; Mal 4:5, Joel 3:18.

consist of either judgement<sup>27</sup> or salvation<sup>28</sup>. Both "day" and "days" denote a time of fulfilment when a promised act of God shall be realized.

2. Furthermore, the Day of Yahweh is not a literal twenty-four-hour day. In the Old Testament the words used for 'day' and 'year' are not precise temporal designations but rather "temporal rhythms filled with particular content."<sup>29</sup> The Day of Yahweh refers, therefore, to a period of time having a certain still-to-be-defined character.

3. The Day of Yahweh does not mean the end of history, but rather a change within history.<sup>30</sup> It is expected that the world will continue, but in such a radically different way that over time end-of-the-world language is used to emphasize the nature of the day.<sup>31</sup>

4. The Day of Yahweh is not a one time occurrence, but has many particularizations in history.<sup>32</sup> These

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<sup>27</sup>Eg. Amos 4:2; 8:11, Hos 9:7; Is 39:6; Jer 5:18; 7:32; 9:25; 19:6; 41:12; 49:2; 51:47, 52.

<sup>28</sup>Eg. Amos 9:13; Micah 4:1-4; Is 2:2; 27:6; Jer 3:16-18; 16:14; 23:5-7; 30:3; 31:27-34; 33:14-16; 50:4-5; Zech 8:23; Joel 3:1.

<sup>29</sup>Klaus Koch, The Prophets: The Assyrian Period Trans M. Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 161.

<sup>30</sup>See Koch, 162; B. De Souza "The Coming of The Lord" Studii Biblicai Franciscani Liber Annus 20 (1970) 171.

<sup>31</sup>See p. 6f above.

<sup>32</sup>De Souza, 175; Gray, 7.

particularizations consist of realization of the purpose of Yahweh for Israel,<sup>33</sup> and are therefore times of eschatological import.

5. Use of the phrase "the latter days" in Jer 23:20; 30:24; Mic 4:1-4 and Isa 2:2 indicate that a final epoch is envisioned. In some instances this is conceived of in terms of judgement (Ezek 38:16) and in others in terms of restoration (Mic 4:1-4, Isa 2:2). Jeremiah depicts this age as an epoch of understanding (Jer 23:20; 30:24).

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<sup>33</sup>Gray, 8, 26.

## THE LUKAN BACKGROUND

### The Composition and Date of Luke-Acts

It is by now accepted by most scholars that both Luke and Acts were written by a single author and were intended to comprise a two-volume work.<sup>34</sup> This thesis shall, therefore, deal with the two books as a unity. This reveals the first of two assumptions I am working on with respect to Luke-Acts. The first is that, though drawing on a number of sources, Luke-Acts is a homogeneous work, for the redactor selected his materials and rigorously edited the whole. The second assumption is that, though Luke interpreted his sources, he did so in a way that shows "how profoundly he understood both the apostolic tradition and the eschatological language in which it came to him".<sup>35</sup> In short, it is possible that Luke's interpretation of the events he recorded is substantially accurate for it is grounded in solid traditions. My treatment of this work, therefore, while acknowledging that editorial work took place, will deal with Luke-Acts in the form in which it was

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<sup>34</sup>See Maddox, Purpose, 3ff, for a discussion of the reasons for this acceptance.

<sup>35</sup>G. B. Caird, "Eschatology and Politics: Some Misconceptions" in Biblical Studies: Essays in Honour of William Barclay ed. J R McKay and J F Miller (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 73.

passed on.

Estimates regarding the date of the composition of Luke-Acts vary widely among scholars.<sup>36</sup> No consensus currently holds, for the proposed dates range from pre-70 to the second century. The diversity is due to the following sets of inferences. First, Luke needs to be dated late for the following reasons: 1. Mark, a second generation book (cf. 15:21), is a source for Luke. This and the time which must also be allowed for its circulation before its use by Luke, suggest a later date.<sup>37</sup> 2. Luke's portrayal of Paul is of a heroic figure of the past, hence some temporal distance is implied.<sup>38</sup> 3. The prophecies regarding the fall of Jerusalem (21:20-24; 19:41-44; 23:27-31) suggest a post-70 date.

On the other hand, Luke needs to be dated early for

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<sup>36</sup>J.C. O'Neill, The Theology of Acts in Its Historical Setting (London: SPCK, 1961), dates Luke in the second century; R. Maddox, The Purpose of Luke-Acts (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 8, dates Luke-Acts in the 80's or 90's CE; E. E. Ellis, The Gospel of Luke (London; Nelson, 1966) 58, and I. H. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke (Exeter, 1978) 35, date Luke around 70 CE; B. Reicke, "Synoptic Prophecies on the Destruction of Jerusalem" in Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honour of A P Wikgren, ed. D E Aune (Leiden: Brill, 1972) 126-8? and J. A. T. Robinson, Redating The New Testament (London: SCM, 1976), 92, suggest a date before 70, with Robinson asserting that Acts was completed in 62 CE and gospel sometime earlier; and P. Parker, "The 'Former Treatise' and The Date of Acts" JBL 84 (1965), 52-58, dates Acts no later than 63 CE with Luke in its present form sometime after.

<sup>37</sup>Maddox, Purpose, 8.

<sup>38</sup>Maddox, Purpose, 8.

the following reasons: 1. No mention is made of Paul's death or the Neronian persecution in Acts.<sup>39</sup> 2. The destruction of Jerusalem is not mentioned in Acts.<sup>40</sup> 3. The prophecies of the fall are based on Old Testament prophecies<sup>41</sup> and suggest that Luke was written before the flight of Christians in 66 AD.<sup>42</sup>

One can see how complex the issue is, especially since the sayings concerning the fall of Jerusalem are used as an argument for a late date in one instance and for an early date in another. While I do not think that one must date Luke-Acts late on the basis of these prophecies,<sup>43</sup> neither must one date it early on this basis. Luke may have deliberately refrained from rewriting them in light of actual historical developments.

Maddox's late dating of Luke based on Markan dependence rests, it seems to me, on an assumption about Markan priority which is itself questionable.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Robinson, 87-92; Parker, 53.

<sup>40</sup>Parker, 53.

<sup>41</sup>See C.H. Dodd, "The Fall of Jerusalem and The 'Abomination of Desolation'" in More New Testament Studies (Manchester: MUP, 1968), 69-83.

<sup>42</sup>Robinson, 88.

<sup>43</sup>See C.H. Dodd, "The Fall of Jerusalem and the 'Abomination of Desolation'", 69-83.

<sup>44</sup>See Wm. R. Farmer, The Synoptic Problem (Dillsboro, North Carolina: Western North Carolina Press, 1976); Pierson Parker, "The Posteriority of Mark" in New Synoptic Studies ed. Wm. R. Farmer (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press,

If Acts is late, as the picture given of Paul does indeed suggest, it is curious that no mention is made of the death of Paul, nor of the Neronian persecution of 64 CE, nor of the fall of Jerusalem. On the basis of these absences one might perhaps support an early date; but such an argument from silence assumes that Luke wrote down absolutely everything that he knew. That assumption seems precarious.

On the whole, it is difficult to say anything with certainty about the date of Luke-Acts. Luke does, however, seem to view the destruction of Jerusalem as a prominent event full of eschatological import, which suggests to me that this destruction was either impending, or in the recent past.<sup>45</sup> My inclination, therefore would be to date Luke around, probably shortly before, 70 CE, with Acts sometime after.

#### Luke's Audience

In his preface (1:1-4), Luke indicates that his gospel is addressed to one Theophilus, a person whose identity is unknown. Rather than attempting to determine

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1983), 67-142.

<sup>45</sup>See G.W.H. Lampe, "AD 70 in Christian Reflection" in Jesus and the Politics of His Day ed. E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (Cambridge: University Press, 1984), 153-171, for an interesting account of the (un)importance of the destruction of Jerusalem in early Christian thinking. This suggests that proximity did make this event important in Luke's mind.

the Lukan audience from this uncertain introduction,<sup>46</sup> I shall make a few observations about the "authorial audience".<sup>47</sup> The "authorial audience" is the audience which Luke saw himself addressing. By examining the assumptions about the audience which are present in the text, we can determine something about what type of people constituted Luke's readership.

In the first place, Luke assumes that his audience has knowledge of the Old Testament.<sup>48</sup> The work is thoroughly steeped in the milieu of Judaism and the Old Testament. Moreover, Luke's reliance on Old Testament themes and quotations is, for the most part, without explanation. A reader with no Old Testament background would not understand much of what Luke is saying.

Second, Luke appears to have been written for people with a Christian background.<sup>49</sup> This is evident in the use of material directed specifically to the disciples,<sup>50</sup> some of which is esoteric. The question has also arisen as to whether Luke would have included the

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<sup>46</sup>See Maddox, 12-15, for an up-to-date discussion of the alternative interpretations of the prologue.

<sup>47</sup>See R. A. Culpepper, Anatomy of The Fourth Gospel: A Study In Literary Design (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 205-211, for a discussion of the "authorial audience".

<sup>48</sup>See Maddox, 14.

<sup>49</sup>See Maddox, 15.

<sup>50</sup>Luke 11:5-8; 12:35-48; 16:1-9; 17:7-10.



Lord's prayer and the words of institution of the Lord's Supper in a work directed to non-Christians.<sup>51</sup> This does not seem likely.

This thesis assumes, then, that the audience Luke was addressing was a Christian audience, well versed in the Old Testament and the expectations of Israel.

#### The Lukan Context

It is evident from the outset that Luke regarded Jesus as the fulfilment of the promises God had made to his people Israel, the fulfilment of the eschatological hope. The angel Gabriel announced one who would "reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of [whose] Kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:33). Likewise the Song of Mary:

He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever.

(1:54-55)

and the Song of Zechariah:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has visited and redeemed his people,  
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
in the house of his servant David,  
as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets

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<sup>51</sup>Maddox, 15. The question was originally raised by Jeremias.

from of old,  
 that we should be saved from our enemies,  
 and from the hand of all who hate us.

(1:68-71)

reveal that the birth of Jesus was to be seen as a fulfilment of all that Israel had been longing for: salvation from enemies, God's saving act of deliverance in history. This is further emphasized by the description of Simeon as one who was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel (2:25) and by the actions of the prophetess Anna: "And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel" (2:38).

Right from the outset Luke made clear the context of Jesus' coming: he came to realize the hope of redemption for Israel, to release her from her enemies. His coming, therefore, is to be interpreted as God's decisive action in history, as the inauguration of a new age, a new day.

The Gospel repeatedly emphasizes this understanding of the coming of Jesus. The Lukan Jesus himself saw his coming in this light in Luke 4:18-21. By declaring that "today" Isaiah's great prophecy of the new age of redemption is fulfilled he made an unmistakable claim: I am bringing salvation, I am establishing the new age.

The fact of this claim is clearly confirmed by how the crowds and disciples received it. A climactic moment in

this reception was the crowd's adulation and cry ("Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" v. 28) at the entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-40). In Jesus they saw a king come to redeem Israel; the new age would begin with him. Similarly the disciples on the road to Emmaus had hoped that this prophet, mighty in word and deed, was the one to redeem Israel (24:19,20). With the resurrection this hope was rekindled, "So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6). The claim Jesus was making had not been misunderstood by those who heard his message.

Although it is clear that the Lukan Jesus is the fulfilment of Israel's hope, it is also evident that the manner in which Jesus intended to bring fulfilment was misunderstood by both the people to whom he addressed his message and the disciples. This caused uncertainty among those who wished to accept him. Hence, upon hearing of the things Jesus was doing, John the Baptist posed a question: "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (7:19). The disciples also failed to understand how redemption was to come; the two going to Emmaus spoke of a hope that was over (24:21), and even after the resurrection the disciples asked about a restoration that had already begun to take shape (Acts 1:6). Although they wanted to believe that God's decisive action in history was taking

place through Jesus, and although his actions on occasion convinced them that it was happening, this was not quite what Israel had expected.

The unexpected nature of what Jesus was doing made it difficult, according to the Lukan account, for some within Judaism to welcome his message. Hence Jesus' words on "this generation":

"To what shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another,

'We piped to you and you did not dance;  
We wailed and you did not weep.'"

(Luke 7:31, 32)

Jesus has not responded to their crisis in the way they had expected, hence they did not respond to him in the way the crisis message he was bringing demanded.<sup>52</sup> Jesus' message, therefore, had another side to it. The message of restoration for some was a message of judgement for others, notably those that did not heed his message (Luke 11:29-32, 51; 13:1-5; 14:34, 35; 19:41-44; 20:9-16; Acts 3:23 cf. 6:14).

The Lukan use of the day of the Lord theme reinforces the above general picture of Jesus as fulfiller of eschatological hope in Israel. Through our analysis of

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<sup>52</sup>See Jeremias, Parables, 161-2.

this theme, we hope to show how Jesus revealed the fulfilment of these prophecies in a new way. Our point of entry shall be the two extended discourses on the coming day in Luke 17:22-37 and 21:5-36. Whereas these passages are directly relevant to our concerns, they are not altogether transparent in meaning. We shall have to appeal, therefore, to other Lukan texts referring to the coming day, some of which will throw an indirect light on the two main passages.

LUKE 17:22-37

This passage is full of images of daily rural life: waking and sleeping, eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, planting and building. Biblical images abound: the unwitting in the days of Noah and Lot, fire and brimstone falling from heaven. Then the end strikes, lightning flashes and vultures gather. From Daniel comes the image of the Son of man and his day(s). The juxtaposition of these two sets of images (biblical symbols and everyday life) results in an illumination of the daily actions of ordinary life by means of Biblical symbols. Ordinary patterns of living become charged with meaning. What the charged meaning is, however, can be a matter of debate; eg. the vultures (ἀετοὶ) mentioned in verse 37 are seen as an image with positive connotations by some scholars,<sup>53</sup> as neutral by others,<sup>54</sup> and as negative by still others.<sup>55</sup> An interpretation of this image as positive or as negative results in very different meanings for the verse and the passage. The arguments on

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<sup>53</sup>Manson, 147.

<sup>54</sup>Marshall, 669.

<sup>55</sup>De Souza, 201; see also Borg, 276.

each side seem plausible.<sup>56</sup> Through examination of the text we hope to uncover what the charged meaning of these images is.

One is struck immediately with the repetition of ἡμέρα in this passage. There are τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (v. 22), ταῖς ἡμέραις Νῶε (v. 26), ταῖς ἡμέραις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (v. 26), ταῖς ἡμέραις Λώτ (v. 28), as well as ἡ ἡμέρα ὃ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποκαλύπτεται (v. 30). The repetitive phrases echo Old Testament passages such as Amos 8:11 "Behold the days are coming," says the Lord'. This phrase generally connotes a time to come in which God will act in some great punitive<sup>57</sup> or restorative<sup>58</sup> measure. On a very basic level, then, the repeated references to days would evoke memories of prophetic oracles announcing a period to come in which God would interact decisively with his people.

The references to certain days in this passage, however, although they may recall certain Old Testament usages, are transformed to carry Jesus' specific message. Rather than references to the day of Yahweh we have references to the days of the Son of man (v. 22) which are to be compared to the days of Noah (v. 22) and Lot (v. 28).

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<sup>56</sup>See p. 32 below for a discussion of this verse.

<sup>57</sup>Is 39:6; Jer 7:32; 9:25; 19:6; 49:2; 51:47, 52.

<sup>58</sup>Amos 9:3; Jer 16:14; 30:3; 31:27-34; 33:14-16; Zech 8:23; Joel 3:1.

The verses create some ambiguity, especially since verse 22 contains the cryptic phrase "one of the days of the Son of man". The variety of interpretations reveals the ambiguity of the phrase: 1. Maddox<sup>59</sup> interprets v. 22 in light of v. 26 and 28, where the days of Noah and Lot are described. The days of the Son of man, therefore, are the days of Jesus' earthly ministry when his call to repentance was not heeded. This interpretation, however, strains the text in v. 26 and 28 somewhat. In the first place, the parallel with verse 26 breaks down. If this refers to the days of Jesus' ministry, why is the reference to days that are yet to come in v. 26: "οὕτως ἔσται καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου"? Secondly, the days of Jesus' earthly ministry did not end in a way similar to the ending of the days of Noah and Lot, as is implied by the text. This interpretation finds poor grounds in v. 26. Furthermore, although the desire to have the good old days back may be a common human desire, there is no indication that Jesus' disciples regarded the days of his earthly ministry in that light. They were days of uncertainty and doubt (9:45), of rejection (9:5; 10:3, 10, 11), and misunderstanding (9:11, 45, 49-50; 18:15-17; 34; 19:11). After the triumph of the

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<sup>59</sup>"The Function of the Son of Man According to the Synoptic Gospels" NTS 15 (1968-69), 51. In his later work, The Purpose of Luke-Acts, 125f, Maddox admits the uncertainty of knowing what this phrase means, noting only that v. 26 cannot refer to the day of Jesus' mission because those days are now in the past.



resurrection and the revelation of the Spirit, the disciples surely would not be longing for days when Jesus was "physically present". This is especially evident in that he was seen as being very much alive and present in the work and persons of his apostles and the church (Saul, why do you persecute me? Acts 9:4).

2. According to I.H. Marshall the 'least unsatisfactory' view is that the days of the Son of man refer to the messiah's reign, and one of the days of the Son of man refers to the parousia.<sup>60</sup> This explanation does not account in any way for verse 26.

3. T.W. Manson<sup>61</sup> suggests that the present text is based on a misunderstanding of the Aramaic verb lachda. This has been translated as "one" (μῑον) rather than "Very much" which would result in this reading: "You will greatly desire to see the day of the Son of man." Even if Manson's theory were correct, this reading does not address what Luke would have intended when he wrote the Greek text. "One of the days of the Son of man" clearly meant something to him, something that was not obscured by the reference in verse 26.

4. B. De Souza<sup>62</sup> is heading in the right direction

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<sup>60</sup>Marshall, 659.

<sup>61</sup>The Sayings of Jesus (London: SCM, 1964), 142 following Torrey The Four Gospels, 312.

<sup>62</sup>"The Coming of The Lord" Studi Bibliici Franciscani Liber Annus 20 (1970), 175ff, 208.

with his interpretation which is based on the Old Testament theme of the day of Yahweh. Since the prophetic writings reveal that the day of Yahweh refers to his many interventions in history, we can say that he has many days. The phrase "one of the days of the Son of man" then refers to one of the Son of man's interventions in history. This phrase is used rather than the more common "Day of the Son of man" in order to avoid the misunderstanding that he is speaking of the parousia. De Souza's explanation results in confusion about the meaning of the vv. 26 and 28, for the days there referred to are clearly not dramatic interventions in history, but average working days.

The Old Testament prophetic books, however, do indeed provide the clue to understanding this passage. Generally when "days" are used in the prophetic literature the phrase is not "the days of Yahweh" or "in his days" but a time period connoted by one of 2 phrases "the days are coming", ἡμέραι ἔρχονται or "in those days", ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις. These phrases then, are not directly linked to Yahweh, although the connotative allusion is always to the day of Yahweh.<sup>63</sup> There is one passage in the prophetic literature, however, where the "days" are linked to a specific person: This is Jeremiah 23:6; both verses 5 and 6 follow:

Behold the days are coming (ἡμέραι ἔρχονται) says

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<sup>63</sup>See p. 10 above.

the Lord, when I shall raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ) Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he shall be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness'.

The use of the phrase "the days of the Son of man" therefore, in the mind of an Israelite familiar with the Old Testament, created echoes of the prophetic promise of a time period to come in which Judah and Israel were to receive salvation. These themes also reflect the words of the angel at the annunciation (1:32-33) and the song of Zechariah (1:68-79).

The messianic figure of the Jeremiah prophecy is given added dimension through identification with the Son of man figure from Daniel 7. That this passage sees the day in the pattern of suffering and vindication found in the Danielic Son of man tradition is made apparent in verse 25 and the parable following the passage.<sup>64</sup> There we see that the awaited day is a vindication of God's elect (8:7, 8), which must nevertheless be preceded by suffering and rejection (v. 25). As we see how the prophetic background informs the passage as a whole, the meaning of verse 22 will

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<sup>64</sup>See Juel, 158: "The eschatological setting of the verses, with explicit reference to imagery from Daniel, makes an allusion to Daniel almost certain".

also be addressed.

An understanding of the prophetic literature is necessary in order to understand not only the allusions in this passage, but also the underlying structure which give these allusions shape. It appears that Jesus is doing exactly what Amos did in his announcement of the coming day of the Lord in Amos 5:18-20; he is challenging the expectations of those who desire to see one of the days of the Son of man. Amos informed the people of his generation that rather than light, the day would consist of darkness, even actions thought to be safe would result in danger. This day would not be as expected. This is also the message that Jesus is bringing, and he brings this warning to his disciples by challenging three specific assumptions about the coming day.

In the first place, the treatment of the "days of the Son of man" reveals a challenge like that of Amos' to the current positive way of thinking about that day. The disciples will be longing for one of the days as a day of salvation for Israel (cf Jer 23:6); and so will those who so eagerly but prematurely announce its arrival (v. 23). That, however, is not what the day will be. The close juxtaposition with Noah and Lot suggest that the days are days wherein the unrighteous live very regular lives with no hint or threat of a coming crisis. Lot himself, according to the Biblical account, did not realize that he was faced

with a major crisis (Gen 19:15-23), and so he lingered and had to be escorted roughly out of the city. It is also a period in which some are aware of the coming crisis and are expected to act in a certain way before its coming. Noah was commanded to build an ark (Gen 6:14ff) and Lot told to leave the city (Gen 19:12-15). That this is the intended parallel is clear, for the passage continues with instructions for the disciples in the coming crisis (v. 31). The sense of verse 22 and following therefore, would be: Behold, you will desire to see a glorious day of the Son of man, but that is not what is coming. The days of the Son of man consist of that unrepentant period before the coming crisis, before the day of the Son of man when judgement will occur". The disciples will not see what they expect.

This passage also challenges a few other details about the day to come. First, no matter how much this day is desired, no one will have more knowledge of its coming than others (v. 23). Not one of those prophets who announce the coming of God's eschatological hope,<sup>65</sup> such as Theudas (Acts 5:36; Ant 20.97f) or "the Egyptian" (Acts 21:38: Ant 29.169-171; BJ 2.261-63), have an inside track, since the day will be as obvious as a lightning flash (v. 24). Everyone will know without being told that it has come.

Second, the necessity of suffering and rejection by this generation before this day arrives is asserted (v. 25).

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<sup>65</sup>See Horsley and Hanson, 160ff.

This, especially when used with the Son of man imagery, would, in its echo of the Danielic Son of man text, introduce the reverberations of vindication into the text. This is reinforced in the parable immediately following our passage (Luke 18:1-8), where the reverberations become the plaintive cry of the widow for vindication and the assurance that God will vindicate his elect speedily. It is not clear whether the corporate associations of the Son of man with his people are intended here to indicate that the disciples will suffer as did the Son of man. The last line of the parable, however, ("Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?") as well as the implied persecution of the widow suggest this association within the passage. This becomes clearer in Luke 21:12-19 where the suffering of the disciples and their vindication by the Son of man (21:27) is part of the framework of the passage.

The comparisons with Noah and Lot in verses 26-30, mentioned above, also reveal some things about the nature of judgement expected on that day. The accounts of Noah and Lot chronicle a similar event: God intends to punish certain wicked people (almost the whole human race in Noah's case and a number of cities in Lot's) so that they may no longer be on the earth ("I will blot out man from the face of the ground", Gen 6:7). He warns certain individuals so that they may remove themselves from the scene of the disaster. Luke 17 seems to expect the same sort of event.

A day of judgment is expected, after which certain people will no longer continue in their daily life (v. 34, 35) and about which the disciples are given instructions for escape.

Although the text does not explicitly state who is taken and who is left, two factors point to the righteous being left and the unrighteous taken away. In the first place, in the Noah and Lot parallels, the unrighteous were destroyed and Noah and Lot were left. This is especially clear in the Matthean parallel: "for as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man" (24:38-39). Second, the following verse (37) raises a question about where those who are taken are taken to. The cryptic answer "where the body is, there the vultures will be gathered" is a deliberate non-answer to the question, but the image does carry certain negative connotations. Although most commentators have asserted that this is a neutral image, referring to the universality of the separation in v. 34<sup>66</sup> or a positive image of the swiftness and suddenness of the coming of the Son of man,<sup>67</sup> the corpse surrounded by vultures is an image of judgement found a

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<sup>66</sup>Marshall, 669.

<sup>67</sup>Manson, 147; see also J. G. F. Collinson, "Eschatology In the Gospel of Luke" in New Synoptic Studies ed Wm. R. Farmer, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 364.

number of times in Old Testament prophecy.<sup>68</sup> In this passage, where images of judgement abound, it is quite likely that the vultures also are meant to reinforce the sense of passage as a whole. Those who are to be judged, then, are the ones who are taken away.

Although the initial references to the days of Noah and Lot in v. 26-30 are likely intended merely to convey a sense of judgement about the coming time, v. 31-33 justifies the use of the above parallel for revealing the nature of the coming day of the Lord. Just as the judgement at the time of Lot was on an apostate city, so will be the judgement on the day that the Son of man is revealed.<sup>69</sup> Run, therefore, with haste, without hesitation from this place which will soon be judged.<sup>70</sup> That this passage originally referred to a judgement on Jerusalem which the disciples were to flee is entirely plausible given the

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<sup>68</sup>Jer 7:23; 15:3; 16:4; 34:20; EZ 39:17; Hos 8:1; cf. Isa 18:6; EZ 29:5; Deut 28:25f. See also De Souza, 201.

<sup>69</sup>So also Marcus J. Borg, Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus (NY/Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 194.

<sup>70</sup>It is interesting that most scholars are loath to suggest that the advice here may be to actually flee a place without looking back. Hence there are suggestions that v 31-33 do not really fit here but were inserted for mnemonic reasons (Manson, 144), or were inserted by Luke because of their emphasis on spiritual challenge (Maddox, Purpose, 126). Or, if this is the correct place, the passage is a warning against an attachment to earthly possessions (Marshall, 664). It should be noted that the parallel advice to flee in Luke 21:21 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.



places where this destruction is addressed elsewhere in Luke. For example, Luke 21:21 gives advice similar to Luke 17:31 with regard to fleeing Jerusalem. Second, in both Luke 19:41-44 and 23:28-31 (cf. 13:34-35) Jesus laments the coming fate of Jerusalem, for she did not know the time of her visitation (19:44), a visitation which now "spells judgement and destruction for the city instead of the redemption of Jerusalem or peace, or the immediate appearance of the kingdom".<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Luke 21:23 makes it explicit that the Jerusalem which is to be fled is being desolated because "these are the days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written" (v. 23). The interpretation of the destruction of Jerusalem as judgement is prominent throughout Luke-Acts. It is entirely possible, therefore, that in Luke 17, where the time of judgment is portrayed in close analogy with the destruction of another city, this passage addressed the actual historical event of the destruction of Jerusalem.

If this is the case, it is difficult to fit verses 34 and 35 into the sense of the passage as a whole, since the judgement there portrayed is one that cuts between people intimately sleeping and closely working.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>71</sup>David L. Tiede, Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 81.

<sup>72</sup>Verse 36, "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken, the other left," is not attested in the oldest sources. Since its point is similar to that of v. 34 and 35, our comments are applicable to it also.

the intent of these verses is to be found in the linking verse 33 "Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it." At first glance this verse appears to be making a statement about the verses that precede it, warning about trying to keep the things of this life and losing Life. And indeed this verse does comment on the earlier ones. In the mind of Luke, however, this verse triggers a further point which he had made earlier (12:35-40; 42-46): those who are not primarily concerned with themselves and with their own life, only they are the ones who will be prepared; those who are concerned only with themselves will be unprepared for the coming judgment. Therefore, although on the surface of it, the two in the bed and the two at the mill may be doing the same things, they are obviously living in different states of readiness. For those who are not waiting, the coming judgement will be a sudden separation<sup>73</sup> (cf. LK 12:35-40; 42-46).<sup>74</sup>

It must also be stated that this point regarding readiness clarifies v. 27 and v. 28 as well. It was not that those in the days of Noah and Lot were doing the wrong thing in eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting and building, but that they were doing so in a

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<sup>73</sup>This is the obvious meaning of the parallel passage in Mt 24:40-41.

<sup>74</sup>For treatment see p. 54 below.

spirit of unfaithfulness with no eye to the coming crisis. They were therefore, unprepared for a confrontation with the judgement of God.<sup>75</sup>

Now that we have outlined what this day of the Son of man could have referred to in a very limited historical sense, it needs to be pointed out that neither Jesus, nor the evangelists ever worked on merely the 'historical' level. B. F. Meyer makes the observation that the day of the Son of man was the "counterpart in esoteric teaching after Ceasarea Philippi to the 'reign of God' in public proclamation."<sup>76</sup> This is derived from texts (such as Luke 17) in which the epiphany of the Son of man comes unannounced. This observation brings the meaning of our passage into startling relief. The day of the Son of man, as the reign of God, has been inaugurated with Jesus' public ministry. Hence the disciples and the rest of Israel, repentant and unrepentant alike, are living in the "days of the Son of man." These days are moving, furthermore, to an imminent crisis, a judgement upon Israel and the city in which she is centred. But, as verse 34 and 35 reveal, this does not mean the end of the "days of the Son of man", they will continue their movement, but this time towards a time of restoration. And although the judgement of the first day

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<sup>75</sup>Cf. Rev. 18 where Babylon is stripped of all her cultural activity for having done that activity in a spirit of wantonness leading to wealth.

<sup>76</sup>Meyer, 209.

contained hints of the coming vindication, the second coming would contain final and complete vindication (8:8).

As we have shown, then, Luke 17 relies heavily on Old Testament concepts and ideas in order to illumine the coming day of God's eschatological activity. Like prophets of old, Jesus' words here interpret current events for his contemporaries, locating the action of Yahweh in the current historical crisis, and identifying it with the coming of the Son of man. Through both the prophetic medium and the images he uses, this passage challenges the complacency and lack of awareness that characterize those who ignore the crisis at hand. In addition, it points out the necessity of suffering before this crisis comes to culmination, and promises comfort in the form of final vindication to those who remain faithful.

Like the prophetic oracles of old, this passage points beyond the specific historical situation that informed it, to a larger pattern of God's dealings with his people. The prospect of imminent judgement is always followed by a promise of restoration, and this action in history gains its eschatological weight from its foreshadowing and involvement in the final judgement and restoration which is still to come.

## LUKE 21:5-36

Unlike Luke 17, which relies on a juxtaposition of daily-rural-life imagery and specific biblical allusion to get its point across, Luke 21 is a passage heavy with cosmic apocalyptic language. This creates a certain amount of confusion in interpretation for most scholars, who have difficulty ascertaining which parts of the passage refer to which event. The two events in question are the destruction of Jerusalem and the parousia (the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory in v. 27) of Jesus. The breakdown of the passage between these two events is generally as follows: the disciples ask a question about the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 7), Jesus' answer first addresses the time preceding the parousia (v. 8-19), then briefly answers the disciples' question about the temple (v. 20-24), then reverts to the parousia and what will precede it once more (v. 23-26).<sup>77</sup> Some explain the fragmentation of this reply by asserting that the question actually referred to both of these events.<sup>78</sup> This is not at all evident from the text, although the assertion does lend the idea of coherence to the answer. Nor is it likely that Luke

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<sup>77</sup>So Maddox, Purpose, 118.

<sup>78</sup>Marshall, 761.

has just recorded a confusion of prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the parousia, since the work as a whole does not betray the author as the sloppy recorder of confused tradition.

Two sections of this passage are generally agreed to be rather straightforward: the setting and question which introduce the passage (v. 5-7) and the direct response to that question (v. 20-24). This is significant, for it means that whatever the ambiguity of the rest of this discourse, we know the intended setting and referent.

Unlike Luke 17, this passage appears to be a public discourse.<sup>79</sup> Jesus' introductory statement here is an echo of Luke 19:44, a prophecy on the destruction of Jerusalem. The allusion is clear: not only will Jerusalem be left οὐκ λίθον ἐπὶ λίθον so also the temple αἴς οὐκ ἀφεθήσεται λίθος ἐπὶ λίθω ὅς οὐ καταλυθήσεται. Then comes the question which, in its quest for further detail, introduces the discourse: when is this going to happen? how can we tell when it is going to occur?

If half of understanding an answer is knowing what the question was, then scholars have been remiss in their analysis of this discourse, for it is generally assumed that only v. 20-24 refer to the question asked, and the rest of

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<sup>79</sup>Jesus is in the temple. The use of Διδάσκαλε in v. 7 also suggests a public a setting since this is a term used by non-disciples in Luke. See Marshall, 762, following Manson, 324.

the discourse is Jesus addressing a different theme. If Luke had any integrity, however, the rest of this passage must also answer the question in some sense. The task at hand, then, is see how this question informs the answer.

The setting which shapes this question, as well as the subject of this passage, is the temple. In response to idle talk about the richness of the temple, Jesus clearly refers to its future destruction. It is necessary to understand the role of the temple in first century Judaism in order to realize the significance of Jesus' statement concerning this destruction.

It is no exaggeration to assert that the temple was the hub around which Israelite daily life turned. Not only was the temple the centre of the cult and the place where God lived with Israel in grace,<sup>80</sup> but all areas of Israelite national life, the political, commercial, financial and social aspects of it, were organized around the temple.<sup>81</sup> The temple gave Jerusalem its political importance as the center of Israel, it provided the bulk of economic income for the area, and it was the center of Jewish scholarship and learning. But more than this, the temple was central to Israel's sense of identity, for it was the visible sign of the special covenantal relationship that God had established

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<sup>80</sup>Wright, Lecture.

<sup>81</sup>Meyer, 182; J. Jeremias, Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus (London: SCM, 1974), 74ff, 138; Freyne, 179f.

with Israel. The temple "stood as the nexus between man and God",<sup>82</sup> as God's dwelling place on earth. As long as the presence of Yahweh was to be found in the temple, Israel knew that she was the elect, covenant people of Yahweh and hence could depend on his favour and protection from harm.<sup>83</sup>

The importance of the temple for Israelite identity can be seen especially in the political role the temple played in the first century. Repeatedly the temple "became the flashpoint of Jewish nationalist aspirations ... culminating in the 'takeover' of the temple by the lesser clergy in 66 CE."<sup>84</sup> Similarly, the unnecessary abandonment of Jerusalem after the destruction of the temple indicates that with that destruction, Israel realized that God would no longer save her.<sup>85</sup> Clearly, then, the temple was central to Israel's identity as the chosen and favoured people of God.

In light of this, Jesus' words of coming destruction, unmistakable in their echo of Luke 19:44, were intended to evoke a whole host of associations in the minds of his hearers. In the first place, his words would call

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<sup>82</sup>J. Neusner, First-Century Judaism in Crisis (New York: Abingdon, 1975), 22.

<sup>83</sup>See Marcus J. Borg, Conflict, Holiness and Politics In the Teachings of Jesus (NY/Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 164, 169; Meyer, Aims, 183; Jer 7:4.

<sup>84</sup>Freyne, 179.

<sup>85</sup>Borg, 169.



into question not only the "general well being" of Israel, but also her "history and hope, national identity, self-understanding and pride."<sup>86</sup> With this saying Jesus was threatening<sup>87</sup> all that Israel thought she was and should be.

In the second place, in light of post-biblical Judaism, it is quite likely that a statement of coming destruction "would have been understood by many of Jesus' contemporaries as meaning that the end was at hand and thus redemption was near."<sup>88</sup> The saying, therefore, was pregnant with eschatological possibility, heightened in Luke by the use of the prophetic formula "the days are coming..." (ἐλεύσονται ἡμέραι" (v. 6). The setting and introduction to this discourse, therefore, point to the coming of an event which would shake the roots of first century Israel, in addition to suggesting the end of the world as they knew it. In short, this introduction indicated the coming of God's great eschatological event.

An interpretation of this passage in light of the above introduction may provide a solution to the apparently

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<sup>86</sup>Meyer, 183.

<sup>87</sup>That Jesus made some sort of reference to the destruction of the temple is clearly illustrated by Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 72ff. Whether the(se) statement(s) were merely predictions or were actual threats is left open by Sanders, however. It seems to me that, in light of the role of the temple in Israelite life, any statement of destruction could be interpreted as nothing but threat to Israel.

<sup>88</sup>Sanders, Jesus and Judaism, 88, with evidence, 77ff; Meyer, Aims 197, on the cleansing of the temple.

fragmented character of the reply. Rather than proceeding image by image, as we did in Luke 17, here we shall approach the text in the somewhat thematic sections in which it occurs.

From the beginning, Jesus' answer to the disciples' question provides an interpretation of the events taking place in first century Palestine, especially those events which clearly seem to suggest that a time of eschatological import has arrived. In the first place, there were a number of messianic and prophetic movements during the first century that attempted to bring about or announce God's new act of salvation.<sup>89</sup> According to verse 6, however, the *καίρὸς* of God's action will not be revealed through these coming prophets or messiahs. As the discourse continues, it becomes clear that Jesus is revealing all that will need to be known in order to be prepared for God's eschatological action; anyone who purports to inaugurate that action or have especial knowledge of its arrival is not to be followed. No one will have inside knowledge.

Similarly, in verse 9, this discourse offers an interpretation of other contemporary events, namely the skirmishes and civil unrest of the period leading up to the revolt in 66 CE.<sup>90</sup> These events also may suggest that God's

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<sup>89</sup>Horsley and Hanson, 88-189.

<sup>90</sup>Maddox, 119: "The wars and civil disturbances of Luke 21:19 must refer to the civil unrest of the last few years before the war broke out in 66 AD or to the War

eschatological action is taking place, but although these are a necessary precursor, the climactic action that will end the current state of affairs has still not yet arrived. This phrase "the end" (τὸ τέλος) causes some scholars to surmise that the point here is that "the fall of Jerusalem is not an immediate precursor of the End."<sup>91</sup> In the context of the question, however, the verses make more sense if interpreted in the following way: a question is asked about the destruction of Jerusalem, which, as we have seen, implies in a negative sense an end to the Israelite way of life and, in a positive sense, the eschatological action of God in making a new thing. Jesus responds first by stating what will not indicate the coming of this climactic event. These things will happen, but will not mean the immediate coming of the destruction of the temple. "The end", then, does not mean "The End" of everything but does mean, rather, this climactic action of God. This is supported by our discussion of apocalyptic language, where it was indicated that although the language of finality is used in apocalyptic writings, it does not necessarily refer to the end of the historical world but rather has the sense of "finally" or "at last".<sup>92</sup>

This point about apocalyptic language clarifies the  


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itself."

<sup>91</sup>Maddox, 119.

<sup>92</sup>See note 14 above.

meaning of the following two verses (10 and 11) which are laden with apocalyptic imagery. Rather than breaking chronologically with the preceding (and following) verses to suggest a far-in-the-future time,<sup>93</sup> equated with the end in v. 9,<sup>94</sup> these verses refer to an intensification of the wars and tumults of verse 9. It is quite likely that these verses also refer to the period just preceding the destruction of the temple; the conflicts between Israel and other nations had in the past been pictured in imagery of kingdoms at war, and nothing less than apocalyptic signs in the heavens and on earth would precede an event such as the destruction of the temple.<sup>95</sup>

The following verses, 12-19, reveal the role of the followers of Jesus before and during these happenings: it will be a time of trial and suffering. The terms used to describe these events recur in Acts 9:2; 12:11; 22:4f and 26:10f, suggesting that this section does indeed refer to

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<sup>93</sup>The use of a separate introductory clause (Τότε ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς) along with this apocalyptic language has suggested this to some scholars, Maddox, 119.

<sup>94</sup>Maddox, 119.

<sup>95</sup>Cf. Josephus, BJ 6:289f, which describes signs that took place before the Jewish War such as a star resembling a sword, a comet which continued for a year, a brilliant light round the altar and sanctuary at night making it seem like daylight (290), a cow giving birth to a lamb in the temple (292), a massive gate opening by itself (293), and chariots and armed battalions which were seen hurtling through the clouds and encompassing the cities (298,299).

the period leading up to the Jewish war.<sup>96</sup> The position of this section immediately before the passage on the destruction of Jerusalem, along with Jesus' advice to flee when Jerusalem is surrounded, has suggested to some scholars that the destruction of Jerusalem somehow has to do not only with the rejection of Jesus, but also with the rejection of his disciples.<sup>97</sup> It seems more likely that these verses, along with the reference to the coming of the Son of man in v. 27,<sup>98</sup> emphasize once again the Danielic Son of man pattern: a time of suffering ended by a day of vindication. Just as the parable in Luke 8:1-8 indicated that in a time of suffering the disciples should pray and not lose heart (8:1) so vv 12-19 give a message of hope to those undergoing suffering ("By your endurance you will gain your lives" v. 19), which is further emphasized in the larger context of the coming vindication and "redemption" (v. 28).

Traditionally, it is in verse 20 that Jesus finally gets around to answering the question put to him. We have shown, however, that previous to this the answer merely reveals what may indicate that the time is at hand, but really does not, as well as what will precede the coming time. This, then, will be the definitive sign: when you

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<sup>96</sup>Maddox, 116.

<sup>97</sup>See D. P. Moessner, "Paul in Acts: Preacher of Eschatological Repentance to Israel" NTS 34 (1988), 100.

<sup>98</sup>See Juel, 158, for verse 27's dependence on Daniel.

see Jerusalem surrounded know that the Temple is soon to be destroyed. On the face of it, this seems almost facetious; the people are clearly looking for some inside sign, a portent, something that will give them inside knowledge as to when destruction will occur. But all they receive is an answer that is extremely obvious--of course desolation is near by the time a city is surrounded. Or it would be obvious if the city was any city but Jerusalem and if the desolation referred to something other than the Temple, the dwelling place of Yahweh. In that context Jesus' warning makes sense. This time, when you are surrounded you should flee, for the days of vengeance have come (v. 21, 22). Your house is forsaken (13:35), your time is up, things are coming to fulfilment. This time the city, normally a safe place of refuge during a war, will be a foolish place to go.

The cosmic implications of this verse are revealed in verses 23 and 24. The destruction of Jerusalem will cause great distress upon the earth (v. 23), and the people of Jerusalem shall be captive to the nations (τὰ ἔθνη πάντα, v 24).

Some ambiguity exists in the last half of this verse: "and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled" (Καὶ Ἱερουσαλήμ ἔσται πατουμένη ὑπὸ ἔθνῶν, ἃξει οὖν πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἔθνων). What exactly are the times of the gentiles?

It could refer to the time of the gentile mission.<sup>99</sup> This seems logical. If, however, as Cullmann<sup>100</sup> asserts, καιροί refers to points of time which are "especially adapted for the execution of"<sup>101</sup> God's redemptive plan, then the concept of the πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἔθνῶν would more likely refer to when all that the gentiles have to accomplish has been accomplished. The previous part of the verse suggests that what is to be accomplished is the trodding down of Jerusalem. The effect of this verse, then, is not primarily to indicate a specific time that can be pinpointed, but rather to indicate that God will be using the Gentiles to fulfil his καιροί, starting specifically with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Since v. 24 begins with a reference to a time period in which the inception of an action will occur, and states how long this action will continue, there is some ambiguity as to the chronological position of the next few verses. Do they refer to the time following the time of the gentiles, that is, the parousia?<sup>102</sup> or do these verses

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<sup>99</sup>So Maddox, Purpose, 120; see also Marshall, 770, 773f.

<sup>100</sup>Christ and Time trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 39ff.

<sup>101</sup>Cullmann, 39.

<sup>102</sup>So Marshall, 775; Maddox, Purpose, 12; Franklin, Christ The Lord: A Study in the Purpose and Theology of Luke-Acts (London: SPCK, 1975) 13; Tiede, Prophecy and History, 88.

further elaborate what will occur at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem?<sup>103</sup> Although it has been argued that since there is no connective material between v 25 and what precedes it,<sup>104</sup> the subject matter moves on in v. 25. Such an argument from silence is less than convincing. Indeed, v. 25 follows quite smoothly from what precedes it, and it is therefore very possible that the verses refer to and elaborate on the fall of Jerusalem in apocalyptic terms,<sup>105</sup> thereby investing this event with eschatological import. That this is what Luke has done becomes clear if one acknowledges that Luke has used Joel to provide the thematic structure of this chapter as a whole. This threefold structure is the time of testimony (21:12-19), of the desolation of Jerusalem (21:20-24), and of the cosmic signs (21:25-26).<sup>106</sup> The cosmic signs, as in Joel, are linked with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The darkening of sun, moon and stars (Joel 2:10, cf. Luke 21:25), the anguish of men (Joel 2:6, cf. Luke 21:25,26), the

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<sup>103</sup>De Souza, 199; Francis, 55f.

<sup>104</sup>So Marshall, 775, despite the use of καὶ.

<sup>105</sup>Although Maddox, Purpose, 120, admits that the passages are closely linked by the use of καὶ and that Luke is not emphasizing a time gap but rather indicating a thematic connection, he does not go so far as to say that the connection may be so close as to refer to the same event.

<sup>106</sup>F. O. Francis, "Eschatology and History In Luke-Acts" JAAR 37 (1969) 55ff.



trembling of the heavens (Joel 2:10, cf. Luke 21:26), and the quaking of the earth (Joel 2:10, cf. Luke 21:11) all relate to the charge of soldiers who scale the wall, and burst through weapons to leap upon the city (Joel 2:7-8), and leave a desolate wilderness (Joel 2:3).<sup>107</sup>

Although it seems that this linking may be Luke's way of revealing the eschatological character of an historical event, this revelatory character was not the purpose of this passage. As was discussed earlier, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple could be nothing but an eschatological event, and the only way to describe this occurrence is in eschatological terms that reveal its cosmic implications. That is why the prophets continually described the destruction of Jerusalem in apocalyptic terms, and why Luke assumes the link between the historical event and the eschatological interpretation.

As indicated earlier, the coming of the Son of man in a cloud draws on the Danielic Son of man imagery. The framing of v 20 and 26 with the suffering of the disciples and the coming of the Son of man indicates that the deliverance (ἀπολύτρωσις) spoken of in verse 28 could well refer to release from persecution. It seems quite certain that the Son of man is bringing this deliverance to his

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<sup>107</sup>Francis, 56.

people on the earth.<sup>108</sup>

The following parable further emphasises the trustworthiness of the signs which have been indicated above, and therefore provides an assurance for those listening. The importance of being able to discern the meaning of these events also underlies this text. Luke 12:54-56 emphasises how the discernment necessary for understanding the natural world is also important for understanding the coming action of God. The close proximity of v. 31, with its assurance that the Kingdom of God is near when these things occur, to the coming of the Son of man and the drawing near of deliverance, reminds us of Meyer's point, which is that the Son of man teachings were the public counterpart of the esoteric teachings about the reign of God.<sup>109</sup> When trying to puzzle out the exact meaning and referent of these phrases, therefore, it is important to remember their multivalent character. On one level, then, these things will happen before the passing away of this generation,<sup>110</sup> and so an interpretation of this discourse as referring to the coming of the Son of man in vindication in the destruction of Jerusalem is entirely plausible. On

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<sup>108</sup>Maddox, 121; cf Lk 18:7f.

<sup>109</sup>See p. 36 above.

<sup>110</sup>Maddox, Purpose, 112-115, exhaustively discusses the possible meaning of ἡ γενεὰ and convincingly concludes that the phrase can only refer to the generation of Jesus' contemporaries.

another level, though, this discourse speaks about events which, although they carry certain eschatological meaning and import, do not exhaust those eschatological meanings. In the words of C H Dodd: "The Son of man has come, but also He will come; the sin of men is judged, but also it will be judged."<sup>111</sup> Hope is provided then, not only for those who lived during the tumultuous years preceding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but also for those who live in the difficult years that follow.

Just as some of the characteristics of the prophetic writings clarified our discussion of Luke 17, so the nature of apocalyptic language provides insight into the meaning of Luke 21. This discourse envisions the decisive action of Yahweh in history which will take the form of the destruction of the temple. This will be a time of judgement on Jerusalem and a time of deliverance of those suffering and hated "for my name's sake" (v. 18). The use of apocalyptic language reveals the context of these events as a scene in the eschatological drama of God's interaction with his people. This means that it points beyond itself to a time of future and final judgement and restoration.

Since the concluding verses of this discourse closely mirror the eschatological parables of Luke 12:35-38, 39-40, and 42-48, it would perhaps be appropriate to examine

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<sup>111</sup>Dodd, Parables, 83.

Luke 21:34-36 with these verses which come earlier in the narrative.

## THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PARABLES

The eschatological parables of Luke 12, also known as the parables of crisis, provide a means for understanding the day of the Son of man different from either the prophetic form of Luke 17 or the apocalyptic form of Luke 21.

The first two parables (12:35-38 and 39-40), of the watchful servants and the absent homeowner, contain a call to vigilance. In the first it is known the master is coming (v 36) but not exactly when. The servants, however, are ready and prepared for his coming when he does arrive (v 37). An amazing reversal then takes place: the master takes on the role of a servant and serves those who should be serving him (v. 37)! The point is clear: those who are waiting for this coming will be blessed, and in an inconceivable manner.

The close conjunction of the second parable also contains a call to vigilance, but it also reveals the flip side of the coin. The homeowner who was not aware of what was going on left his house and was the recipient of unexpected theft (v. 39). The point here is also clear: those who are not ready will receive the exact opposite of blessing.

The close juxtaposition of these images creates a strong contrast: blessing and a banquet on one hand for those who were ready, judgement and loss for those who were unprepared. The sitting of the servants at table, moreover, adds eschatological overtones to the whole picture, for it is reminiscent of the messianic banquet of the new age.<sup>112</sup>

In response to Peter's question regarding whom this parable was for, Luke makes the point even clearer through the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants. The use of an introductory question with the parable, like the question "who is my neighbour?" in Luke 10:29, reveals this parable and question as a vehicle for eliciting judgement. Again two contrasting pictures are presented: a faithful servant who properly cares for the household will be set over all the master's possessions; the unfaithful servant, who abuses his position and fellow servants, will be surprised by the coming of the master, and will be punished. Again the point is made: blessing for those who are ready; judgement for those who are unprepared.

This parable goes further than the previous two, however, in its suggestion of who the faithful and unfaithful servants are. The introductory question along with the closing verse suggest that Israel's religious

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<sup>112</sup>Jeremias, Parables, 54; see also Luke 13:29.

leaders are being referred to<sup>113</sup> in the imagery of the unfaithful servant. The suggestion that those in authority over Israel are indeed the ones to whom much has been given and much is therefore demanded is made elsewhere in Luke: most notably in the parable of the pounds (LK 19:11-27) and the parable of the unfaithful tenants (LK 20:9-18). In the latter instance we are informed that the scribes and chief priests were well aware that they were being portrayed as the unfaithful ones (20:19) and hence wanted to lay hands on Jesus at that time.

In suggesting that the leaders of Israel are no longer faithful stewards, this parable also raises a question as to the identity of the faithful steward. The suggestion is that it is the one who is tending the household or, in this case, ministering to Israel. Who else could that be but those who have been wandering the countryside healing the sick, casting out demons and announcing the nearness of the kingdom (9:1-6; 10:9-10)?

The section which follows these parables helps explain the coming of the Son of man (v. 40) which is expected. This passage (12:49-13:9) "deals with the crisis within Palestinian Judaism caused by the mission of Jesus."<sup>114</sup> The people are castigated for not being aware that a crisis is at hand (12:54-56), are warned of the

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<sup>113</sup>Jeremias, 58; Dodd, 127.

<sup>114</sup>Maddox, Purpose 128.

necessity of repentance (13:1-5), and are informed that time is running out for those who do not repent (13:6-9). Rather than merely linking the historical crisis of Jesus' mission with the ultimate crisis of the parousia and last judgement<sup>115</sup> this connection by Luke reveals that the coming of the Son of man is dawning in the historical crisis of his time. The kingdom of God, insofar as it has arrived, has taken Israel by surprise (13:6); the Son of man will postpone his coming in judgement, however, in order to provide a chance for repentance (13:8,9).

The importance of prepared waiting for the day of the Son of man revealed in these parables is touched upon again in Luke 17:26-30. In Luke 21:34-36 these two earlier treatments are made explicit and the nature of the vigilance is explained. That day will be a sudden coming if one is distracted from being watchful by dissipation and drunkenness and the cares of this life (v. 34,35). This passage not only addresses the suddenness of this day for those who are unprepared, but also indicates that the watchfulness and prayer of Luke 18:1-8 will enable endurance of this time of testing.

This passage, then, sums up in some sense the themes found earlier in our treatment of the day of the Son of man. It will be sudden for those not waiting (v. 34) and

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<sup>115</sup>Maddox, 128.



will be preceded by a time of trial that will require  
endurance and prayer (v. 36).

### CONCLUSIONS BASED ON LUKE

On the basis of our exegetical work so far, we can draw a number of conclusions regarding the day of the Lord theme in Luke.

In the first place, Luke's use of the day of the Lord theme is clearly rooted in Old Testament prophecy. Not only are the prophetic themes of judgement on Israel used along with prophetic images, but the manner in which Jesus brings his message is itself that of the prophet. Luke also relies heavily on imagery associated with the Son of man, the one who comes bringing judgement on oppressors and vindication for the suffering people of God. This day, therefore, is referred to most commonly in Luke as the day of the Son of man. In this way the coming is invested with new and certain meaning.

The Son of man associations are developed in Luke in such a way that the link with Daniel is obvious. Central to this is the expectation of suffering for the righteous; the corporate character of the Son of man is emphasized. Not only will the Son of man suffer and be rejected (17:24), but so also those who confess his name (21:12-19). The Son

of man, who in Daniel is equated with Israel,<sup>116</sup> is revealing to Israel that this equation means suffering.

This suffering intensifies the need for the coming vindication. The Son of man comes to vindicate his elect (18:7,8); this means judgement for some and redemption (21:28) for others: for those who are living in faithful anticipation of this day, its coming will be a day of salvation and release; for those who are living in faithless ignorance of the times, with disregard for the current crisis, the day will be a startling revelation of judgement.

Information about the coming of this day will not be given to a few who will then announce its arrival; rather everyone who chooses to do so will be able to see the signs that indicate the coming of the day. Certain events will serve as signposts and assurances that the day will come. For the most part, these signposts point to and precede the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which is described by Luke in terms which indicate that he perceived this event as the coming of the Son of man in judgement on a generation that had rejected Jesus and in vindication of those that have suffered for him. For the audience depicted within Luke, this coming was a future one. In another sense, however, the Son of man had already come and discovered that some were faithful servants and others were faithless servants. The understanding of the day of the Son of man

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<sup>116</sup>See note 18 above.

like the prophetic references to the day of Yahweh is somewhat fluid, therefore. With the coming of Jesus "the day" has come, in the destruction of Jerusalem it is still to come.

Like the prophetic day of Yahweh, this coming of the Son of man will be so climactic and will so completely shake the very roots of Israel, that apocalyptic language is necessary to speak of this event. Only language which reflects the momentous implications of this coming is appropriate. A new age, a new circumstance of being would obviously come into effect after this occurrence. The present age could only come to an end.

## ACTS

In the first book, Luke portrays Jesus as the fulfilment of much Old Testament prophecy, as the one who brings to fruition the eschatological hope of Israel. The book of Acts not only records the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, but also the continuing fulfilment of the prophetic words of Jesus. Within this context, Luke completes his picture of the transformation of the Old Testament theme of the day of the Lord. Our point of entry shall be the account of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), and the subsequent interpretation of this event in Acts 2:17-21.

Acts 2 describes the sudden coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Leaving aside for the moment Peter's explanation of this event, we should first of all note that this event alone carries a number of eschatological overtones. In the Old Testament, the coming of the Spirit was part of the expectation associated with the new age. In one instance, the reference is to a cleansing and purifying spirit (Isa 4:4).  
/Generally, however, the vision is one of renewal and revivification of Israel and the land in which she

dwells.<sup>117/</sup> The coming of the Spirit, therefore, signifies the dawning of a new epoch, the last days, the time of fulfilment and restoration.

The pentecost event also suggests the establishment of a new covenant between God and Israel.<sup>118</sup> Although this link may be based on the Jewish celebration of Pentecost as a commemoration of the giving of the law at Sinai,<sup>119</sup> it is not evident that this tradition predated 70 CE.<sup>120</sup> In support of this connection, Maddox cites a quotation from Philo, from a midrash on Exod 19 where "a marvellous heavenly sound...was changed into 'flaming fire like pneuma and of a voice coming out of the stream of fire from heaven and speaking in the language customary for the hearers [sic]",<sup>121</sup> as well as a Rabbinic tradition which held that God's voice was divided into the seventy languages of the world when the Law was offered at Sinai.<sup>122</sup> It is quite

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<sup>117</sup>Isa 11:1-5; 32:15-15; 44:3-5; Ezek 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28f.

<sup>118</sup>G. W. H. Lampe, "The Holy Spirit In the writings of St. Luke," in Studies In The Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 161.

<sup>119</sup>H. J. Cadbury, "Acts and Eschatology" in The Background of The New Testament and Its Eschatology ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 304.

<sup>120</sup>See Maddox, 138 and 154 n. 124.

<sup>121</sup>Maddox, 138 citing Philo, Decal, 33, 46.

<sup>122</sup>Maddox, 138, citing Billerback, II, 1924, 604f.

likely, however, that at a more basic level the coming of the new age alone, signalled by the coming of the Spirit, carried overtones of the new covenant God would make with his people at that time (cf Jer 31:31f; Luke 22:20). The new age, the Spirit, a new covenant, all of these things were tied up together in the expectation of what God would do in restoring his people.

Peter's use of the Joel quotation, indicates that the disciples were well aware of the eschatological overtones of this passage; Luke "explicitly draws the connection between this ancient hope and the fulfilment of it in the experience of the apostles and their associates".<sup>123</sup> Notable in the first place, is the opening of the quotation: Joel's "and it shall come to pass afterward" (2:28) is replaced by "and in the last days it shall be" (v 17). This phrase ("the last days") carries definite prophetic connotations, referring to a period of time when a given prophecy would be fulfilled. At times this means judgement for Israel (Ezek 38:16), but more often the phrase signals a time of restoration and peace (Isa 2:2ff; Micah 1:4ff), when all that has been accomplished will be understood (Jer 23:20; 30:24). The use of this phrase explicitly labels this event as eschatological. The point of the quotation, then, is clear: God's decisive action is now taking place, fulfilment is occurring now, the

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<sup>123</sup>Maddox, 137.

great new eschatological age has dawned.

The continuation of the prophecy beyond the outpouring of the Spirit (v 17, 18) to the cosmic signs (v 19, 20) further connects the Pentecost event with the climactic cosmic drama<sup>124</sup> yet to come, the great and manifest day of the Lord (v 20).

Further references to the coming day in Acts are scarce as well as brief. In Acts 1:11, the angel informs the disciples that Jesus will come again in the same way that he went up into heaven. Not much is revealed except that a return is expected.

In Acts 3:17-26, part of the speech Peter gave in the temple after healing the man lame from birth, it is revealed again that the present is a time of fulfilment of prophecy: "And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days" (v 25). "This time" not only includes the raising up of the prophet Jesus, as prophesied by Moses (v 22) and enacted by God (v 26), as well as the sending of him first to those in the covenant (v 25, 26), but also the removal from his people of those who do not listen to him (v 22). The fulfilment, however, though begun and in process, is by no means complete. There is still a coming time when Jesus,

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<sup>124</sup>Francis, 51; Giles, 11; cf. Maddox, 138: "There is no need to regard the heavenly and earthly portents in v. 19f as having any great significance for Luke at this point, though in the light of Luke 21:25f he presumably also felt no need to do away with them."



the appointed Christ (v 20) will come to establish all that was prophesied from of old (v 21). It is unclear whether this time is identical to the times of refreshing (v 19), although such a time was certainly a prominent aspect of Old Testament prophecy. There is also some suggestion that the repentance of Israel is necessary for this time to come (v 19), but a better emphasis would seem to be that if repentance occurs, then the time can come whenever, there is no fear of the coming. Moreover, the consummation will then be a time of refreshing (v 19) rather than a time of destruction (v 23).

This is certainly the emphasis in Acts 17:30-31, where the appeal is to repentance because a day of judgement is coming. Again, a man has been appointed to carry out this task (v 31). Furthermore, an assurance that this day will come has been given in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (v 31). The certainty of Jesus' return in the future is attested by his previous return in the past. This return is also implied in Acts 10:41: Jesus is the one ordained by God to judge the living and the dead. It will occur, and will do so through this one who has fulfilled, is fulfilling and will fulfil that to which the prophets testify (10:43).

Paul's speeches in the last part of Acts reveal that Jesus' resurrection is the fulfilment and promise of Israel's hope. Paul repeatedly asserts that he is on trial

because of the hope of Israel and the resurrection of the dead.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, in two places he explicitly asserts that the content of this hope is the resurrection of the dead (24:15, 26:6-8). The resurrection as fulfilment of Israel's hope is a sign of further fulfilment to come. This too is part of all that will be established by the appointed Christ.

There are a number of things about the coming day that are emphasized in the book of Acts. In the first place, it is asserted and assumed that Jesus is going to return (1:11) in fulfilment of all that Israel has expected (3:21; 10:43). This return will include both judgement (3:23; 17:31) and restoration (3:19).

The certainty of this coming fulfilment is rooted in the past. It is based first of all on the resurrection of Jesus (17:31), but is also established by his ascension (2:32, 33) and in the outpouring the Holy Spirit (2:33). The coming fulfilment is, therefore, attested by the past and present fulfilment. Indeed, the whole book of Acts attests this fulfilment and hence all that occurs from the beginning of the book in Jerusalem to the end of the book in Rome testifies to the coming time.

Acts reveals the unique character of this fulfilment, of this coming of Jesus: it is an event that is part of the "last days". It proclaims a new age which is

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<sup>125</sup>Acts 23:6; 24:15, 21; 26:6-8; 28:20.

the inauguration of the age of God's restoration, an age of complete and final consummation. Just as the resurrection of Jesus enables his followers to be a new creation on the strength of the coming resurrection, so the Spirit acts as a downpayment, enabling his followers to live in the Spirit and therefore in the future epoch.

## CONCLUSION

What do these two pictures reveal about the day of the Lord theme in Luke-Acts? How has Luke handled this theme, and how has it been reformed by his treatment? What is so different about this day as it comes to expression in Luke-Acts? In a sense, nothing. Almost all that Luke says about the day of the Lord has precedent and basis in the Old Testament: the nature of the day as destruction and vindication; its sudden advent on those it judges; the necessity of suffering before this vindication; the indwelling of the Spirit and the giving of prophecy; a complete and final restoration of God's chosen people, the remnant.

On the other hand, everything about the day of the Lord in Luke-Acts has been changed, for the symbol-laden terms in which the prophets spoke have been realized in ways which astounded Israel. The destruction and judgement of this day will be upon "this generation" of unrepentant Israel rather than upon the gentile oppressors. Moreover, this destruction will be upon the temple; Israel's house will be left desolate, the shekinah of Yahweh will no longer dwell in that way in her midst. The vindication and salvation will be for those who suffer "for my name's sake"

rather than Israel as a whole, groaning under foreign domination. Those who suffer will do so under persecution from within Israel rather than from without. The Son of man who will come to bring this judgment will be Jesus of Nazareth, crucified for the judgement which he himself pronounced against Israel.<sup>126</sup>

Even more outrageous is the assertion in Luke-Acts that all these things are already happening: the day of the Lord has already arrived! With the coming of Jesus the judgement has begun, with the resurrection the vindication has been effected, with the giving of the Spirit the certainty of the eschatological age has been established. The restoration of Israel has begun, but not in a way that Israel had ever expected it. The day of the Lord in Luke-Acts is part of what Meyer, following Jeremias, calls "eschatology in the process of realization";<sup>127</sup> the coming of the Son of man will be a future outworking of what Jesus has already begun. In the meantime, those who eagerly await that coming can claim the already fulfilled promises and testify to the Spirit-filled restoration taking place already now, in the last days.

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<sup>126</sup>See N. T. Wright, "Jesus, Israel and The Cross", 86ff.

<sup>127</sup>Aims, 249.

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