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Luke Chapter 18

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Abstract: A commentary on the events of Luke 18, accompanied by parallel columns of the King James translation of the chapter alongside a new rendition.



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Luke Chapter 18

INTRODUCTION

These verses invite us to follow the narrow but well-marked path that runs through much of this chapter—the one that leads into the kingdom of God. The language of entry stands in 18:17 and 18:25: “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein” and “it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Following the Savior’s lead, we enter the kingdom by pursuing pathways of prayer (see 18:1–6; also 18:9–14), of humility (see 18:9–14), of becoming as a child (see 18:15–17), of a willingness to give up all earthly possessions (see 18:18–30), of coming to understand Jesus’ true mission (see 18:31–34), and of seeing as we should see (thus 18:35–43). The Savior’s summarizing statements about the kingdom of God justify this view: “every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (18:14; see also 18:17, 25; compare 18:7–8). But in a different vein, his words also justify seeing the connecting, unifying highway as that of discipleship. For all of the various pieces in the chapter escort us to a viewpoint of how we pursue our status as disciples.

To be sure, Jesus leads us to dimensions of discipleship in other places (see 6:27–31, 35–38, 47–49; 9:23–26; 14:26–27, 33). But we need not believe that these few statements exhaust his teachings on this most important subject. Moreover, for the most part these passages offer broad guidelines for the engaged disciple—“Love your enemies” (6:27) and “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily” (9:23) and “whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (14:27)—but little in detail about exactly what path a disciple is to move along. Hence, the teachings embedded in chapter 18 supply a rehearsal of expectations that appear nowhere else in Jesus’ recorded words.

The very first step in this pursuit consists of prayer: “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (18:1). Jesus illustrates the point about how one persists in prayer by recounting a parable wherein a widow chases justice by constantly pressing the judge who is handling the case (see 18:1–8) so that, after her nonstop importuning he finally says to himself, perhaps even after receiving bribes from the other party in the case,¹ “because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me” (18:5). The application for readers is obvious—a doggedly persistent approach in one’s prayers will yield positive results whereas casual, merely repetitive prayers will not (see the Note on 11:8; also Matt. 6:7).

Another stride in the journey to full discipleship leads us to humility, a virtue that Jesus unfolds in his parable of the Pharisee and publican, both of whom “went up into the temple to pray” (18:10). Not surprisingly, we note the continuing, connecting theme of prayer. Here, the most despised of society, a tax collector, models a disciple’s need for humility. Why? Because all of us are spotted by sin and misdeeds, as the publican is, at least in the eyes of most, though Jesus’ coming encounter with another publican, Zacchaeus, will moderate this notion (see 19:1–10). The publican’s humility is set off strikingly by the Pharisee’s haughty words to himself: “I am not as other men are, . . . even as this publican” (18:11). Such an attitude should be far from the disciple. Instead, the disciple’s humble prayer should be, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (18:13).

Humility’s further manifestation in little children follows naturally this story about a publican’s meekness. In the account of people bringing their children for Jesus’ touch, hoping for his blessing, the disciples inappropriately push their way to the fore and display their inner sense of authority, and therefore their lack of humility, by scolding those who bring the children (see 18:15–17). Plainly, the disciples’ journey with Jesus thus far has not caused humility to flourish within them, though Jesus has been clear in his teaching about this principle on more than one occasion (see 14:7–14; 17:7–10). And Jesus’ words carry an unvarnished message, once again: “Suffer little children to come unto me, . . . for of such is the kingdom of God” (18:16).

Likewise, discipleship walks in plain sight in Jesus’ encounter with the “certain ruler” who approaches him about inheriting “eternal life” (18:18–23). The man, usually thought of as youthful (see Matt. 19:20, 22), obviously keeps the commandments—“All these have I kept from my youth up” (18:21). But he carries a flaw. Just as those in Jesus’ prior illustrations

1. Marshall, *Luke*, 669.

seek to hold onto earthly possessions in a time of crisis (see 17:31), similarly, in the fellow's critical moment of choosing, Jesus guides him to an unexpected and gnawing choice, whether to lay aside his earthly wealth and to embrace discipleship (see 18:22–23). Importantly, it is the man's question to Jesus—"what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (18:18)—that leads to the astonishing invitation: "sell all . . . and distribute unto the poor, . . . and come, follow me" (18:22). But he is plainly not ready for this response that probes and tests his sincerity.

The faithful disciples in Jesus' entourage who witness his exchange with the wealthy ruler take a step backward, wondering what Jesus' strong requirement means for them (see 18:24–30). Acting as a spokesman for those who do not possess the wealth of the young man, Peter protests that the choice for him and others does not mean giving up earthly possessions. So how do they measure up, having "left all, and followed [Jesus]" (18:28), when they have little more to leave than their beloved families? In response, Jesus leads them to the highway that runs into the sun-drenched celestial valley where the most meaningful rewards await the truly devoted disciple: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (18:29–30).

Even Jesus' prediction of his coming death bears, on its edges, a tie to discipleship (see 18:31–34). For Jesus takes "the twelve" aside and tries to teach them about the ultimate mission that awaits him, framing the person whom they choose to follow and thus giving meaning to their discipleship: "the Son of man . . . shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and . . . they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again" (18:31–33).

One of the last reported miracles from Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, that of healing the blind man on the outskirts of Jericho (see 18:35–43), also pulls in dimensions of discipleship. Because the account involves a person's sight, the record points on a metaphorical level to seeing as we are meant to see. Though blind, the man is perceptive enough that, when he hears the low roar of an approaching crowd's conversations and the steady, distinct beat of footfalls, "he asked what it meant." The surprising answer tells him "that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by" (18:36–37). Already he knows enough about this man to fill him with hope at the news, and he begins to shout to be heard above the din, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me" (18:39). After the miracle that restores his sight, the man "followed him [Jesus], glorifying God," just as a disciple should (18:43).

PARABLE OF THE WIDOW AND THE UNJUST JUDGE (18:1–8)

King James Translation

1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

New Rendition

1 And he spoke a parable to them about how they should always pray and not lose heart, 2 saying, “There was a judge in a certain city who did not fear God and did not have regard for man. 3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him saying, ‘See that I get justice from my opponent.’ 4 And he would not for a time. But after these things, he said in himself, ‘Though I do not fear God or have any regard for man, 5 because this widow is annoying me I will get her justice, lest she incessantly come and aggravate me.’”

6 And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 But will not God surely defend his elect who cry to him day and night? Also, is he delaying long over them? 8 I say to you that he will hastily see justice done for them. But will the Son of Man therefore find faith on the earth when he comes?”

Notes

18:1 a parable: Luke’s term leads us to other stories that he labels as parables (Greek *parabolē*; see 5:36; 6:39; 8:4; etc.).² As with these other stories, Jesus’ narrative effectively “presents one single point of comparison”³ that Jesus himself articulates, namely, “that men ought always to pray” (18:1). As an affirmation of the value and authenticity of this parable, modern scripture repeats it word for word and then applies it to a need among the saints in Missouri to seek relief from government agencies (see D&C 101:81–92).

2. BAGD, 617–18; TDNT, 5:752–53, 756–57.

3. Dodd, *Parables*, 18; also Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 295–99; Plummer, *Luke*, 125–26; TDOT, 9:64–67; TDNT, 5:744–61.

unto them: Luke’s notation identifies Jesus’ audience as the same as in 17:22, “the disciples,” likely with Pharisees on the periphery (see 17:20).

always to pray: At first glance, the stress rests on the unwearied aspect of seeking an answer to prayer, as does the account of the friend who begs bread of his neighbor at midnight (see 11:5–8). A similar sense underlies Jesus’ words in 21:36, wherein he instructs the Twelve to pray for deliverance, in this instance a deliverance from coming troubles tied to the end-time. In our passage also, given the prior context of the end-time (see 17:22–37), these troubles form a main reason for praying (see 18:7–8).⁴ In a passage from modern scripture that almost quotes lines from this verse, a similar sense of praying for aid during the latter days arises (see D&C 75:11). Incidentally, Jesus’ directive stands in direct contrast to contemporary Jewish teachers who hold that a person is not to pray continuously, a teaching that the Pharisees who stand on the edge of the crowd will likely know (see 17:20).⁵

not to faint: The sense is not to grow weary, here in praying for deliverance. The verb bears a basic meaning of “to act badly” (Greek *enkakeō*). But the context, as in other New Testament passages, requires a meaning of not becoming tired, of not despairing (see 2 Cor. 4:1, 16; Gal. 6:9; Eph. 3:13; 2 Thes. 3:13).⁶

18:2 a judge: Plainly, Jesus does not intend to compare the judge, whom he later calls “unjust” (18:6), to God. Rather, the sense is that if a mortal person will do good, God will do all the more (see 6:31–34; 11:11–13).⁷

which feared not God: A debate goes on whether the person is a gentile judge⁸ or an unbelieving Jew.⁹ On the basis of what little Jesus says about the judge, the question cannot be fully resolved. But the introduction of a widow into the parable apparently leads us to a Jewish judge because widows are guaranteed legal rights by strong language in the Old Testament (see Ex. 22:22–24; Deut. 24:17–18; Mal. 3:5; etc.).

neither regarded man: Jesus’ point sets off the next person whom he will introduce in the story, namely, the widow who stands well beneath the judge’s notice. If the judge takes no notice of even important people, he certainly will pay no attention to her.

4. Plummer, *Luke*, 411; Green, *Luke*, 637.

5. Plummer, *Luke*, 411; Marshall, *Luke*, 671; Morris, *Luke*, 287.

6. BAGD, 214; TDNT, 3:486.

7. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 436; Jeremias, *Parables*, 156; Morris, *Luke*, 287.

8. Plummer, *Luke*, 411; Marshall, *Luke*, 672.

9. Johnson, *Luke*, 269; Caird, *Luke*, 201.

18:3 a widow: This woman is the central person in Jesus' parable, as widows are in other accounts (see 2:37; 4:25–26; 7:12; 20:47; 21:2–3). She represents the most vulnerable, the least noticed persons in her society (see 18:9).¹⁰

came: The tense of the verb is imperfect, thus representing repeated action.¹¹ The sense is that she comes to the judge again and again.

Avenge me: The primary sense of the verb (Greek *ekdikeō*) has to do with vengeance. But over time it comes to refer to a judicial process that involves deciding a legal case or bringing a person to judgment, the meaning in this passage.¹²

mine adversary: The simple sense of the term (Greek *antidikos*) has to do with an opponent in a legal case.¹³

18:4 he would not for a while: Jesus does not specify the reason for the delay. Even though the judge is obliged to hear the case of a widow, clearly he does not want to proceed and keeps delaying (imperfect of Greek *thelō*), perhaps because the widow's opponent is wealthy and formidable.¹⁴

I fear not God: If the judge is Jewish, he has clearly lost his faith.

nor regard man: If in his self-evaluation the judge is not influenced by others, including the widow's legal opponent, then it is difficult to explain why he delays and why Jesus calls him "unjust" (18:6). Rather, we seem to be walking with a man who is not influenced by the widow but is affected by her strong opponent.¹⁵

18:5 I will avenge her: The verb is the same as that in 18:3 (Greek *ekdikeō*) and has to do with reaching a decision in the widow's legal case that favors her. Why make the decision now after delaying? Does she have more sound reasons that favor her? Evidently not. She simply persists "by her continual coming."

she weary me: Although the verb comes from the world of boxing and has to do with giving one's opponent a black eye (Greek *hypōpiazō*), the preferred sense has to do with blackening the reputation of the judge, or, as the King James translation renders the expression, wearying the judge.¹⁶

18:6 the Lord: The title comes from Luke or his source (Greek *kyrios*) and, as in other cases, virtually equates Jesus with Jehovah (see 11:39; 12:42; 13:15;

10. TDNT, 9:450.

11. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§327, 325; Johnson, *Luke*, 269.

12. TDNT, 2:442–43.

13. TDNT, 1:373–75.

14. BAGD, 355; TDNT, 9:449–50; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §325.

15. Jeremias, *Parables*, 153; Marshall, *Luke*, 672.

16. BAGD, 856; TDNT, 8:590–91; Marshall, *Luke*, 673.

17:6; 19:8; 22:31, 61; 24:3; and the Notes on 7:13, 31).¹⁷ Thus, Jesus’ words of application for the parable, beginning here, carry divine authority. In this context of the end-time, which begins at 17:22, Jesus stands as the one who offers better gifts than the judge, specifically deliverance through prayer.

Hear: Jesus’ insistence on listening to what he says continues a long set of sayings that underscore this very point (see 6:27, 47, 49; 8:8; 11:28; 14:35; 16:29, 31). Some consider Jesus’ words that apply the meaning of the parable to be added by other persons (verses 6–8). But Jesus’ application generally matches others of his teachings and need not be seen as an add-on to his original words.¹⁸

unjust judge: In the story, the judge’s self-evaluation is, “I fear not God, nor regard man” (18:4). But Jesus twists this self-serving compliment, hinting openly that the judge participates in the corruption of the world.¹⁹ Even so, Jesus’ followers can learn important lessons even from such a person, as in the case of the “unjust steward” (16:8).

18:7 shall not God avenge: The noun for *vengeance* derives from the same root as the verb in 18:3 and 18:5 (Greek *ekdikēsis*) and thus carries the sense of defending, punishment, or vengeance.²⁰ Accordingly, vengeance belongs to God, not to his followers (see Deut. 32:35; Ps. 94:1; Rom. 12:19; Morm. 3:15; 8:20; D&C 29:17; 97:22), and its execution is regularly tied to a critical moment such as the end-time (see 21:22).

elect: The term (Greek *eklektos*)²¹ appears in only one other passage in Luke with the meaning “chosen,” as applied to Jesus (23:35), and in a similar term in 9:35, a participle, also applied to him (see the Notes on 9:35; 23:35; 24:26). In these two instances, even though one utterance comes from his detractors, Jesus is singled out as the one chosen by God and, furthermore, is fully obedient to this divine choosing (see Moses 4:1–2; Abr. 3:27; D&C 93:21–22). For obedience is a key characteristic, just as Jesus’ question suggests when he hints at an enfeebling apostasy: “when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (18:8). As it is with Jesus, so it is for those who are chosen by God for his work—obedience is a must—“mine own elect . . . will hear my voice . . . and shall abide the day of my coming” (D&C 35:20–21). We compare Matthew 22:14—“many are called, but few are chosen”—wherein

17. BAGD, 459–61; *TDNT*, 3:1058–62, 1086–93; *TLNT*, 2:347–50.

18. Marshall, *Luke*, 670–71.

19. Marshall, *Luke*, 673.

20. BAGD, 238; *TDNT*, 2:443, 445–46.

21. BAGD, 242.

some of the invited guests to the banquet are clearly out of step with the host's expectations.²² Modern scripture graphically demonstrates that this process of divine choosing, called in other contexts *foreordination*,²³ takes place in the premortal existence because of a person's obedience there (see Abr. 3:22–23).

which cry day and night: In a large number of scriptural passages, including especially the Septuagint, the verb “to cry” (Greek *boaō*) characterizes desperate pleas to God for aid (see 9:38; LXX Ex. 15:25; 17:4; Num. 12:13; Deut. 15:9; Judg. 6:7; 10:10; etc.; Mark 15:34). As the context of James 5:4 illustrates, where the noun occurs (Greek *boē*), these cries arise at the end of days from the mouths of the oppressed and downtrodden.²⁴ It is not clear whether those who cry out are still in this world or in the next; whether they cry because they are currently oppressed or because they are unjustly slain (see Rev. 6:9–11; 8:3–4; D&C 135:7). But Jesus' meaning is clear on two levels: as the widow persists in approaching the judge, so the elect persist in crying to God, day and night, for his justice to be done; as the end-time brings severe trials to the elect, so they will pray for a deliverance that only God can offer to them (see 21:36).

he bear long: A clear connection stands between God's longsuffering and restraint, as noted here, and the sudden action that will follow when he decides to bring matters to a conclusion, as in the following verse (“he will avenge them speedily”), and in the prior chapter. At base, it seems that God will put the saints' faithfulness to the test by not answering as quickly as they want. Even so, the faithful will still cry to him “day and night.”²⁵

with them: As the text reads, God will “bear long” with his elect. The Joseph Smith Translation adjusts the reading to “with men,” changing the emphasis to God's patience with others, not just his elect (JST 18:7).

18:8 *I tell you:* The expression has appeared previously and underscores Jesus' appeal to his own authority (see 18:14 and the Notes on 6:27 and 17:34).²⁶

avenge them: The notion that God will avenge his elect points prophetically to trouble ahead (see the Notes on 21:12, 16–17). The Joseph Smith Translation inserts a clarifying statement on Jesus' lips both about the surety of his coming and about avenging his followers: “he will *come, and when he does come, he will avenge his saints speedily*” (JST 18:8; emphasis added).

22. TDNT, 4:186–89.

23. Brent L. Top, “Foreordination,” in *EM*, 2:522–23.

24. BAGD, 143–44; TDNT, 1:625–28.

25. Marshall, *Luke*, 675; Johnson, *Luke*, 270.

26. Marshall, *Luke*, 675.

speedily: The expression (Greek *en tachei* from *tachos*) can mean either “quickly” or “soon.”²⁷ The question is whether Jesus means to say that his return will come suddenly, as in 17:24, or that he will come back soon. Most opt for the sense “soon” or “without delay,”²⁸ although 18:7 inclines toward the meaning “suddenly” or “unexpectedly,” after a delay.²⁹

shall he find faith: On one level, Jesus’ question is a clear pointer to the apostasy that will occur between his ministry and his Second Coming. On another, it hints at rampant, frightful apostasy that will develop at the end of days if he does not answer the pleas of his elect in a timely fashion and with action (compare 21:36).

Analysis

The parable of the unjust judge and the Savior’s intriguing words of application lead us into a wide valley of doctrinal illumination whose landscape is varied and rich. None is so striking as Jesus’ mention of God’s *elect* at 18:7, not only coaxing into view the end-time³⁰ but also one of the important aspects of the Atonement, the suffering of Jesus that leads to his glory as the Elect One. Among the Gospel writers, Luke alone repeats the fragrant language of one chosen or elected as it ties to the Savior (Greek *eklektos* and its associated verb). In the first instance, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice of the Father declares: “This is my beloved [chosen] Son: hear him” (9:35). Of course, the Father’s act of choosing the Son goes back to a time before people came on earth (see Moses 4:1–2; Abr. 3:27–28; also 1 Pet. 2:6). In a second instance, the term appears in the mouth of Jesus’ detractors as he hangs on the cross: “let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God” (23:35). The fact that Luke quotes this ridiculing comment underlines the notion that not only God but also Jesus’ enemies acknowledge his election, the latter unknowingly. Moreover, this last passage links the election of Jesus explicitly and vividly to the cross where he suffers. It is this suffering that brings him to his glory, the final proof of his election, the final demonstration of his absolute and resolute obedience, no matter the opinions of others, and the final proof that the Father is right to choose him so long before. For Jesus asks the obvious to the two

27. BAGD, 814.

28. Plummer, *Luke*, 414–15; Marshall, *Luke*, 676; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1180–81.

29. Jeremias, *Parables*, 155.

30. *TDNT*, 4:186–87; D&C 35:20–21.

disciples on the way to Emmaus: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (24:26; see also 17:25; 24:46).³¹

The Savior’s insightful and unexpected words of application lead us further into the valley, introducing to our view the end of days and his Second Coming,³² complete with the sudden appearance of the Son of Man, God’s vengeance on the enemies of his elect, and the need for constant prayer because of persisting troubles, troubles so dire that even the faith of the faithful might fail (see 18:7–8). To be sure, only the last of these elements, the need for intense prayer, wends its way through the parable that Jesus recites, leading some scholars to reject Jesus’ words of application as originally from him. But this view misses the point that all of Jesus’ expressed concerns appear elsewhere in his teachings.³³

Accordingly, the valley looks familiar. Why? Because the last half of the prior chapter offers a tour of similar theological terrain: the sudden appearance of the Son of Man “as the lightning” (17:24), God’s vengeance on those “of this generation” who reject the Son of Man, destroying “them all” (17:25, 27, 29), and the need to be alert against spiritual letdowns before “the days of the Son of man,” as people are in the days of Noah and Lot (17:22, 26–30). In this light, the parable of the unjust judge forms the other side of the valley, opposite the side where we enter as Jesus responds to the question of the Pharisees about the coming of the kingdom of God, the one completing the other (see 17:20).³⁴ For the moment, the topic of the end-time has run its course, awaiting Jesus’ further words that he will speak to his Apostles on the Mount of Olives (see 21:6–36).

Traversing this broad landscape should not draw our attention away from the other lessons that Jesus’ parable presents to us. The first, of course, has to do with Jesus’ declaration about always praying and not growing weary (see 18:1). The enduring legacy of the widow’s actions in the parable, though apparently she is left virtually as she is after the judge’s verdict, lonely and largely powerless,³⁵ pushes out from her unflagging persistence. Like her, “men ought . . . not to faint” (18:1). By making a helpless, forgotten widow the heroine of the story, Jesus conveys to all how relentlessly we should pursue prayers for divine aid.

31. *TDNT*, 4:189.

32. Plummer, *Luke*, 411; Jeremias, *Parables*, 153; Marshall, *Luke*, 669–70; Green, *Luke*, 637.

33. Marshall, *Luke*, 670–71.

34. Green, *Luke*, 637.

35. Ford, *Parables of Jesus*, 67.

In this connection, a second lesson arises. The verb forms of “to cry” characterize our deepest, most heart-felt prayers (Greek *boaō* and *krazō*).³⁶ We read God’s touching, song-like language as he reaches out to the oppressed Hebrews by calling Moses: “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry . . . behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me” (Ex. 3:7, 9). After Jesus and his three disciples descend from the Mount of Transfiguration, the father of an afflicted son, in his desperation, “cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son” (9:38). Similarly, the blind man outside Jericho “cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me” (18:38). To the pinnacle of such prayer, of course, rise Jesus’ last utterances on the cross: “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost” (Matt. 27:50). Yet “this is not an inarticulate death-cry but a final prayer to God,”³⁷ as witnessed by additional words in the Joseph Smith Translation: “Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, *saying, Father, it is finished, thy will is done*, yielded up the ghost” (JST Matt. 27:54; emphasis added). In Luke’s report of Jesus’ final utterance, we also read the words of a prayer within his cry, that “when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (23:46). Thus, Jesus closes his mortal ministry with a prayer of submission.

One of the most unusual applications of the parable of the unjust judge comes forward in modern scripture. In section 101 of the Doctrine and Covenants, a revelation received as persecutions gather and rage against church members in Missouri during 1833, the Savior utters the now famous lines, “it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another” and “for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land” (D&C 101:79–80). What do these utterances mean for church members caught in the gnarled situation in Missouri? The Lord turns to this parable and recites 18:2–5 word for word from the King James text. Pairing the understanding that he announces when he first rehearses the parable, “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (18:1; D&C 101:81), the Savior now shifts more light onto the judge while keeping at center stage the persistent pleadings of the widow, holding that the beleaguered Saints, in seeking relief, are to “importune at the feet of the judge”; if that effort does not yield aid, “let them importune at the feet of the governor”; if that

36. BAGD, 143, 448–49; TDNT, 1:627; 3:899–901.

37. TDNT, 3:901.

endeavor falls flat, “let them importune at the feet of the president”; finally, if that undertaking fails, “then will the Lord arise and come forth out of his hiding place, and in his fury vex the nation” (D&C 101:86–89), matching Jesus’ earlier statement that God will “avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him” (18:7). As with the original application that ties the parable to the last days (see 18:7–8), so the Savior’s warning in section 101 ties to the end-time and its associated judgment: “in his [the Lord’s] time, [he] will cut off those wicked, unfaithful, and unjust stewards, and appoint them their portion among hypocrites, and unbelievers; even in outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth” (D&C 101:90–91). In this modern adaptation of the parable, we witness the continuing association with events at the end of days.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN (18:9–14)

King James Translation

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

New Rendition

9 And he also spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and were disdainful of everyone else: 10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed these things to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of men, robbers, criminals, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week, I give away a tenth of everything I gain.’ 13 But the tax collector stood afar off and did not even want to lift his eyes to heaven, but began to beat his chest, saying, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ 14 I say to you, this one went down to his home justified instead of the other, because each one who lifts himself up will be humbled, but he who humbles himself, will be lifted up.”

Notes

18:9 he spake this parable: Luke, who alone rehearses the following story, does not offer any clue about the time or place of Jesus’ words, perhaps allowing the tale to travel the paths of timelessness as he seems to do with other accounts (see the Notes on 6:1 and 8:4, 22). But the basic theme of meaningful prayer ties the parable to that of the unjust judge (see 18:1, 7). The title “parable” comes from Luke or his source and here introduces an exemplary story, a common feature.³⁸

certain which trusted in themselves: Luke discloses both Jesus’ audience—presumably the Pharisees because of 18:10, though Jesus may include others³⁹—and the purpose of the parable when he introduces it. This latter aspect—disclosing his purpose—becomes a common feature of Luke’s retelling of such stories, certainly near the end of Jesus’ ministry (see 18:1; 19:11). This observation leads to a tentative conclusion that, as Jesus’ mortal life approaches its end, he becomes more intense and more open about the thrust of his teaching in an effort to reach into people’s hearts, an aspect visible, for instance, in the crowd’s reaction to his parable about the wicked husbandmen (see 20:16).

righteous: We run into this term first at 1:6 in the description of Zacharias and Elisabeth (Greek *dikaios*), and find its negative sense at 20:20.⁴⁰ The Apostle Paul opens a small glimpse for us inside the world of Jewish righteousness in Philip. 3:4–6.

despised others: According to their detractors, Pharisees are notorious for looking down on those outside their own group.⁴¹

18:10 went up: The language of ascent ties both to traveling to Jerusalem and its environs (see 2:4; 19:28; John 12:20; 1 Ne. 3:9–10) and, often, to approaching the temple (see Ps. 24:3; John 7:14) as well as to other designated, sacred spots (see Mosiah 2:1, 5; D&C 59:1; 60:1, 14; 61:16, 24; 63:39–43; 64:26; etc.).

38. Jeremias, *Parables*, 20.

39. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1185–86.

40. BAGD, 194–96.

41. Schürer, *History*, 2:395–400; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 259, 266–67; Anthony J. Saldarini, “Pharisees,” in *ABD*, 5:300.

the temple: The term *hieron* generally points to the temple grounds as a whole (see 2:27, 46; 4:9)⁴² rather than to the most sacred sanctuary (see 1:9, 21, 22; 23:45; the Notes on 1:9; 2:37).⁴³

to pray: Although Jesus' story features the prayers of the two men, their presence in the temple may involve more than simply offering prayers in a holy place. If, for example, they enter the temple grounds at or just before the time of the morning or evening sacrifice, they will engage in a worship service that includes virtually all attendees (see 1:10; Acts 3:1).⁴⁴

18:11 stood and prayed: Here we see a person at prayer, standing and voicing his thoughts. Standing erect for prayer in a place of worship is customary (see 18:13; 1 Sam. 1:26; 1 Kgs. 8:14; Matt. 6:5), as well as in other places (see Mark 11:25).⁴⁵ For believers, standing in Jesus' presence seems to be an act of honoring him (see 19:8).

with himself: The meaning of this prepositional phrase (Greek *pros heauton*) may mean that he stood by himself as he prayed, perhaps separating himself from other worship activities.⁴⁶

other men: The expression is literally "the rest of the people" and brings forward the Pharisees' general contempt of those who do not follow their paths of devotion, particularly in matters of tithing (see 18:12).⁴⁷

extortioners: The term (Greek *harpax*) exhibits a range of meanings, from "robber" to "swindler."⁴⁸ Within this cluster of odious persons, according to later Jewish rabbis, reside all sorts of infamous occupations and activities that offer temptations to cheat, including camel drivers, butchers, physicians, shepherds and gamblers.⁴⁹

this publican: The demonstrative pronoun "this" likely carries a derogatory tone of voice (see the Note on 23:38).⁵⁰ The occupation of tax collector, of course, is often paired with "sinners" in other settings (see 5:30; 7:34; 15:1). It almost goes without saying that these people, whether customs officers at border crossings or collectors of local taxes, are despised by the

42. BAGD, 373; *TDNT*, 3:232, 235.

43. *TDNT*, 4:885.

44. Edersheim, *Temple*, 111, 152–56, 166–68.

45. Edersheim, *Temple*, 156.

46. Plummer, *Luke*, 416–17; Marshall, *Luke*, 679; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1186.

47. Schürer, *History*, 2:395–400; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 259, 266–67; Saldarini, "Pharisees," 5:300.

48. BAGD, 108; Lampe, *Lexicon*, 229; Marshall, *Luke*, 679; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1187.

49. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 303–312.

50. Marshall, *Luke*, 679; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1187.

rest of society and are even regarded by some as ceremonially unclean (see the Notes on 3:12; 5:27, 29–30; 19:2).⁵¹

18:12 *I give tithes of all:* Much of the Pharisees' ritual life focuses on foods, and their storage and preparation. The Pharisee seems to say that he pays a tenth not only of produce that he grows in his own garden but also of the foods that he purchases, illustrating the high standards of Pharisees (see 11:42).⁵²

18:13 *standing afar off:* The publican's location remains unknown. Jesus' description seemingly puts him outside the restricted zone for Jews only, in the wide Court of the Gentiles, where his presence presumably does not draw undue attention from those who may know him.⁵³

be merciful to me: The Greek verb *hilaskomai*, in the passive, bears the sense “to be merciful” or “to be gracious.”⁵⁴ We hear echoes of the pleading by the blind man (see 18:38) and the plaintive cry of Alma: “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me” (Alma 36:18; also 38:14).

a sinner: The expression is “the sinner,” perhaps illustrating the man's harsh judgment that he is a sinner without equal. The publican places himself among the despised of society: those who hold dishonorable employment—and hence do not enjoy certain civil rights—and those who lead immoral lives (see the Notes on 5:8; 6:32; 15:1).⁵⁵

18:14 *went down:* The image is one of going down from the temple to which one ascends (see the Note on 18:10).

justified: The term is the same that the Apostle Paul appeals to (Greek *dikaioō*), meaning that God reckons us as upright—when we are not—or, more vividly, stands us up so that we are upright before him (see Rom. 2:13; 3:20, 24; Gal. 2:16–17; etc.; for other meanings, see the Notes on 7:29, 35).⁵⁶ In either case, we are unable to perform this action on our own, that is, becoming justified before God (see 18:27; the Note on 10:29). In this story, if we glean the meaning of the Hebrew verb *tsādaq* which likely lies beneath the Greek term, Jesus plays the role of judge when pronouncing the pub-

51. Schürer, *History*, 1:372–76; *TDNT*, 8:99–103; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 303–4, 310–12; Donahue, “Tax Collector,” 6:337–38.

52. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 258, n. 41, 267, n. 72; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1187–88; Johnson, *Luke*, 272.

53. Connolly, *Living in the Time of Jesus of Nazareth*, 34–35; Bahat, *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, 42 (sketch).

54. BAGD, 376; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1188.

55. *TDNT*, 1:327, 329, 330–32; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 311–12; and *Parables*, 132, 227.

56. *TDNT*, 2:211–12, 215; *TLNT*, 1:340.

lican “justified” or exonerated,⁵⁷ a notable anticipation of his eventual role as judge of all (see the Notes on 6:9 and 16:15; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 20:12–13).

rather than the other: Although some manuscripts read “rather than that Pharisee,” the majority read simply “and not the former.”⁵⁸

every one that exalteth himself: Jesus is still speaking in the ultimate terms of the end-time, the judgment. He makes the same point in 14:11. In each case, it is a matter of clamoring for the honors of this world by using any means possible, including religious ways. In modern scripture, the application shifts to those who “must . . . be chastened” (D&C 101:41–42; see the Note on 14:11; also Isa. 2:11–17; D&C 112:3, 15).

he that humbleth himself: Here lies one grand key to Jesus’ story for his followers: the person whom he judges to be justified or exonerated is the one who comes to God in humility (see D&C 112:10; 124:114).

Analysis

Perhaps oddly, this parable about two men of contrasting backgrounds leads a hearer to the Savior. How so? Because he effectively sits in judgment on the two men and their attitudes about how to approach God. It is he who renders judgment about “certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous”; it is he who through the telling of the story pronounces a verdict against those who “despised others” (18:9); it is he who declares the publican “justified” before God (see the Note on 18:14); and it is he who knows the one “that humbleth himself” (18:14). By sitting as judge when rehearsing the parable, Jesus not only lifts up to view his current role as the judge of a person’s attitudes and direction of life but also discloses his eventual office as judge of all, a function of the end-time which the earlier section of Luke’s record happens to address (see 17:22–18:8).

As is his custom, the Savior seizes an illustration from the workaday world that ever surrounds him and others, and turns it on its head, creating a memorable story, yes, but in a more important sense, drawing his hearers into a captivating world inhabited by the less fortunate, the despised and helpless, the weak and vulnerable. The widow in the prior parable is such a character (see 18:1–6), as is the hero of the story of the Good Samaritan (see 10:25–37). Even though Pharisees are known for their spite of others who do not share their ideals about tithes and foods, by some accounts they

57. *TDOT*, 12:250.

58. Marshall, *Luke*, 680.

enjoy a notable measure of respect within the larger Jewish community.⁵⁹ Hence, in some circles, for Jesus to make a Pharisee into his anti-hero goes against a social and religious grain. But he does not do so simply to make a nifty point. He is aware of their social and religious attitudes, and he levels genuine criticisms against them when opportunity arises (see 7:40–47; 11:37–44; 14:1–14; 17:20–21).

For Jesus to make a publican into an exemplary hero, of course, will surprise most of his hearers. But Jesus comes to reach out to those who stand on the shorelines of the populace as well as those who stand in the middle of the streambed, as his raising of the widow's only son illustrates (see 7:11–17). Who better to demonstrate God's willingness to listen to the earnest prayers of his children than a publican who draws scorn and alienation at every turn? To be sure, as Jesus and his audience will know, this publican, or any publican, is obliged to restore anything gained improperly, as Jesus' later encounter with Zacchaeus demonstrates (see 19:8). Even so, by framing the story as he does, Jesus invites to his side any and all who are genuinely humble, any and all who are in need of his mercy, because "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10).

Luke alone preserves this account. As in other reports, he locates Jesus' words in the realm of timelessness, not recording a time or place (see the Notes on 6:1 and 8:4, 22). But the story's emphasis on prayer surely ties back to the earlier parable of the unjust judge and the widow, perhaps showing why Luke places the narrative here. But its thicker, stronger link runs forward, into the following stories that deal with a person's proper actions within the kingdom, that is, with discipleship.⁶⁰ Hence, although the publican may yet have much to do to fulfill his desire to become a part of God's work on earth, his humble attitude when approaching God, in contrast to the pompousness of the Pharisee, is worthy of our emulation.

One element that might encourage us to see Jesus rehearsing this parable late in his ministry has to do with Jesus, through Luke's eyes in this case, spelling out the purpose of the parable before narrating it: "he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (18:9). We meet this approach in an earlier verse: "he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (18:1). Then, in a subsequent setting, we read that he speaks "a parable . . . because they [his audience] thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (19:11). Further, in a meaningful reversal, we

59. Schürer, *History*, 2:402–3; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 265–67.

60. Marshall, *Luke*, 677; Green, *Luke*, 643–44.

see later a crowd's response at the end of Jesus' recounting of the parable of the wicked husbandmen. In presenting this story, Jesus does not hide his main point by speaking in parables so "that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand" (8:10). Instead, he makes his point so clear that, almost in unison, the crowd "said, God forbid" (20:16). What do we make of Jesus' three efforts to announce the purpose of his parable and, in a fourth, to take the varnish off another parable so that hearers grasp his point immediately? One answer is that, at the end of his ministry, Jesus grows more blunt and becomes entirely clear about his purposes. He knows that time is running out, and he is reaching out to his audience in a strong, sharp effort to bring them to a decision about himself. If this reading is at all correct, then the statement of purpose in 18:9 may fit the last days of Jesus' life and thus locate the parable of the Pharisee and publican about where Luke sets it down in his report.

BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN (18:15–17)

(Compare Matt. 19:13–15; Mark 10:13–16)

King James Translation

15 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

New Rendition

15 And they brought to him also babies, so that he might touch them. But when the disciples saw, they began to rebuke them. 16 But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Allow the children to come to me, and do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly, I say to you, he who will not receive the kingdom of God as a child, shall surely not enter into it."

Notes

18:15 *infants*: The Greek noun *brephos* refers to a baby, and can also point to an unborn child.⁶¹ The other two accounts of this event repeat the word for "child" (see Matt. 19:13; Mark 10:13). We can easily imagine Jesus giving

61. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 329; BAGD, 146–47.

special blessings intended mainly for very young children (see Mark 10:15–16; JST Matt. 19:13; 3 Ne. 17:21; D&C 20:70).⁶²

touch: Both this passage and Mark 10:13 record the verb for touching or holding (Greek *haptomai*),⁶³ and Matthew and Mark specify that Jesus places his hands on the children and blesses them (see Matt. 19:13, 15; Mark 10:16). Mark adds that Jesus “took them up in his arms” in an affectionate embrace (Mark 10:16). For Luke, though he does not beam a light on Jesus’ acts of blessing, such touching is not merely for the sake of touching but is for securing blessings for the infants (see 6:19; 8:44–47; 22:51; LXX Isa. 6:7; Jer. 1:9; Dan. 10:16, 18; the Notes on 4:40; 5:13; 8:54; 13:13).⁶⁴

disciples: Whether only the Apostles are involved or other followers as well, it appears that an inner group shares the same response, to keep people with seemingly minor requests away from Jesus, particularly those involving children who, in some instances in the broader society, are seen to possess limited value in the first century world.⁶⁵

they rebuked them: The Greek verb (imperfect tense of *epitimaō*) discloses a strong, drawn-out censure which, in scripture, is often the prerogative of God (see 4:35, 39, 41; 8:24; 9:42, 55; LXX Ps. 105:9; Zech. 3:3).⁶⁶ Clearly, the disciples have stepped beyond their authority in an effort to impose control on the situation. The only rebuke allowed among disciples has to do with one who trespasses against a disciple; but even this situation requires forgiveness (see 17:3).

18:16 Jesus called them: Jesus is evidently calling to the children, even though they are young, as the neuter pronoun “them” (Greek *auta*) illustrates, because the noun for small children is neuter in gender. What he says next is intended for both parents and followers.

Suffer little children to come unto me: These words of Jesus address not only parents, so that they are reassured about his concerns for little children, but also disciples who need correction.

forbid them not: This part of Jesus’ response aims more directly at his erring followers, although the parents need to learn of his deep love for and noble appraisal of their children. The sense is “stop preventing [them].”⁶⁷

62. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 86; Lowell Bangerter, “Blessing of Children,” in *EM*, 1:268.

63. BAGD, 102.

64. *TDNT*, 9:432.

65. *TDNT*, 5:639–43; Green, *Luke*, 650–51.

66. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §§1889–90; *TDNT*, 2:623–26.

67. Johnson, *Luke*, 276.

of such is the kingdom of God: Jesus' lofty view of children becomes visible. Although he is making a point about the character of those who will enter his kingdom, we must also grasp the refined dimensions of this declaration about children that are found elsewhere: "little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ" (D&C 74:7); "little children are alive in Christ" (Moro. 8:12); "the children . . . are whole from the foundation of the world" (Moses 6:54). From this brief selection of passages, we readily see that children enjoy a special place in Jesus' labors and in eternity.⁶⁸

18:17 *Verily I say:* On only a handful of occasions does Luke quote Jesus' strong affirmation of a following, authoritative statement (see 12:37; 13:35; 18:29; 21:32; 23:43; see the Note on 4:24).⁶⁹

shall in no wise enter: The dual terms (Greek *ou mē*), with a subjunctive verb, form a very strong negative, creating an emphatic denial. The force is: No one, ever, who does "not receive the kingdom of God as a little child," will enter it⁷⁰ (see also D&C 99:3).

Analysis

For the second time in Luke's Gospel, the Savior places children onto center stage (see 9:47–48 and the Notes thereon). Their presence in both the earlier account and in this later story links to the theme of discipleship, a theme that runs through this section of the Gospel report because Jesus educates his disciples about the childlike virtues they must cultivate and possess as members of the kingdom of God. But soaring above this connecting theme rises the warmly inherent value of children in the Savior's mind, an aspect that is generally at home in his own Jewish culture.⁷¹ However, his animating attitude toward children is set off sharply by their occasional low valuation in the Greco-Roman world—infanticide is well known⁷²—and is certainly illustrated by the disciples' officious efforts to keep them away from Jesus.

68. Michaelene P. Grassli, Lowell Bangerter, and Calvin P. Rudd, "Children," in *EM*, 1:266–69; Wells, "Savior and the Children in 3 Nephi," 62–73.

69. *TDNT*, 1:337–38; Johnson, *Luke*, 80.

70. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §§1804, 2755; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §365.

71. Joseph A. Grassi, "Child, Children," in *ABD*, 1:904–5.

72. Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1:27; *TDNT*, 5:639–43; Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, 53–55; Patricia Smith and Gila Kahila, "Identification of Infanticide in Archaeological Sites: A Case Study from the Late Roman–Early Byzantine Periods at Ashkelon, Israel,"

This story about helpless infants, though not located in time or place, contrasts crisply with the following account that features a “certain ruler” (18:18), a person of importance and means. In his life, he has become a person of influence, the infants have yet to make their way in the world; he commands respect, the small children are largely invisible except to family members; he is able to take care of himself, the infants depend on their parents for their nourishment; finally and most importantly, he is able to respond to Jesus’ invitation, the babies are too young and therefore not accountable. The contrast lies between a fully able person, whose life to this point illustrates his ability to make and follow through on decisions, and powerless infants who are completely dependent on others.

In a completely different vein, it is important to establish certain doctrinal tenets that fix the way that we value children. In all the following cases, the reference point is the Savior and his Atonement on behalf of children: “the blood of Christ atoneth for their [the children’s] sins” (Mosiah 3:16); “little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten” (D&C 29:46); “little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ” (D&C 74:7); “little children are alive in Christ” (Moro. 8:12); “the children . . . are whole from the foundation of the world” (Moses 6:54). This brief selection of passages underscores the essential significance of children in the eyes of the Savior and his elevating efforts on their behalf, clarifying that they are innocent, even holy, before God and that they are saved into his presence.

At the opening of this story, Luke’s narrative rejoins that of Matthew and Mark (see Matt. 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–22). The issue is whether Luke follows Mark in repeating the story of the children because their accounts are very similar, whereas Matthew’s version differs in a range of details. In contrast to Mark, Luke omits only that Jesus is displeased when the disciples interfere with the parents and that he affectionately takes them in his arms and blesses them (see Mark 10:14, 16). In this light, it appears that Luke does indeed borrow Mark’s report, with few editing adjustments.⁷³ This said, however, in earlier accounts Luke omits details from Mark’s record, if he indeed is following it with any fidelity (compare Mark 1:31 with Luke 4:39; Mark 5:25–26 with Luke 8:43; and Mark 5:29 with Luke 8:44). Further, in what follows, Luke’s narrative will differ markedly from that of Mark.

Journal of Archaeological Science 19 (1992): 667–75; Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 202; Green, *Luke*, 650–51; see the references in Lane, *Gospel according to Mark*, 361, n. 29.

73. Marshall, *Luke*, 681; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1191–92.

THE RICH RULER (18:18–25)

(Compare Matt. 19:16–24; Mark 10:17–25)

King James Translation

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. 20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

New Rendition

18 And one of the rulers asked him saying, “Good teacher, what do I do to inherit eternal life?” 19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except one: God. 20 You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.” 21 And he said, “I have observed all these things from youth.” 22 And when Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing: sell everything you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come follow me.” 23 But when he heard these things, he became deeply grieved, for he was very rich.

24 When Jesus saw him [being deeply grieved], he said, “How difficult it is for those who have money to enter into the kingdom of God. 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Notes

18:18 ruler: The Greek term *archōn* embraces a wide range of official positions in Jesus' world and points to none in particular, although it can refer to a synagogue official or to a member of a local sanhedrin.⁷⁴ At base, the man comes as one who possesses authority, most likely within the Jewish world (see 7:8). On one level, he represents other wealthy officials who all come under condemnation because they do not impart to the poor (see

74. TDNT, 1:489; Marshall, *Luke*, 684.

18:22).⁷⁵ Luke offers no hint that he is youthful, as Matthew holds (see Matt. 19:22). But his interaction with the Savior, showing a level of immaturity, does point to a youthful person.

Good Master: The title is curious. To be sure, others address Jesus as “Master” or “Teacher” (Greek *didaskalos*; see 7:40; 9:38; 10:25; 11:45; etc.; the Note on 12:13).⁷⁶ The odd element is the adjective “good” (Greek *agathos*).⁷⁷ Jesus will ask the fellow why he calls him “good” (18:19) because God alone is good. This concept is at home in the world that the two share. Hence, it seems that the man is draping his words in flattery, effectively “cheapening a word that strictly applied only to God,” especially in light of Jesus’ words in 18:14.⁷⁸

what shall I do to inherit eternal life?: The question, asked earlier (see 10:25), brims with the naïve sense, even arrogance, that one or two tasks, performed quickly, will open the door to eternal life. Even so, the question comes to the heart of Jesus’ teachings.

18:19 none is good: Jesus’ forceful protest does not amount to an admission of sin on his part but instead points to a long-standing doctrine in the Old Testament that God holds exclusive claim on goodness (see 1 Chr. 16:34; 2 Chr. 5:13; Nahum 1:7; Ps. 34:8; 118:1, 29).⁷⁹

18:20 the commandments: We can see from Jesus’ list here, drawn mostly from the second half of the Decalogue (see Ex. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20), that parts of the Mosaic law are surely still in effect (see D&C 59:5–9).

Do not commit adultery: In the three synoptic lists, only Luke places this commandment first. According to Matthew and some manuscripts of Mark, the commandment “Thou shalt do no murder” stands first (Matt. 19:18; Mark 10:19). The order seems to be of little consequence because the fellow claims to have kept them all, unless he faces temptations with members of the opposite sex.

Honour thy father and thy mother: By highlighting the fifth commandment (see Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16)—Jesus emphasizes it by uttering it last—he not only affirms the ongoing relevance of the Ten Commandments but particularly stresses the importance of the home and the relationships among

75. *TDNT*, 6:905–8.

76. BAGD, 190–91; *TDNT*, 2:152–57.

77. BAGD, 2–3; *TDNT*, 1:13–16.

78. Marshall, *Luke*, 684; also Plummer, *Luke*, 422–23; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1198; Green, *Luke*, 655.

79. Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2:339; Marshall, *Luke*, 684; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1199.

family members (see the Notes on 2:51; 4:38; 6:48; 8:21, 48, 55; 9:48; 11:21; 12:53; 14:26; 15:13, 29; 20:13; 21:16; the Analysis on 11:14–28). Although we do not know anything about the ruler’s parents, Jesus’ words lay stress on the man’s duty to care for them.⁸⁰

18:21 *All these have I kept:* We sense on the edge of the fellow’s response a level of disappointment at Jesus’ answer. If indeed he is trying to flatter Jesus (see the Note on 18:18), then he may be looking for some grand task that he, as a prominent citizen, can perform so that it becomes widely known to acquaintances, further enhancing his reputation or status.⁸¹ In a word, his response smacks of superficiality and a serious misunderstanding of Jesus’ teachings to which he has likely been listening.⁸²

from my youth up: The man is not referring to a *bar mitzvah* experience because this rite does not become regularized until the fifteenth century, but is instead pointing to teachings in his home that he has followed since childhood (see the Note on 2:42).⁸³

18:22 *when Jesus heard:* Luke omits the notation about Jesus’ compassion for the man that Mark expresses (see Mark 10:21). Instead, his emphasis falls on Jesus’ willingness and ability to listen discerningly to the man’s answer, an act that he has been requiring of his disciples if they, on their part, wish to hear what he is really saying (see 6:27, 47; 8:8; 11:28; 14:35; 16:31; 18:6), and an act that the man is unwilling to perform (see 18:23).

sell all . . . and distribute: Jesus now hands to the man the grand assignment that he comes seeking, and it overwhelms his feigned sincerity. Whether he would actually need to sell all as a first step in inheriting eternal life remains unknown to us because he hastily retreats from Jesus’ requirement, exhibiting a tattered unwillingness even to try. But, as Jesus directs, he certainly will need to be completely willing (see D&C 70:14; 104:16, 18; the Notes on 9:23 and 14:27; the Analysis on 14:25–35).

18:23 *when he heard:* Again the verb *to hear* plays a note in the story, this time characterizing the man (see 18:22). Finally, he hears Jesus; finally, he understands that Jesus’ message is not just a feel-good sound bite; finally, he grasps the enormous commitment of becoming a disciple.

he was very sorrowful: Both Matthew and Mark write that the man walks away deeply distressed, thus painting a picture of a man pulling away

80. Balla, *Child-Parent Relationship*, 120.

81. Plummer, *Luke*, 423.

82. Morris, *Luke*, 293; Stein, *Luke*, 457.

83. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1200.

from the one person who is able to make a difference when mortal life ends and a person's worldly goods fade away forever. Luke, on the other hand, underlines the emotional inability of the man to examine the nature of his connections to this world, especially to his property: “woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation” (6:24; see the Notes on 6:24 and 16:25; see D&C 56:16).

18:24 *he was very sorrowful*: This expression, present in many important manuscripts but missing in others, seems to be added later to what Luke writes. If so, then the account reads simply, “And when Jesus saw him, he said. . . .”

***hardly*:** The Greek term *duskolōs* conveys the meaning “with difficulty.” The sense is “not impossible, but nearly so.”⁸⁴

***they that have riches*:** Jesus' statement embraces not only the wealthy but any person who has money, even in modest amounts.⁸⁵ The recoiling response of the ruler allows Jesus now to lead his hearers back to an insistent, familiar theme: wealth and property. As we have observed before, many of Jesus' sayings and stories preserved by Luke focus on this subject (see 6:20–25; 8:14; 12:13–21, 31–34; 14:12–24; 15:8–10, 11–32; 16:1–9, 10–12, 19–31; 18:2–5; 19:11–27; 20:9–16, 21–26, 47; 21:1–4; the Notes on 3:11; 6:20, 21, 24, 30, 34; 12:15, 21; 15:18; 16:25; 17:28, 32; 18:27; the Analysis on 16:1–12).⁸⁶

18:25 *easier for a camel*: Jesus' appeal to a large animal, a camel, that can carry huge burdens of valuable goods, sets the stage for his hyperbole, his overstatement. A later rabbinical saying similarly holds that an elephant cannot squeeze through the eye of a needle, a teaching that may derive from Jesus' words.⁸⁷ An alternate reading in a few late manuscripts, “rope” (Greek *kamilos*) instead of “camel” (Greek *kamēlos*), represents a scribe's effort to scale down Jesus' vivid hyperbole.

***a needle's eye*:** Although one might wonder whether, in this era, the walls of Jerusalem feature a small opening known by this tantalizing title,⁸⁸ to date nothing is confirmed from either written sources or archaeological data.⁸⁹ Instead, it is evident that Jesus is pointing to an impossible act for the wealthy, certainly impossible without a lot of help from a divine source (see 18:27; Mark 10:27; JST Mark 10:26).

84. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 458; BAGD, 208–9.

85. Johnson, *Luke*, 278.

86. *TDNT*, 6:905–8.

87. *TDNT*, 3:592–94.

88. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 485–86.

89. Evans, *Luke*, 276; Johnson, *Luke*, 278; Stein, *Luke*, 458.

a rich man to enter into the kingdom: The immediate referent, of course, is the rich ruler who turns away from the Savior (see 18:23; Matt. 19:22; Mark 10:22). For this man, the chance of him reaching the kingdom is extremely slim. But for others, opportunity does beckon (see JST 18:27; JST Mark 10:26; the Note on 18:27).

Analysis

Above all, the key expression from the Savior is “come, follow me” (18:22). In a word, discipleship tied to him is worth more than anything else: more than being a ruler or official; more than enjoying access to important people such as Jesus; more than a cleverly feigned or even genuine interest; more than worldly wealth; more even than a willingness to “sell all . . . and distribute unto the poor” (18:22). When taking a step toward Jesus by “hearing” him and responding (see the Notes on 18:22 and 18:23), we step onto the path that leads to a consecrated life. But instead of stepping forward, the man steps back, creating an everlasting cold space between himself and the Savior.

Meaningfully, as Matthew and Mark do, Luke tucks this story between one that deals with small, helpless children (see 18:15–17) and Jesus’ extended statement on discipleship and its rewards (see 18:26–30). The contrasts with the prior report on the children appear to be intended: the ruler is not “as a little child” (18:17), complete with unspoiled innocence; in Luke’s hands, the man carries an air of insincerity, which is a learned behavior that does not affect babies; the fellow has become fully invested in his properties, a feature of existence that infants cannot engage in. At this stage of life, the ruler is accountable for his choices, whereas little children are not.

Naturally, the wealthy ruler’s acts of approaching and then withdrawing from Jesus, particularly in light of Jesus’ demand that he shed all his property, lead us to confront the issue of riches once again, highlighting true riches, a “treasure in heaven” (18:22) which becomes “in the world to come life everlasting” (18:30). This theme of wealth and a person’s response to it, prominent in Luke’s Gospel, takes its place alongside Jesus’ other important teachings because he returns to it again and again (see, for example, 8:14; 12:13–21, 31–34; 14:7–14; 15:8–10, 11–32; 16:1–9, 10–12, 19–31; 19:1–10). In this case, Jesus’ startling saying about a camel passing through “a needle’s eye” (18:25) underscores the impossibility of a rich person entering the kingdom (see D&C 49:20). But this is by no means the final word, as we shall see in the next section (see 18:26–30). In a moment, Jesus will

make the point that the “things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (18:27; see also JST 18:27).

Importantly, the meeting of Jesus and the ruler bundles together a series of three significant teachings in an orderly way. First, the man’s question leads to the topic of God’s goodness. Uttered by Jesus, the point that God alone is good is not to be discarded or minimized. That said, what does this mean for Jesus himself? Measured against his pending task of completing his Father’s will, Jesus remains distant from the goal and therefore will not adopt any measure of goodness that applies to God. But the day will come when he can finally claim the Father’s attributes as his own (see 3 Ne. 11:14; 12:48; 15:9).

Second, the fellow’s query brings Jesus to an assessment of how we deal with one another, that is, whether we keep the commandments that affect directly our relationships with other people: “Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother” (18:20). Jesus sticks strictly to commandments that are familiar to the ruler, not adding dimensions that will come into play only when the man shows a willingness to step onto a higher plane: “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you” (6:27–28). To the fellow’s everlasting credit, “these have I kept from my youth up” (18:21). Plainly, his relationships with friends and associates remain honorable and unsullied.

Jesus brings a third element into play, that of eternal values, of a “treasure in heaven” (18:22). For mortals, here lies our ultimate goal. One dimension of reaching this goal has to be our recognition of God’s goodness to us, his interest in our lives and our challenges (see 18:19). Further, this goal becomes accessible to us when we keep God’s commandments that he has given through Moses long centuries before, because they frame both our relationship to others and our relationship to God (see 18:20; Ex. 20:3–17; Deut. 5:7–21). The Savior’s response earlier to a similar question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” still applies: “Thou has answered right [about the commandments]: this do, and thou shalt live”—eternally (10:25, 28, and the Note on 10:28).

If Luke is following Mark’s account, he omits much, altering the character of the encounter between Jesus and the ruler. First, Luke does not pick up Mark’s notation about the journey to Jerusalem, an item that fits into Luke’s long, continuing journey section: “when he was gone forth into the way” (Mark 10:17). In the same verse, Mark reports that the fellow comes “running, and kneeled to him,” hinting strongly at the man’s sincerity, an implication that is completely lacking in Luke’s record. Second,

according to Mark, one of the commandments that Jesus utters is “Defraud not” (Mark 10:19), a command that Luke does not repeat and that does not appear in the Decalogue but may well be authentic because it “appears to be an application of the eighth and ninth commandments.”⁹⁰ Third, in a significant omission, Luke does not record Mark’s notation that Jesus, before spelling out the requirement that the man sell all, looks at him and loves him (see Mark 10:21). Fourth, from the same verse Luke omits Mark’s quotation of Jesus saying to the man to “take up the cross” (Mark 10:21) before inviting him to “follow me,” a line that reminds us of Jesus’ earlier declaration in Mark 8:34: “Whosoever will come after me, let him . . . take up his cross.” Fifth, Luke neglects Mark’s pointed notation that, at the end of the conversation, the fellow withdraws, “went away” (Mark 10:22). In light of these omissions, it seems that either Luke is trimming Mark’s account or he rests his narrative on an independent source that preserves the series of stories in the same order (see 18:15–34; Mark 10:13–34).

ON DISCIPLESHIP AND REWARDS (18:26–30)

(Compare Matt. 19:25–30; Mark 10:26–31)

King James Translation

26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? 27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. 29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, 30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

New Rendition

26 And they who were listening said, “Then who can be saved?” 27 And he said, “Things that are impossible for men are possible for God.”

28 And Peter said, “Behold, we have left everything and followed you.” 29 And he said to them, “Truly I say to you that there is no one who has left home or wife or siblings or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who shall not receive many times more in this time, and eternal life in the world to come.”

90. Lane, *Gospel according to Mark*, 366.

Notes

18:26 *they that heard*: Luke freshens the presence of Jesus’ audience, a number that includes his disciples and many others (see 17:20, 22; 18:15).

Who . . . can be saved?: The question is one of the most important that comes to Jesus. For he has just spoken of the severe difficulty for a rich person to enter the kingdom (see 18:24–25). Jesus’ answer will deftly underscore the notion that it is within God’s power to save, not humans’ (see 18:27). Not incidentally, the essence of this question arises previously in different settings and with slightly different twists (see the Notes on 13:23 and 14:15).

18:27 *impossible with men*: Although Jesus is not specific, his declaration discloses a total blockade to human-driven efforts to receive celestial salvation. In this connection, but with a sharp shift in focus, the Joseph Smith Translation offers a significant change in Jesus’ words, opening a conditional, heavenly door to the wealthy: “It is impossible for them who trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God” (JST 18:27; also JST Matt. 19:26; JST Mark 10:26; Alma 5:53–55; D&C 49:20).

***possible with God*:** The key rests in God’s hand. But as a first act, the person of wealth is not to “trust in riches” (JST 18:27). Just as Jesus’ reply to an earlier question illustrates—“are there few that be saved?”—all are to energetically “strive to enter in at the strait gate” (13:23–24). As in the first part of this verse, so in the second portion the Joseph Smith Translation adds an important, strongly positive dimension to the saving of wealthy persons: “*he who forsaketh the things which are of this world, it is possible with God, that he should enter in*” (JST 18:27; emphasis added), softening the sternness of other sayings on the topic (see 6:24; 8:14; 12:15, 21, 34; 16:22–23; 18:24; the Note on 9:25).⁹¹ A similar softening occurs in the JST adjustments to Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts, most notably in Mark’s: the reading changes from “With men it is impossible” (Mark 10:27) to “With men *that trust in riches, it is impossible; but not impossible with men who trust in God and leave all for my sake*” (JST Mark 10:26; emphasis added; see Matt. 19:26; JST Matt. 19:26; 2 Ne. 2:18; 9:30, 42; D&C 84:112).

18:28 *we have left all, and followed thee*: Some manuscripts substitute “our possessions” for the term “all,” the word preserved in Mark 10:28. Even so, the depth of the Apostles’ commitment shows through in Peter’s remark.

91. TDNT, 6:328.

Although they are not required to “sell all . . . and distribute unto the poor” (18:22), they have entered into a lifelong commitment that includes leaving all behind so that they can become Jesus’ followers.

18:29 *house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children:* Many manuscripts preserve a different order, but Jesus’ words, in whatever order, focus on family relationships that can be impacted by committed discipleship (see the Notes on 14:26–27).⁹² In this light, the term for “house” (Greek *oikia*) is to be understood in the figurative, personal sense of a “household” or “family” rather than a building (see the Note on 6:48).⁹³

18:30 *receive manifold more:* This assurance links with both Jesus’ portrayal of the earthly kingdom as an extended family and, therewith, his promise of receiving more family members, as it were, by continuing faithful in the kingdom (see 8:19–21; the Notes on 8:21 and 14:26–27; Matt. 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35; also Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:29–30).

in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting: The term translated “present time” (Greek *kairos*) has to do with important or decisive time,⁹⁴ which our lives are. The expression “the world to come” is a common Hebraism (*ho-‘olam ha-ba*) which Jesus repeats only here,⁹⁵ underlining the promise of enriched family relationships that reach across our mortal existence into the next life. In essence, “life everlasting” will consist of an elevated, eternally ameliorated family life.

Analysis

Perhaps surprisingly, the Savior’s treatment of wealth brings him to a profound statement on eternal families. This section, following Jesus’ declaration about challenges that the rich face when trying to reach the kingdom, begins with audience members asking, “Who then can be saved?” (18:26). The question seems to wrap around at least two important matters. First, at issue may be a question whether Israelites, such as the ruler, are to be excluded from heaven, a topic that pokes its head up in a prior query, “are there few that be saved?” (13:23). After all, the man is Jewish and therefore, seemingly, already enjoys a place above the heathens (see the Notes on 3:8 and 13:23). Second, behind the question may also lurk the earlier

92. Marshall, *Luke*, 688.

93. BAGD, 560; *TDNT*, 5:131–32.

94. BAGD, 395–96; *TDNT*, 3:455–62.

95. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1206; Johnson, *Luke*, 279.

self-assured sentiment from a guest at a dinner party, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” (14:15). The belief expressed there seems to hold that “the kingdom of God” will winnow out those whom Jesus wants to include, “the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind,” those who “cannot recompense” others for kindnesses because they are not rich or well off (14:13–14; see D&C 58:11 and the Note on 14:15).

In Jesus’ view, possessing wealth poses problems and, as he will later declare, equality will be the norm in his kingdom (see D&C 78:5–6; 82:17). As an important counterbalance, the following story of Jesus’ interaction with the chief publican Zacchaeus will stand as an obvious proof that a person of wealth can receive salvation (see 19:1–10). Even so, we notice that Luke preserves a string of statements that underscore Jesus’ unbending concern about what riches can do to a person: “woe unto you that are rich!” (6:24); “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (12:15; also 9:25); “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (12:34); “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (16:13). This said, in his compassion, Jesus lovingly offers an open doorway for those who possess wealth: “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (18:27). More precise than this, the Joseph Smith Translation presents exactly what the Savior expects: “he who forsaketh the things which are of this world, it is possible with God, that he should enter in [the kingdom of God]” (JST 18:27). This declaration runs like a breath of fresh air across a dark and forbidding landscape that reeks of riches (see the Note on 16:11; Analysis on 16:1–12 and on 19:1–10).

Jesus’ final, radiant point is that families are eternally enhanced by discipleship. For those who follow him, “which hear the word of God, and do it,” they become as “[his] mother and [his] brethren” (8:21). In this view, Jesus himself is the binder and strengthener of family ties. Such ties, now enriched by common commitment to him, stretch across “this present time” and into “the world to come,” resulting in “life everlasting” (18:30). What is more, families united in this way escape becoming “a house divided” whose end is eternal “desolation” (11:17), effectively living as captives of “the unclean spirit” that can “return unto [its] house” any time it wants (11:24; see the Analysis on 11:14–28).⁹⁶

96. Brown, “Family and Home,” 21–33.

JESUS' FOURTH PREDICTION OF HIS SUFFERING (18:31–34)

(Compare Matt. 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34)

King James Translation

31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. 34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

New Rendition

31 And taking the twelve aside, he said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be fulfilled. 32 For he will be handed over to the Gentiles, and he will be mocked and despitefully treated and spit on. 33 And after they flog him, they will kill him, and he will rise on the third day. 34 And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

Notes

18:31 *he took*: The verb (Greek *paralambanō*) is the same that appears in earlier scenes with members of the Twelve (see 9:10, 28) and carries the meaning “to take to oneself,” with the added senses that Jesus imparts both religious and ethical teaching and that the Twelve receive this teaching with a divinely inspired, inner conviction.⁹⁷

***the twelve*:** We have not seen the Twelve as a unit since chapter 9, where we read of their one recorded mission (see 9:1, 12). What Jesus has to say is for their ears only, as is implied on the earlier occasions when he speaks about his looming suffering (see 9:22, 44–45).

***we go up to Jerusalem*:** The expression is curious because Jesus has been journeying toward the city for months, and the Twelve doubtless know his intent (see 9:51–52). Perhaps Jesus is emphasizing that the critical moment for his suffering is near, a moment that is to be separated from the coming Passover celebration that they will all attend; perhaps he is repeating what he says previously, hoping that the Twelve will grasp his meaning, though they do not: “they understood none of these things” (18:34).

97. BAGD, 624–25; TDNT, 4:11–14.

all things that are written by the prophets: Two issues arise. (1) Do “the prophets” include those known from New World sources? Possibly, because some speak directly about the Messiah’s suffering (see 1 Ne. 11:32–33; 19:10; etc.; the Note on 10:24). (2) It is interesting that Jesus lays stress on “written” prophecies (see 22:37; 24:46; JST 16:17; also D&C 101:19), particularly in light of his emphasis and Luke’s emphasis on the living, oral voice of prophecy (see the Notes on 3:2, 4 and 4:12). The two, of course, are not incompatible.

shall be accomplished: The Greek verb *teleō* carries the meaning “to finish, to complete.”⁹⁸ Here it applies pointedly to Jesus’ ministry as fulfilling scripture (see 12:50; 22:37; also 20:17; Acts 13:29).⁹⁹ The passive voice “to be accomplished” indicates that fulfilling the prophesied word of scripture is brought about by the Father (see the Notes on 12:50; 13:32; 14:11; 16:11; 22:37; 24:31, 44).¹⁰⁰

18:32 *delivered unto the Gentiles:* Luke omits Jesus’ point that Jewish authorities will involve themselves in his arrest (see 9:22; Matt. 20:18; Mark 10:33). According to all the accounts, Jesus’ saying clearly points to the Roman part in his arrest, suffering, and death. In addition, it appears that these “Gentiles” will be responsible for much that happens to Jesus (see 18:33; Matt. 20:19; Mark 10:34).¹⁰¹ The verb “to deliver” (Greek *paradidōmi*) bears the meaning “to betray” in other passages (see 9:44; 22:4, 6, 21–22, 48; 24:7).¹⁰²

mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: Luke’s report of the Romans’ treatment of Jesus after he arrives at Pilate’s temporary residence in the city includes two of these cowering activities (see 22:63, 65; 23:11, 36). Only Matthew and Mark record that Roman soldiers spit on him (see Matt. 27:30; Mark 15:19), as Jewish authorities do (see Matt. 26:67; Mark 14:65). It seems that, as in the case of the scourging, Luke lets the prophecy stand in for the actual deed (see the Note below). So vivid and repulsive is this act that other prophecies draw attention to it (see Isa. 50:6; 1 Ne. 19:9).

18:33 *scourge:* This part of Jesus’ prophecy is also vivid, and becomes part of the warp and weft of prophetic predictions because of the nature

98. BAGD, 818.

99. *TDNT*, 1:748; 6:290–91, 295–97; 8:59–60.

100. *TDNT*, 6:291, 295; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§313, (1)130; Jeremias, *Parables*, 122, n. 33; Marshall, *Luke*, 898; Johnson, *Luke*, 227.

101. Brown, “Arrest,” 165–209; Wayment, “Responsibility for the Death of Jesus,” 422–49.

102. BAGD, 619–21.

of the Roman scourge (see Matt. 20:19; Mark 10:34; 1 Ne. 19:9; 2 Ne. 6:9; Mosiah 3:9; 15:5). Simply, the Roman scourging (Greek verb *mastigoō*), envisioned here (see the Note on 23:16), consists of beating a condemned prisoner, for no preset number of blows, with a leather strap into which are tied bits of bone and metal. On occasion, a prisoner will die from this punishment.¹⁰³ As with the spitting, Luke does not report the scourging but lets Jesus' prophecy represent the act (see the Note above).

the third day: Most prophecies and records about the length of Jesus' time in the tomb adopt this expression.¹⁰⁴ A very few others hold to an apparently longer period of "three days" (see Matt. 12:40; Mark 8:31; 2 Ne. 25:13; Hel. 14:27). The discrepancy seems rather minor and leads to the question whether the crucifixion took place on Thursday or, more likely, on Friday.¹⁰⁵

rise again: The term "again" is supplied by the translators to complete the English meaning. The Greek verb *anistēmi*, in its intransitive sense, simply means "to rise" and specifies Jesus' power to raise himself (see 24:7, 46; Acts 10:41; Rom. 14:9; 1 Thes. 4:14), whereas other passages point to the Father as the one who raises the Son (see Acts 2:24, 30, 32; 7:37; 10:40; 13:33–34; 17:31).¹⁰⁶

18:34 they understood none: Even as Jesus brings forward his suffering for the fourth time (see 9:22, 44; 17:25), the Twelve still do not grasp the awful reality of what awaits him, not yet possessing the hindsight that his death and resurrection will confer on them (see Acts 2:29–33; 3:12–15; the Note on 9:45).

this saying was hid: As in 9:45, the fact that Jesus' dark meaning is hidden from the Twelve implies that they do not bear the full weight of remaining wilfully obtuse.

neither knew they: With a third declaration, Luke affirms—almost in a Hebrew poetic parallelism¹⁰⁷ that, if it is present, derives from his source—the incomprehension of the Twelve that will change only after the resurrection (see 9:45).¹⁰⁸ By changing one word, the Joseph Smith Translation shifts the focus away from the disciples' incomprehension to simply not

103. TDNT, 4:517, 519.

104. 9:22; 13:32; 24:7, 46; Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4; Mosiah 3:10.

105. Brown, *Death*, 2:1350–51.

106. BAGD, 69; TDNT, 1:368–71; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:195.

107. Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 3–26.

108. Marshall, *Luke*, 691; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1210; Morris, *Luke*, 295.

remembering: “neither *remembered* they the things which were spoken” (JST 18:34; emphasis added), possibly a reference to Jesus’ earlier prediction at 9:22 or, more likely, meaning that the Twelve do not remember this prediction until he is arrested and made to suffer.

Analysis

Although most commentators count these verses as the Savior’s third prediction of his suffering, it is actually the seventh forecast of eight (see 5:35; 9:22, 44–45; 12:50; 13:32–33; 17:24–25; 22:22).¹⁰⁹ Notably, and perhaps incredibly, the Twelve do not get the message. In the language of 9:45, largely mirrored in 18:34, “they understood not this saying.” Plainly, these men find it impossible to wrap their minds around the peril threatening Jesus. Even so, the Apostles are not to be criticized because “this saying was hid from them” (18:34). The effect, of course, is to make secure their later testimony of his resurrection—they do not go into the last week of Jesus’ life expecting his death, but it happens, devastating them; they do not really grasp that he will rise from the tomb, but it happens, filling them with unspeakable wonder and joy. Importantly, we do not find evidence that they conspire to make up a story about Jesus’ return to life; their testimony of his resurrection is genuine because it grows out of their experience with him in coming days.

Unlike the other forecasts of Jesus’ suffering, dying and rising, except the last at 22:22, this one draws hard on prophecy: “all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished” (18:31). His fate in Jerusalem is not random; his redemptive task for which he is “anointed” is “delivered to [him] of [his] Father” (4:18; 10:22); his “baptism to be baptized with” is in place “before the foundation of the world” (12:50; Moses 5:57; 7:47); his “sore” sufferings at the capital city wherein he will “be slain” are fully foreseen (9:22; D&C 19:15); his “anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” are plainly planned (Mosiah 3:7). Already in the synagogue service in Nazareth, Jesus quotes the forecasting words of a prophet, Isaiah, when announcing the celestially driven agenda for himself: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, . . . to preach the gospel to the poor; . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised” (4:18; Isa. 61:1).¹¹⁰

109. Morris, *Luke*, 294.

110. Richard D. Draper, “Jesus’ Prophecies of His Death and Resurrection,” in Holzappel and Wayment, *From the Last Supper through the Resurrection*, 3–38.

Another of Isaiah's prophecies seems to lie just below the surface of Jesus' words, anchored beneath Jesus' prediction of shameful treatment as well as pointing backward to the beginning of his journey to the holy city. In chapter 50, the prophet portrays the Suffering Servant¹¹¹ as setting his "face like a flint" (Isa. 50:7). The expression leads us immediately to think of Jesus setting "his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51). For from both passages we come away with a sense of firm resolve in seeing matters to their end. For Jesus knows that he goes to suffer, "that he should be received up" (9:51). Moreover, in the Old Testament, Isaiah quotes the Suffering Servant as announcing, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isa. 50:6). Again, the "face" is framed inside the prophet's portrait. In this connection, although not expressly mentioned, Jesus' "face" lies implicitly yet graphically in his forecast of his own suffering: "he . . . shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on" (18:32). Hence, it seems that Isaiah's prophecies about the Suffering Servant not only experiencing shameful treatment but also resolutely meeting them head-on—"therefore have I set my face like a flint" (Isa. 50:7)—lie at the base of Jesus' forecast of the shameful treatment that awaits him (see 18:32) as it ties to his resolute action of going to Jerusalem to face his fate (see 9:51).

In contrast to Matthew and Mark, who note briefly and vaguely that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem when he utters his prediction (see Matt. 20:17; Mark 10:32), Luke places Jesus' prophecy in a real place, just outside the gates of Jericho (see 18:35), the last town that he and his entourage of disciples will enter before ascending to the capital city. As with an earlier prediction, Luke has given Jesus' words about his suffering a concrete setting (see the Analysis on 9:43–45). The Savior's ominous forecast thus concludes and gives meaning to his journey that begins at 9:51: Jesus "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," where he will suffer and die. Now he stands, as it were, on the doorstep of the capital city, completing his long preaching tour at Jericho and positioning himself to meet what lies ahead, for we shall soon see him leading the band of pilgrims up the hill, forcing the pace and betraying no sign of hesitation or fear: "he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem" (19:28).

Jewish officials are missing in this foretelling. They play an important role, of course, in a prior prediction: "The Son of man must . . . be rejected

111. Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 333–36, 340–41; Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), 483–90.

of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain” (9:22). Why their omission here? After all, they appear prominently in the parallel forecasts preserved by Matthew and Mark: “the chief priests and . . . the scribes . . . shall condemn him to death” (Matt. 20:18; Mark 10:33). Because of the wide number of differences between the reports in Matthew and Mark on the one hand and in Luke on the other (see 18:31–33; Matt. 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34), we cannot simply assign the missing Jewish authorities to some imagined predilection of Luke. For he certainly knows and repeats the role that Jewish authorities will play in Jesus’ difficulties from the earlier prediction (see 9:22). As a further divergence, neither Matthew nor Mark seem to be aware of Luke’s point about the inability of the Twelve to grasp the meaning of Jesus’ forecast; only Luke preserves this passage (see 18:34). In this light, it seems more reasonable that Luke, or his source, notes only the Gentiles and does not draw from Mark’s passage at this point in his narrative, a narrative that, in an additional variation, does not include the story about the sons of Zebedee which appears in Matthew and Mark following Jesus’ prophecy about his suffering and death (see Matt. 20:20–28; Mark 10:35–45). Overall, the differences are too striking to see a common source for the three Gospels at this point.

HEALING THE BLIND MAN OUTSIDE JERICHO (18:35–43)

(Compare Matt. 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52)

King James Translation

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: 36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to

New Rendition

35 And it came to pass that, when he came close to Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road begging. 36 And when he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was going on. 37 And they reported to him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” 38 And he shouted, saying, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.” 39 And they who were going ahead rebuked him, that he should be quiet. But he cried all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” 40 And Jesus, when he had stopped, commanded that he be

be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. 43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

led to him. When he had come near, he asked him, 41 “What do you want me to do for you?” And he said, “Lord, that I see again.” 42 And Jesus said to him, “See again! Your faith has saved you.” 43 And immediately he regained his sight, and he followed him, glorifying God. And all the people who saw gave praise to God.

Notes

18:35 *he was come nigh*: This expression, coupled with notations about “the way side” in this verse and “the multitude pass by” in the next, brings forward concretely the sense of movement, the action of Jesus’ continuing journey to Jerusalem,¹¹² complete with dust kicked up by disciples’ sandals and the irregular but constant drumbeat of footfalls, especially because we have seen no notice of Jesus’ movement since 17:11 (see the Notes on 9:51; 10:38; 14:25; 17:11; 19:28). Even the statement, “Jesus stood” (18:40), attests that he is on the move. The vivid character of the story points to an eyewitness recollection. The eyewitness is likely the beggar himself, named Bartimaeus in Mark’s account (see Mark 10:46).¹¹³

***nigh unto Jericho*:** At last, Jesus’ journey reaches Jericho, the last stop before the twenty-kilometer ascent to the holy city. The notation of place, then, ties off Luke’s long journey section and represents geographically the lowest place that Jesus travels in contrast to the uplands of Jerusalem in the hills of Judea. Importantly, in this era, Jericho does not lie in the same spot as the earlier, Old Testament settlement, Tell es-Sultan, but lies 1.5 miles to the south at the mouth of the Wadi kelt from which a steady stream of water flows from springs high in the Judean Hills. The dominant, contemporary building in the town is Herod’s winter palace, whose magnificent structure sits near and atop earlier palace structures set in place by the Hasmonians.¹¹⁴ From Jericho, Jesus and his disciples will join other pilgrims, also not from Judea, who are going early to the city to purify themselves

112. Green, *Luke*, 662.

113. Lane, *Gospel according to Mark*, 386–87; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 39–40, 54–55.

114. Ehud Netzer, “The Winter Palaces of the Judean Kings at Jericho at the End of the Second Temple Period,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 228

before the Passover because they reside among Gentiles and thereby contract ritual impurity (see John 11:55; the Notes on 2:42; 19:29; 23:26).¹¹⁵

a certain blind man: Mark names this man, calling him Bartimaeus, meaning the son of Timaeus (see Mark 10:46), and Matthew writes that Jesus meets and heals two blind men (see Matt. 20:29–30). Luke does not preserve the man’s name but may know it.¹¹⁶ It is almost certain that the recollection of this healing goes back to this man.¹¹⁷ Both Mark and Matthew report that Jesus meets the blind man on his way out of town rather than as he approaches, as Luke records. It is difficult to say which details are more accurate. But Luke’s version tidily fits with his following story about Zacchaeus, the tax collector whom Jesus meets in Jericho after giving the blind man his sight, a story that appears only in Luke’s Gospel (see 19:1–10).

begging: The blind man has no other option, for he cannot labor at a vocation. He is the very kind of person whom Jesus seeks to include in his wider circle (see the Note on 14:13). The fact that this man takes up his spot outside of town may indicate that he is not Jewish (see the Note on 14:23).

18:36 hearing the multitude pass by: The noise from conversations and footfalls of many people, perhaps more than one hundred, with the accompanying noises from beasts of burden, catch in the ears of the blind man, even if he is dozing at the moment.

18:37 Jesus of Nazareth: This name appears here for the first time in Luke’s works (see 24:19; Acts 2:22; 6:14; 22:8; 26:9; also Acts 3:6; 4:10). From the blind man’s reaction, clearly Jesus is already known by this title and he carries a reputation as a healer. He is also known as son of Joseph and son of Mary (see 3:23; 4:22; John 1:45; Mark 6:3). Incidentally, a few manuscripts read “Jesus the Nazarene,” likely a copyist’s change.¹¹⁸

18:38 Son of David: In the earliest Christian records, the letters of Paul, Jesus is linked to the lineage of David “according to the flesh,” that is, through his mother (Rom. 1:3; 15:12). In the words of the angel who appears to Mary, Jesus is to inherit “the throne of his father David” (1:32). From the blind man’s piercing, persistent shouts we learn that, evidently,

(December 1977): 1–13; Aharoni and others, *Carta Bible Atlas*, map 238; Ehud Netzer, “Jericho,” in *ABD*, 3:723–24, 737–39.

115. Josephus, *B.J.* 1.11.6 (§229); *Mishnah Oholoth* 2:3 (“These convey uncleanness . . . earth from a foreign country”); Hyman, “Pilgrimage,” 16:154–55; Hayes, “Purity and Impurity, Ritual,” 16:752–53.

116. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 52–54.

117. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 39–40, 46–47, 55.

118. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1215–16.

Jesus is already known as the son of David during his mortal ministry (see 18:39; 20:41). The title “Son of David,” of course, carries messianic connotations and Jesus’ obvious acceptance of the title points to his messiahship.¹¹⁹

have mercy on me: This cry for deliverance mirrors that of Alma the Younger (see Alma 36:18). In the case of the blind man, he seeks sight, a deliverance from debilitating darkness; on Alma’s part, he begs for deliverance from his saturating sins. The idea that the blind man is simply asking for alms misses the point of his unusual insight into who Jesus really is,¹²⁰ the notice that he shouts all the more to gain Jesus’ attention when travelers try to quiet him (see 18:39), and that he pleads for his sight (18:41). Besides, Jesus’ reputation does not portray him as a wealthy man who dispenses alms (see 9:58).

18:39 they which went before: As the account stands, a question arises whether this group, evidently walking at the front of the pack, includes Jesus’ closest disciples. If disciples are among those who try to silence the blind man, they will soon learn that they incorrectly represent Jesus’ feelings for this disadvantaged man, much as they act earlier toward the small children and their parents (see 18:15–17). On the question of the disciples’ presence, see the Note on 18:43 for the adjustment in the Joseph Smith Translation.

rebuked him: The verb (Greek *epitamaō*) is the same as in 18:15; see the Note thereon for the observation that these people are stepping away from appropriate action.¹²¹

18:40 Jesus stood: This tiny detail, appearing in all three records of this incident (see Matt. 20:32; Mark 10:49), points to an eyewitness memory of this poignant moment when Jesus stops to take notice of a blind beggar (see 6:10; 9:55; 10:23; 14:25; 19:3; 22:41, 61; 23:28; John 8:6–8; the Notes on 7:9, 44; 22:31, 34).

to be brought: The man is led, because of his blindness, to Jesus. Obviously, the man cannot distinguish Jesus from the others in the crowd either by hearing his voice or by some other means. On a metaphorical level, Jesus’ command that the man be led to him shows not only his acceptance of the man, in his reduced social capacity, but also his willingness to invite him into the circle of his followers¹²² as well as his interest in making him whole.

119. Morris, *Luke*, 296; Green, *Luke*, 663–64.

120. Green, *Luke*, 663.

121. *TDNT*, 2:623–26.

122. Green, *Luke*, 665.

when he was come near: Rather than being “distinctly colorless,”¹²³ the verbs (Greek *engizō*, and its Hebrew counterpart *qarav*) are drenched in religious meanings, including approaching the sacrificial altar and drawing near to God (see 21:28; Ex. 40:32; 1 Sam. 14:36; 2 Kgs. 16:12; Ps. 119:169; Heb. 7:19; James 4:8; etc.).¹²⁴ In this light, it is as though the blind man is approaching the one who can offer salvation (see 18:42).

18:41 What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?: Although Jesus throws open the door to any request, as it were, his words exhibit a remarkable measure of trust that the blind man will not ask for something that will offend heavenly purposes (see James 4:3; 2 Ne. 4:35; Hel. 10:3–5; D&C 46:30).

Lord: We meet this divine term of address elsewhere that essentially acknowledges Jesus as Jehovah (see 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:6; 22:31, 61; 24:3; and the Notes on 7:13, 31; 18:6).¹²⁵

receive my sight: Although the verb (Greek *anablepō*) can mean simply “to receive sight,” it can also mean “to regain sight,” implying that the man earlier enjoys the ability to see but for some reason loses it.¹²⁶ Because restoration of sight is unknown from Old Testament sources that may be a part of the blind man’s world, we conclude that he, ever alert to anything that will aid him, somehow learns of Jesus’ powers to give sight and, unexpectedly aware that Jesus the miracle worker is near, almost breathlessly begs for his vision (see 7:21–22).

18:42 thy faith hath saved thee: For a fourth time, Jesus links salvation and well-being, two meanings of the Greek verb *sōzō*, with a person’s self-motivated actions, all growing out of faith (see 7:50; 8:48; 17:19).¹²⁷ In a fifth instance, that of the Gergesene demoniac, it is Luke who notes the tie between the man’s initiative and Jesus’ healing or saving (see 8:27, 36).¹²⁸ In our passage, one possible meaning is “thy faith hath saved thee [into the kingdom],” understanding the blind man’s newly born discipleship as already mature. The other sense has to do with him becoming whole, with his sight now fully functional (see the Notes on 7:50; 8:48; 17:19).

18:43 immediately: Although the term that Luke repeats differs from that which appears in Matthew 20:34 and Mark 10:52 (Greek *parachrēma*

123. Marshall, *Luke*, 694.

124. *TDOT*, 13:135–48; *TLOT*, 3:1164–69; *TDNT*, 2:330–32.

125. BAGD, 459–61; *TDNT*, 3:1058–62, 1086–93; *TLNT*, 2:347–50.

126. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 99; BAGD, 50.

127. BAGD, 805–6; *TDNT*, 7:989–91; *TLNT*, 3:349–50.

128. For other occurrences of *to save* and the noun *salvation*, see also 8:12; 13:23; 19:9–10.

versus *euthus*),¹²⁹ all three accounts stress that the sight of the blind is restored not by a process but instantly (see Mark 8:22–25). Perhaps oddly, because Luke and Matthew share this story, Luke does not write that Jesus touches the blind man, as Matthew does, but merely speaks to him, as Mark reports. The omission feels strange unless Matthew is drawing details from a different source, which seems apparent because he writes about two blind men.

followed him: This expression not only underscores the theme of discipleship in this chapter but also highlights the man’s immediate and full commitment to Jesus, much as another blind man responds to Jesus after he is granted his sight in Jerusalem (see John 9:24–38). How so? The verb “to follow” (Greek *akoloutheō*) stands in the imperfect tense, the tense of customary, continuing and repetitive action.¹³⁰ In a word, the man continues to follow Jesus; his commitment is not limited to just this marvelous moment.

all the people: From this expression, the presence of the disciples can only be assumed, although such an assumption seems secure (see the Note on 18:39). By changing one word, the Joseph Smith Translation artfully affirms their presence, “all the *disciples*,” thus including the Twelve as witnesses to the miracle (JST 18:43; emphasis added).

Analysis

We now witness the fulfillment of one of the pillars of the Savior’s announced agenda when he steps into his public ministry, the “recovering of sight to the blind” (4:18; see the Note thereon).¹³¹ To be sure, a person’s blindness may be spiritual and therefore, with divine aid, recovery of sight really consists in acquiring a proper spiritual perception. But the literal sense of Jesus’ declaration stands front and center, that he has come to give sight to the blind (see Mosiah 3:5). For Luke writes about Jesus healing “many that were blind,” though he does not rehearse the stories (see 7:21–23). Matthew, of course, writes about Jesus healing two blind men in the city of Capernaum (see Matt. 9:27–31), and Mark reports that Jesus gives sight to a blind man in Bethsaida (see Mark 8:22–26). Luke may know these stories without repeating them, though we cannot be certain. In any event, Luke

129. BAGD, 321, 629.

130. BAGD, 30; Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §§1790, 1889–94, 2341; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§327, 325.

131. Green, *Luke*, 665.

chooses to feature Jesus' merciful action for the blind man who sightlessly patrols the road outside Jericho, the road that links to Galilee in the north and to Perea, the territory on the east bank of the Jordan River.¹³²

The theme of discipleship continues to push itself forward. What appears to be a happy story about a forgotten blind man begging loudly for Jesus to give him the unimaginable gift of sight turns out to be a proof of Jesus' words that, among those who accept invitations to his kingdom, will stand "the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" (14:21; see the Note on 14:13). For after receiving his sight, the man "followed him, glorifying God," with the sense that he persists in following Jesus (18:43; see the Note thereon). Mark adds the phrase, "followed Jesus *in the way*," clearly implying that the blind man joins Jesus' followers on the trek up to Jerusalem (Mark 10:52; emphasis added). As a continuing theme, discipleship will reappear as a major element in the following report on the tax collector Zacchaeus.

The account of the blind man's healing also forms a conclusion of sorts for the journey section that begins at 9:51. In one sense, Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem involves one last stop, in Jericho, the town that he and his entourage are approaching. Luke identifies this town alone throughout the whole itinerary, drawing attention to it just as he does to Jerusalem at the journey's beginning. Moreover, even when Jesus finally enters the capital city, Luke records that he goes into the temple area, saying nothing about Jerusalem (see 19:45, 47; 20:1). As a further touch, this incident forms the last recorded interaction between Jesus and those of lower social status, although the throngs in the temple certainly include unidentified poor and suffering people (see 21:1–4).

As a final note, the relationship of Luke to the other Synoptists, Matthew and Mark, bears reviewing. When placed side by side, the differences among the three accounts jump out at a reader much more brightly than the similarities. For example, according to Mark and Matthew, Jesus is on his way out of Jericho when he meets the blind man rather than entering the town (see Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46). In an unusual twist, Matthew holds that Jesus heals two blind men, not one (see Matt. 20:30). In Mark's case, he reports part of a conversation between bystanders and the blind man as well as the fact that the blind man sets aside "his garment," then "rose, and came to Jesus" without any apparent assistance (Mark 10:49–50). Another difference arises in Matthew's narrative when he writes that "Jesus

132. Beitzel, "Roads and Highways (Pre-Roman)," 5:780 (map); David F. Graf, Benjamin Isaac, and Israel Roll, "Roads and Highways (Roman)," in *ABD*, 5:783, 784 (map).

had compassion . . . and touched” the eyes of the blind, aspects missing in Luke (Matt. 20:34). A final divergence, found in Mark, consists in Jesus’ additional words to the blind man, “Go thy way,” inviting him to go to family and friends even though he instead follows Jesus “in the way” (Mark 10:52). Although these differences do not completely discourage a view that Luke takes his story from one or both of the other Gospels, the fact that the report of the sons of Zebedee seeking special places in the kingdom stands before the healing of the blind at Jericho in the narratives of Matthew and Mark, but not in Luke, suggests the strong possibility that Luke does not depend fully or even partially on either of them for his story of the blind man (see Matt. 20:20–28; Mark 10:35–45).