

- 1 Christ should suffer
- 2 he should rise from the dead
- 3 on the third day
- 4 repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name
- 5 among all nations (people)
- 6 starting in Jerusalem.

In point five we see Luke's record emphasising again the Gentile aspect of salvation in that it is to go out to people in the world and not be restricted to the Jews. Although this is repeated again in

the instructions left with the disciples as they were together on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:8), it was a teaching they struggled to comprehend and put into practice.

It was also the disciples' lack of understanding of Scripture that caused them to be confused, cast down, full of mourning and uncertain of the future on the death of Jesus. They had not comprehended the teaching of Jesus prior to his death and therefore had no conception of the promise of his resurrection.

Problem passages in Luke's Gospel

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*This article considers several verses in Luke which are difficult to understand and have the potential to be wrested out of context to support false teaching. The format follows the familiar problem/solution structure found in Wrested Scriptures, by Brother Ron Abel.**

Demons

"And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice" (4:33).

Problem

The claim is made that supernatural possession of individuals can occur, requiring exorcism.

Solution

The word "devil" translates the Greek word *daimonion*, from where the English word 'demon' or 'dæmon' is derived. Of the four Gospels, the term occurs most frequently in Luke. This perhaps is expected, given that Luke's is the longest Gospel; nevertheless, occurrences per page or chapter are highest in Luke. This reflects the emphasis given by the Spirit to medical aspects in the Gospel.

The word is used by Paul in his First Epistle to Corinth: "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to *devils*, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fel-

lowship with *devils*" (10:19,20). Paul quotes from Deuteronomy: "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not" (32:17). The words in Deuteronomy and Corinthians show that dæmons are paralleled with idols. The idols, and the dæmons that the idols represent, are not "any thing".

In Revelation 9 the term is again associated with idols: "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship *devils*, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk" (v. 20). Here, the verse is speaking about the idolatrous worship of the followers of the beast, including the worship of saints. As Brother Thomas wrote: ". . . they have

* The article covers some of the verses dealt with in *Wrested Scriptures*. These include: satan as lightning (10:18, p. 175); the kingdom of God within you (17:21, p. 91); satan entering Judas (22:3, p. 176); satan and Simon (22:31, p. 176) and paradise (23:43, p. 117). Brother Abel's book provided invaluable background reading for this article, and readers are recommended to consult it when considering these verses. The saying, "the kingdom of God is within you" (17:21), was also dealt with in detail by Brother Simeon Guntrip in the Testimony Special Issue in [May 2000, pp. 214-15](#). Other sources used in this article are referenced in the text.

conferred the names of fabulous saints and angels upon the gods and dæmons of ancient Greece and Rome. All that the old heathens affirmed of their deities, the modern heathens of the Greek and Latin communions affirm of their martyrs, saints, and angels. The dæmonology of the ancient world is the dæmonology of the Apostasy, catholic and protestant".¹

The dæmons in the Gospels refer to various diseases, some of which it is possible to identify, for example epilepsy (Lk. 9:37-42) and dumbness and blindness (Mt. 12:22). Idolatry had largely been removed from Israel following the return from captivity, but at the time of Christ there was still much spiritual malady. The diseases represent the spiritual illness of the Israel in the first century, and the use of terminology associated with mythology and idolatry serves to emphasise this. Hence the dæmons are described as "unclean".

Satan as lightning

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (10:18).

Problem

This passage is wrested by some people to claim that a supernatural being called Satan once dwelt in heaven but was then cast out.

Solution

The Greek word "Satan" here derives from the Hebrew word *satan*, which means 'adversary'. The first occurrence of the word is found in Numbers, where it used of an angel: "And God's anger was kindled because he [Balaam] went: and the angel of the LORD [Yahweh] stood in the way for an *adversary* against him" (22:22). So the word does not necessarily refer to somebody who is evil. The word *satan* can also refer to men: "And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah, that ye should this day be *adversaries* unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?" (2 Sam. 19:22).

The word can also refer to illness. For example, the woman who had "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years" (Lk. 13:11) is described as "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years" (v. 16). Paul described his illness as deriving from *satan*: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn

in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7). In Luke 10 the context is that of the disciples healing people, therefore the word *satan* would seem in part to refer to the diseases.

The heavens represent the rulers of nations (see Isaiah 1:2,10). Just as the king of Babylon fell from heaven (see Isaiah 14:4,12), so the rulers of the world will fall when Christ returns. The healing carried out by the disciples pointed forward to this time. As Brother Roberts wrote, Christ "beheld in vision, as a matter of prospect, the complete dethronement of the power of the Adversary in every form—for Satan merely signifies the Adversary. It was as if Jesus had said, 'My name has prevailed at your hands on a small scale. The time is coming when all evil will disappear by the same power. The work has already begun'".²

Asking for the Holy Spirit

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (11:13).

Problem

It is argued that this verse shows that believers today can ask for the Holy Spirit to be given to them.

Solution

The Holy Spirit truly was given to many who asked. It was something which the Apostle Paul also commanded believers to desire (1 Cor. 14:1). The Holy Spirit was given in the form of gifts; however, these gifts were "done away" (1 Cor. 13:10).

John wrote: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us" (1 Jno. 5:14). We can ask for anything, *providing* it is according to the will of God. In that God has done away with the Spirit-gifts, and thus it is not His will that the Holy Spirit should be given at present, it is now quite wrong to ask God for the Holy Spirit. The need for such a prayer has gone.

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1. Thomas, J. (1921, eighth edition), *Eureka: An exposition of the Apocalypse*, Birmingham, The Christadelphian, Vol. II, p. 493.
 2. Roberts, R. (1916, second edition), *Nazareth Revisited*, Birmingham, The Christadelphian, p. 370.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

“And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven” (12:10).

Problem

This verse can cause concern because of fear that we might commit a sin which could be construed as blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, thus not being able to obtain forgiveness.

Solution

The Greek word for ‘blasphemy’ derives from two words meaning ‘hurt’ and ‘speak’ respectively. It involves speaking hurtful words against something. Mark records Jesus as saying: “Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme” (3:28). There were different types of blasphemy, of which blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was a very specific example. General blasphemy could be forgiven. Paul had been a blasphemer but was forgiven. He says of himself: “who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13). Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit should not be confused with blasphemy generally.

The preaching in the first century by Christ and the apostles was accompanied by signs and wonders:

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know . . .” (Acts 2:22);

“and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (v. 43);

“how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy [Spirit], according to His own will?” (Heb. 2:3,4).

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit relates to times such as this when there was open manifestation of the Holy Spirit power. To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is to speak out against signs and wonders when they occur, defaming their cause and purpose.

In Matthew 12 the Lord Jesus spoke about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit after the Pharisees said, “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (v. 24). They were ascribing the work of the Holy Spirit to the prince of devils. The Lord Jesus spoke of Beelzebub’s kingdom being “divided” (vv. 25,26). The dividing of Israel’s kingdom is alluded to here. As the leader of the breakaway kingdom, Jeroboam appeared to blaspheme the Spirit of God when he denied that the power of God had brought Israel out of Egypt: “the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (1 Kgs. 12:28).

We do not live in a time when the Holy Spirit is openly manifested in sign and wonder, and therefore it does not seem that we can blaspheme against the Holy Spirit in the sense that people could in the first century. The Word of God, of course, is given by the Holy Spirit, but this is not the same as a miraculous sign. As Brother Roberts wrote: “We have but the written testimony, unsupported by miracle. Whether speaking against the testimony in this state of circumstances is speaking against the Holy Spirit in the sense of Christ’s words is extremely doubtful. We may, therefore, freely rest on the first part of Christ’s otherwise terrible words: ‘All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men’”.³

The kingdom of God within you

“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (17:20,21).

Problem

This verse is used in Christendom to support the false teaching that the Kingdom is either the Church itself, or the spiritual reign of Jesus in our hearts, or both.

Solution

This is the only occasion when the Lord Jesus says, “the kingdom of God is within you”. In contrast,

3. Roberts, R. (1880), “Sunday morning at the Birmingham Christadelphian Ecclesia, No. 120”, *The Christadelphian*, Vol. 17, No. 192, p. 267.

there are many occasions when the Lord Jesus speaks about *entering the kingdom*. For example, in Luke 18 he speaks of it three times:

“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein” (v. 17);

“And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (v. 24);

“For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (v. 25).

On no occasion is the kingdom said to *enter* a person.

The context displays Jesus speaking to the Pharisees, of whom he said, “ye . . . outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Mt. 23:28). It could not be said of the wicked Pharisees that they had the Kingdom of God within them.

The word translated “within” can have the sense of ‘among’ (see AV mg.). The Lord Jesus was *among* them. Moreover, he epitomised the Kingdom of God in the things he said and did. In Mark 11 the Lord Jesus is, as it were, referred to as the Kingdom of God: “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest” (v. 10).

A Greek word, *paratēreō*, which is closely related to the word translated “observation” (*paratērēsis*), is used by Paul to the Galatians: “Ye observe [*paratēreō*] days, and months, and times, and years” (4:10). The Pharisees were obsessed with this type of observance, but no amount of observing the Law or man’s traditions would bring the Kingdom any nearer.

Satan enters Judas

“Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve” (22:3).

Problem

This verse is cited to prove that Satan is a supernatural being.

Solution

This verse concerns adversarial thoughts arising in the heart of Judas against the Lord Jesus Christ. As Brother Ron Abel pointed out, the incident concerning Ananias helps to explain this verse. In Acts 5 it is written, “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the

Holy [Spirit], and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (vv. 3,4). Here, “Satan” refers to the way Ananias had conceived his evil plan in his heart. As with Judas, the origin of his adversarial attitude against God was his own heart.

Satan and Simon

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (22:31).

Problem

This verse is likewise cited to prove that Satan is a supernatural being.

Solution

The “you” in this verse is plural, and refers to Simon Peter and the other disciples. The beginning of the chapter shows who had “desired to have” the disciples. It is written, “And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people” (v. 2). The chief priests and scribes were adversaries against the Lord Jesus. They desired to “have” the disciples under their sway so that they could take the Lord Jesus. In the end, they only managed to “have” Judas: “And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them” (v. 4).

Two swords

“Then said he [Jesus] unto them [his disciples], But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough” (22:36-38).

Problem

This statement seems to advocate the use of the sword.

Solution

That Christ was not advocating the use of the sword is shown by his rebuke of the use of the

sword by Peter when Christ was arrested: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Jno. 18:10,11).

It is clearly wrong for a brother or sister in Christ to commit violence. John the Baptist said to the soldiers, "Do violence to no man" (Lk. 3:14), and Christ said, "unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other" (6:29).

The passage is explained by taking account of a time during the reign of Saul when there were also only two swords. The Philistines were preventing swords being made: "Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears" (1 Sam. 13:19). As a consequence, no one had swords apart from Saul and Jonathan: "So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found" (v. 22). So at this time there were only two swords in Israel.

David was later offered one of these two swords to fight Goliath, but rejected it: "And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him" (17:39). For him two swords were not only enough, they were more than enough. David later said to Goliath, "Thou comest to me with a sword" (v. 45). These words were quoted by Christ when he was taken by the Jews: "Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?" (Lk. 22:52).

Neither David nor Christ put their trust in the sword, but in the name of God. When Christ told the disciples to buy a sword he was showing them that they would be in situations which, from a human perspective, needed a weapon. The reality was that two swords would be enough. In fact, it was more than enough, for, from God's perspective, no swords were needed.

Paradise

"And he [one of the malefactors crucified with Jesus] said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I

say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (23:42,43).

Problem

Some claim that this verse suggests that Christ and the thief went to heaven when they died.

Solution

The word translated "paradise" is the Greek version of the Hebrew *pardes*. This word occurs three times in the Old Testament, rendered "forest" (Neh. 2:8), "orchards" (Eccl. 2:5) and "orchard" (Song 4:13). Therefore, it does not refer to heaven but to a plantation of trees on earth. In Revelation 2, this link with trees is continued, with the tree of life being said to be "in the midst of the paradise of God" (v. 7). The implication is that paradise is a way of referring to the Kingdom when Israel will be like the garden of Eden: "For the LORD [Yahweh] shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD [Yahweh]; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isa. 51:3). One reason why Christ used the term 'paradise' was because it contrasted with the three dry stakes on which he and the thieves hung.

The expectation of the Jews was that the Kingdom would come, that is, that it would come on earth. The Pharisees understood this to be the teaching of Christ, for they asked him "when the kingdom of God should come" (Lk. 17:20). The Lord Jesus had commanded his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (11:2). The thief, too, believed that the Kingdom would be on earth, and it was this belief which underpinned his request.

The request by the thief quotes some of the words of Joseph to the butler: "But remember me with thee when it shall be well with thee" (Gen. 40:14, mg.). Later, we are told, "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (v. 23). The Lord Jesus provides assurance to the thief that, unlike Joseph, he would not be forgotten. He does this by formalising and emphasising his statement by making mention of the day in which the promise was made. This point is lost in the AV because of the comma placed after "thee". The text would be better rendered: "Verily I say unto thee to day". A similar approach was used by Moses: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" (Deut. 6:6).