

# Thoughts on the Parable of the Good Samaritan

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**T**HE PARABLE of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 is based on an incident that occurred in a war between Israel and Judah (who were, of course, neighbours), as recorded in 2 Chronicles 28. Israel took captive a large number of prisoners from Judah and took them to Samaria, but then decided to return them. Verse 15 records this return using words and phrases very like those in the parable: "the men [of Samaria] rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho".

I suggest that the man in the Parable of the Good Samaritan who "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (Lk. 10:30) represents Israel. Going "down" is never a good move. Abraham "went down into Egypt" (Gen. 12:10) and brought trouble upon himself. Lot went down to Sodom and Gomorrah and ended up sitting in the gate of Sodom.

The man "fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment" (Lk. 10:30). This reminds us of what is said of Israel in Isaiah 42:22,24: "this is a people robbed and spoiled . . . Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers?". In this situation "none delivereth . . . none saith, Restore". Indeed, there was none to help the man until "a certain Samaritan . . . came" (Lk. 10:33). The priests and Levites did nothing for fallen Israel; they would not lift a finger to help (Lk. 11:46; Mt. 23:4), they "passed by on the other side".

Concerning the man it is said that the thieves "stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him" (Lk. 10:30). In Ezekiel 16, where Israel is depicted as an adulterous wife, it is said that her lovers would "strip [her] also of [her] clothes, and shall take [her] fair jewels, and leave [her] naked and bare" (v. 39). This is repeated in 23:26.

Back in Luke 10:30, we read that the thieves "departed, leaving him half dead", which was Israel's state when the parable was given. There

is a remarkable description of Israel's state in Isaiah 1:4-6: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers . . . the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment". In the parable the Samaritan "had compassion on him . . . and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine" (Lk. 10:33,34).

The Samaritan here represents Jesus. It is recorded at least nine times of Jesus that he had compassion, a Divine attribute. "Bound up his wounds" reminds us of Ezekiel 34, where the false shepherds are condemned because "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken" (v. 4). In Jesus's day these false shepherds were the priests and Levites who passed by on the other side.

The Samaritan poured oil and wine into the man's wounds. The oil represents the Word, as in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, and so does the wine, as in Isaiah 55: "come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . hear, and your soul shall live" (vv. 1,3).

The Samaritan "set [the man] on his own beast . . . and took care of him" (Lk. 10:34). This may represent the idea contained in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden [with sin], and I will give you rest"; and in Isaiah 53: "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"; "he bare the sin of many" (vv. 6,12).

The parable continues: ". . . and brought him to an inn, and took care of him"; and then the innkeeper was instructed to "Take care of him" (Lk. 10:34,35). The word translated "care" here occurs elsewhere only in 1 Timothy 3:5: "for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?". The inn therefore represents the ecclesia, where Christ cares for his children.

To pay for the care, the Samaritan "took out two pence" (Lk. 10:35). This coin was the denarius, a silver coin worth about half a shekel. According to Exodus 30:12,13, this was the redemption price, representing the price paid by Jesus for our

redemption: "ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). Finally the Samaritan says, "whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee" (Lk. 10:35), representing the second coming of Jesus.