

supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him That was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (5:7).

Back in Luke 22:44, we read, "And being in an *agony* he prayed more earnestly". The Greek word for "agony" (*agōnia*), used only here in the New Testament, is derived from the Greek word *agōn*, and according to Vine<sup>1</sup> it was used by the Greeks as an alternative to *agōn*. *Agōn* was originally used to indicate 'a place of assembly', but later was used for the games or contests which took place there. Athletes strain every sinew and muscle in their bodies in order to win a race. One can see the agony expressed in their faces. Such contests are trivial compared with the greatest and most significant of all contests that took place in Gethsemane. This was a contest between the will of God and the will of the flesh. The Evangelists summarise our Lord's agonising prayer with the words, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done" (v. 42). It seems that the greatest battle in Christ's contest against the flesh took place here in Gethsemane. Throughout the trial, the scourging, the mocking and the agonising crucifixion, the Gospels portray Jesus serene and in control. It was in Gethsemane that the contest took place and the will of God prevailed.

And this brings us full circle in this study of the prayers of our Lord recorded in Luke's Gospel. The first prayer was as he rose from the waters of

baptism. With the help of the apostle's comment in Hebrews 10 it was suggested that the prayer of Jesus then was, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God". In the agonising hour in Gethsemane at the end of his ministry, that declaration of intent gloriously triumphed.

A final thought and exhortation arises from the apostle's words in Hebrews 12: "let us run with patience the *race* that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (vv. 1,2). The word "race" in verse 1 is the Greek *agōn*. This is our contest in which we must agonise, but we lack the determination and moral and spiritual strength of Jesus, who prayed so earnestly that his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground. Perhaps it is with this in mind that the apostle continued his exhortation, "Ye have not yet resisted unto *blood*, striving against sin" (v. 4).

Thankfully Christ has gained the victory. As we strive to be accounted worthy to partake of the fruits of that victory, let us remember his example of prayer, and his exhortation, "Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Lk. 22:46).

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1. W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

# The Holy Spirit in Luke's Gospel

Tony Benson

*The Holy Spirit is mentioned a number of times in the early chapters of Luke in relation to the births of Jesus and John the Baptist and the commencement of the ministry of Jesus. It is suggested that Luke is presenting the themes of a new outpouring of the Spirit after 400 years of silence and of Jesus as the Spirit-filled servant of Isaiah's prophecies.*

**T**HE PROMINENCE of the Holy Spirit theme in Luke's Gospel can be seen by the number of occurrences of the phrase in each of the four Gospels:

Matthew	7
Mark	6
Luke	13
John	4

This is not because of occurrences of the phrase scattered throughout the Gospel of Luke, but because of the number of occurrences in the early chapters, specifically chapters 1–4.

We can narrow things down further. Matthew and Mark, as well as Luke, refer to the Spirit in their accounts of the ministry of John the

Baptist, the baptism of Jesus and his going into the wilderness to be tempted, although only Luke uses the phrase "Holy Spirit" in relation to the last two incidents. It is in the material unique to Luke that we find particular emphasis being placed on the Holy Spirit, that is, the narratives to do with the births of John the Baptist and Jesus in Luke 1 and 2, but also in the first incident that

Luke records concerning the ministry of Jesus, the preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, where Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1,2, beginning, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me". Table 1 gives the references to the Spirit in Luke 1 and 2.

### A new outpouring of the Spirit

Why this emphasis on the Spirit in the early chapters of Luke? It is surely because Luke, himself inspired by the Spirit, is setting out the fact that, after centuries when the Spirit was not active in Israel, a new and greater outpouring of the Spirit was commencing. It was one particularly linked with the two great outpourings of the Spirit in Old Testament times; firstly in the bringing of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness into the Promised Land, and secondly in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha.

All three synoptic Gospels record the transfiguration, at which Moses and Elijah, the leaders of Israel at the time of these two past outpourings of the Spirit, appeared to Jesus to encourage him. Only Luke says that they "spoke of his departure [Gk. *exodus*] which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (9:31, RV mg.), a clear link back to Moses; and in the verses which follow the transfiguration account in Luke there are several links with the ministries of Elijah and Elisha.

Regarding Elijah and Elisha, the outpouring of the Spirit that Luke is describing is linked with their ministry by what the angel told Zacharias; that his son John would "go before [God] in the spirit and power of Elias" (1:17). The article "[Echoes of Elijah and Elisha in the Gospel of Luke](#)" (p. 302) provides more details.

Regarding the time of the Exodus, Moses was instructed to tell Pharaoh, "Thus saith the LORD, Israel is My son, even My firstborn" (Ex. 4:22), and the narrative goes on to speak of how God's Spirit power was at work in bringing the nation of Israel to birth. Gabriel revealed to Mary that she was to conceive and bear a son who would be called "the Son of the Highest"; and how this would come to pass is explained

**Table 1. The Spirit in Luke 1 and 2**

John "shall be filled with the Holy [Spirit], even from his mother's womb" (1:15).  
*"[John] shall go before [God] in the spirit and power of Elias" (v. 17).*  
 Gabriel said to Mary regarding the conception of Jesus, "The Holy [Spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (v. 35).  
*When Mary arrived at Elisabeth's house, "Elisabeth was filled with the Holy [Spirit]" (v. 41).*  
 When Zacharias recovered his voice on the naming of John the Baptist, he "was filled with the Holy [Spirit], and prophesied" (v. 67).  
*Regarding the aged Simeon it is said, "the Holy [Spirit] was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy [Spirit], that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple" (2:25-27).*  
 In addition it is also said of both John and Jesus that they "waxed strong in spirit" as they grew up (1:80; 2:40).

as, "The Holy [Spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:31-35).

In her song, Mary, surely speaking by the Spirit, though the record does not say so, uses language which reflects the Exodus; for example: "[God] hath shewed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (v. 51). Zacharias "was filled with the Holy [Spirit], and prophesied" in the words of verses 68-79, and his words also reflect the Exodus, as shown in [Table 2](#) overleaf.

### 400 years of silence

The outpouring of the Spirit at the time of the births of the John the Baptist and Jesus came after a period of over 400 years during which there was no revelation from God by the Spirit. This fulfilled the prophecy of Micah: "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them" (3:6). Significantly, when the Spirit was poured out again through Zacharias and Simeon, they spoke of the coming of light again:

"whereby the dayspring [mg. sunrising] from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Lk. 1:78,79);

**Table 2. Zacharias' song and the Exodus**

<p>"He hath <i>visited</i> and <i>redeemed</i> His people" (Lk. 1:68, cf. v. 78).</p>	<p>"I have surely <i>visited</i> you" (Ex. 3:16); "I will <i>redeem</i> you with a stretched out arm" (6:6); "the people which Thou hast <i>redeemed</i>" (15:13).</p>
<p>"that we should be <i>saved</i> from our enemies" (Lk. 1:71); "<i>delivered</i> out of the hand of our enemies" (v. 74) "knowledge of <i>salvation</i> unto His people" (v. 77).</p>	<p>"stand still, and see the <i>salvation</i> of the LORD" (Ex. 14:13); "I am come down to <i>deliver</i> them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (3:8).</p>
<p>"to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to <i>remember</i> His holy <i>covenant</i>; the oath which He swore to our father Abraham" (Lk. 1:72,73)</p>	<p>"I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob . . . And I have also established My <i>covenant</i> with them . . . I have <i>remembered</i> My <i>covenant</i>" (Ex. 6:3-5).</p>

not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD". With this we link the words of Mary: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Lk. 1:53). After the centuries of spiritual famine, the new outpouring of the Spirit through the Son of God would provide ample spiritual sustenance for those who hungered for it (6:21), but the rich and corrupt spiritual rulers of the nation would receive nothing because of their failure to confess their need.

"a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (2:32).

The final revelation by God's Spirit in the Old Testament was that given through Malachi. It was he, of course, who prophesied of the coming of Elijah in the words quoted by Gabriel when speaking of John coming "in the spirit and power of Elias", as mentioned above. In that final chapter of the Old Testament Malachi also speaks of the coming of the "Sun of righteousness . . . with healing in his wings" (4:2), and so Luke not only records the coming of light into the world through the new outpouring of the Spirit, but also speaks of miracles of healing being performed by that same Spirit.

During those centuries of darkness the faithful were sustained by the word of prophecy, in particular that of Daniel, whose prophecies bridged the gap, showing what was to be fulfilled in the nations before the coming of the "Messiah the Prince" of Daniel 9. At the time of the new outpouring of the Spirit recorded by Luke, the time for the fulfilment of the Seventy Weeks Prophecy of Daniel 9 was near, and so we have in Luke 2:38 the reference to "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem", to whom Anna brought the good news of the birth of the one who was to bring that redemption. She was a prophetess, and would therefore have also spoken by the Spirit, although we have no record of her words.

Another verse in the Minor Prophets that seems to speak of this period of silence of the Spirit is Amos 8:11: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land,

### The servant

As mentioned above, the preaching of the Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he applied Isaiah 61 to himself, is unique to Luke and directs our attention to the fact that here was the one who fulfilled the servant prophecies of Isaiah, which mention the giving of the Spirit to the servant that was to come.

Significantly, when Jesus received the Holy Spirit at baptism, his heavenly Father declared, "Thou art My beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Lk. 3:22). This links with the first of Isaiah's servant prophecies, which begins: "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon him" (42:1). Through the Spirit, the servant would "open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (v. 7). Jesus did this when by the Spirit he literally gave sight to the blind, and released people from the imprisonment of paralysis, but also did so when his teaching gave sight to the spiritually blind and released people from the bondage of sin. This literal and figurative aspect of Jesus' use of the Spirit was sometimes shown in one individual, as when he both enabled a paralysed man to walk and forgave his sins (Lk. 5:18-25).

After his baptism, Jesus, "being full of the Holy [Spirit]" (4:1), was "led by the Spirit" to go into the wilderness, where he overcame the temptation to misuse the Spirit for his own ends. He then "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (v. 14) and in the synagogue at Nazareth

applied Isaiah 61 to himself: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk. 4:18,19). He seems to have incorporated into his quotation the giving of sight to the blind from elsewhere in Isaiah (42:7; 35:5) to give emphasis to the fact that he would use the Spirit to provide both literal and spiritual sight.

The work of Jesus through the Spirit did not end when he ascended to heaven, however. The Gospel concludes with Jesus telling his disciples, “I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (24:49). Thus in

the first verse of Acts Luke says that the Gospel was the record of “all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach”. He was to continue the work through his apostles, who, after receiving the Spirit at Pentecost, “went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mk. 16:20).

*For more on the theme of the Holy Spirit at work as recorded in the early chapters of Luke, see [“I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh”](#), Don Harrison (Apr. 2003, p. 128); [“The promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2: A reply”](#), Don Harrison (Dec. 2006, p. 442) and [“The spirit of Elijah and Pentecost”](#), Andrew Perry (Feb. 2007, p. 42). These are available on the [Back Issues](#) page of our website: [www.testimony-magazine.org](http://www.testimony-magazine.org).*

# Poverty and wealth in Luke’s Gospel

Mark Vincent

*The themes of wealth, materialism and stewardship, and the contrast between rich and poor, are widely recognised as being dominant in Luke vis-à-vis the other Gospels. This article looks at what Jesus has to say about the topic by breaking Luke’s teaching down into five sections.*

**O**UR CONSIDERATION of the theme of poverty and wealth in the Gospel of Luke is divided into five sections:

- 1 The God Who turns things upside down
- 2 Jesus and the poor
- 3 Woe to the rich
- 4 Give to the poor
- 5 Stewardship.

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## 1. The God Who turns things upside down

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**T**HE famous Song of Mary, recorded uniquely in Luke’s Gospel, sets the tone for our theme. Like Hannah before her, she characterises her Lord and God as the God of inversion, the One Who turns things upside down. Consider these phrases:

“He hath regarded the *low estate* of His handmaiden:

for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me *blessed* . . .  
He hath *scattered the proud* in the imagination of their hearts.  
He hath *put down the mighty* from their seats,  
and *exalted them of low degree*.

He hath *filled the hungry* with good things”  
(Lk. 1:48,51b-53a).

What, then, would such a God think of riches, and the attitude they are likely to engender? What would be His attitude to materialism and obsession about ‘things’ when He sees it in the men and women He has created? We could guess it pretty accurately even if we did not know the next line of the Song. Mary makes it quite clear:

“and the *rich* He hath sent *empty away*”  
(v. 53b).

There is good reason for this, as we shall see later on; it is not arbitrary, nor is it that He rejoices in seeing people stumble for the sake of it (as if He would gain satisfaction from watching someone fall off a bicycle just because they had learned how to ride). It is not success *per se* that God decries, whether measured in monetary or in other terms. It is the spirit that success—of many different kinds—so often breeds within