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## The Royal Procession (19:28-40)

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28 **After he had said this, he went ahead, up to Jerusalem.<sup>a</sup> 29/ When he came near to Bethphage and Bethany, toward the mount called the Mount of Olives, it happened that he sent two of the disciples 30/ and said to them,<sup>b</sup> "Go into the village that lies before us; when you enter it you will find a young ass<sup>c</sup> on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. 31/ And if anyone asks you, 'Why do you untie it,' you shall say that its master needs it." 32/ And when those who had been sent were going, they found it to be as he had told them. 33/ While they were untying the young ass, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the ass?" 34/ They answered, "Because its master needs it." 35/ Then they led it to Jesus, and when they had thrown their garments on the young ass, they helped Jesus mount it. 36/ While he rode ahead,<sup>d</sup> they spread their garments on the way. 37/ When he drew near to the foot of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of disciples began to praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty deeds they had seen. 38/ They said,<sup>e</sup> "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest."**

39 **Some of the Pharisees from the crowd called to him, "Master,<sup>f</sup> rebuke your disciples." 40/ He answered them, "I tell you: If these are silent, the stones will cry out."**

a Literally: "And having said this, he went on ahead up toward Jerusalem."  
 b Literally: "saying" (without "to them")  
 c Literally: "foal/colt," "young one," "young ass."  
 d Literally: "While he strode ahead."  
 e Literally: "saying."  
 f Or: "Teacher" (Greek διδάσκαλε). In vv. 31-34 the Greek word is κύριος, "master," which can also mean "Lord," "Mister," "owner."

### Synchronic Analysis

One senses already the presence of the city of Jerusalem (vv. 28, 41-44)—still, however, from a distance. Thus, the event in question is an approach to (see vv. 29, 37, 41) rather than an entry into the city. (The verb "to enter" does not appear until v. 45, and there it refers to the temple.)<sup>1</sup> What takes place during this approach, in the outlying villages of Bethphage and Bethany (vv. 29-30),

at the foot of the legendary Mount of Olives (vv. 29, 37)? Various marginal happenings are mentioned. Later they will turn out to be major events, but at the moment their immediate significance remains unclear and ambiguous. After Jesus' primary destination, Jerusalem, is reported (v. 28), mention is made of a special intention. Its importance ("his master needs him," v. 34) but not its significance is underscored. It involves taking possession

1 See C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (TPI New Testament Commentaries; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International) 677; and Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (2 vols.; BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994, 1996) 2:1546. Doeve ("Purification") is of the opinion that the

pericopae of 19:28—20:19 have been arranged according to the midrashic method.

of a young ass (vv. 29-34). This action, arranged by Jesus, leads to further preparations in which the disciples take the initiative.<sup>2</sup> They took off their garments, laid some of them on the ass as a saddle, and helped Jesus mount it. Then they spread some of the others on the ground in the place of a red carpet.<sup>3</sup> While this is happening, Jesus remains quiet and passive (from v. 32 to v. 39).

The main action begins with a brief summary (v. 37a). The disciples present, described as a “multitude” (πληθος—translated here as “multitude of disciples”), are the only persons involved. They express their joy over Jesus’ miracles by thanking God with praise and by blessing the hero with words of Scripture and a liturgical formula (vv. 37b-38).<sup>4</sup>

Later the readers learn that a crowd of people (ὄχλος) is present. They also hear a challenge of the Pharisees that appears to involve a complaint, which, however, is not further explained (v. 39). Jesus, again active and speaking, silences them by giving his approval to the praise, which appears to be at the same time both staged and spontaneous (v. 40).

In summary, the readers are present for four brief actions that follow one another in rapid sequence without any detailed commentary:

- Vv. 28-34: Once the readers are reminded of the opening situation, two disciples take possession of a young ass.  
 Vv. 35-36: The disciples help Jesus mount the ass.  
 Vv. 37-38: The multitude of disciples erupts in praise.  
 Vv. 39-40: Some Pharisees try to intervene. Jesus silences them.<sup>5</sup>

## Diachronic Analysis

Using a synoptic comparison, we are able to establish a hypothesis to explain how the evangelist brought together the traditional materials available to him, and we can discover the redactional features with which Luke put his own imprint on them. The report he has reproduced has a parallel in John as well as in Mark and Matthew.<sup>6</sup>

Three of Luke’s details are found only in the Fourth Gospel:<sup>7</sup> the recollection of Jesus’ miracles imprinted on the disciples’ memory (v. 37; John 12:16), the title “king” given to Jesus (v. 38; John 12:13), and the Pharisees’ negative reaction (v. 39; John 12:19). Thus, Luke shares with John several recollections of Jesus’ last days.<sup>8</sup>

Luke and Matthew share the following, primarily grammatical, details: the aorist of the verb “to approach,” where Mark uses the present (v. 29; Matt 21:1);<sup>9</sup> the aorist “he sent,” where Mark has the historical present (v. 29; Matt 21:1); the omission of αὐτοῦ (“his” after the word “disciples” (v. 29; Matt 21:1); the present participle λέγων (v. 30; Matt 21:2), where Mark has the present indicative; the use (twice) of the verb “lead to” (ἄγω), where Mark uses the verb “bring to” (φέρω, vv. 30, 35; Matt 21:2, 7); “that” (ὅτι) after “you shall say” (v. 31; Matt 21:3); the observation that the disciples did as Jesus had instructed them (v. 32; Matt 21:6);<sup>10</sup> the absence of the words “tied outside near a gate where the street turns” (Mark 11:4; see v. 32 and Matt 21:6); the absence of “blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes” (Mark 11:10; see v. 38 and Matt 21:9).

2 Patsch (“Einzug,” 15–16) cites the case of a contemporary of Jesus and the apostles: “Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai once rode toward Jerusalem on an ass, and his disciples followed him” (*b. Ketub. 66b Bar.;* Str-B 2:414; this according to the Munich ms. In the Bamberg ms he leaves Jerusalem). The Talmud (*Talmud Bavli* [Steinsaltz ed.; New York: Random House, 1994], vol. 11, tractate *Ketubot*, part 5, p. 18) chooses the reading “he leaves Jerusalem”; see also the parallel passage in *Sifre Devarim* 31.14 §305 (130a).

3 By contrast, Marie-Joseph Lagrange (*Évangile selon saint Luc* [7th ed.; EtB; Paris: Gabalda, 1948] 499) thinks that other people spread their garments on the ground.

4 See Lagrange, 499; and C. F. Evans, 680.

5 See the slightly differing schematic portrayal in Bock, 2:1551.

6 The report does not appear in the *Gospel of Thomas*. According to Rese (*Motive*, 196–99), the connections between 19:36-40 and the Gospel of John are not that close.

7 See Schniewind, *Parallelperikopen*, 26–28.

8 There are also a number of agreements between Matthew and John, esp. the quotation from Zech 9:9.

9 The reference to Bethphage does not appear in all manuscripts of Mark. If it should be the case that it was not original, then the existence of this small village in Luke and Matthew constitutes another minor agreement.

10 On these small agreements, see Andreas Ennulat,

In my opinion, however, these observations do not justify positing a literary relationship between the First and Third Gospels.<sup>11</sup> It is quite possible that both evangelists improved Mark, their common source, in the same way. They may also have been able to remember having heard an orally transmitted form of the report. To imagine, as another hypothesis does, that alongside Mark both of them draw on a Deutero-Mark<sup>12</sup> is a solution that is both complicated and improbable.<sup>13</sup>

The connections between Luke and Mark are consistent with a close relationship between the two Gospels. Luke appears as a *rewriter* who improves Mark's style, narration, and ideas. Nevertheless, in doing so he retains what is essential in his source's narratives down to the smallest details of many of its expressions.<sup>14</sup> Along with Mark, he names Bethany and calls attention to the Mount of Olives (v. 29; Mark 11:1); he mentions only a single animal (Matthew famously speaks of an ass and a colt in exact fulfillment of the prophecy of Zech 9:9); he disregards the quotation from Zech 9:9; in the same order and with the same words he describes what the two disciples do (vv. 32-35). In addition to the minor agreements between Matthew and Luke already mentioned, one can also observe differences between Luke and Mark: Luke omits the words "and he will send it back here immediately" (Mark 11:3b). He fails to mention the branches that had been cut (Mark 11:8). He readily repeats Jesus' direction and location (v. 37a). Twice he avoids mentioning "Hosanna" (Mark 11:9-10). He offers a new formula—"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest" (v. 38b)—in place of the second "Hosanna" shout ("Hosanna in the highest," Mark 11:10c). He ends by

inserting a brief exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus (vv. 39-40). We can explain most of the Lukan narrative by assuming that Luke is critically faithful to Mark. For the features unique to the Third Gospel we are indebted here to its redactor's initiative. It is probable, however, that Luke did not fabricate Jesus' statement about the stones that cry out (v. 40). It is, rather, an early, free-floating logion, which the evangelist (in v. 39) came to adopt and deliberately and carefully to quote (v. 40). Thus, I doubt that we have here the influence of Luke's special material.<sup>15</sup>

Matthew and John develop their sources in the direction of a messianism that is the fulfillment of biblical prophecies, but Luke, who at this point follows Mark, understands Jesus' ride as an act that symbolizes the imminent or realized kingdom.<sup>16</sup> Since the episode in which the ass is found can be understood only in terms of the LXX text of Zechariah and corresponds to a motif found in the literature of Greek aretologies, it is not possible to give it an early date. It is even less possible to regard it as historical. It is an acceptable introduction, which, however, is not indispensable for the main narrative.<sup>17</sup> The procession of Jesus, who is praised by the disciples while riding on an ass, constitutes a literary unit that quite satisfies the criteria of form criticism.<sup>18</sup> Honored first as one of the joyful pilgrims to whom Psalm 117 [118] refers, the historical Jesus becomes after Easter the impulse for the first Christologies. In this episode he becomes as the Risen One, the Son of David, who makes an appearance to his city as a conqueror and demonstrates his kingship to the impatient multitudes.

*Die "Minor Agreements": Untersuchungen zu einer offenen Frage des synoptischen Problems* (WUNT 2/62; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994) 245–52.

11 Contra Michael D. Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm* (2 vols.; JSNTSup 20; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989) 2:685–88.

12 That is the hypothesis of Fuchs, "Agreements."

13 There are various agreements between Matthew and Mark. It is, for example, the multitude and not necessarily the disciples who offer praise (Matt 21:8-9; Mark 11:8-10). See also the double Hosanna-shout (Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9-10).

14 For a good comparison between Mark and Luke, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (2 vols.; AB 28, 28A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981, 1985)

2:1242–43, who also discovers connections between Luke and John in this pericope (John 12:12-16).

15 Contra Patsch, "Einzug," 8–9; and Schramm, *Markus-Stoff*, 148; in agreement with Mariadason, *Triomphe*. Kim Paffenroth (*The Story of Jesus according to L* [JSNTSup 147; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997] 32–33, 65 n. 243, and 95 n. 154) is uncertain.

16 On the Lukan theme of royalty, so emphatically present here and qualified as that of Jesus, see p. 9 below and n. 39.

17 The secondary character of the search for the ass is emphasized by Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1976) 261.

The episode has been compared to the visitations that Greek, Roman, or Jewish rulers, princes, or governors made to their capitals and cities.<sup>19</sup> The local citizens prepared these triumphal entrances. They decorated the streets; dressed in white, they went outside the city walls to meet the hero, the victorious general, or the magistrates who constituted the highest authority. They organized speeches as well as the reception.<sup>20</sup> Long before the ancient model was applied to Palm Sunday, it had been—a fact too often overlooked—used to portray in advance the parousia of the Son of Man. Using it for the entry into Jerusalem meant that one adapted the model in such a way that, as a prelude to the passion, it should not be confused with a triumphal entry of a political or military nature. Nor should it be mistaken for a religious parousia that, since Jesus was still a mortal human being, was not to be portrayed as a triumph. Thus the ambiguous character of the episode: the ass is both a sign of kingship and a mark of humility—a sign of an insignificant kingship in the age of Tiberius and Pilate, and at the same time a living but fragile metaphor of a solemn heavenly enthronement. Luke, but also each of the other three evangelists, is thinking of the peace that is “in heaven,” because the demons of oppression still dwell on earth. Luke takes the story that is still moving toward its conclusion and attaches it to the “promise–fulfillment”

typology that extends from the Scriptures to the present moment.<sup>21</sup>

### Commentary

■ **28** According to Luke, Jesus comes from Jericho (18:35; 19:1) and, going ahead (*ἔμπροσθεν*) of the others, makes his way toward Jerusalem. Verse 28 offers one of the formulaic summaries (cf. 9:51; 13:22; 17:11) that accompany the Travel Narrative.<sup>22</sup> The words Jesus had just spoken (*ταῦτα*, “this”) are the parable of the pounds, to which is added the journey of the prince who set out to obtain his royal crown (19:12-14).

■ **29-34** “And it happened” (*καὶ ἐγένετο*) serves to mark a new episode. Jesus now approaches two villages. In spite of two scholarly hypotheses, we do not know the exact location of Bethphage (literally, “the house of wild figs”).<sup>23</sup> The village of Bethany (probably the “house of Anania”) lay 2.7 kilometers east of Jerusalem on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives. The fourth evangelist locates Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in this village (John 11:1, 18; 12:1). We should not confuse it with the Bethany “beyond the Jordan” mentioned in John 1:28.<sup>24</sup> When Luke speaks of the “mountain named the Mount of Olives,” he is thinking of readers who are not familiar with the geography of Palestine.<sup>25</sup> By defining it exactly

18 According to Tatum (“Entry”), Jesus wanted not to give a messianic sign but to challenge the Romans, to remind them of God’s power, finally “making an ass out of the Romans” (p. 131). Trautmann (*Handlungen*, 347–78) is of the opinion that there lies at the beginning of the narrative an event that attracted attention, but it was an event that did not come from the intention of Jesus. On this occasion he did not want to give a prophetic sign. Mastin (“Date”) suggests that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem took place in autumn, probably at the feast of the Dedication of the Temple.

19 See Duff, “March,” 55–71; Kinman, *Entry*, 25–47; idem, “Parousia,” 280–84. Fernández Marcos (“Entrada”) insists that there are connections between the entries into Jerusalem of Jesus (19:35–40) and Solomon (1 Kgs 1:33–40).

20 See Lucien Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (trans. Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker; New York: Herder & Herder, 1959) 32–33; Kinman, *Entry*, 25–47.

21 On this adaptation, see Hans Conzelmann, *The*

*Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; 1961; reprinted Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 74; and Kinman, *Entry*, 91–122, who emphasizes the nontriumphal aspect of this entry.

22 Note the motif of proceeding (*πορεύομαι*) up (*ἀναβαίνω*) toward the holy city as well as the use of the imperfect to indicate continuous action.

23 On Bethphage, see Fitzmyer, 2:1247. Lagrange (p. 498) writes: “We continue to believe that, in climbing the Mount of Olives on the old road that passed the hollow located between the Victoria-Augusta hospice and the village of et Tor, Jesus left Bethany quite far to his left. Thus even though it was closer to Jerusalem, the village of Bethphage had to be mentioned before that of et Tor.” Origen (*Hom. Luc.* 27.1) is of the opinion that Bethphage means “house of the jawbone.”

24 On Bethany, see Fitzmyer, 2:1248. Origen (*Hom. Luc.* 27.1) declares that Bethany means “house of obedience.”

25 Mark writes simply “Mount of Olives.” On this four-kilometer-long mountain, lying to the east of Jerusa-

as “in the direction of the mountain” (πρὸς τὸ ὄρος) Luke shares Mark’s understanding that the two villages lie on a slope of the Mount of Olives.

Jesus’ command to the two disciples he had chosen (“two of the disciples”) seems to be easy to carry out and at the same time insurmountably difficult. The paradox emphasizes the divine man’s miraculous foreknowledge,<sup>26</sup> which is confirmed by the cautious words (“you shall say that the master needs it”). In antiquity it was primarily military and political authorities who impounded provisions or mounts. Even in those cases when impoundment is mentioned to benefit rabbis, we would miss the miraculous dimension the evangelist suggests to us if we were to place Jesus’ action in this category.<sup>27</sup> Instead, we must consider that the evangelist understands Jesus as a “king” (βασιλεύς, v. 38) who makes use of his title “Master” or “Lord” (κύριος, vv. 31, 34) and requisitions the animal he needs.<sup>28</sup> The concept of need was important for legitimating and carrying out impoundments (cf. Mark 2:25 par. Luke 6:3). Since Jesus is a poor Galilean, the contrast is especially conspicuous.

Even if it is true that, without any distinguishing characteristic, πῶλος usually means “foal/colt,” on occasion, even without further modification, it means the “young” of various animals—for example, a “young ass.” If we assume that Zechariah’s prophecy lies behind the Synoptic episode, it can only mean the young offspring

of a she-ass. Matthew understood it this way (21:4), and we can assume that Mark and Luke did also.<sup>29</sup>

Why is it important that the young ass has never been ridden? It preserves the reference to Zech 9:9 (LXX) in which the young ass is “new.” Doubtless its purpose is also to underscore Jesus’ messianic privilege.<sup>30</sup> That the young ass will be “bound” is not only obvious; it may also be biblical. Judah’s famous oracle (Gen 49:11), which first-century C.E. readers interpreted messianically, shows that the hero “binds” his ass to the vine. In the middle of the second century Justin Martyr compared the two texts (*1 Apol.* 32.1.5–6), and in his narration of the episode of the palm branches he points out that the young ass was tied to a grape vine.<sup>31</sup>

Luke here pits the Lord against the owners of the young ass, the “Lord” (κύριος, vv. 31 and 34) against the “masters” (κύριοι, v. 33). Why does the ass have more than one owner? Is Luke influenced here by Mark, who says “some of the ones standing there”? Does he think the ass was common property? Is there a Semitism here where a grammatical plural sometimes can serve to designate a reality in the singular? Does he want to allegorize and, as Paul does in 1 Cor 8:6, contrast Christ, the sole Lord, with the numerous heathen “lords” called deities? It is difficult to answer these questions, and the plural form remains an enigma.<sup>32</sup>

lem beyond the Kidron Valley and running from north to south, with its three summits of which traditionally the middle one is considered to be the Mount of Olives, see Fitzmyer, 2:1248. The word ἡ ἐλαία means olive tree as well as olive. Instead of ἐλαιῶν (genitive plural) one can also read ἐλαιών (nominative masculine singular: “olive grove”); see Lagrange, 498.

26 On such a superhuman power, see Ludwig Bieler, *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ: Das Bild des “göttlichen Menschen,”* in idem, *Spätantike und Frühchristentum* (1935–36; reprinted Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967) 87–94; Rosa Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike* (Würzburger Studien zur Altertumswissenschaft 3; 1932; reprinted Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969) 65–67.

27 The Hebrew Bible already indicates the rights of a king, in particular, the right to requisition an ass (1 Sam [LXX 1 Kgdms] 8:16). This system was called ἀγγαρεία, derived from a term that

originally designated the organization of the Persian couriers. The verb ἀγγαρεύω means “to requisition,” “to subject to forced labor,” “to force.” Concerning the case of a rabbi, see *b. Yoma* 35b (Soncino translation, 163–64); Derrett, “Colt.”

28 The ὅτι (vv. 31 and 34) in fact introduces a direct discourse. It functions as does a colon.

29 The famous article by Bauer (“Colt”), which argues in favor of “foal/colt,” has been criticized by Kuhn, “Reittier.” In the attempt to remain faithful to the letter of Zech 9:9, Matthew puts Jesus simultaneously on the female ass and her young ass (Matt 21:7). See Gruber, “Parallelism,” 291–92; Frenz, “Mt 21,5-7.”

30 See here Kuhn, “Reittier,” 86–91.

31 See also *Ps.-Clementine Rec.* 1.49–50; 5.10.14; *Hom.* 3.72.2; Blenkinsopp, “Oracle.”

32 It may be that with this plural Luke simply wants to designate who the owners of the ass are (the farmer, his wife, his children, his servants . . .). Nevertheless, on the plural οἱ κύριοι (v. 33), Buth (“Transla-

■ **35-36** It is obvious: the double action of laying the clothes on the ass and having Jesus sit on it expresses, on the one hand, the desire to provide a saddle, a somewhat ostentatious gesture,<sup>33</sup> and, on the other hand, the will to welcome the visitor as a prince or dignitary.<sup>34</sup> The improvised and yet theatrical aspect of the scene is noteworthy: the disciples must act “as if.” To this point Jesus has traveled by foot. By having him mount an ass, one attributes to him a special—for Luke, a royal—role. The Lukan Jesus does not refuse this honor.<sup>35</sup>

■ **37-38** As if he wanted to emphasize a new, decisive stage, Luke makes a point of repeating the location: “at the foot of the Mount of Olives.” Then in his own words he mentions praising God for the mighty deeds at which the disciples and the multitude had marveled and blessing the Christ who comes (a messianic expression) in the name of the Lord (here meaning God).

The interaction between theology and Christology deserves attention: *God* receives the praise, for he is the source of *Jesus*’ intervention. It is God who permitted the deeds and words of his Son to be effective. Thus, one praises God for the “mighty deeds” (*δυνάμεις*).<sup>36</sup> For Luke, salvation is not only a hearing of the words; it

is also a seeing of God’s great deeds (*εἶδον*, “they have seen,” translated “they had seen”).<sup>37</sup> There is no doubt that on this day what is essential of the Father’s activity takes place through the Son (see also 5:26; 7:35; 13:13).

Following Mark, in v. 38 Luke quotes, without citing, Ps 117 (118):26. He gives the verse a messianic significance (“he who comes” is no longer a simple pilgrim).<sup>38</sup> He does not hesitate to give Jesus the title *βασιλεύς* (“king,” “emperor”), for in his view, as in that of the evangelist John, Jesus’ kingship is not of this world (which is not to say that there are no social and political effects here below).<sup>39</sup>

Luke confirms this interpretation with a doxology that is different from the one in the birth narrative. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus came to bring peace on earth (2:14) through the good that he would bring about with words and deeds (see Acts 10:38). At the end of his ministry Jesus establishes through his passion and his resurrection—here Luke is similar to Ephesians (Eph 2:14-18)—cosmic peace “in heaven.” He is praised for this, and the Father too is praised in him. In this central point as well, Luke is not far removed from John.<sup>40</sup>

tion”) refers in particular to Exod 21:29 and 36, where the plural is used for the singular (the text speaks of the owner of an ox). The LXX translates it as singular, *ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ*, “its owner.” In Acts 16:16 the plural *οἱ κύριοι* in a Greek context doubtless represents a real plural. On Luke’s insistence in presenting Jesus here as the Lord, see Hahn, *Titles*, 84.

- 33 The verb *ἐπρίπτω* (“to throw” [his clothes]) indicates the brisk gesture of impatience. The expression *ρίπτω τὰ ἱμάτια* is found in Plato, e.g., *Resp.* 5.473E.
- 34 When Jesus’ intimates learn of his anointing at the hands of the prophet sent by Elisha, they spread their garments before the feet of the one whom they from that time on celebrate as king (2 Kgs [LXX 4 Kgdms] 9:13). On the day of his coronation, David’s heir, Solomon, rode on a young ass (1 Kgs [LXX 3 Kgdms] 1:32-40). See Fernández Marcos, “Entrada.”
- 35 From a historical point of view, I imagine that Jesus, a popular pilgrim and recognized as a prophet, agreed to ride on a young ass and to receive acclamation. Psalm 117 (118) could be understood in a nonmessianic way: even if associated with the feast of Tabernacles it could take on an eschatological

coloring in ancient Judaism. See Robert Martin-Achard, *Essai biblique sur les fêtes d’Israël* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1974) 75, 83–88, and 92.

- 36 Elsewhere Luke has mentioned the divine *δύναμις*, which permits Jesus to fulfill his function as physician and thaumaturge. See 5:17 and 8:46. He uses the term in the plural with reference to miracles in 10:13; here in 19:37; Acts 2:22; 8:13; and 19:11.
- 37 On this Lukan connection among “praise,” “see,” and “miracles,” see Mariadason, *Triomphe*, 19. See also 2:30; and vol. 1 of this commentary, 101–3, on 2:29–32.
- 38 The readers remember that the numerous miracles of Jesus are mentioned (7:21–22) as a response to the question of John the Baptist (“Are you the one who is to come?” 7:19–20).
- 39 George, “Royauté”; idem, *Études*, 274–76; del Agua Pérez, “Entrada,” 182–88; Kinman, “Parousia,” 284–89. On the text *ὁ ἐρχόμενος ὁ βασιλεύς*, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994) 144–45.
- 40 On *δόξα* in Luke, see esp. 9:32; 24:26. On the interpretation of the doxology and the different hypoth-

■ **39-40** In contrast to what happens in Mark and Matthew, the multitude plays no great role. It is the Pharisees who intervene. They oppose the disciples in a confrontation with which Luke has already made us familiar (cf. 5:30; 6:2; etc.). Even if a similar opposition appears in the Gospels of Matthew (21:14-16) and John (12:19), what Luke here describes takes on a special coloration: Jesus is told to reprimand his disciples.<sup>41</sup>

Jesus solemnly (“I tell you”) states that the situation is extraordinary; it deserves to be taken seriously. If the disciples were forced to keep silent,<sup>42</sup> the stones would cry out. Luke, for whom stones are symbols of death and silence,<sup>43</sup> had already had John the Baptist say that the all-powerful God could raise children of Abraham from these stones (3:8). Here he puts a similar affirmation in Jesus’ mouth, an affirmation that has been interpreted in different ways. The prophet Habakkuk speaks of stones and beams that in a crisis or a tragic event could speak. If the sinner (oppressor, plunderer, thief) continues his evil deeds, the evil will come back on him. “Indeed, the stone in the wall will cry out, and the rafter in the framework will answer him” (Hab 2:11). If I understand it correctly, the house refuses to carry out the criminal intentions of the evil person. Thus, the stone and the beam rebel by

speaking the truth and by bearing witness to God’s judgment. Likewise, the stones will cry out the truth here, even if it is not certain that the Lukan verse alludes to the verse in Habakkuk.<sup>44</sup> It is more likely that they speak of the Son’s legitimacy and the Father’s wisdom than that they announce the destruction of Jerusalem or denounce injustice.<sup>45</sup> The motif of the stones that cry out, suggested here in Luke’s proverb-like sentence, also appears in certain religious, mythological, and literary texts of antiquity.<sup>46</sup>

### History of Interpretation

The Christian liturgy of the first centuries cited Luke’s two-volume work to justify the festivals of Pentecost and the Ascension.<sup>47</sup> To establish and inaugurate Palm Sunday, however, it chose to go back to the Gospel of Matthew, thus celebrating Jesus’ triumphal entry into the holy city of Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup>

In his polemical work against Marcion, Tertullian ignores Luke’s account of the entry into Jerusalem (*Adv. Marc.* 4.37–38).<sup>49</sup> By contrast, we have received a short sermon of Origen in its Latin version that is dedicated to the young ass (*Hom. Luc.* 37). As one would expect, the

eses regarding its origin, see Baarlink (“Friede”), who thinks that peace had provisionally retired into heaven.

41 On the redactional character of v. 39, see Diachronic Analysis above.

42 The word *ἐάν* followed by the future is irregular. The subjunctive of numerous manuscripts (*σιωπήσωσιν*) is a correction by purists. In that era the conjunction *ἐάν* followed by the indicative gradually becomes more prevalent (1 Thess 3:8; 1 John 5:15), but this construction from the pen of an author such as Luke is still astonishing.

43 One does not give one’s children stones to eat (11:11).

44 See Ruiz (“Clamor”), who agrees with the reference. The stones, anxious because of the fate that awaits them (the destruction of the city of Jerusalem), will cry out against the injustice. It is a question neither of a shout of praise nor of the noise created by the destruction of Jerusalem.

45 The manuscripts  $\aleph$  (= 01) and B (= 03) support the future active *κράξουσιν*. The manuscript 1241 has the subjunctive aorist *κράξωσιν*, D (= 05) the future middle *κράξονται*. A, W,  $\Theta$ ,  $\Psi$ , and  $f^{1,13}$ , as well as the majority of the witnesses of the Byzantine

period, have the future perfect *κεκράξονται*, which would be unique in the New Testament.

46 Kinman (“Stones”), who is not aware of the study cited in the preceding note, thinks that the cry of the stones is a cry of joy. He cites an interesting parallel from Cicero (*Against Piso* 52), who says that on his return from exile in the year 57 B.C.E. the very walls, the buildings, and the temple proclaimed the joy of Rome.

47 See Robert Cabié, *La Pentecôte: L'évolution de la Cinquantaine pascale au cours des cinq premiers siècles* (Bibliothèque de Liturgie; Tournai: Desclée, 1965) 182, 197.

48 See Mariadasan, *Triomphe*, 3:56, 65. On pp. 57–62 this author quotes or mentions a series of Christian texts from late antiquity related to the narrative or the festival of the palm branches. I was not able to look at A. W. Martin, “Interpretation.” On the celebration of the festival of the Branches in late antiquity, especially in Jerusalem, see H. Leclercq, “Rameaux” (“Dimanche des”), *DACL* 14.2 (1948) cols. 2060–64.

49 Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* 4.37–38) passes directly from the parable of the pounds (19:11-27) to the next polemic beginning in 20:1.



preacher believes in “a sense that lies deeper than the meaning of the simple narrative” (37.1).<sup>50</sup> The mount on which Jesus rides represents the human soul. Untying the ass shows that the human being is delivered from the forces of evil and is entrusted to the Lord, who needs him. The disciples, that is, the apostles, lay their clothes, that is, their works, on the ass. These works become the believers’ attire. The clothes on the ground represent the doctrine and the life of the apostles whom the faithful imitate. Origen closes by saying that he prays to God that the disciples’ praise may never end and that in no case would their work of love grow cold.<sup>51</sup>

In his commentary on the *Diatessaron*, Ephraem of Syria expresses the opinion that the disciples’ praise was interrupted at Jesus’ death. Then it was the stones that praised Jesus by delivering up the dead they had contained (Matt 27:51-53). Along with this literal interpretation, Ephraem is also familiar with a figurative one: the stones that cry out represent the Gentiles who have come to faith. Two centuries later James of Sarug rejoices at the praise in the mouth of the disciples, whom he compares with children. Then he connects the stones that could have cried out with a great thunder, doubtless with the thunder the crowd thinks it hears according to John 12:29. For those who need proofs for their faith he concedes that the literal sense (the crashing of the tombs

that open on Good Friday; Matt 27:51-53) is still possible.<sup>52</sup>

As is his custom, Albert the Great organizes the Lukan material carefully (*Evang. Luc.* 19:28-40 [580–89]). In his view, vv. 28-40 can be subdivided into four sections: the seizure of the young ass, the placing of Jesus on the ass, the eruption into song, and the rejection of the grievance. He uses the term “preparation” to describe the approach to Jerusalem. He begins with the literal sense before moving to the figurative (*secundum mysterium*). He speaks of certain spiritual explanations without accepting all of them. The two disciples who were sent to untie the ass are Philip, the evangelist of Samaria, and Peter, who converted the Roman centurion, Cornelius. Following John Chrysostom, Albert mentions the ten reasons why the ass represents the nation of the Gentiles. The statement “the Lord needs it” speaks more of the spiritual than the literal sense: “more in view of the mystery than of the means of transport” (*magis ad mysterium quam ad vehiculum*)! In its literal sense the procession involves three realities: the veneration of the believers, the envy of the evil persons, and their refutation. The veneration itself is divided into three parts: the clothing cast off from the bodies ready for martyrdom, the expressed praise, and the confession of royal dignity. Thus, the commentary gives a clear and consistent account of the

50 A modern allegory from the pen of O. Samuel, “Regierungsgewalt”: The Jesus entering Jerusalem is the Word of God in action.

51 See also Ambrose of Milan *Exp. Luc.* 9.1-16: Jesus goes up to the temple not made with human hands. Next follows the text of Matthew that mentions the female ass and her foal. The sense of the scene in which the owners deliver the young ass to the Lord corresponds to that given by Origen. The same is true for the interpretation of the clothes of Christ, who straddles the mount. Ambrose himself is responsible for the interpretation of the bridle that restricts the ass (Albertus Magnus *Evang. Luc.*). It symbolizes the heavenly Word. See Cyril of Alexandria *Serm. Luc.* 130 (Robert Payne Smith, *A Commentary upon the Gospel according to S. Luke*, by S. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, Now First Translated into English from an Ancient Syriac Version [2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859; reprinted New York: Studion, 1983] 2:601–6): The entry into Jerusalem takes place at a time when Jesus prepares to liberate the entire world. It offers the opportunity to give

a sign. Riding a young ass, Jesus shows that the nations soon will be summoned to the gospel, while the mother ass represents disobedient Israel. The young ass moves from the country to the city, from pagan uncouthness to Christian civility. See also the Venerable Bede *Luc. Exp.* 5.1834–2020.

52 Ephraem Syrus, *Commentaire de l’Évangile Concordant ou Diatessaron* (trans. L. Leloir; SC 121; Paris: Cerf, 1966) 315–16; James [Jacob] of Sarug, “Sur le dimanche des Hosannas 43–45,” in: Jaques de Saroug, *Six homélies festales en prose* (ed. Frédéric Rilliet; PO 43.4; Turnhout: Brepols, 1986) 606–9. See also Rilliet (“Louange”), who provides additional Syrian and Greek patristic references to Luke 19:40.

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wording of the text and at the same time decodes it in order to bring to light the figurative sense.<sup>53</sup>

Calvin, who rejects some of the above-mentioned allegories, insists on the theatrical character of the event.<sup>54</sup> Thus, Jesus “wanted to show by a solemn ceremony the nature of His Kingdom.” In a certain sense the instruction he gave was “ridiculous,” his equipment “a sign of terrible and shameful poverty,” and the action he carried out seemed to be exposed deliberately “to the mockery of all men.” Nevertheless, there is wisdom in all these things. Jesus referred to the prophet Zechariah, bore witness about his kingdom, and let it be understood “that it has nothing to do with earthly empires.” “Christ’s lowly condition” should not keep the believers from “seeing in this spectacle His spiritual Kingdom”—on the contrary.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

We should avoid referring to the Lukan narrative (19:28-40) as the story of the “palm branches” or of the “entry into Jerusalem,” for it neither mentions palm branches nor does it tell of a triumphal entry into the city. As with the story of the transfiguration, it lifts a veil. At the beginning of the humiliation it reveals the paradox of Jesus’ kingship. Neither the Pharisees, nor the cautious crowd, nor the disciples will be moved at the passion by the memory of this suspected dignity. When he dies, Jesus will be alone. Yet his Easter exaltation will confirm the prophetic and symbolic value of his royal procession approaching the holy city.

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53 See also the *Glossa ordinaria* (PL 114:329–30) and Bruno of Segni *Comm. Luc.* 2.46 (PL 165:438–40), who directs attention to v. 40 and to vv. 41–46.

54 Jean Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vols. 1–3: *A Harmony of the Gospels* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. A. W. Morrison and T. H. L. Parker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 2:291.

55 See also Martin Luther, *Evangelien-Auslegung*, part 3: *Markus und Lukasevangelium* (ed. Erwin Mülhaupt; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1938–54) 895–902; Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrasis in N. Testamentum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 7 (ed. P. Vander; Leyden: Vander, 1706; facsimile reprint London: Gregg, 1962) 432–34.

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## Jerusalem Fails to Recognize the Visitation, and Jesus Restores the Temple (19:41-48)

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- 41 **When he drew near, he saw the city, wept over it 42/ and said, "If this day even you had been able to recognize what leads to peace<sup>a</sup> . . . But now it is hidden from your eyes. 43/ Because days will come upon you when your enemies will raise up a rampart around you and surround you and will press you from all sides; 44/ and they will dash you and your children in you to the ground; and they will not leave one stone on another in you, because you did not recognize the time<sup>b</sup> of your visitation."<sup>c</sup>**
- 45 **When he had entered the temple, he began to drive out the sellers, 46/ saying to them, "It is written: My house shall be a house of prayer but you have made of it a den of robbers."**
- 47 **And he was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes—that is, the leaders of the people—sought to destroy him.<sup>d</sup> 48/ And they did not know<sup>e</sup> what to do, for all the people hung on him and were all ears.**
- a Literally: "the things concerning peace."  
 b Another possible translation: "the opportunity" or "the favorable moment."  
 c That is: "the visitation you received."  
 d Or: "to kill him."  
 e Literally: "they did not find."

### Analysis

Luke gives a coherent account: While Jesus is approaching Jerusalem riding on his young ass, he receives the acclamation of the disciples. Then he refutes the Pharisees' criticism (19:28-40). He weeps over the city and

drives the sellers out of the temple before, to the surprise of the authorities and to the joy of the people, he teaches regularly in the sacred area (19:41-48). The priests, the scribes, and the elders ask him where he gets his authority. Jesus evades the question (20:1-8) before telling a final parable, the parable of the murderous vine-dressers

(20:9-18). Luke is thinking of a sojourn of several days, but he mentions only a single entering (directly into the Temple, 19:45).<sup>1</sup>

Compared with this logical development, Mark's text, which I assume served as Luke's source, is surprising in the complicated way it moves Jesus from one location to another and in the appearance of the puzzling pericope concerning the barren fig tree. After the episode of the young ass (Mark 11:1-10), Jesus enters the holy city, where he simply looks around before spending the night in Bethany: day 1 (Mark 11:11). On the next day, after cursing the fig tree, he returns to the city, drives the sellers from the temple, and leaves the city for the night: day 2 (Mark 11:2-19). On the next morning, after he has verified that the fig tree has dried up, he again enters the city and converses with the authorities, who ask him about the source of his authority. Jesus proceeds with the parable of the murderous vine-dressers: thus the third day (Mark 11:20—12:12).<sup>2</sup>

Some commentators think that, in addition to Mark, Luke is familiar with an account earlier than or parallel to the Second Gospel, an account he prefers because of its greater coherence.<sup>3</sup> It is a daring hypothesis, because, except for the episode of the fig tree, to which I will return, the differences between Luke and Mark deal with the seams and not the events themselves. Thus, Luke always feels free to examine Mark's redactional arrangement and sometimes to reorganize the sequences according to his own logic.<sup>4</sup>

According to the hypothesis I am assuming, the evangelist rearranges Mark's text, eliminating the pericope of the barren fig tree (Mark 11:12-14 and 20-25) for two reasons: (a) He has already given a parable about a fig tree (13:6-9), and he fears monotony. (b) He is uncertain about this puzzling episode and Jesus' stern, almost unjust attitude.<sup>5</sup>

If Luke omits one literary unit, he adds another, very appropriate unit: the lament over Jerusalem (19:41-44), which he regards as a counterpart to the disciples' praise (19:38) and as an echo of the Pharisees' rebuke (19:39). It is important to compare this lament with some of Luke's other passages: the quarrel with Jerusalem (13:34-35), the announcement of Jerusalem's ruin (21:20-24), and the lamentation spoken to the daughters of the holy city (23:27-31).<sup>6</sup> Verses 41-44 of Luke 19 contain redactional elements,<sup>7</sup> but they come essentially from Luke's special material. Apart from the introduction Luke drafted (v. 41), they constitute an oracle of woe. They describe a punishment that the city could have avoided. Jerusalem should have realized this (v. 42 and v. 44c). In their insistence on this point, the beginning and end of the oracle play off of one another without tedious repetition. There was the fortunate day ("on this day," v. 42; "the [favorable] time," v. 44), which offered an opportunity of peace (*τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην*, "that leads to peace," v. 42), a decisive visit (*ἡ ἐπισκοπή σου*, "your visitation," v. 44). In her spiritual blindness the city wasted it all: "But now it is hidden from your eyes" (v. 42). This state-

1 On this unit, see Conzelmann, *Theology*, 74–78; Dawsey, "Origin," 10–13, 16–21. Bibliography on the expulsion of the sellers from the temple is in Trocmé, "Expulsion," 1 n. 5; Fitzmyer, 2.1268; John Nolland, *Luke* (3 vols.; WBC 35A–C; Dallas: Word, 1989–93) 3:929, 933–34, 939.

2 The studies on this Markan unit are innumerable. See, e.g., Haenchen, *Weg Jesu*, 389–405.

3 Dawsey, "Confrontation," 156–60; idem, "Ur-Markus"; idem, "Origin."

4 See Conzelmann, *Theology*, 74–94. On the pre-Markan and pre-Johannine condition of various episodes, see Schneider and Stenger, *Johannes*, 26–53, esp. 40–41.

5 Can one say Luke did not like Mark's "sandwiches"? In 8:40-56 he preserves the way Mark combines the two miracles (Mark 5:21-43). On Luke's omission of the episode of the barren fig tree, see Kinman

("Eschatology"), who proposes theological reasons: Luke does not despair of Israel's future. See also Cantrell ("Fig Tree"), who thinks that, since the episode of the unfruitful fig tree is reminiscent of Jer 8:10-13, Luke replaced it with the lament of vv. 41-44, which fulfills the same accusing function as Jeremiah's passage.

6 The first text comes from Q, the second from Mark, the third from the special material. On the links between 19:43-44 and 23:27-31, see Dupont, "Pierre sur pierre," 447–52.

7 E.g., ἐγγίξω ("to draw near"), συνέχω ("to hold together"), ἀνθ' ὧν ("instead of the fact that"), ἡ ἐπισκοπή ("the visitation"). See Joachim Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums: Redaktion und Tradition im Nicht-Markusstoff des dritten Evangeliums* (KEK Sonderband; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980) 281–82.

ment, which is an accusation, leads to the mention of the punishment: “The days will come” (as a contrast to the past “day”), when the enemies, who remain anonymous, will besiege, capture, and completely destroy the city without sparing its inhabitants. In this well-structured oracle one recognizes the parataxis of Semitic style (see the many “ands”), as well as the omnipresence of the second person singular personal pronoun, sometimes in its accented form and sometimes in its enclitic form (σὺ, σοῦ, σέ, σου, σοῦ, σε, σε, σε, σου, σοί, σοί, σου).<sup>8</sup> The literary quality of the piece, characteristic of Luke’s special material,<sup>9</sup> is evident in the equilibrium of the whole (see the outline below), in the precision of the military vocabulary, in the feeling of regret expressed,<sup>10</sup> and in the inexorable character of the punishment. This “you” that is challenged here can only be the holy city. The description of the attack it suffers corresponds to every siege in antiquity (see, e.g., Josephus *Bell.* 6.1.3 §§24–28); to those described in the Hebrew Scriptures,<sup>11</sup> beginning with that of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.;<sup>12</sup> and then to the attack that led to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 (see Josephus *Bell.* book 5). This oracle of woe belongs to a well-established genre of Old Testament prophetic literature. It is less an apophthegm than an oracle of judgment clothed in a lament and provided with a brief introduction (see, e.g., Mic 6:3-5).<sup>13</sup> One can present it graphically, in its literal content, in the following manner:

- V. 42: If even you had recognized this day also [literally, also *you*] the (ways that lead) to peace!
- V. 43: But in reality they were hidden from your eyes [literally, “from the eyes of *you*”].  
Because the days will come on *you*,  
and they will raise up your enemies [literally, “the enemies of *you*”],  
a rampart against *you*,  
and they will surround (you), *you*,  
and they will press (you), *you*,  
from all sides
- V. 44: and they will dash (you) to the ground, *you*,  
and (your) children in *you* [literally, “the children of *you*”].  
And they will leave no stone on another in *you*,  
because you did not recognize the time of your visitation [literally, “the visitation of *you*”].<sup>14</sup>

Verses 45-46 briefly mention Jesus’ action in driving the sellers from the temple and then offer a (mixed) quotation from Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11.<sup>15</sup> Our analysis of the details will explain that Luke, who follows Mark here, has his reasons for abbreviating the text.

Luke ends the unit with a transitional summary<sup>16</sup> that emphasizes Jesus’ teaching in the temple (v. 47a) before he contrasts the desire of the leaders to eliminate Jesus (v. 47b) with the protection that the people provide the Master simply by admiring Jesus’ word (v. 48). Here Luke

8 Noted by Dupont, “Pierre sur pierre,” 445; and Méhat, “Écrits,” 164–67.

9 On these verses, see Gerd Petzke, *Das Sondergut des Evangeliums nach Lukas* (Zürcher Werkkommentare zur Bibel; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1990) 172–74. Borg (“Prophet”) is of the opinion that Jesus was a sage and a prophet. Verses 42-44 can reflect an authentic lamentation of Jesus.

10 Note the aposiopesis in v. 42a. See Méhat, “Écrits,” 164–67.

11 See Jer 29:3; 37:33; Ezek 4:1-3, 21-22; see also Jeremiah 27–29; 52:4-5; 1 Sam [LXX 1 Kgdms] 23:8; 2 Kgs [LXX 4 Kgdms] 6:14; 25:1-2; Ezek 26:8; 1 Macc 15:13-14; Josh 7:9. The list is taken from Méhat, “Écrits,” 165. See Dupont, “Pierre sur pierre,” 445–46.

12 On the connections between 19:41-44 and the description of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., see C. H. Dodd, “The Fall of Jerusalem and the Abomination of Desolation,” *JRomS* 37 (1947)

47–53; reprinted in idem, *More New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 69–83.

13 On this literary genre in the Hebrew Bible, see Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (trans. Hugh Clayton White; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967) 169–76, 202–3. Bultmann (*History*, 36) classes the passage as an apophthegm. Barrett (“House,” 18) rejects this view.

14 Méhat, “Écrits,” 164; Dupont, “Pierre sur pierre,” 445; idem, *Les trois apocalypses synoptiques: Marc 13; Matthieu 24–25; Luc 21* (LD 121; Paris: Cerf, 1985) 120–27.

15 Without the words “for all nations.” On the reasons for omitting these words see below, p. 20.

16 Note the use of the imperfect and, in the first case, even the periphrastic imperfect.

rewrites Mark 11:18. Thus, the two units 19:45-46 and 47-48 take up again two successive units of Mark.<sup>17</sup>

### Commentary

■ **41-42** The verb “to draw near” (ἐγγίζω) has played an important role since Jesus arrived from Jericho (vv. 28-29). Here, as elsewhere, Luke gives special importance also to seeing.<sup>18</sup> When he sees the city, Jesus weeps.<sup>19</sup> The verb κλαίω is stronger than δακρύω (“to shed tears”) and designates here a real wailing.<sup>20</sup> In other circumstances<sup>21</sup> Jesus would have acted, protected, or healed. Here he resorts to no divine δύναμις (see 5:17; 8:46). His mission is no longer to intervene; now it is to verify the failure and to deliver God’s judgment. More than anywhere else Luke’s Jesus stands in the line of the prophets of Israel. Because Israel did not want to acknowledge God’s plan for it, its enemies will prevail with unrelenting severity. It is something the Master must say, but he does so not without profound regret.<sup>22</sup>

Jesus’ final sentence remains incomplete.<sup>23</sup> It involves an aposiopesis, a rhetorical construction used by Israel’s prophets.<sup>24</sup> Charged with emotion, the sentence expresses a helpless regret: Oh! If the city had only been able to recognize! It is a question not of the intellectual knowledge favored by the Greeks but of an existential

comprehension such as that cherished by the Hebrews.<sup>25</sup> “On this day”: God’s presence is always contextual in Israel; it is bound to a life plan included in the time of salvation and of perdition. “Even you” (καὶ σὺ)<sup>26</sup> emphasizes the responsibility of the comprehending subject.

The expression “the things that lead to peace” (τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην) is vague. It may be that the plural (τά) indicates that God has offered Jerusalem various occasions to attain peace. This “peace” means not only the silence of weapons;<sup>27</sup> it also means the harmonious relation with God—the “peace in heaven” that has just been mentioned (v. 38), which comes about with or without the approval of the holy city. Israel’s Messiah, whose birth the Christmas angels celebrated in song with words of peace (“and peace on earth,” 2:14), brings this peace to reality. This peace established by Christ is real and is not to be confused with the Jewish messianic hope or with the Roman imperial power. It is not limited to heaven. After the ascension the disciples of Christ will proclaim it to the entire world. They will try to live it and to get others to live it.<sup>28</sup>

For the present (νῦν, “now”) these peace efforts are not in vain, but they are not recognized. Indeed, the “now” belongs to the past of Jesus, of the temple, and of the passion, but as the “today” of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:38-40) and the “today” of Jesus’ inaugural proclama-

17 See Schramm, *Markus-Stoff*, 149. The details of the literary relationship between Luke and Mark are presented below in the interpretation.

18 E.g., at the death of the son of the widow (7:13) or in the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:31-33). Note there the three “having seen” (ἰδῶν) as here (v. 41).

19 It can only be Jerusalem, just as for Byzantines it could only be Constantinople. This is the source of the name Istanbul. The Turks have taken over the term from the Greek expression εἰς τὴν πόλιν (“into the city”).

20 Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke* (5th ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1922) 449. It is the attitude of the widow of Nain at the death of her only son (7:11-13). In addition, in John 11:35 Jesus sheds tears (δακρύω) at the death of his friend, Lazarus. Luke 19:41 and John 11:35 are the only two times where it is said of Jesus that he shed tears.

21 See the connection between Jesus’ looking and his active compassion in 7:13.

22 On the genre of the piece see n. 13 above.

23 There are several text-critical problems in vv. 41-48. They are well presented and resolved in Plummer, 449-55; and Metzger, *Commentary* (2d ed.), 145.

24 For an Old Testament example of an aposiopesis, see Exod 32:32. In the New Testament, see Luke 22:42 (“Father, if you will, take this cup from me . . .”); John 6:62; 12:27; BDF §482.

25 On γινώσκω, see BAGD, s.v.; Walter Schmithals, “γινώσκω,” *EDNT* 1:248-51.

26 Grammatically, one can also translate as “also you,” but then one has the difficulty of understanding with whom Jesus is comparing Jerusalem. By translating as “even you” one discreetly recalls the privileges of the holy city.

27 Even though vv. 43-44 describe the opposite with military terms.

28 On peace in Luke, see José Comblin, “La paix dans la théologie de saint Luc,” *ETHL* 32 (1956) 439-60; François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950-2005)* (2d rev. ed.; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006) 209.

tion in Nazareth (4:21), this *νῦν* becomes present in the decisions taken in the church and in the synagogue.

God manifests himself and hides himself. He rejects compelling obviousness. He has made himself visible in the person and in the acts of Jesus (see v. 37). Alas, the right to close one's eyes belongs to human freedom.<sup>29</sup> As a result, revelation grows dim. Nevertheless, the day will come when what is hidden will be revealed and will become irrefutably obvious (12:2).<sup>30</sup> Before that distant day, however, there is, in the short term, the threatening days of calamity (vv. 43-44).

■ **43-44** “The days will come” is a common expression in prophetic and apocalyptic literature.<sup>31</sup> The future tense allows no hesitation: the future belongs to God and is proclaimed by the prophets he authorizes. Since these days will come “over [upon] you,” Jesus wept “over it” (v. 41).

A description of the siege of Jerusalem follows. Her enemies surprise her<sup>32</sup> by building a “palisade” (*χάραξ*).<sup>33</sup> This machinery makes it possible to “surround” the city<sup>34</sup> and to “press” it on all sides.<sup>35</sup> The description is brief and eloquent. It appears to be inspired by Scripture, in particular by Isa 29:3 LXX: “and I, like David, will encircle you, and will raise a palisade around you and set up towers around you” (*καὶ κυκλώσω ὡς Δαυὶδ ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ βαλῶ περὶ σὲ χάρακα καὶ θήσω περὶ σὲ πύργους*). Luke, who doubtless is familiar with the siege of Jerusalem by Titus in 70,<sup>36</sup>

prefers the biblical language over historical reporting. Speaking of the future (as seen by Jesus), he dispenses with details and precise descriptions.

If v. 43 describes the siege of the city, v. 44 tells of its capture with the two common elements, the fate of the inhabitants and the destiny of the buildings. Both involve inexorable cruelty.<sup>37</sup> The inhabitants<sup>38</sup> will be crushed<sup>39</sup> and the city razed. In chap. 21 Luke will present a different prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem. In his view, the two descriptions complement each other and are not quite identical. This one comes from Luke's special material, the other from the Gospel of Mark.<sup>40</sup> In chap. 21, Luke omits one of Mark's expressions—the statement that one stone will not be left on another (Mark 13:2). Doubtless he wants to avoid repeating the almost identical sentence of the special material, which he quotes here about the entire city.<sup>41</sup> While Luke 21, following Mark 13, mentions a number of events that will take place before the fall of the city, Luke 19 moves directly from the time of Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem. The text is concerned here not with the unfolding of a history but with the logical contrast between the rejected offer and the disastrous consequences of this refusal. The two expressions, side by side yet different, eloquently suggest: “If even you had been able to recognize . . .” (v. 42) and “because you did not recognize . . .” (v. 44).

For Luke, *καιρός* (“time”) is eminently positive. It is the valuable opportunity offered by God. The same is

29 On *ἐκρύβη ἀπὸ ὀφθαλμῶν σου*, see Jer 16:17 LXX.

30 See vol. 2 of this commentary on Luke 12:2.

31 J. A. Bengel (noted by Plummer, 451) pointed out the contrast: Dies, multi, quia unum diem non observas (“many days, because you do not observe the one day”). See Johann Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament* (trans. Charlton T. Lewis and Marvin R. Vincent; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Perkinpine & Higgins, 1860, 1862) 1:502. For the Latin, see J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (secundum editionem tertiam, 1773; Berlin: Ludov. Frid. Fues, 1855) 183.

32 On *παρεμβάλλω*, “insert,” “insinuate,” “introduce,” see BAGD, s.v. The verb often suggests an element of surprise.

33 On the term, which initially means “stake, post” (Latin *vallum*), then “palisade” (Latin also *vallum*), “the palisade and the small earthwork” that is erected to elevate it (*vallum* and *ager*), finally “fortified line,” see Plummer, 451; and BAGD, s.v.

34 On *περικυκλώ*, see BAGD, s.v.

35 On *συνέχω*, “hold together,” “contain,” “press,” “compress,” see BAGD, s.v.

36 See Pierre Prigent, *La fin de Jérusalem* (CAB 17; Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1969) 36–46.

37 Like that of the king's enemies at the end of the parable of the pounds (19:27).

38 Since the city is seen as a mother, the *τέκνα* are not the children but the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The usage is common. See Joel 2:23; Zech 9:13; Bar 4:19, 21, 25; 1 Macc 1:38; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34; Gal 4:25.

39 The verb *ἐδαφίζω* means literally “to reduce to the level of the ground” (*ἔδαφος*, “ground”), “to demolish,” “to level,” “to throw to the ground,” sometimes “to fling against the earth violently.”

40 On Luke 21:20-24, see the commentary below.

41 On the connections between Mark 13:2 and Luke 19:44, see Dupont, “Pierre sur pierre.”



true of “visitation” (ἐπισκοπή). It is the arrival and the favorable presence of God’s envoy. The attentive readers recall the evangelist’s grateful and nostalgic love of these terms. The theme of the visit appeared already in the infancy stories<sup>42</sup> and the one about the favorable time at the beginning of the Galilean ministry.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, here the positive moment rooted in God comes up against the negative forces of human beings.

■ 45-46 Most historians of primitive Christianity accept the authenticity of Jesus’ action against the temple and its leadership.<sup>44</sup> Mark has preserved the memory of an action of Jesus that suggests that it was an effort at reform (this action refers to Jesus’ refusal to let people carry the cultic vessels [Mark 11:16]). The violence directed against the sellers<sup>45</sup> does not call into question the religious function of the sanctuary. As the Fourth Gospel has made clear, it was intended as a prophetic act, an expression of zeal for the Lord.<sup>46</sup> In a rare instance, Jesus’ action is stronger than his words. Before acting, the Master doubtless remembers Zech 14:21: “There will no longer be a merchant in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day.”<sup>47</sup> Jesus’ words are based on Scripture. They are a mixed quotation combining a line from Isa 56:7 LXX (ὁ γὰρ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται) and an expression from Jer 7:11 (σπήλαιον ληστῶν).<sup>48</sup> The attack is directed less against the temple than against those who have diverted its mission

for their own profit. The money collected for the temple tax was kept there (Exod 30:13-16). This tax was to be paid in the form of the sanctuary’s shekel; in those days that meant in shekels from Tyre that had been declared to be sacred. Since not everyone had these shekels, a system of exchange was essential, and it proved to be quite useful. Obviously, the exchange was profitable for the money changers, who earned their livelihood in this way and used the profit (see *m. Šeqal.* 1.7) to protect themselves against possible losses. There were also markets on the Mount of Olives, in particular for buying the animals for the sacrifices. In the year 30 (probably the year in which Jesus carried out the temple cleansing and was crucified), in a dispute with the high priest the Sanhedrin lost the right to meet in the temple precincts. The group then was welcomed on the Mount of Olives by market vendors, the family of Bene Hanan. Perhaps by way of reprisal, perhaps to simplify the pilgrims’ journey, Caiaphas, the high priest at that time, authorized the opening of a market in one of the temple courts (probably in the Court of the Gentiles).<sup>49</sup> Thus, animals had begun to be sold only recently in the sacred precinct when Jesus opposed it. Nothing indicates, however, that Jesus sided with the Sanhedrin against the high priest. Coming from the country, he was shocked by the customs in the capital city. As a prophet, he wanted to render “to God the things that are God’s” (20:25).<sup>50</sup>

42 On ἐπισκοπή and ἐπισκέπτομαι, see vol. 1 of this commentary, 72, on 1:68; 76 on 1:78; 273–74 on 7:16.

43 On καιρός, see vol. 2 of this commentary on 12:54–56. In 4:16–21 the opportune time is called the “favorable/acceptable year” (4:19).

44 Defenders of the historicity are, e.g., Trocmé, “Expulsion,” 13–20; Söding, “Tempelaktion,” 56–59; Oakman, “Fig Trees,” 268.

45 See the “Zealot” interpretation of a revolutionary Jesus from Reimarus to Brandon. Lukito (“Cleansing,” 34) introduces this interpretation without himself accepting it.

46 On this act as a prophetic sign see Trautmann, *Handlungen*, 129–32; Schnider and Stenger, *Johannes*, 37–49.

47 On the act that is more important than the quotation, see Barrett, “House,” 18. On the reference to Zech 14:21, see Roth (“Cleansing”), who is of the opinion that in Jesus’ day there were two interpretations of this oracle in circulation. According to the

first, at the end of time there would be no more vendors in the temple. According to the second, all foreigners would have access to the temple. According to Barrett (“House,” 19–20), Jesus may have remembered Mal 3:1–3.

48 On the mixed quotation, see Roth, “Cleansing,” 176–77. According to Barrett (“House,” 19), the mixed quotation must have been added secondarily to the original narrative.

49 For information on the connections between the business dealings in the temple and the agrarian society, see Eppstein, “Historicity.” See also Oakman, “Fig Trees,” 263–66; and Barrett, “House,” 17. On the date of the episode, see Manson, “Cleansing.” Haenchen (*Weg Jesu*, 382–83) provides concrete information on the temple and its activities. On the money one was permitted to bring into the temple, see Jeremias, “Zwei Miszellen,” 179–80.

50 On Jesus’ provincial anger, see Renan, *La vie de Jésus* (Paris: Lévy, 1863), 147–60, 210–11, 222 (Eng. trans. *The Life of Jesus* [1902; repr., New York: Modern

The first Christians maintained a connection to the temple, but there is no text indicating that they continued the practice of blood sacrifices. They came to the temple as a place of prayer and of practical evangelistic activity. Luke supports this image and projects it into the life of Jesus (in 19:45—21:38 Jesus concentrates his activity in the temple). He describes Jesus' disciples after the ascension as active in the temple (24:52). It is in the temple that Peter and the other apostles pray and preach the risen Jesus (Acts 3:1).<sup>51</sup>

The so-called Hellenists in primitive Christianity made a decisive move when they spiritualized the idea of the temple and criticized the sacred building in Jerusalem (see Acts 6:13; 7:47-50).<sup>52</sup> Then Jesus' statements about the fall of the temple (Mark 13:2 par.; 14:58 par.; 15:29 par.; Luke 13:35; 19:44; John 2:19-21) took on the appearance of true prophecies. Stephen and his friends were persecuted in large part because of their hostility to the temple made with human hands. When he wrote his Gospel, Mark interpreted the cleansing of the temple as a prophecy that predicted its disappearance (whence comes the episode of the barren fig tree that frames the account on both sides).<sup>53</sup>

Luke concedes that a vigorous cult concentrated in Jerusalem no longer exists in his day, but he maintains that for the time of Jesus and the first Christians there was a legitimate temple in the holy city. He fears, however, a Zealot reading of the event that would characterize Jesus as a revolutionary.<sup>54</sup> That Jesus is "king" (*βασιλεύς*, v. 38) is theologically valid for the evangelist, but it is only in the figure of the Suffering Servant that his kingdom is of this world. Only a brief sentence remains from Mark's already concise narrative (v. 45).<sup>55</sup> Mark said that the temple must be a house of prayer "for all peoples" according to the quotation of Isa 56:7. Luke and Matthew omit these words. Are they following a version of Mark that differs from our present copy? I think rather that the two evangelists shorten Isaiah's prophecy willfully and for the same reasons. Speaking after 70, the year of the destruction of the temple, they realize that this sanctuary can no longer serve "all peoples" as a place of prayer.<sup>56</sup> They also tell themselves that in their day it is the Christian church that has become the only place open for the prayers of all peoples.<sup>57</sup>

As for the robbers (*λησταί*) from the Jeremiah quotation, they represent first of all the merchants who exploit

Library, 1927] 206–12 [chap. 12], 274, 283) (sometimes with expressions of hostility toward Judaism). According to Oakman ("Fig Trees," 264–68), Jesus wants the temple really to be for everybody; with his action Jesus wants to bring the Jews to repentance. According to Söding ("Tempelaktion," 59–61, 63), his message of the kingdom unsettles the temple. For Lukito ("Cleansing," 38–40), Jesus shows his messianic identity. According to Dawsey ("Confrontation," 155), Jesus binds his teaching, understood as an instrument, with the cleansing of the temple. According to Roloff (*Kerygma*, 89–110), who offers both principal interpretations (criticism of the temple and universal opening), the pericope gives an account of a prophetic act of Jesus, who wants to bring about Israel's conversion. According to Hiers ("Purification"), by cleansing the temple Jesus wanted to prepare Israel for the kingdom of God.

51 On the attitude of the Jerusalem church toward the temple, see Trocmé, "Expulsion," 13. There are a number of studies of Luke's conception of the Jerusalem temple: Weinert, "Meaning of the Temple in the Gospel of Luke"; Bachman, *Tempel*; Casalegno, *Tempio*; Chance, *Jerusalem*. To these monographs one must add van der Waal, "Temple"; and Dawsey, "Origin."

52 Marcel Simon, *St. Stephen and the Hellenists in the Primitive Church* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1958). For a different opinion, see Hengel, "Hellenists," 18. Since then the Christian community (1 Cor 3:17) or the body of believers (1 Cor 6:19) represent the true temple of God.

53 On the barren fig tree, which gives meaning to the temple episode, as well as on the omission of this incident, see Cantrell, "Fig Tree"; Kinman, "Eschatology."

54 See Burger, *Davidssohn*, 112–14.

55 See Trocmé, "Expulsion," 6–7; and Trautmann, *Handlungen*, 98–101. In contrast to Mark, Luke neglects the buyers and money changers. Nor does he mention the sellers of doves.

56 On the mixed quotation and the absence of the words "for all peoples," see Trocmé, "Expulsion," 6; and Barrett, "House," 17–19.

57 On the church as a place of prayer for all peoples, see Eph 2:11-12.

their inordinate privileges. But for those who had followed the course of the Jewish revolt, “robbers” was also, in the eyes of the Roman conquerors, a disrespectful way of referring to the Zealots,<sup>58</sup> those partisans of violence against the occupier who, in the last months of the siege, had made the temple their landmark.

■ **47-48** For Luke, following Mark, Jesus’ act was directed principally at the leaders responsible for the temple (ὅμειλις δέ, “but you,” v. 46). It is understandable that an attitude and language such as Jesus used, even if tempered, would have greatly irritated the temple personnel. That the temple police, a squad of husky Levites, did not intervene and that the Roman troops quartered close to the temple in Antonia did not lift a finger show that the incident was a minor event<sup>59</sup> (the prophets always chose the small to interpret the large<sup>60</sup>). Even its small scale, however, does not keep the scene from being shocking for the spectators. Since only one high priest served at a time, the plural ἀρχιερείς refers to the group of professional priests who lived in Jerusalem and who occupied the responsible posts in the temple organization.<sup>61</sup>

According to Mark and Luke, these men, along with the scribes, want to take Jesus’ life.<sup>62</sup> What is the expression “the leaders of the people,” absent from Mark, doing here? It can designate the third group of the Sanhedrin, the “elders,” whom Luke will mention by name in the first verse of the next chapter (20:1). If we give the “and” (καί) an exegetical—that is, explicative—sense,<sup>63</sup> it can also indicate the sense of the terms “chief priests” and “scribes” for readers who have little familiarity with the earlier Jewish realities. Then the two groups constitute “the leaders of the people.”<sup>64</sup>

No matter how powerful they might be, these men did not dare mount a frontal attack on Jesus. The *vox populi* in Rome, Athens, or Jerusalem carried weight.<sup>65</sup> And if, as Luke said, all the people were hanging on Jesus’ every word, it was better to wait and not to attract the attention of the Roman authorities, who would not be eager to challenge a unanimous popular mood. These are the facts as Luke gives them. By and large he follows Mark’s description, as does Matthew.<sup>66</sup> Only John, who depends on other traditions, puts the episode at the beginning

58 Josephus emphasizes this title of the Jewish patriots. Cf. George Wesley Buchanan, “Brigands in the Temple,” *HUCA* 30 (1959) 169–77; Roth, “Cleansing,” 176–80; Prigent, *Fin de Jérusalem*, 9–10; Barrett, “House,” 15–17. It appears that the Christians in the capital city did not support the revolt. Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. eccl.* 3.5.3) reports that they fled from the capital city to Pella, but the historicity of this report is a matter of controversy among scholars. See Jürgen Wehnert, “Die Auswanderung der Jerusalemer Christen nach Pella—historisches Faktum oder theologische Konstruktion? Kritische Bemerkungen zu einem neuen Buch,” *ZKG* 102 (1991) 231–55.

59 This is the classic argument of the opponents of a revolutionary Jesus. See Oscar Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (trans. Gareth Putam; New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Martin Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* (trans. William Klassen; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

60 On the smallness of the sign compared with the largeness of the reality and on the sacramental *signum* vis-à-vis God’s *res*, see Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995) 346–47 (on the symbolic economy of sobriety).

61 On the idea of the high priest, see Albert Vanhoye,

*Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament* (trans. J. Bernard Orchard; Studies in Scripture; Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede’s Publications, 1986) 1–59, esp. 8–14. Note the use of the term in the singular and in the plural in the Fourth Gospel. Even if the fourth evangelist gives the impression that there had been two high priests at one time (John 18:19, 22; 11:49–51; 18:13, 24), he wants to say that only one was active and that the other, although retired, had kept his title.

62 They “seek” to kill Jesus. On the verb ζητέω, which can be used in a good or a bad sense, see vol. 2 of this commentary on 11:9. In any event, Luke sees a great deal of energy in this searching.

63 On the exegetical καί, see BDF §442.9.

64 It is customary for Luke, a good pedagogue. One finds it also in Luke 22:67 and 70 (the title “Son of God” in v. 70 explains the enigmatic title Messiah [v. 67] for non-Jews).

65 Even in trials, see ἐκβόησις. See the perhaps excessive thesis of Jean Colin, *Les villes libres de l’Orient gréco-romain et l’envoi au supplice par acclamations populaires* (Latomus 82; Bruxelles-Berchem: Latomus, 1965); François Bovon, *The Last Days of Jesus* (trans. Kristin Hennessy; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006) 50.

66 On Mark’s redaction, see Söding, “Tempelaktion,” 39–41; and Joachim Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach*

of Jesus' ministry (John 2:14-17), depicts a more aggressive Jesus armed with a whip and reawakens the memory of the zeal as the disciples remember it (Ps 68 [69]:10 is quoted in John 2:17). Alongside the report of the temple purification (John 2:13-22), the evangelist John<sup>67</sup> also includes a notice about the destruction and rebuilding of the temple theologically identical with the body of Jesus.<sup>68</sup>

### History of Interpretation

Origen raises the question about Christ's tears (*Hom. Luc.* 38). He sees them as the application of the beatitude "Blessed are you who weep." In the course of his life, Jesus corroborated each of the beatitudes. Indeed, Jerusalem represents the earthly city whose destruction constituted a divine punishment. Above all, however, it represents the capital of human souls. Jesus weeps especially for those who are besieged by various sins.<sup>69</sup>

The Christian West also reflects on Christ's tears and relates them to the beatitudes. Augustine writes, "Blessed are those who weep; you imitate him who wept over Jerusalem" (*Virginit.* 28).<sup>70</sup> Gregory the Great gives

Jesus' lament a moral sense: As the Master wept over Jerusalem, likewise preachers are to mourn the human life burdened with sins (*Hom. Ez.* 1.2.19).<sup>71</sup> For his part, the Venerable Bede remembers that Jesus wept in his life. He wept at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35) and here (Luke 19:41). As he wept over Lazarus before he raised him, relatives and neighbors must also weep over the sins of their parents and friends (*In Luc.* 2.1516–20).<sup>72</sup> An anonymous commentator, probably writing in Ireland in the eighth century, indicates that Jesus never laughed. It is fitting, therefore, that Christians share his tears. As for Jerusalem, the city has no peace, because it lacks faith in Christ (Anonymous *Comm. Luc.* 19:41-44).<sup>73</sup>

Bonaventure compares Jesus' tears with the divine condescension mentioned in the Old Testament (e.g., Deut 4:7). He wept, therefore, on behalf of his people (*pro nobis*). He drew near to Jerusalem with his body and with his heart. In a figurative sense Jesus wept for the people's sins—sins that encircle them and throw them to the ground. Against these attacks the believers must build a fortress in which Christ comes to dwell (*Comm. Luc.* 19.63–75).<sup>74</sup>

Calvin thinks in clearly universal terms.<sup>75</sup> Since Christ

*Markus* (2d ed.; 2 vols.; EKKNT 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986) 2:127–28. On Matthew's redaction, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary* (trans. James E. Crouch; 3 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002–7) 3:6. On Christian rereadings of the temple cleansing, see Söding, "Tempelaktion," 63–64; Oakman, "Fig Trees," 254.

67 On the episode in John, see Jürgen Becker, *Das Evangelium des Johannes, Kapitel 1–10* (ÖTBK 4.1; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1979) 120–27; Mendner, "Tempelreinigung."

68 Rius-Camps ("Origen") tries to demonstrate that the pericope of the adulteress (John 7:53–8:11), a late addition to the Gospel of John, is actually Lukan and belongs to the section on the temple (Luke 19:47–21:38). Plummer (455) is aware of the attempt to locate the episode in this period. This was already the opinion of Renan (*Life*, 311–12).

69 See also Cyril of Alexandria, *Serm. Luc.* 131; Payne Smith, *Cyrl*, 2:607–12. There are two Greek fragments: Joseph Reuss, *Lukas-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche: Aus Katenenhandschriften gesammelt und herausgegeben* (TU 130; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984) 195, frgs. 293 and 294. Cyril offers an exegesis of Luke 19:41-48 that is very hostile toward

Jews. In the process he makes use of various oracles of Jeremiah, especially Jer 6:19. If Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, it is because he wishes that the city were happy, living in peace with God, and thus offering him faith. Nowhere have I sensed that Origen influenced Cyril.

70 CSEL 41:265.

71 CCSL 142:29–30; see also Gregory's *Hom. Ev.* 39, devoted to Luke 19:41-47 (*PL* 76:1293–1301).

72 In commenting on Luke 19:41-47, Bede (*In Luc.* 5.2021–2197) extensively quotes Gregory the Great's second homily mentioned in the previous note.

73 CCSL 108C, 94–95. Rupert of Deutz (*In Gen.* 6.45; CCCM 21:417) explains that when Jesus weeps he expresses his feelings and his human nature. An exegetical tradition announces that the enemies of v. 43 are Vespasian and Titus. See Gregory (n. 71 above), Anonymous (*Comm. Luc.* 19.41–44), and Thomas Aquinas *Catena Aurea* 19.5 (p. 261).

74 Bonaventure, *Opera omnia*, vol. 7: *Commentarius in Evangelium S. Lucae* (ed. R. P. Bernardini; Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1881–1902) 495–501.

75 Calvin, *Harmony*, 2.295–3.10. My remarks refer to 2.295–97.

wants to bring salvation to everyone, beginning with the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he grieves when faced with the sullen inhabitants of Jerusalem. Like the medieval theologians, Calvin interprets these tears as an expression of human feelings. An experienced rhetorician, he notices Jesus' emotion even as far as the interruption in the thread of his discourse (the above-noted

aposiopesis in v. 42). As a friend of Hebrew thought, he conceives of "peace" (v. 42) in the fullness of well-being.<sup>76</sup>

Over the centuries preachers and theologians have respected Jesus' tears and been attentive to the unhappy people who let the divine offer escape. All of them try to apply the message to the present by locating Jesus' adversaries in the history of nations or in the fate of individuals.<sup>77</sup>

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76 Erasmus (*Paraphrasis*, 435–37) also notes the aposiopesis. He supplements it in an interesting way: If you had been able to recognize your day as I have recognized it . . . He adds: The next day will no longer be yours; it will be that of the Romans. Martin Luther, in his sermon from August 16, 1528 (WA 27:304–11; Erwin Mülhaupt, ed., *D. Martin Luthers Evangelien-Auslegung* [5 vols.; 3d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957] 3:341–47), retains the literal sense of a punishment of Jerusalem. Yet, because the Gospel always serves as an example, he envisages a figurative sense: The Jerusalem authorities are the bishops and all the princes who

are hostile toward the reformation and who bring Germany to ruin.

77 Linder ("Destruction") takes as his starting point the festival of the Ninth of Ab, when the Jews remember the fall of Jerusalem. He then examines the origin and the development of the Sunday on which Christians have observed this event since late antiquity. The date of this Sunday was established in summer, between the festival of Saint Peter and Saint Paul on June 29 and that of Saint Laurence on August 10. Since the middle of the eighth century, Luke 19:41-47 has gradually become the liturgical reading.

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## Questions without Answer (20:1-8)

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- Roloff, *Kerygma*, 93–95, 101–2.
- Schramm, *Markus-Stoff*, 149–50.
- Shae, Gam Seng, “The Question on Authority of Jesus,” *NovT* 16 (1974) 1–29.

1 **Now it happened that on one of these days, when he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the good news, the chief priests and scribes with the elders encountered him 2/ and spoke to him saying,<sup>a</sup> “Tell us with what authority<sup>b</sup> you do all these things or who it is who gave you this authority?” 3/ He answered them: “I also have a question for you.<sup>c</sup> Tell me: 4/ The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from human beings?” 5/ They reasoned and said,<sup>d</sup> “If we say from heaven, he will say, why did you not believe him?” 6/ But if we say from human beings, all the people will stone us, for they are convinced that John is a prophet. 7/ They answered that they did not know the origin.<sup>e</sup> 8/ And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”**

- a Literally: “and said to him saying.”
- b Literally: “in what authority.”
- c Literally: “I also will ask you something” (or: a word, *λόγος*).
- d Or: “They reasoned among themselves, saying.”
- e Literally: “And they answered they did not know whence.”

Jesus’ ministry had begun with a series of disputes with the scribes and the Pharisees (5:17—6:11). It concludes with a series of disputes with the scribes and chief priests, and then with the Sadducees (20:1—21:38). The apostles’ missionary activity will elicit the same opposition (Acts 3:1—5:42). The proclamation of the gospel (see *εὐαγγελιζόμενον*, v. 1) sets loose waves of hostility.<sup>1</sup>

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### Analysis

Jesus’ only sojourn in Judea and Jerusalem that Luke depicts begins in a striking manner. The evangelist first expresses a christological truth: The Master, riding on his young ass, deserves the title “king” (19:38). Then Luke draws an ecclesiological consequence: The

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1 See Jean Zumstein, “L’apôtre comme martyr dans les Actes de Luc,” *RThPh* 112 (1980) 371–90.

“people” of God (λαός, 19:48; 20:6, 45) appear in sharp relief next to the blind Jewish authorities.

The question of authority (20:1-8) provokes the first of these disputes. It is followed by a polemical parable (20:9-19), the problem of tax paid to Caesar (20:20-26), a discussion about the resurrection (20:27-40), a question from Jesus about the Son of David (20:41-44), and a final warning (20:46-47).<sup>2</sup>

All these events, as also the apocalyptic discourse of chap. 21, take place in the temple. Luke creates a final phase of activity, or more precisely of teaching (the verb διδάσκω is used several times: 19:47; 20:1, 21; 21:37; 23:5), and emphasizes that it takes place in the environs of the Jerusalem sanctuary.<sup>3</sup>

The episode dealing with authority takes place against the background alluded to in 19:47-48 and recalled here in v. 1a: Jesus teaches the people daily in the temple. The point of departure is indicated by the expression “now it happened . . . on one of these days” (v. 1a). It consists of the intervention of the authorities (v. 1b), who ask Jesus a double question about his authority and its origin (v. 2). For his part (κἀγώ, “I also”), Jesus responds by posing a question to his interrogators (v. 3): What about the authority of John the Baptist (v. 4)? The opponents then talk among themselves (vv. 5-6) and finally acknowledge

their ignorance and refuse to answer (v. 7), whereupon the Master also refuses to discuss the matter any further (v. 8).<sup>4</sup>

Here in schematic form is the structure of the brief dialogue of the deaf conversation partners:

- Vv. 1-2: Intervention and question of the authorities
- Vv. 3-4: Jesus’ answer in the form of a question
- Vv. 5-6: The authorities’ reflection
- V. 7: Admission of the authorities’ ignorance
- V. 8: Jesus’ refusal to answer<sup>5</sup>

The episode belongs to the three-part tradition. Exegetes generally agree that it circulated only in this tradition. Thus, Matthew and Luke inherited it from Mark.<sup>6</sup> Even Tim Schramm concedes that Luke depends only on Mark here.<sup>7</sup> The evangelist obviously permitted himself to revise his source. The adjustments he makes appear from the very beginning. The opening indicated above (“it happened . . . on one of these days,” v. 1) is characteristic of his narrative style.<sup>8</sup> He makes a point of specifying that Jesus’ teaching goes along with the communication of the good news (v. 1).<sup>9</sup> The double question of the notable persons (v. 2) coincides with Mark’s text.<sup>10</sup> Luke reworks the first part of Jesus’ answer by simplifying it (v. 3).<sup>11</sup> One might say he leaves the second

2 Several scholars (e.g., Plummer, 455; and Fitzmyer, 2:1271) comment on the sequence. Charles H. Talbert (*Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 185–87) is of the opinion that 19:45–21:38 and 22:1–24:53 constitute two sections that have parallels at the end of Acts.

3 It is to the credit of Hans Conzelmann (*Theology*, 75–78, 164) that he has called attention to this redactional change. The same is true of the above-mentioned activity of the apostles (Acts 3:1–5:42).

4 There is a certain narrative tension, for if the authorities declare they do not know, Jesus considers that he does not want to answer.

5 For further examples of the subdivision, see Roland Meynet, *L'évangile selon Saint Luc: analyse rhétorique* (2 vols.; Paris: Cerf, 1988) 1:185; 2:191; and Grang-aard, *Conflict*, 66, 69.

6 I find only two minor agreements between Luke and Matthew: ἐρωτήσω and κἀγώ (v. 3; Matt 21:24). They are not enough to shake the hypothesis of an exclusive dependence on Mark. See Nolland, 3:942.

7 I. Howard Marshall (*The Gospel of Luke: A Com-*

*mentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978] 723) errs here. What Schramm (*Markus-Stoff*, 149–50) says is that if Luke depends here solely on Mark, that does not exclude the possibility that there was a similar narrative in a parallel tradition.

8 See n. 21 below.

9 It is difficult to know whether Luke was thinking of two complementary activities (teaching and evangelizing) or of a certain kind of “teaching” that coincided with the “proclamation of the gospel.” In the latter case, the καί before εὐαγγελιζομένων is expegetical. If teaching is mentioned often, proclaiming the gospel is rare. I lean toward the first of these options.

10 Luke simply changes the aorist indicative ἔδωκεν (“gave”) into an aorist participle ὁ δούς (“the one who has given”) and eliminates the redundant ἵνα πάντα ποιῆς (“that you may do these things”; Mark 11:28).

11 He prefers ἐρωτῶ to ἐπερωτῶ (which is not necessarily an improvement, since Mark’s verb may suggest a question to be added to the ques-

part intact (v. 4).<sup>12</sup> He copies the first hypothesis with no change (“if we say, ‘from heaven,’” Mark 11:31), replacing in the introduction (v. 5) the verb *διαλογίζομαι* with the verb *συλλογίζομαι*.<sup>13</sup> He rewrites the second hypothesis, characterized in the Second Gospel with a harsh anacoluthon.<sup>14</sup> The sentence flows more naturally (he describes the people as “convinced that,” while Mark writes that the people “held that”) and expresses the leaders’ risk (stoning).<sup>15</sup> In v. 7 Luke states precisely that they did not know “whence”; they did not know the “origin” (Mark says simply they did not know; 11:33). As for the final sentence (v. 8), it is identical in the two Gospels.<sup>16</sup>

Primarily two exegetes have tried to explain the origin of the episode. Rudolf Bultmann ingeniously observes a change in meaning between v. 30 and vv. 31-32 in Mark 11. Here the issue is the opposition between God and human beings in general; there it is the opposition between God and the people not empowered by God in particular. He especially emphasizes rabbinic parallels, controversies in which a rabbi responds to a question by asking a question. Finally, he expresses the opinion that the verb *πιστεύω*, “believe” (Mark 11:31), reflects a Christian perception that is more Hellenistic than Semitic. Thus, he suggests a distinction between two stages in the development of the tradition of this episode. A first version (without vv. 31-32) corresponds to the rabbinic disputes better than the second. A second version added the content of vv. 31-32 and in so doing changed the sense of the words of the Jewish leaders. Nevertheless, according to Bultmann, even the first version of the development does not necessarily reflect a historical event. It may

correspond to concerns of the early church, a dispute between Jesus’ disciples and those of John the Baptist.<sup>17</sup>

Gam Seng Shae takes up the question.<sup>18</sup> He first defines which are the redactional elements of the Markan version. There are not many: Mark 11:27a and 32b. Then, moving from the written phase back to the oral phase, he subdivides the oral phase into at least two periods. Originally the disciples of Jesus, facing the disciples of John the Baptist, told of a rabbinic-style dispute in four parts: (a) The opponents: Who gave this authority? (b) Jesus: Is John’s baptism from heaven or from humans? (c) The opponents: from heaven. (d) Jesus: My authority also is from heaven. This (authentic) dispute could have taken place at any time and was tied neither to the entry into Jerusalem nor to the cleansing of the temple. In the question (Mark 11:28) “these things” and “this” designated all of Jesus’ ministry and not a particular action. Later the episode was reinterpreted in light of the bonds between the early church and the temple. Its hook was the recollection of the cleansing of the temple, and it was understood as an eminently christological text (Jesus was no longer put on the same level with John the Baptist, and he began to score points when facing the Jerusalem authorities). At that time the first Christians had to justify their attitude toward the temple, and they too were asked about the source of their authority (Acts 4:7). Their best argument was the reference to Jesus’ attitude in a similar situation in the story of the episode in its revised form.

Personally, I also think that one can distinguish between two stages in the oral phase. In the first stage one is told about a dialogue that was going nowhere—a dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish opponents who

tion already asked). He consciously states *καὶ γὰρ* (“and also I,” “for my part”). He removes the *ἕνα* (“one”) before *λόγον* and changes the imperative from “and answer me” to “and tell me.” Finally, by eliminating “and I will tell you by what authority I do these things” he loses what appears to him to be an obvious clarification but gains in conciseness.

12 Luke omits the repetition of the imperative “answer me” (Mark 11:30).

13 The interpretation will return to this relatively important change. See the commentary on 20:5-6 below.

14 “But shall we say ‘from human beings’? . . . they feared the crowd” (Mark 11:32).

15 Mark emphasized: “really a prophet” (Mark 11:32). Luke says simply: “a prophet” (v. 6).

16 Luke prefers the aorist *εἶπεν* (“he said”) to Mark’s historical present *λέγει* (“he says”; Mark 11:33).

17 See Bultmann, *History*, 19–20.

18 See Shae, “Question.” In reading this otherwise remarkable article, one does not understand why the author moves from a positive response of the opponents to a refusal to answer and from a positive Jesus to a hesitant Jesus.



themselves had a certain religious authority. The dialogue did not necessarily take place in Jerusalem, and it was associated neither with the entry into the holy city nor with the cleansing of the temple. In contrast to Shae, however, I am of the opinion that the historical Jesus had the rhetorical skill to evade the question and to avoid giving any answer at all (careful as he was not to make a show of his prophetic consciousness, especially before people of a hostile disposition). It is because of this same skill that the early Christians did not forget the episode.

A second oral phase associated the incident with the last period of Jesus' ministry. Unlike the christological reserve of the historical Jesus, Christian memory intensifies the opposition between Jesus and, in its view, the heart of Israel's religious power, the Sanhedrin, represented by the three groups priests, scribes, and elders. Jesus' authority is taken for granted. With enthusiasm it is asserted that it comes from God. The Sanhedrin's ignorance, more pretended than real, becomes an indication of impotence, a sign of its inability.

### Commentary

■ 1 This first verse reflects Luke's style and intentions. The expression "now it happened" is characteristic of a

new event in the life of Jesus.<sup>19</sup> "On one of these days" is not necessarily a Semitism. It can be a narrative style appropriate at that time<sup>20</sup> that was popular with Luke (cf. 5:17; 8:22).<sup>21</sup> Jesus continues the teaching begun in Galilee (4:15, 30; 5:17) and carried on in Judea (19:45). The temple gives a special connotation to what the Master has to say. Luke suggests a continuity of the biblical message, a legitimate hermeneutic of the Holy Scriptures, and an actualization of Israel's institutions that is in keeping with God's plan and the approach of the kingdom of God. The addition of the explanation "and proclaimed the good news" directs the readers' attention to this theological program.<sup>22</sup>

Then the official representatives of Judaism, against whom Luke directs his entire work, confront Jesus and his plan.<sup>23</sup> The three groups<sup>24</sup> are presented judiciously. Such was indeed the composition of the Great Sanhedrin.

It is not easy to understand why Luke never says simply, "the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders." One time he says, "the chief priests and scribes, that is to say, the leaders of the people," omitting the elders (19:47). Here he says, "the chief priests and the scribes with the elders" (v. 1). At any event, this official delegation<sup>25</sup> asks Jesus a question. His teaching in the temple will have been interrupted by such questions (see 20:21, 27; 21:7),

19 Since the first chapter of the Gospel, the reader has been accustomed to this and similar formulas (see 1:5, 8; 2:1, 15, etc.).

20 Even if it is known in Syriac, one does not find it in the Hebrew Bible, in the intertestamental literature, or in the LXX. On the other hand, it is current in the Greek Christian literature even independent of Lukan influence. One cannot declare it to be "non-Greek." Burchard ("Fußnoten," 146–49) holds this opinion against Plummer (225), Schramm (*Markus-Stoff*, 84, 96–97), and others. Nevertheless, Burchard (147) explains: "It remains conceivable that the Syntagma, although correct in Greek, actually has been executed according to a Semitic pattern." It is to be noted that the manuscripts vary between *ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν*, which I retain, even if I must translate it as "on one of these days," and *ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκεῖνων*.

21 See vol. 1 of this commentary, 318, on 8:22.

22 From the Galilean period Luke has established a connection between the teaching and the proclamation of the good news. Cf. 4:31, 43.

23 *ὁ ἐπίσταμαι* ("approach," "appear") see 2:9; Acts 4:1; 6:12; Marshall, 109. See also vol. 1 of this commentary, 87, on 2:9.

24 On the composition of the Sanhedrin, see Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 B.C. to A.D. 100* (trans. David E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968) 142–52; and Eduard Lohse, "συνέδριον," *TDNT* 7 (1971) 860–71. Many manuscripts have "priests" instead of "chief priests." Some scholars (see the list of names in Fitzmyer, 2:1274) prefer this reading. I hold to "chief priests," since it is possible that the writers corrected the text thinking there had been only one high priest and did not realize the term could refer to the most important priests.

25 See Kremer, "Antwort," 130. To be precise, Luke does not speak of a delegation. Like the popular storytellers, he includes the entire Sanhedrin in his attack.

so much so that one could speak on this matter of a “day of questions.”<sup>26</sup>

■ 2 The question is about the ἐξουσία of Jesus. In Greek the term designates freedom granted, authority, and power.<sup>27</sup> The nature of this quality, conferred by a higher power, depends on the social milieu, the institutional framework, and the civilization in which it is exercised.<sup>28</sup> Here it is a question of spiritual, prophetic authority, since Jesus was not part of the establishment.<sup>29</sup> Recognizing true prophets and denouncing false prophets have accompanied the life of the people of Israel from ancient times. One thinks of the struggle between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jeremiah 28).<sup>30</sup> The criteria for recognizing and denouncing have never had a rational objectivity (that would be from below, from the human level). They can only belong to the order of things recognized in faith (coming from God, from above). They can be the contents of the message (one had to beware of the prophets of happiness and peace; see Jer 4:10; 6:14; 14:13; 23:17) or the messenger’s moral attitude (an argument well into the time of the early Christians, in particular of the *Didache* [11.6-12]). In addition to the divine, thus legitimate, or the human, thus suspect, origin, it is necessary also to specify the application and the extent of this “authority” (ἐξουσία). The Lukan context suggests linking it to preaching and teaching (of the prophets, the sages, or the rabbis). It is

concerned neither with the cultic function of the priest nor with the sociopolitical function of the elder.<sup>31</sup> In this prophetic and didactic framework Jesus’ authority often created a problem, and various New Testament traditions preserved the memory of such debates (Mark 2:1-12 par.; Luke 11:15-23; 13:14-17). Sometimes, but less frequently, it was explicitly the question of messianic authority that was raised, particularly during Jesus’ passion (see Mark 14:61 par. Matt 26:63 par. Luke 22:67).<sup>32</sup> More than the Synoptics, the Gospel of John is concerned with the question of Jesus’ authority (John 2:18-22; 5:11-30; 6:36-54; 8:37-47; 17:2). The apostolic authority lies in the extension of Jesus’ authority (see Mark 2:18-28; 6:7; 13:34).<sup>33</sup> It will also be expanded in the period when various kinds of ministry are evolving in the ancient church. Added to it will be the right to celebrate the sacraments and to lead the life of the ecclesial community.<sup>34</sup>

■ 3-4 In keeping with the oral tradition of their communities, the evangelists preserved the memory of a Jesus who, refusing to answer immediately, chooses the tactic of the counterquestion. This behavior eliminates the surprise effect and makes it possible to avoid revealing oneself immediately. Far from being seen as something negative, it was regarded as legitimate and even honorable among the rabbis<sup>35</sup> and also among the philosophers.<sup>36</sup>

Jesus, in turn,<sup>37</sup> asks a question.<sup>38</sup> He refers to John the Baptist, whose activity certainly did not take place

26 See Plummer (455, 445), who thinks, although cautiously, that it is a question of April 4 in the year 30.

27 On ἐξουσία in the Greek world, see Werner Foerster, “ἔξεστιν κτλ.,” *TDNT* 2 (1964) 562–63.

28 The Latin world carefully distinguished among the qualities of the *imperium*, originally military, bestowed on the general; the *potestas*, by nature political, residing in the senate and the magistrates; and the *auctoritas*, of a personal nature, given to an outstanding leader or to the emperor. See François Bovon, *New Testament Traditions and Apocryphal Narratives* (trans. Jane Haapiseva-Hunter; PTMS 36; Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick, 1995) 133–35, 224.

29 On ἐξουσία in Israel, see Werner Foerster, “ἔξεστιν κτλ.,” *TDNT* 2 (1964) 564–66.

30 See André Neher, *Jérémie* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1960) 117–21.

31 On authority in Israel, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (trans. John McHugh; 2d ed.; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973).

32 With respect to 20:1-8, Kremer (“Antwort,” 135)

insists on the testimony this passage delivered about Jesus’ supreme authority.

33 See Chilton and Neusner, *Types of Authority*; and Brock, *Mary Magdalene*. Nolland (3:944) summarizes the situation well: “Jesus trades question for question, implicitly suggesting that he will somehow build his answer to their question on their answer to his question.”

34 On this topic, see Jürgen Roloff and Knut Schäferdick, “Amt,” *TRE* 2 (1978) 509–52.

35 See Str-B 1:861; Bultmann, *History*, 20; Shae, “Question,” 13–14.

36 As Plato’s dialogues attest, Socrates practiced this technique in order to stimulate the questioner’s thinking. The Sophists, the Stoics, and the Cynics also made use of it.

37 This *καὶ γὰρ*, which both Luke and Matthew have, underscores Jesus’ right to ask questions of the highest authority of Judaism in that day.

38 Is there a difference between ἐρωτῶ (Luke) and ἐπερωτῶ (Mark)? Does the term λόγος designate

in Jerusalem and belonged to the past. This reference to John the Baptist would have been astonishing to the mind of the first Christians, but it was not surprising coming from the lips of Jesus. It recalls his beginnings at the side of the Baptist and the importance of his own baptism. Elsewhere he is located at John's side, although with a significant difference (7:31-35). He acknowledged the prophetic importance of the precursor's ministry (7:24-28).<sup>39</sup> Thus, he made an honest attempt finally to get an admission from the authorities—the recognition of the Jewish authorities of the prophet whom Herod had caused to be put to death. Should they grant this acknowledgment, he is prepared to ally himself with John in order to claim the same kind of authority. In my judgment, the question in v. 4 reflects a reaction of the historical Jesus.<sup>40</sup>

■ 5-6 The embarrassment of the three groups, who at the beginning of the oral tradition probably were distinguished by their silence, now comes to expression, but it does so in the voice of the early Christians.<sup>41</sup> Those Christians, speaking from an encampment of their own choosing, accuse the Sanhedrin of closing itself off from God's intervention on behalf of the people (and they are thinking as much of the rejection of Jesus as of that of John) or of cowardice, since the Jewish leaders fear "all the people" (who understood John and acknowledged

without reserve the validity of his prophetic ministry).<sup>42</sup> In his reading of the events, Luke goes even further than Mark: He imagines that the people will go so far as to stone the Sanhedrin.<sup>43</sup> In so doing he draws more on his romantic imagination than on legal or historical probability.<sup>44</sup>

One point deserves attention: Mark mentions a dialogue, even a dispute, among the members of the Sanhedrin (he uses the verb *διαλογίζομαι*). Luke prefers a different verb (*συλλογίζομαι*). Since the time of the Vulgate, which understands these two verbs as synonyms, exegetes have neglected the difference between the one and the other formulation.<sup>45</sup> We are indebted to G. Mussies for noting this difference and giving us the correct significance of the verb that Luke uses.<sup>46</sup> What we have here is not a more or less vehement debate but a reflected calculation, an established accounting, a continuous reasoning, a balanced reflection. In contrast to *διαλογίζομαι*, the relatively rare verb *συλλογίζομαι* has a philosophical connotation (which we have inherited in the term "syllogism"). Here is a significant use of the verb with respect to Diogenes of Sinope: "It was his custom to reason (*συνελογίζετο*) as follows: Everything belongs to the gods. Those who are wise are the friends of the gods. Now among friends everything is shared. Thus everything belongs to those who are wise."<sup>47</sup>

the outward form (a question) or the content (some matter)? See n. 11 above.

39 See vol. I of this commentary, 283–84, 285–88, on 7:24-28 and 31-35.

40 The *Five Gospels* of the Jesus Seminar offers a different opinion (Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus. New Translation and Commentary* [New York: Macmillan, 1993]).

41 Kremer ("Antwort," 135) draws a clear distinction between the level of the historical Jesus and that of the first Christians who report the episode.

42 Günther Bornkamm (*Jesus of Nazareth* [trans. Irene McLuskey and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson; New York: Harper, 1960] 50) writes: "The decision concerning John and his baptism of repentance is also the decision concerning Jesus and his mission." Luke 7:29-30 has already contrasted two opposing Jewish attitudes toward John the Baptist: one positive, that of the people and the tax collectors, the other negative, that of the scribes and the Pharisees.

43 Luke uses the compound verb *καταλιθάξω*, which is rare and appears only in Christian authors, perhaps influenced by Luke. See G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961) s.v.; and Fitzmyer, 2:1275–76.

44 There were cases of legal or illegitimate stonings. The difference between *καταλιθάξω* and the simple *λιθάξω* ("to stone") may be that in the end the one who is stoned collapses (*κατά*, "downward"). In Acts 7:58, in connection with the stoning of Stephen, Luke uses the verb *λιθοβολῶ*, "to attack by throwing stones," "to stone."

45 Doubtless yielding to the reflex to harmonize, the Vulgate expresses the *διελογίζοντο* of Mark 11:31 and the *συνελογίσαντο* of Luke 20:5 with the same verb, *cogitabant*. See Mussies, "Sense," 73.

46 Mussies, "Sense."

47 *Ibid.*, 59, 76.

■ **7-8** Luke does not say whether Jesus' opponents are honest. Doubtless he is of the opinion that they are not. Had they wanted to run the risk of being honest and of acknowledging the signs of John the Baptist, according to the evangelist they would have dared to admit (a) that they knew the source<sup>48</sup> of the Baptist's authority and (b) that they located him near God in heaven. Luke obviously adopts a Baptist—and, above all, a Christian—outlook. It is therefore not astonishing that he had Jesus say that he refused to answer, since Jesus himself had not received the answer he expected.

Finally, we find on the lips of Jesus the expression his questioners used at the beginning: *ταῦτα ποιῶ* in v. 8 takes up *ταῦτα ποιεῖς* of v. 2. In the context of chaps. 19 and 20 "these things" (*ταῦτα*) are the symbolic actions of the entry into Jerusalem and especially the expulsion of the merchants from the temple. Yet for Luke these signs are but the last, perhaps the most ambitious and most shocking, of a long series of signs and words. In the prayer that the Lukan Jesus addressed to the Father, there was also the question of a *ταῦτα*, at the same time both precise and vague (10:21).<sup>49</sup> On the one hand, God, the Father, in his "good pleasure" (*εὐδοκία*) reveals, through his Son, *ταῦτα* (that is, his plan of salvation), to the little ones, that is, to his people. On the other hand, Jesus, the Son, in the name of his Father, fulfills *ταῦτα*, that is, the signs about the plan of salvation, and he speaks words about this divine economy. In Luke's eyes, this complementarity of the Father's plan and the realization of this plan by the Son constitute the strength of Christian faith. Yet because of its very power and its exclusivity, the plan of salvation arouses the opposition of those who see God's intention inscribed in other realities and communicated in other mediums, principally the law or the temple.

## History of Interpretation

In a difficult passage Tertullian draws his inspiration from the episode in Luke 20:1-8 to apply it to Marcion, who, inwardly divided, does not know whether he must identify John the Baptist with God the creator or God the savior (*Adv. Marc.* 4.38.1-2).

Cyril of Alexandria sees in the question posed to Jesus a way of fleeing from the truth, a rejection of light, in a word, sin (*Serm. Luc* 133).<sup>50</sup> Augustine of Hippo sees this question in terms of John 1:29 (lamb of God) and comes to the conclusion that Christ acts with the authority of the lamb, who bears the sins of the world (*Tract. in Ioh.* 5.14).<sup>51</sup> The Venerable Bede understands the scene as a case of intentionally withholding religious knowledge on the part of Jesus (*In Luc.* 5.2222-35). Following Augustine (*Tract. in Ioh.* 35.2),<sup>52</sup> whom he quotes, Bede places the episode in a typological relationship with Psalm 131 (132):17-18: John the Baptist embodies the lamp prepared for God's anointed, and Jesus' opponents represent the psalm's enemies, covered with shame. He quotes John 16:12 on this subject ("you cannot bear everything I have yet to say to you"), then Matt 7:6 ("do not throw pearls before the swine").<sup>53</sup>

Without always admitting it, medieval exegesis often relies on patristic exegesis.<sup>54</sup> Without any scruples at all, it insists on the guilt of Jesus' opponents.

Calvin explains why the Jewish leaders ask about authority instead of doctrine: "They dispute His calling and commission," because "they had previously failed in their attacks many times."<sup>55</sup> The reformer has no more regard for Jesus' opponents than do the exegetes of antiquity and the Middle Ages:<sup>56</sup> "Their dealings show perversity and evil." How can they doubt Jesus' divine calling when from it they had seen so many miracles?

48 Compared with Mark 11:33, which does not have *ποθέν*, Luke firmly holds to the Baptist's authority.

49 See vol. 2 of this commentary, on 10:21.

50 Payne Smith, *Cyril*, 2:621; Reuss, *Lukas-Kommentare*, 198 (frg. 302). The Syriac text, which I paraphrase only partially, corresponds to the Greek fragment: *οἱ δὲ φεύγουσι τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ δυσσεβοῦντες οὐ καταπεφρίκασιν* ("The others flee the truth and, filled with impiety, they are not at all horrified").

51 CCSL 36:48-49.

52 CCSL 36:318.

53 The gloss is based on Bede. It also uses the quotations from John 16:12 and Matt 7:6; *Glossa Ordinaria*, Luke 20:4-8 (PL 114:331).

54 See, e.g., Bonaventure *Comm. Luc.* 20.1-9 (Bernardini, 501-3) and Albertus Magnus *Evang. Luc.* 20.1-8 (599-603).

55 Calvin, *Harmony*, 3:11-12.

56 Martin Luther shares this opinion. Jesus' reaction is not mild; it is "sharp and harsh," because the Jews' question was "an arrogant question" (*Evangelien-Auslegung*, 924-25).

Jesus' counterquestion is "to convict them out of their own mouths of impudent pretence to ignorance on a subject they well understood." Why add other proofs on behalf of Jesus than those already given by John the Baptist? Finally, Calvin defends Jesus, who had not "intended His example to encourage the sophist's device of silencing truth." He is delighted by the alternative "from human beings" or "from God," because from that we know "that no kind of teaching or sacred sign may be accepted in our worship unless evidently sent by God."<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusion

The Lukan Christ succeeded in attracting the attention of the Jewish authorities and in upsetting them. He has become a personality with whom the most powerful people must deal. By means of his rhetorical skill and power, he has embarrassed them and even rendered them mute. Thus, his authority of divine origin, like that

of John the Baptist, manifested itself on the human level in a brilliant manner.

The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, the heart of national power, have broken with the people who earlier defended the Baptist and now support Jesus. For Luke, this moment confirms the separation between divine truth and the ignorance of the Jewish leaders, which is more pretended than real. The true prophetic line empowered by God is opposed to Israel's religious and political leaders. The following parable will indicate where this opposition leads. For now, the λαός, "the people," still have confidence in Jesus, the faithful keeper of the divine message.

The faith inspired by Jesus Christ encourages each person to surrender one's self-assurance, to acknowledge that one's a-priori stances are relative, and to open oneself to question. Will Luke's readers accept this challenge?<sup>58</sup>

57 According to Erasmus (*Paraphrasis*, 437), Jesus' opponents claim, *Nobis ignotus es, nulla potestate publica praeditus es*, "For us you are an unknown, you are equipped with no public authority." We find the same hostility toward the Jews as we find in Luther and Calvin: An impious thought (*ab impio cogitatione*; col. 437) is the father of the question.

Erasmus notes ingeniously that, had Jesus' opponents answered honestly, they would have lost some of their authority before the people (*Si respondissent verum, periclitabatur apud populum illorum auctoritas*; col. 438).

58 See Kremer, "Antwort," 135–36.