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**The Kingdom and the Poor in Luke:
A Biblical Interpretation with Application to the Chin Churches**

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**BY
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**THE KINGDOM AND THE POOR IN LUKE:
A BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION WITH APPLICATION
TO THE CHIN CHURCHES**

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED

BY

Prof. Hans Kvalbein

Date.....

To

My Beloved Wife
Mrs Khen Chum (Sun Doi)

My Kids
Heaven Chan Bawi Bik
Lenz Ngun Tial Zi
Phoebe Ca Len Cuai

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Soli Deo Gloria

Khen Chum

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

Introduction	1
0.1. Defining the Task	1
0.2. Research Background	2
0.3. Statement of Problems	3
0.4. Purpose and Scope	5
0.5. Procedure	6
Chapter I. Interpretation of βασιλεια του θεου	7
1.1. A Historical Review of the Interpretations of the Kingdom	7
1.1.1. Augustine	7
1.1.2. Liberal School	8
1.1.3. History of Religions School	9
1.1.4. The Kingdom as Realized and Process	11
1.1.5. Liberation Theology	12
1.2. The Meaning of βασιλεια του θεου	14
1.2.1. βασιλεια του θεου in the OT and Judaism	14
1.2.2. βασιλεια του θεου in Luke	17
1.2.3. βασιλεια του θεου: Reign or Realm?	19
1.2.4. βασιλεια του θεου: Present and Future	24
Chapter II. Interpretation of πτωχος	26
2.1. Different Interpretations of ‘the Poor’	26
2.1.1. The Poor in a literal or material sense	27
2.1.2. The Poor in a moral sense referring to the Pious Poor	27
2.1.3. The Poor as referring to a marginalized Group	28
2.1.4. The Poor as referring to Israel as a whole	29
2.2. The Poor in the Old Testament and Judaism	30
2.3. The Poor in Luke	32

2.3.1. The Poor as the Receivers of Alms	32
2.3.2. The Poor as receivers of the Gospel and the Kingdom	33
2.3.2.1. <i>εὐαγγελισασθαι πτωχοις</i> (Lk 4:18-21)	34
2.3.2.2. <i>μακαριοι οἱ πτωχοι</i> : The Poor as the Disciples (Lk 6:20)	39
2.3.2.3. Why are the Poor Blessed?	41
2.3.2.4. <i>πτωχοι εὐαγγελιζονται</i> (Lk 7:22-23)	44
2.3.2.5. Not the Invited but the Poor (Lk 14:21)	46
2.4. Other Expressions about the Receivers of the Kingdom	49
2.4.1. The Hungry (<i>πεινωντας</i> , Lk 1:52)	49
2.4.2. Not the Righteous but Sinners (Lk 5:32)	50
2.4.3. Not the Wise and Prudent but the Simple (Lk 10:21)	51
2.4.4. The Children (Lk18:16)	52

Chapter III. To give to the Poor as a Challenge to the people

of the Kingdom	54
3.1. Luke and Material Possession	54
3.2. Lazarus and the Dives (Lk 16:19-31)	57
3.2.1. Context Study	58
3.2.2. Reading the Text	60
3.3. Sell all your Property and give it to the Poor (Lk 18:22-31)	63
3.3.1. Context Study	63
3.3.2. Reading the Text	64
3.4. Jesus and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-9)	71
3.4.1. Context Study	71
3.4.2. Reading the Text	73
3.5. Give Alms (<i>δοτε ελεημοσυνην</i> , Lk 11:41; 12:32-34)	78
3.5.1. Reading Lk 11:41	78
3.5.2. Reading Lk 12:32-34	80

Chapter IV. The Message of The Kingdom and Its Challenges

to the Chin Churches	83
4.1. The Growth of Chin Out-migration and the Rise of Materialism	83
4.2. The Impact of Liberation Theology in Chin Churches	87

4.3. The Word 'Kingdom' in Chin Concept	91
4.4. Pentecostals, Fundamentals and Prosperity Theology.....	93
4.5. A Challenge to The Chin Christians as the people of the Kingdom	95
Conclusion	97
Appendix	101
Bibliography	107

INTRODUCTION

0.1. Defining the Task

Modern scholarship is quite unanimous in the opinion that the Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus.¹ It comes out more than 100 times (out of a total of ca. 162 in the whole NT) from Jesus' mouth throughout the Gospels. Ulrich Luz called it as a typical usage of "the language of Christ".² On the other hand, it is one of the most debated subjects regarding its intended theological meaning in the New Testament studies. Furthermore, the term is very ambiguous, especially in the Chin version and it is hard to suggest if the term refers to abstract meaning, reign or concrete meaning, realm. The primary task of this project is therefore to explore the intended meaning of 'βασιλεια' by interpreting some important selected texts in Luke.

To understand the real intended meaning of a word or a phrase, its context plays a very important role in biblical studies. Referring Barr, Kvalbein has stated that the meaning of a word and a phrase is always defined by its context and its actual use in a language; its meaning must be derived from its syntagmatic and paradigmatic relation.³ I am thus tempted to analyse the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relation of the phrase by looking at its synonyms and antonyms. In light of the terminological analysis and the interpretation of these selected texts, it is intended to explore its appropriate translation in the Chin version.

Not only did Jesus proclaim the message of the Kingdom of God, he also talked about who the recipients of this Kingdom are. In Luke the recipients are mostly the poor, the marginalized and the like (Lk. 6:17-20, 14:15-20, etc.). The word *πτωχος* (poor) occurs 10 times in Luke (out of a total of 34 times in the NT, most frequently in adjective form)⁴ and it is also interpreted in various ways. According to biblical interpretation of Liberation theology, *πτωχος* implies economical and sociological poverty. The Kingdom of God in this view is intended only for the poor in material sense.

This makes me quite surprised and I am tempted to critically look at its biblical context. This project therefore will focus on seeking the true biblical teaching of the Kingdom and the Poor, and to understanding the active role of people of the kingdom in the Gospel of Luke to shade light upon the Chin Churches.

¹Ladd 1994: 54.

²Ulrich Luz, "βασιλεια" in Balz and Schneider (eds.), 1990: 201-205.

³Kvalbein 1998: 197-227.

⁴Balz and Schneider (eds.), 1990: 201-205.

0.2. Research Background

This project will be a biblical interpretation of the Kingdom and the Poor in Luke with application to the Chin Churches. Chin state is located in the North-western part of Myanmar (also known as Burma) bordering India and Bangladesh. The State has a land area of 13,906 square miles with a population about 400,000. The State is so mountainous that it was known as Chin Hills since and during the British colonial rule. Being not able to apply modern technological advancement by the country, unfortunately transportation and communication have been severely difficult that it is one of the poorest and most isolated states in Myanmar.

The first persons to bring the Gospel Light to the Chin Hills were Mr. Arthur E. Carson and his wife Laura L. Hardin. At the time of their arrival in the land on 15th March, 1899, the living standard of the Chin people was very low.⁵ The arrival of Christianity contributed to the development of the Chin people because Christianity came to Chin State with modernity. The missionaries were enthusiastically involved in the work of developing the people. Adapting Roman alphabet, they reduced the Chin language into writings, and they concentrated on literature, education and health. Whereas it was undeniably a good work that they did to uplift and develop the lifestyle of the Chin people, it was difficult to distinguish between evangelization and liberation in the life of the Chin Christians.

Moreover, since 1980s Liberation theology became very popular among the Chins as it came out from Latin America and it is indeed very relevant for the third world countries like Myanmar which is one of the most poverty-stricken and exploited countries in the world. The Chin Christians who are minority in the country and oppressed by the military government are very receptive to it. But the problem is that the term 'reign' rather than 'realm' has been generally taken for the term 'βασιλεια' among the Chin Churches. It is thus imperative to explore its true biblical meaning.

Furthermore, due to the political and economic crisis of the country, the Chins have been resettled as refugees in Australia, Europe and North America, etc., since the year 2000. As they began to live in this part of the world where Christian faith is declining and Christ is no longer the center of people's life, secularism or materialism thus becomes a great threat to the Chins around the globe. For the said background, I am tempted to clarify the true intended meaning of *βασιλεια του θεου* and its ethical implication to the Chin Churches.

⁵The Chin people at that time, for instance, were practically without decent clothing to speak of. This condition appalled Mrs. Carson so much that she was said to have wept bitterly and the encouragement given by her husband and the fortitude she got from God could make her a worker for the Chin people in the succeeding years.

0.3. Statement of Problems

In evangelizing the Chin people, the American Baptist Mission, in my view, focused on the work of developing and liberating the people not because it was basically required by the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, but as an immediate response to the community at that time, and it was appropriate to do that way as the people of the kingdom. I am well convinced that the Chin Churches must also run liberation process since it is the role of the people of the Kingdom. But it is unfortunate that the Chin Christians always confuse the gospel of the Kingdom of God with the role of the people of that kingdom.

All this necessitates that the biblical interpretation of some Liberation Theologians, particularly that of C. S. Song whose liberation theology is very dominating among the Chin Churches, should be reviewed.⁶ We need to test it if it is biblical or not because Song definitely differentiates between the kingdom of God and the reign of God. He intentionally avoids using the term “the kingdom” because to him it has a negative meaning. The kingdom of God (*βασιλεια του θεου*), according to Song, is usually taken literally as the dominion that belongs to God or the empire ruled by God.

He insists that the phrase ‘kingdom of God’ is mostly used by religious leaders especially Christians in the West to colonize other people who are not Christians. So he suggests a theology that is different from the theology manufactured in the ivory tower of Christendom.⁷ Song’s theology, more or less, is undeniably very relevant and significant to Asian people. But to me his argument that **all** Jesus said and did was directly related to the reign of God⁸ must be tested in the light of the texts.

Furthermore, Song seriously considers the place of the non-Christians in the reign of God. He asserts that God is not a homogenous God.⁹ To him conversion is not a conversion to one religion but to the God of life, justice, love and freedom, that is, to the reign of God.¹⁰ He interprets the reign of God only in terms of love, justice, and freedom among men, women and children.

⁶Song was born in Taiwan in 1929. He graduated from Taiwan National University in 1954; his B.D. from University of Edinburgh in 1958, and his Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1965. He has been working in different universities and organizations, and now he is currently professor of Theology and Asian Cultures at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. He is the author of fifteen books in English, some of which are translated into Chinese. His theology now became very influential to Asian Churches.

⁷This is the quotation of Mang Hre 2008: 62. See more on Song, *The Compassionate God*, p.79.

⁸Song 1993: 4.

⁹Song 1993: 39.

¹⁰Song 1993: 29-62.

He thus insists that in the reign of God, the human conditions become the primary concerns and the religions they belong to become secondary. Another pluralist Asian theologian Kosoke Koyama also insists that Christians and Buddhists are more important than Christianity and Buddhism.¹¹ This concept persuades us to think of the kingdom only in terms of justice, love, freedom and the reign of God only in terms of the life here and now. This interpretation implies that there is no room for the life after death.

If the kingdom of God has no room for eternal life in the life of Chin Christians, the out-migrated Chins will surely be dominated by secularism or materialism in the western way of life sooner or later. In fact, Materialism is often a synonym with wealth seeking, prefers extravagance, believes the bigger the pay check the more important the person, more selfish, and more preoccupied with money.¹² It is a belief that there are no higher realities, spiritual substance is a delusion.

Contrary to liberation theology, there is another theology adopted by Pentecostal and Fundamental groups who are world-denying and totally neglect the work of liberating the poor. They also adopt prosperity theology and make themselves deaf to the ethical dimensions of the faith community. I see that the Chin Christians now always choose the easy way than the right way for adopting prosperity theology. Therefore my point of departure here is not by no means totally opposing liberation theology. Instead it is, to solve the said problems, intended to give sound biblical interpretation of the kingdom and the roles of the people of the kingdom to the Chin Churches.

0.4. Purpose and Scope

The primary purpose of this project is first and foremost to explore the true biblical meaning of *βασιλεια του θεου* for the Chin Churches. It also aims to warn against the

¹¹Koyama 1974: 130-131.

¹²<http://similar minds.com/types/materialism.html>, September 9, 2010.

dangers of biblical interpretation of extreme liberation theologians and to direct to sound biblical interpretation of the kingdom of God and its ethical implication. It also aims at warning and giving instruction to the threat of materialism among the Chins. It is of capital importance because today more than a hundred thousand of the Chins migrated abroad, especially to the West where secularism and materialism got a firm root.

Application of the text thus will be limited to the Chin Churches who are dominated by secularism and materialism. Application to the Chin Churches may have several distinct forms to that of Churches in Myanmar in general. Interpretation in Myanmar context will be intrinsically intertwined with Buddhism since Christian population is only 6% in the whole Myanmar and otherwise are Buddhists. Nevertheless 88% of the Chin population have been Christians and its problem is not Buddhism but secularism and materialism because of the influx of the Chin immigrants to the West. Having migrated to the West, in their striving for their survival, they have been unconsciously dominated by western ideology and world views. The Chins in Myanmar also are very much attached to Western way of thinking in terms of materialism.

One can easily notice that the Chin Christians nowadays choose the easy way than the right way for their survival. An authentic Christian faith has no room in their life. The rich in the Chin society also become more and more individualistic, having less and less concerns to the poor and the needy. They are not dominated by higher realities and hospitality which play a very important role in Jesus' teaching. Instead, money becomes a 'god' to some Chin people. The Gospel of Luke absolutely and strongly renounced such a belief and warned against the rich who were dominated in worldly sufficiency. The underlying message of the kingdom and its ethical roles in Luke, I think, will hopefully create inflect to the life of Chin Christians around the globe.

This project also aims to build a bridge between Pentecostals who stress only the indicative aspect and liberals who stress only the imperative aspect of Christian duty respectively. I positively believe that the message of the Kingdom to the Poor in Luke could give a solution to such a tension in theology. Since this is a very broad subject, the focus will be stressed on the Gospel of Luke, mainly on his teaching related to the kingdom and the poor by taking some relevant texts.

0.5. Procedure

This project will employ two kinds of methodological approaches. The main task will be concentrated on exegetical method or interpretation of some selected texts. To see the real intended meanings of an important key word, analysing its syntagmatic and paradigmatic relation plays a very important role. Therefore exegetical as well as analytical method will be the main tools of the project.

The second method is interviews with some leaders in the field research work. It will deal with investigations of the status of the Churches in Chin and their understanding on the Kingdom. The status of the out-migrated Chins abroad will also be enquired. It thus will have interviews with some leaders of Chin Churches around the globe concerning the situations of their members particularly on the impact of materialism in their life. Literate old men in Chin as well as those in abroad were also interviewed in order to discover the relevant translation for the Kingdom in Chin Version. The final step of this thesis will deal with an application of the selected texts to the Chin Churches.

The first chapter of the thesis will outline the prevalent views on the interpretations of the Kingdom throughout the ages. It will also try to explore the true intended meaning of the kingdom of God. The second chapter will sketch out modern scholarship on Luke's theological view on the kingdom and the poor: the poor as the receivers of the kingdom as well as the potential receivers of alms. The third chapter will clarify the ethical roles of the people of the kingdom. In these two chapters, the stress will be focused on the exegetical study of the selected texts by analysing its structure, literary, word context.

The final chapter, as mentioned above, will deal with the message of the kingdom of God and its ethical challenges to the Chins both inside and outside Myanmar. It will also try to explore and propose the relevant translation for *βασιλεια του θεου* in Chin version. Solutions received from interviews will be mainly used in this part. Some important answers from the interview questions will be also attached at the appendix in more details.

CHAPTER I

INTERPRETATION OF βασιλεια του θεου

1.1. A Historical Review of the Interpretations of the Kingdom

A prominent New Testament scholar George Eldon Ladd asserted that interpretations of the Kingdom of God have taken several distinct forms, with almost infinite variety in detail.¹³ Ladd could clearly sketch out a historical review of the understanding of the Kingdom and I see his picture very helpful. Therefore, I will mainly refer to him in looking at the historical view of the interpretation of the kingdom in brief.

1.1.1. Augustine

Ladd started his review from Augustine. Augustine identified the kingdom of God with the church.¹⁴ This identification between the kingdom and the church continued in the Catholic doctrine and was perpetuated, though in a modified form, until the reformation period. This view however is seldom defended now, even among Catholic scholars. Schnackenburg claims that the new Catholic interpretation conceives of the kingdom in *heilsgeschichtlichen* (Salvation-historical) terms of the redemptive work of God through the church. Ladd therefore comments that the church is the community or the society of women and men of the kingdom but never the kingdom itself. The Church witnesses to the kingdom and it is thus the custodian of the Kingdom.¹⁵

I also see Augustine's view quite difficult to accept since entering into the Church in his view implies entering into the Kingdom of God. Many scholars have denied that Jesus had any idea of creating the Church. Alfred Loisy has given this viewpoint classic expression: Jesus foretold the kingdom of God, but it was the church that came.¹⁶ The Kingdom and the Church therefore could not be identified.

1.1.2. Liberal Schools

¹³Ladd 1994: 55.

¹⁴This is the quotation of Ladd 1994: 103.

¹⁵Ladd 1994: 103-117.

¹⁶This is the quotation of Ladd 1994: 104.

Kvalbein sees Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), a prominent representative of liberal theology in Germany, as the first to see the kingdom as the most prominent concept in the message of Jesus.¹⁷ He observes that Ritschl interprets the kingdom only in a moral concept: a human community of moral attitudes (*Gemeinschaft der sittlichen Gesinnung* in German), and a growing movement of moral rearmament in the world. In this view, the place of the kingdom was the heart or mind (*Gesinnung*) as the source of moral renewal. He also notes that this concept was primarily applied to the individual personality in Germany. And in North America, the liberal view was also applied to society, in the so-called *Social Gospel* theology. *Shailer Mathews* asserted, "By the Kingdom of God Jesus meant an ideal (though progressively approximated) social order in which the relation of men to God is that of sons and (therefore) to each other, that of brothers."¹⁸

Like Ritschl, another German church historian and theologian Adolf Von Harnack published a book in 1900, entitled, *What is Christianity?* Ladd sees it as the representative of the old liberal view. Harnack understands the kingdom of God as the pure prophetic religion taught by Jesus: the Fatherhood of God, the "brotherhood of man," the infinite value of the individual soul, and the ethics of love. He insists that the obvious apocalyptic element in Jesus' teaching was only the time-conditioned husk that contained the kernel of his real religious message.¹⁹ He observes,

The kingdom of God comes by coming to the individual, by entering into his soul and laying hold of it. True, the kingdom of God is the rule of God; but it is the rule of the holy God in the hearts of the individuals; it is God himself in his power.²⁰

Like Ritschl and Harnack, many liberal scholars have understood the kingdom primarily in terms of ethics and personal religious experience. This view also seems to me quite difficult to be accepted since this understanding of the kingdom as morality implies man as the subject to build the kingdom. In this view, the kingdom of God seems the creation of human, or at least man plays a helper role in founding it. And it seems to equate the Kingdom with ethics.

1.1.3. The History of Religions School

¹⁷Kvalbein 2009: 1.

¹⁸This is the quotation of Kvalbein 2009: 1.

¹⁹This is the quotation of Ladd 1994: 55.

²⁰Harnack 1957: 56.

The History of Religions School, represented by Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, refused the above mentioned liberal view of the kingdom of God. They argued to understand Jesus as a man of his own time, sharing the basic views of his Jewish contemporaries. In 1892, Johannes Weiss published a slim book entitled “The Preaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God”, in which he argued that Jesus’ view of the kingdom was like that of the Jewish apocalypses: altogether future and eschatological.

These Jewish apocalypses expected the kingdom of God as an eschatological reality, the endpoint and goal of human history, as described in Dan 2 and 7 and in the First Book of Enoch. The victory of the Kingdom of God over Satan had already been won in heaven; therefore Jesus proclaims its coming on earth. The kingdom will be altogether God’s supernatural act, and when it comes, Jesus will be the heavenly Son of Man.

A prominent New Testament scholar Albert Schweitzer, a winner of Nobel peace prize for his career as a missionary and his contribution as a medical doctor in tropical equatorial Africa, published a book in 1901, entitled *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus’ Messiahship and Passion* and his next book, *The Quest of Historical Jesus* in 1906. He interpreted the entire career of Jesus from the point of view of the eschatological understanding of the kingdom. He insists Jesus expected to come in the immediate future. In other words, Jesus was an apocalyptic preacher who expected the kingdom to come during his own ministry (Mat 10:23).

Jesus ethical teaching in Schweitzer’ view was therefore designed only for the brief interval before the end comes (interim ethics), not for the ordinary life of people in society. But the kingdom did not come and Jesus died in despair and disillusionment. His followers were disappointed in this, and had to give a new interpretation of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem as a journey to martyrdom, not to establish the kingdom from Jerusalem.²¹

Since the ethics of Jesus to Schweitzer is interim ethics which aims to prepare for the kingdom and the kingdom has not come as he expected, our ethics could not derive from Jesus ethics. In this point he came into conflict with liberals who took the value of Jesus’ ethics as timeless truth. Nevertheless, to Schweitzer, Jesus’ demand for a denial of the world and a perfection of personality are still valid for us, though they are in contrast to our ethics

²¹This is the quotation of Ladd 1994: 55.

of reason. He concluded that we need more persons like Jesus. His enthusiasm and heroism are important for us because they derived from the choosing of the kingdom of God.²²

Since Weiss and Schweitzer, most scholars have recognized that the apocalyptic element belongs to the kernel and not the husk of Jesus' teachings. Especially after World War I, the imminent approach of the eschatological kingdom is accepted as the correct historical interpretation of Jesus' message.

But Rudolf Bultmann suggests giving it a new application by demythologization and existential interpretation. He insists that most of the miracles attributed to Jesus never occurred. Rather he sees Jesus as the one who wanted to confront his audience with the demand for a decision for or against God which at the same time entails salvation or judgement. In his view, Modern man cannot accept the expectation of an imminent end of history, but can read the message of Jesus as an urgent invitation to a genuine, existential decision. Past and future are irrelevant: you should only be concerned with your life and your choices here and now.²³ The new interpretation of the kingdom in historical schools is still unsatisfactory and it has to be tested in light of the text.

²²This is the quotation of Schwartz 1986: 138-139. He affirms that while we cannot lay our hands on Jesus as a historical reality, his spirit is still alive and active among us. With this conclusion his concept is almost resemble to the timelessness of Jesus in liberal theology.

²³Schwartz 1986: 140-141.

1.1.4. The Kingdom as Realized and Process

The dominating concept in this view was C. H. Dodd's *Realized Eschatology*. In Dodd's view, the kingdom of God, described in apocalyptic language, is in reality the transcendent order beyond time and space that has broken into history in the mission of Jesus. In Jesus, "The Wholly Other" has entered into history. In this event, all that the prophets had hoped for has been realized in history. That is what Dodd means by "Realized Eschatology". Dodd has been criticized for minimizing the futuristic aspect of the kingdom. But he in his latest publication admits that the kingdom yet awaits consummation "beyond history".²⁴

W. G. Kümmel understands that the primary meaning of the kingdom is the eschaton—the new age analogous to Jewish apocalyptic. When Jesus proclaimed that the new age was near, in Kümmel's view, it is also present in the person of Jesus. The future eschatological kingdom has begun its activity in Jesus' mission. Kümmel accepts the Kingdom of God as both the future eschaton and a present activity in Jesus.²⁵ Ladd says, "Kümmel's statement seems unclear to some scholars and solved the problem by holding that the kingdom was altogether future, but it was very near that its power already could be felt as the dawn precedes sunrise."²⁶

Jeremias accepts Dodd's Realized Eschatology in a certain degree. But he criticized for minimizing the eschatological aspect. In place of Dodd's Realized Eschatology, he suggests "Eschatology in the process of realization". He follows Dodd's suggestion that Jesus regarded his resurrection, Parousia and the consummation of the kingdom as a single event in which the triumph of God would be manifested.²⁷ In the resurrection appearances, the disciples experienced Jesus' Parousia. Only after Easter did the early church separate the Parousia from the resurrection.

Briefly Stated, Jeremias understands that with Jesus' message of the kingdom of God and his miracles of exorcism, the kingdom has broken into history. However, Jesus himself looked forward to the imminent eschatological consummation of the kingdom that would involve his own resurrection and Parousia. Briefly stated, after World War II it is a broad consensus that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God both as a future and a present reality.²⁸

²⁴This is the quotation of Ladd 1994: 56.

²⁵This is the quotation of Ladd 1994: 56.

²⁶This is the quotation of Ladd 1994: 56.

²⁷This is the quotation of Ladd 1994: 57.

²⁸Kvalbein 2009:1.

1.1.5. Liberation theology

This school is more concerned with the practical effect of the message of Jesus than with its exact content. The kingdom of God is seen as a *utopia*: a vision of a better society and a new world that can create hope and inspire to action to liberate the poor and marginalized. A prominent slogan is “God’s preferential option for the poor”. The liberation theology is influenced by neo-Marxism.²⁹

The most dominating theologians in this view are Gustavo Gutierrez, C.S. Song and John Sobrino and the prevalent view in this school particularly on the Kingdom concept is C. S. Song’s *Jesus and the Reign of God* as mentioned earlier in the introductory part. He intentionally avoids the word, “Kingdom” and uses “Reign”. Song identifies the reign of God with the liberation of the people: The reign of God in Jesus’ saying is in people, with people and for people - the reign of God is people.³⁰ He observes,

Is it any wonder that when Jesus speaks of God’s reign, his eyes are fixed on earth and not on heaven? When he declares that God’s reign is among us, he is pointing to the poor and oppressed in front of him over against the rich and the powerful.³¹

Sobrino’s view is also quite impressive. He does not regard words where Jesus forgives sin as original: Jesus did not forgive sins, but he received sinners. His meals with the sinners are signs of the present kingdom. The meals are liberating in themselves, for those who formerly could not eat together are now celebrating the feast of the βασιλεια του θεου in an open table fellowship.³²

Nevertheless, Liberation theology seems to me very radical and unbiblical since it only pays attention on the social and political work of Jesus and it tries to equate the Kingdom with liberation. The golden text of all liberation theologians is Nazareth Episode in Luke 4:18. In fact, Jesus literally never released the captive and liberated Israelites from their bondage. It seems that there must be an inward intended meaning of this text. Therefore, this episode as well as the texts quoted by liberation theology will be interpreted in the second and third chapters.

²⁹Kvalbein 2009: 1.

³⁰Song 1993: 23.

³¹Song 1993: 160.

³²Sobrino 1993: 87-104. Needless to say, there is a tendency of the third quest for historical Jesus. From ca. 1980, North American scholars adopted *the third quest for the historical Jesus*. This is a broad and imprecise description of Jesus research. Many of them interpret the kingdom as future as well as present. But there is also a tendency to play down the eschatological view and to present Jesus as a Jewish sage and healer (G. Vermes) or as a cynic preacher of a *sapiential kingdom* in contrast to an apocalyptic kingdom (D. Crossan). See Kvalbein 2009: 1.

No scholar, therefore, tends to deny that the Kingdom of God is the central teaching of Jesus though there are infinite varieties for details. However, interpretations of the Kingdom of God have taken several distinct forms. Since it is a very important, but a very disputed term, it is very imperative to implore the intended meaning of *βασιλεια του θεου*. In order to decide the meaning of *βασιλεια του θεου*, I will try to clarify the historical background of the Kingdom of God and Lucan usages of this phrase. We will then try to sketch out syntagmatic and paradigmatic expression by analysing synonyms and antonyms of the Kingdom of God in Luke.

1.2. The Meaning of βασιλεια του θεου

1.2.1. βασιλεια του θεου in the OT and Judaism

G.R. Beasley-Murray asserts that the exact expression “kingdom of God” does not occur in the Old Testament. By contrast, the term “king” is applied to Yahweh forty-one times in the Old Testament.³³ Thus, it is clear that whereas the announcement of the Kingdom of God (*βασιλεια του θεου*) is at the center of Jesus’ proclamation, the frequent use of the term ‘Kingdom of God’, however, seems unusual at first in the OT, Judaism and Rabbinic tradition.

According to Hans Schwarz, a statistical comparison in the Old Testament apocrypha, in the pseudepigrapha, in the targumic commentaries of the Hebrew Scriptures, and in Philo’s writings, shows that the Kingdom of God is mentioned very seldom. In the New Testament too it occurs only 22 times outside the synoptics, 10 of which are in the Pauline writings and 8 in Acts. However, Jesus used this term 61 times in Synoptics.³⁴

When we turn to the sociological and historical look at the kingship of God, Kvalbein asserts that the kingship was introduced late in the history of Israel, and not without critical voices (I Sam 12). The idea of God as king presupposes a positive idea of the king. This positive picture of the king can be seen when there is an analogy between the king and God. Sayings about the king as the supreme judge and protector of justice, a helper for the poor and the oppressed (Ps 72:12-14) can also be applied to God as king of Israel (Ps 146).

In the OT, God’s kingship can be seen from different temporal aspects: 1) God is king as creator, (Ps 47, 93, 96-99); 2) God is king in Israel, his people and his land, and this kingship is based on his being liberator (Ex 15:18; Dt 33:5; Sal 114:1f); 3) God’s kingship and kingdom shall be manifest in the future (Is 24:21-23; 33:10-24; Zech 14:9; Ob 21; Is 52:7)³⁵ Therefore the idea of Yahweh as a king (I Sam 12:12; Is 6:5; 33:22; 43:15; Jer 8:19; Mic 2:19; Zeph 3:15; Zech 14:9, 16; Ps 47:3,8), his ruling as king (Ex 15:18; Is 24:23; 52:7; Eze 20:33; Mic 4:7; Pss 93:1, 97:1, 146:10) and his royal and kingship authority that are ascribed to him (Obad 21; Ps 103:19; 145:11-13) are very prominent in the OT concept.³⁶

But the exact phrase ‘kingdom of God’ does not appear in the OT. Fitzmyer suggests that the NT phrase finds its closest verbal counterpart in postexilic writings (I Chro 28:5-*malkut Yhwh*, *βασιλεια του κυριου*; II Chro 13:8- *mamleket Yhwh*, *βασιλεια του κυριου*).

³³Beasley-Murray 1986: 17.

³⁴Schwarz 1986: 147.

³⁵Kvalbein 1999: 1.

³⁶Fitzmyer 1981: 154-156.

He also suggests that in the OT, the phrase expresses an eschatological hope for a period when God's salvation would be realized, when his dominion over the minds and lives of human beings would be accomplished, and they would be withdrawn from subjection to danger, evil and sin.³⁷

Also in Judaism, according to Hans Schwarz, the Kingdom of God was understood in a twofold sense: 1) it denotes the enduring rule of God in the present world through which God reigns over Israel (cf. Dan 4:31) and; 2) it indicates the future reign of God through which God will sanctify his name and establish his rule over all nations (cf. Dan 2:44). When Jesus used the term Kingdom of God, he, in Schwarz's view, always meant it in the second, eschatological sense.³⁸

Kvalbein also argues that the kingdom of God is a future concept in the apocalyptic literature. In Dan 2:44; 7:14, the kingdom of God replaces the kingdoms of the world rulers. In Ps Sol 17, we can see that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of David's Son replaces the Roman rule. Ass Mos 10 insists that the kingdom of God shall replace the kingship of Satan. But in important apocalyptic texts, like IV Ezra, there are no references to the kingdom of God or to God as king.³⁹ Furthermore the kingdom of God is also closely related to the future judgment in the Apocalyptic literature. According to Beasley-Murray, the interrelation between judgment and the kingdom of God is apparently shared by the authors of I Enoch 6-36, and 83-90. The view can also be found in the Psalms of Solomon, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, etc.⁴⁰

Kvalbein asserts that the kingship of God is a topic in the *Amidah*, the great prayer (Tephillah) in the synagogue. He sees the Qaddish-prayer as a close parallel to the Lord's Prayer by praying that his name be sanctified and his kingdom or kingship may be established now and soon. . . In rabbinic Judaism God's kingship is linked to the Torah, his Law. The daily recitation of the Shema is to take upon oneself "the yoke of the kingdom of heaven" (M Ber 2:2). It is thus obvious that the kingdom of God implies a concrete and eschatological sense in later Judaism.

Most of all, Kvalbein's suggestion is remarkably significant in this respect. He insists that the expectation of a future salvation is not so often connected with Malkuth, God's kingship, but with *olamhabbah*, the coming age or world in rabbinic Judaism (cf. Gal 4:4). He also asserts that this spatial and concrete view of the kingdom is supported by Hengel and

³⁷Fitzmyer 1981: 154-156.

³⁸Schwarz 1986: 147.

³⁹Kvalbein 1999: 1.

⁴⁰Beasley-Murray 1986: 47.

Schwemer, who point to the Sabbath Songs from Qumran, possibly an echo of the temple liturgy and the heavenly sanctuary, the dwelling of God, is the kingdom of God. Here the Malkuth is not verbal noun for the kingship of God, but a spatial concept referring to the heavenly temple in Judaism.⁴¹

It could therefore be concluded that though the idea of God as king was very well-known, *βασιλεια του θεου* was not a well-known concept in the Old Testament, Judaism and even in the time of Jesus. It had been used very seldom. Kvalbein suggests that Jesus may have coined it himself and made it a central topic in his message. It could be also concluded that in Rabbinic Judaism, *βασιλεια του θεου* mostly implies future aspect and more related with *olamhabbah*, coming world than *malkuth*, the reign of God.

⁴¹Kvalbein 1999: 1.

1.2.2. βασιλεια του θεου in Luke

Joseph A. Fitzmyer sees Jesus of the Lucan Gospel as the kingdom-preacher par excellence. Referring to Conzelmann, he notes that the first proclamation of the kingdom in Luke is made by Jesus (4:3). The proclamation of the kingdom by John the Baptist, prior to Jesus, is not mentioned in Luke, unlike it is in Mark and Matthew (Lk 3:3 compared with Mk 1:15; Mt 3:1). The reason is to make room for the identification of Jesus as the one in whom Isaiah's prediction is fulfilled. He has put it, "When the first proclamation of the kingdom of God is made in Luke (4:43), Jesus is there made to add significantly, 'That is why I was sent for' _ Jesus is the herald. His announcement is one of an event, and is not merely a lecture on the nature of God's kingship or kingdom."⁴²

It is widely assumed that some passages of the kingdom in Luke derived from Mark.⁴³ But we can see Luke's distinctive manner in the kingdom-preaching of Jesus. For instance, Mark noted that the disciples need to leave home and family "for my (Jesus) sake and that of the gospel". But Luke alters the reason as "for the sake of the kingdom of God". Fitzmyer notes, "It is only Luke who depicts the risen Christ speaking to his disciples about the kingdom." (Acts 1:3)⁴⁴

Luke thus speaks frequently about the term kingdom. We can see it 38 times, almost in every chapter, in Luke (Compared to Matthew 55 times, Mark 14 times and John 5 times).⁴⁵ Luke employs the form *ἡ βασιλεια του θεου*, the kingdom of God (never uses the kingdom of heaven which Matthew often employs). In some cases, he employs only 'kingdom' without 'God' (11:2;12:31,32; 22:29,30; 23:42).

Luke's point of departure in employing the phrase *βασιλεια του θεου* is that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in the Old Testament. That is why Luke is said to emphasize his writings a 'proof-from-prophecy'. Fitzmyer asserts that Luke, as mentioned in the Nazareth Manifesto (4:18) which is called as the programmatic text, depicts Jesus as identifying

⁴²Fitzmyer 1981: 154.

⁴³See Luke 8:10// Mk 4:11, Mt 13:11; Lk 9:27// Mk 9:1; Mt 16:21; Lk 13:19//Mk 4:30, Mt 13:31; Lk 18:16-17// Mk 10:14-15, Mt 19:14; Lk 18:24-25// Mk 10:23-25; Mt 19:23-24; Lk 22:18// Mk 14:25. And some parts may derive from Q. (Lk 6:20; 7:28; 10:9; 11:2, 20; 12:31; 13:18,20,28,29; 16:16).

⁴⁴Fitzmyer 1981: 154-155. He suggests that the alternation of the 'gospel' in Mark to the 'kingdom' is certainly related to Luke's reluctance to speak of the 'gospel' or 'euangelion' which appears as the quasi-title of Mark (The words occurs seven times in Mark). To Luke the use of *diegesis* (good news) is the quasi-title of his work. To Fitzmyer, why Luke has avoided 'euangelion' is unsure. It may be that he was familiar with the use of 'euangelion' in the cult of the Roman emperor and preferred to avoid the use of it in his story of Jesus. The word is used in the oft-quoted Priene inscription about Augustus. In spite of the omission of the the noun 'euangelion' Luke does use the verb 'euangelizestai' frequently for 'preach, announce, proclaim'. p.172-174.

⁴⁵Fitzmyer 1981: 557. See Lk4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1,10; 9:2,11,27,60,62; 10:9,11; 11:20; 12:31,32; 13:18,20,28,29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20bis,21; 18:16,17,24,25,29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16,18,29,30; 23:51.

himself with the role described in Is 61:1-2, one of proclaiming release, sight, and freedom to his fellow townspeople- who are the symbol of Israel as this point in the Gospel.⁴⁶

It is therefore obvious that Luke is the kingdom-preacher. His frequent usages reflect that the OT prophecies about the ideal king or messiah are fulfilled in Jesus. It is quite sound to say that Jesus is the subject to proclaim the kingdom of God as well as the object of the message of the kingdom of God in the gospel Luke. We will now proceed the important content, “*βασιλεια του θεου*: Reign or Realm?” to identify the implied meaning of the kingdom of God in Luke.

⁴⁶Fitzmyer 1981: 188-189.

1.2.3. βασιλεια του θεου: Reign or Realm?

Βασιλεια του θεου can be translated in two meanings: Reign or realm. Kvalbein compares the double meaning of βασιλεια with the word “building” in English. He asserts that the word building may have two meanings: the verbal meaning - the act of building and concrete meaning - something built (a house, a castle etc.). If translated in abstract sense, βασιλεια means kingship as a status of activity, where ‘God is king’ or ‘God kings’. On the other hand, if translated in concrete sense, it means kingdom as a spatial concept, where ‘God has a kingdom, a territory or society’.

Abstract	concrete
Dynamic	static
(God is king, God “kings”)	(God has a kingdom, a territory or society)
kingship as status or activity	kingdom as a spatial concept
Reign, Rule, Kingship of God	Kingdom of God (Dominion of God) ⁴⁷

Fitzmyer also distinguished between ‘kingship’ and ‘kingdom’. He noted that the former meaning ‘kingship, reign, dominion’ is more abstract. It may suit most of the OT idea of Yahweh as king. The latter meaning ‘kingdom’ is more concrete and spatial in its connotation.⁴⁸ Both Kvalbein and Fitzmyer are inclined on the position that the kingdom in Luke rather implies the concrete and spatial sense. S. Aalen also argued that βασιλεια as a ‘kingdom’ in the sense of a house is the only concept that fits the NT and Jesus’ own preaching.⁴⁹

However some prominent NT scholars such as Gustaf Dalman, Bruce Chilton and George Eldon Ladd, absolutely hold that the βασιλεια του θεου implies kingship or reign. They agree that the key term, ‘βασιλεια’ in Greek derived from Hebrew, *mamalaka*, and post exilic Hebrew and Aramaic, *malkut*. Gustaf Dalman observed, “No doubt can be entertained that both in the OT and in Jewish literature, malkuth, when applied to God, means always the kingly rule, never the kingdom as if it were meant to suggest that territory governed by him.”⁵⁰

Bruce Chilton, referring the Targum of Isaiah, also insists that the emphasis on the phrase ‘kingdom’ is on the dynamic, personal presence of God, God in strength, the

⁴⁷Kvalbein 1999:1.

⁴⁸Fitzmyer 1981: 156.

⁴⁹This is the quotation of Fitzmyer 1981:156.

⁵⁰This is the quotation of Kvalbein 1999: 1.

sovereign activity of God, the saving revelation of God himself.⁵¹ He argues against the concept of *βασιλεια του θεου* as a realm or a particular area in which God is ruling. To live in the kingdom in Chilton's opinion, is to live in a fellowship where the values of the kingdom are performed in living life.⁵²

Ladd also suggests that not only does the Hebrew word for the kingdom in the OT have the abstract dynamic or idea of reign, rule, or dominion, but also in the late Judaism, the Kingdom of God means God's rule or sovereignty. This is to Ladd the best point of departure for understanding the Kingdom in the Gospel.⁵³ Furthermore, the Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament seriously notes, "It is generally a serious mistake to translate the phrase *ἡ βασιλεια του θεου* the kingdom of God as referring to a particular area in which God rules. The meaning of this phrase in the NT involves not a particular place or special period of time but the fact of ruling. An expression such as 'to enter the kingdom of God' thus does not refer to going to heaven but should be understood as accepting God's rule or welcoming God to rule over."⁵⁴

But on the other hand, the argument for the kingdom as a spatial and concrete connotation is also very strong. According to Kvalbein, whereas Dalman's argument that *βασιλεια του θεου* as being derived from *malkuth* has a major impact on the twentieth century study of the Kingdom, Dalman himself made another observation in his later works on the expression. Kvalbein observes,

Dalman pointed out to the fact that most syntagms or word-connections containing the phrase *βασιλεια του θεου* in the gospels did not correspond to *mulkuth/ malkutha*, but to the Rabbinic phrase *olamhabbah* or *chajji olamhabbah*, the coming world or 'life in the world to come'. . . . *Malkuth/ Malkutha* is never connected with the verb 'come'. The idea of 'coming' in the future is firmly connected with the *olam*-terminologi, where the *olamhabbah*, the coming world is contrasted to the present world, *olamhazzeh*.⁵⁵

It thus seems that *βασιλεια του θεου* means the coming world in eschatological sense in Jesus' teaching. If we critically look at the actual use of *βασιλεια του θεου* in the gospel

⁵¹This is the quotation of Dunn 2003:200.

⁵²This is the quotation of Kvalbein 1998: 197-227.

⁵³Ladd 1994: 63.

⁵⁴Louw&Nida 1988: 89.

⁵⁵Kvalbein 1998: 197-227. He says, "Its character as a gift or as the highest good is also present in expressions where people seek, wait for, receive or inherit the kingdom. As a gift of salvation it is a synonym to eternal life and an antonym to eternal death and *gehenna*, hell."

of Luke, it is a designation for the gift of salvation, the time of salvation, and the place of salvation in the message of Jesus.⁵⁶

In the beatitudes (6:20), it is obvious that the kingdom is a gift promised to the disciples. Its concrete meaning is evident when declared as a possession of the disciples, ‘for yours is the kingdom’. The future realm or the time expression of βασιλεια is also evident by the expression of “your reward is great in heaven,”(6:23) in which the kingdom is a contrast to life and realities in this world. Moreover, since the beatitude-form in Luke usually stresses a reversal of values that people on earthly things in view of the kingdom now being preached by Jesus, a paradox is often involved. The first part describes the condition of the disciples, but the second promises the eschatological lots, often formulated in theological passive (‘be filled’ meaning ‘by God’). Referring to Dupont, Fitzmyer suggests that in Luke, the imminent expectation of the *eschaton* recedes as the evangelist shifts the emphasis in both the beatitudes and woes to the present condition, and he contrasts the present earthly condition of the individual Christians with that following their death.⁵⁷

Kvalbein also observes, “The situation of the disciples in the future consummation is explicitly put in contrast to their status ‘now’, when they are poor, when they hunger and weep and when they are hated by men. The kingdom of God implies a reversal: They will be satisfied and laugh and have a great reward in heaven. The rich will experience a different reversal. They shall have no consolation. Antonyms to ‘the kingdom of God’ in this text are hungering, mourning and weeping in the eschatological future.”⁵⁸

Furthermore, in Fitzmyer’s view, the concrete manifestation in the beatitudes is evident by the fact that the term μακαριοι, meaning blessed, is used. In the Old Testament wisdom literature, the blessing often connotes a full life, a good wife (Sir 26:1), sons as heirs (Ps 127:3-5), prosperity and honor (Job 29:10-11). In the Greek world, according to his argument, the gods were often considered supremely *makares* and the adjective *makarios* denotes a person’s inner happiness. However, in the Jewish and Christian tradition, the word ‘μακαριος’ emphasizes not just a person’s inner happiness, but indeed like that of the Old Testament wisdom literature, it denotes the person’s resultant happy, prosperous or fortunate condition. Fitzmyer thus insists that μακαριος emphasizes the concrete manifestation of the blessing.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Kvalbein 1998: 197-227.

⁵⁷Fitzmyer 1981: 633.

⁵⁸Kvalbein 2010: 1-10.

⁵⁹Fitzmyer 1981: 633.

And it is a broad consensus among scholars that the meaning of a word should not only be derived diachronically from its history and etymology, but synchronically from its specific contexts in the text as a whole and in similar, contemporary texts.⁶⁰ I will thus pick up some important *syntagmas* to βασιλεια του θεου and its synonyms and antonyms we find in Luke. The spatial aspect of the phrase is evident as we look its *syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations* in the actual texts.

In Luke 13:22-33 and 14:15 the image of βασιλεια is seen as a banquet hall. It is like a room which has a door or a specific place for entrance. The opposite possibility here would be to be thrown out or to meet a closed door. To Kvalbein, the door marks the limit between those who are outside and those who are inside. Here the spatial aspect is dominant when God's *basileia* is conceived as a meal, a banquet or as a wedding. Opposite (antonym) to this, there was darkness outside the banquet hall, which also can be described as a place with fire or "weeping and gnashing of teeth".

In the parables of the lost coin, sheep and prodigal son (Lk 15), all of them have a happy ending, a great celebration. Kvalbein notably points, "A feast for both friends and neighbors would probably be more expensive than the one sheep or the one coin that was found. This extravagance points in direction of a metaphorical interpretation: the feast points to the kingdom of God. The shepherd and the woman point to God's efforts to include everyone in its celebration. In the third parable, the celebration at the return of the younger brother is also a metaphor for the kingdom of God and here Kvalbein sees a deep interconnection between the acceptance of God as the forgiving Father and receiving the kingdom as God's gift."⁶¹

He also suggests that in Luke 13, the saying is embedded in a section introduced by the question if there are few that shall "be saved". Being "saved" evidently functions as a synonym to "enter the kingdom of God", like that of the story of the rich man and the following dialogue with the disciples (Lk18:24-26). The βασιλεια is a soteriological concept for the final salvation. Kvalbein is therefore right when he draws the conclusion that since the concrete meaning of βασιλεια του θεου as the gift of salvation, the place of salvation is so dominant in the message of Jesus, it is a serious mistake to take the abstract meaning (kingship, rule, reign) as the starting point for the interpretation of the texts.⁶²

⁶⁰Kvalbein 2010:1-10.

⁶¹Kvalbein 2010:1-10.

⁶²Kvalbein notes, "The metaphor of God as king is in fact quite marginal in the synoptic gospels. Jesus prefers to talk about God as Father. In many contexts, however, the gospels present Jesus as king. He has received kingship and shall return as a king (Mark 11,10 par Luk 19,38; Matt 21,5; Matt 16,28; Luk 1,33; 22,29). He was

1.2.4. βασιλεια του θεου: Present as well as Future

In the gospels the central teaching of Jesus is “the kingdom of God has come near” (Lk 10:9,11). On the other hand, he also said that the kingdom of God has already come upon you (Lk 11:20). To Ladd, as already mentioned, it could be interpreted as “the kingdom was altogether future, but it was very near that its power already could be felt- as the dawn precedes sunrise.”⁶³ That is why Nolland sees possession of the kingdom as primarily future, but perhaps not exclusively so (10:9, 11, 21-24).⁶⁴

In the Lord’s prayer, the βασιλεια is evidently a reality of the future when Jesus taught them to pray that God’s kingdom come. Here the kingdom of God is combined with the verb ‘come’. It is already mentioned that *malkuth/malkutha* is never connected with verbs for “coming”. Instead *olamhabba* meaning “the coming world” or “the coming age” in Jewish terminology seems a wording corresponding to the kingdom. In fact the time of fulfillment or βασιλεια has come in the ministry of Jesus. A new epoch has begun when Jesus proclaims the gospel, heals the sick and casts out the demons. If then, what does the expression of ‘thy kingdom come’ in prayer taught by Jesus himself mean?

It is, in Beasley-Murray’s view, a request for God to act in His power and love to bring about judgment and salvation in his creation. All the Old Testament prophetic pictures of deliverance through another exodus and salvation of God come to expression in this brief petition. It entails eschatological hope in Old Testament (Is 40:1-11; 26:1-15; and Is 2, 4, 11, and 32), and above all, in the latest reaches of the Old Testament hope, the conquest of death and the wiping away of tears from all eyes (Is 25:8). Beasley-Murray maintains that Jesus himself gives few such pictures in his instruction on the kingdom (Mt 8:11-12; 22:1; Mk 14:25). In final analysis, he observes that ‘Your kingdom come’ is a prayer for God himself to come and achieve his end in creating new world.⁶⁵

He also observes that the phrase ‘thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ is not primarily a prayer that the disobedient be converted and obey God’s law; rather it is a plea that God will act in such a way as to realize his ‘good pleasure’ - namely the purpose he

crucified as the “King of the Jews” (Mark 15,26; Matt 27,37; Luk 23,38; Joh 19,19). In the judgment the Son of Man is the supreme judge as the king on his throne (Matt 25,34.40). His βασιλεια (here: “kingship”) is not of this world (Joh 18,36). Acc. to 1 Cor 15,24f he is king and shall in the end return his kingship to God. In the Book of Revelation he is called “king of the kings” (Apc 17,14; 19,16) and is praised for his βασιλεια together with God the Father (11,15; 12,10).” Kvalbein 1998: 197-227.

⁶³Ladd 1994: 57.

⁶⁴Nolland 1989: 283. We find other texts expressing the time of fulfilment in the presence of Jesus (Luk 10,23f // Matt 13,16f- many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it; Luk 11,31f // Matt 12,41f - now one greater than Solomon /greater than Jonah/ is here; Luk 7,22 // Matt 11,5f - “The blind receive sight, . . . the good news is preached to the poor.”)

⁶⁵Beasley-Murray 1987:151.

intended for the world when he created it, to which end he is bringing about redemption. He eloquently notes,

“Heaven has already invaded the earth in the mission of Jesus; here he is praying for completion of what God has begun in him. We can assume that it consists primarily in God’s bringing the saving sovereignty he has initiated in Jesus to a victorious conclusion at the end of the age.”⁶⁶

And some scholars interpret the phrase “the kingdom of God is within you” in Lk 17:21 as being God’s kingship in man as an abstract meaning. Here the Greek phrase *ἐντος ὑμῶν ἐστίν* could be translated as *within you* as well as *among you* or *in the midst of you*. At this point, it is striking to notice that the audiences here are the Pharisees who never accept Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God. It is thus illogical that the kingdom of God is within the heart of the Pharisees who always are opposing the message of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. It thus seems to mean, not his kingship *in* their heart, but to mean the gift of salvation, the place of salvation and the time of salvation which is present at hand *among* them in the person of Jesus.

It is thus wise to draw the conclusion that the message of *βασιλεια του θεου* in Luke, therefore, is the gift of salvation which is available now. The waiting time is therefore over. Now the invitation is there and the narrow door is still open. Everybody is invited to come and join to the joyful fellowship of the kingdom of God, now present in the person of Jesus, once to be fulfilled at the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.⁶⁷

Therefore no doubt *βασιλεια του θεου* has come and is present in Jesus. The presence of Jesus gives a foretaste of the coming kingdom. Jeremias sees Jesus’ participation in joyful meals (14:1ff) as acted parables of the coming kingdom. The table fellowship with sinners is a proleptic sign of the coming celebration in the kingdom of God and the death of Jesus is a sacrifice into the proleptic celebration of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God in his view nevertheless is also eschatological fulfilment in the future. The Lord’s Supper is a mirror or a foretaste of the eschatological banquet and will be fulfilled in the kingdom of God (Lk 22:16-18).⁶⁸ And since it is defined as a place of joy, fellowship and abundance, in contrast to a space outside the banquet hall or wedding ceremony, it has mostly a spatial concept in Luke, probably also in the whole synoptic gospels.

⁶⁶Beasley-Murray 1987: 152. He also mentions Jeremias’s interpretation on the phrase ‘give us today our daily bread’ as ‘give us today the bread of the time of salvation’. P.153.

⁶⁷Kvalbein 2010: 1-10.

⁶⁸Kvalbein 2009: 1. The vision of the kingdom of God as a feast and as fellowship is a central element of early Christian Eucharistic praxis and theology.

Therefore, the interpretation of the kingdom only in terms of reign, which is a very prevalent view in the biblical studies as well as liberation theology today, has no ground in its biblical context. It is unbiblical to equate, as Song's interpretation, *βασιλεια του θεου* with justice, peace and love among men. The kingdom of God is not human's creation. Human's effort could never build the kingdom of God. Instead it is the gift of God which has never been achieved but received. And 'Realm' rather than 'reign' is a more accurate translation for *βασιλεια του θεου* since it denotes a gift of salvation, a time of salvation and a place of salvation.

CHAPTER II

INTERPRETATION OF *πτωχος*

2.1. Different Interpretations of ‘the Poor’

Up to the 1960s, the subject of historical Jesus and form criticism played a very important role in the New Testament study and the study of the poor and the rich had no prominent place in the New Testament research. According to Kvalbein, the new awareness of the widening gulf between the rich and the poor and the emergence of social anthropology around the 1970s gave way to social science criticism on the New Testament and the study of the poor and its interpretation became an important theological agenda in New Testament studies. Then many scholars have published different studies relating to the subject of the poor and the gospel Luke became scholars’ interest for such theological agenda more than other gospels.⁶⁹

The poor in some passages of Luke are mentioned as receivers of the good news or the kingdom whereas in some other passages as receivers of alms. However it is unclear ‘who are the poor?’ and ‘what does the poor actually mean?’ Many scholars accept that Luke has a particular interest in the poor and interpret poor in literal sense. In this view, especially in liberation theology, Jesus’ message of the kingdom is a special comfort for the poor and the oppressed. On the other hand, there are some scholars who do not agree on the position that Luke holds poverty ideal. The term ‘Poor’ in Luke is thus interpreted in different ways, particularly in a transferred sense.⁷⁰ It is therefore of capital importance to explore the intended meaning of the poor.

I will first look at some common held views about the identity of the poor. This presentation will be mainly built on Seccombe since he is to me the most reliable resource in this respect. The following topic will deal with seeking the intended meaning of the word ‘poor’ in Luke. Then I will discuss the synonyms of the poor as the receivers of the kingdom in Luke. The texts related to the potential receivers of alms will be discussed in the third chapter. The meaning of the poor is defined in different views and references of the poor are also taken widely as mentioned below.

⁶⁹Kvalbein 1987: 80. See also on Hendrickson, *The Social World of Luke-Acts, Model for Interpretation.*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody Publisher’s Inc. 1993); James A. Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth in Luke’s Travel Narrative* (Brill, 2007). W.E. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor, Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* (Manneapolis, 1981); D.P. Seccombe, *Possession and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz, 1982).

⁷⁰Seccombe 1982: 23.

2.1.1 The Poor in a Literal or Material Sense

A number of scholars literally take the poor in Jesus' teaching as literally poor and economically deprived classes. Seccombe sees that to this group, the actual condition of poverty conditions people to virtue, or makes them receptive to the message of the kingdom.⁷¹ One of the supporters of this view is Plummer who observes, "Actual poverty, hunger and sorrow are declared to be blessed as being opportunities for the exercise of internal virtue."⁷² More in harmony with the eschatological setting of the beatitudes, B.S Easton interprets Luke 6:20, "Blessed are you the poor" as "Your poverty has disposed you towards a reception of the blessings".⁷³

To a certain extent, it is acceptable since the receivers of the message of Jesus in the Gospel are mostly the poor and the outcast. However it is unlikely that only the condition of poverty conditions the people to be receptive to the message of the kingdom because we can see some rich people such as Zacchaeus in Luke 19 and Lydia in Acts 16, also are receptive to the Gospel. Moreover, to be in the condition of poverty has never been mentioned as an ideal Christian life in Jesus' teaching. Instead it is an object to be terminated by the coming of the Kingdom.

2.1.2. The Poor in a moral sense referring to the Pious Poor

W. Sattler sees the poor in the New Testament as an organized party called the *anawim*, meaning the humble. In this view, the idea of *anawim*-piety was taken to explain the background of Jesus and the first Christians. They suggest the beatitude refers to such group.⁷⁴ M. Dibelius, in his commentary on James, also argues that by the time of Jesus, poor had become a religious self-description for certain groups of messianic pietists. He traces the development of this stream of piety from the Psalmists, through the *hesidim* of the Maccabean period and the Pharisees of the Psalm of Solomon to the pious in Jesus' time.⁷⁵ A. Rahlfs, an editor of Septuagint, also maintained that the Psalms had their origin in group of poor Jews in post-exilic times, regarding their poverty as a part of their piety. They made a virtue out of their need and despised the rich and wealthy.⁷⁶

In this case, Seccombe suggests that the New Testament does not maintain to identify the poor with humble. He is reluctant to accept that *anawim* piety really existed in the New

⁷¹Seccombe 1982: 33.

⁷²This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 33.

⁷³This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 34.

⁷⁴This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 24-25.

⁷⁵This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 24-25.

⁷⁶This is the quotation of Kvalbein 1987:80-86.

Testament times.⁷⁷ Like Seccombe, Kvalbein also insists that the thesis of the pious poor has no tenable basis. Likewise, many scholars do not believe the poor as referring to the pious poor since there was no positive evidence for the existence of such a party in the New Testament time.⁷⁸

2.1.3. The Poor as referring to the Marginalized Groups

Most of the scholars tend to group the poor with the tax-collectors, the sinners, women, children, Samaritans, Gentiles for whom Jesus seemed to have such affection, and attribute his interest either to a natural sympathy for all unprivileged groups, or to his universalism.⁷⁹ To this view, Luke’s emphasis on the poor, the women and the marginalized is closely related to his universalism and his inclusiveness under the kingdom of God, and his aim is to break the major treatment in the society.

Green also sees Luke’s portrayal of salvation as status transposition. He asserts that Luke uses the language of salvation more than any other New Testament writers and salvation to Luke is preeminently, status reversal.⁸⁰ He argues that poor and rich in Luke’s time is not simply economic term; it is related to issue of power, privilege and social status. He is grouping the poor with the disadvantaged, marginalized and excluded. His analysis is very interesting. He listed the seven of the ten occurrences of the poor (*πτωχος*) in Luke in this nature.

4:18	6:20	7:22	14:13	14:21	16:20,22
Poor	Poor	Blind	Poor	Poor	Poor
Captive	Hungry	Lame	Maimed	Maimed	Ulcerated
Blind	Mournful	Leper	Lame	Blind	Hungry
Oppressed	Persecuted	Deaf	Blind	Lame	
		Dead			
		Poor			

He insists that in each case ‘poor’ stands at the head of the list except in 7:22 where it appears in the final, emphatic position. Poor thus interprets and is amplified by the others. He also defines two kinds of status: ascription, and performance. The former is imputed on the basis of family heritage, one’s sex and other inherited/generic attributes whereas the latter is status, granted as a consequence of one’s action. And he argues that one’s status in Jesus’

⁷⁷Seccombe 1982: 24.

⁷⁸Kvalbein 1987:80-86.

⁷⁹Seccombe 1982: 24.

⁸⁰Green 1995: 90.

time is measured by ascription, not by performance. Jesus' vocation of 'proclaiming good news to the poor' embraces the excluded, marginalized and disadvantaged of society. The message of Jesus is that such status markers are no longer binding. Anyone may freely receive the grace of God. Anyone may join the community of Jesus' followers.⁸¹ This interpretation looks very logical in one way or the other, but it is not without difficulty or problems at all. This position thus needs to be examined in the light of the texts.

2.1.4. The Poor as referring to Israel as a whole

Seccombe is critical to all the above mentioned views and holds that Luke uses 'the poor' as soteriological terms characterizing Israel in her great needs of salvation.⁸² He maintained that Luke was very much influenced by the book of Isaiah in writing the Gospel. Not only does he quote from it extensively, he has also drawn from it many of his theological categories (Lk4:18). He argues that in Is 49:13 (MT), the poor are explicitly identified with the nation returning from captivity, i.e., 'the poor' equals Israel. The same is true in Is 41:8-20: the poor and needy are you Jacob. . . Poverty is seen not in economic terms, as in some Psalms, but as the great need of salvation.

He also sees the influence of the book of Psalm on Luke and he suggests that the Psalmist identifies the salvation of the poor with the salvation of Israel in spite of some restriction to the pious. He also traces the stream of the writings in the inter-testamental periods such as Psalms of Sol 10:6, and shows the knowledge of idea that the poor are the heirs of Israel's salvation. In his conclusion, he quoted the statement of R. Johanan bar Nappaha,⁸³ saying, "Whenever such phrases as 'we are brought very low', 'the oppressed', 'the neediest', 'the poor of the flock', 'the helpless' occur in the scriptures, they refer to Israel."⁸⁴ Seccombe's argument is very reliable since he could clearly portray the interconnection of Luke with the stream of interpretation of Isaiah, Psalm and even with the writings in the inter-testamental period.

Kvalbein also suggests that the book of Psalms is the official prayer book of the Israelites and when the Israelite in his prayer describes himself as 'poor and needy', it never means economic sense but his helplessness and need before God. Like Seccombe, he proved

⁸¹Green 1995: 80-82.

⁸²Seccombe 1982: 19.

⁸³Seccombe notes that R. Johanan bar Nappaha is the reputed editor of the reputed Psalms and died in AD 279 in Tiberias.

⁸⁴Seccombe 1982: 36-43.

that such a language is found in the later Jewish texts such as Ecclesiasticus, Psalms of Solomon and Hymn schroll from Qumran.⁸⁵

2.2. The Poor in the Old Testament and Judaism

In order to explore the intended meaning of the poor in Luke, it is very important to sketch out the OT stream of the word 'poor'. Zau Lat⁸⁶ gives seven different Hebrew words of the poor in the Old Testament. According to him, the Hebrew words: 'ebyon'⁸⁷ which is translated as the beggarly poor occurs at least 61 times; 'dal'⁸⁸ which generally refers to poor peasant farmer occurs over 48 times; 'mahsor'⁸⁹ which means lazy poor occurs 13 times; 'ras' which basically means materially poor and is also the result of laziness occurs 22 times; 'misken'⁹⁰ which mostly refers to poor in material sense occurs only about four times; and 'ani'⁹¹, which is the most common Hebrew term, appears 80 times; and the more popular Hebrew term 'anawim'⁹² which means the pious or the humble ones of Yahweh, occurs 24 times in the Old Testament.

The most often use for the Hebrew word poor in the OT is thus *ani*, which is proposed to translate 'miserable, unhappy', like the English expression 'poor me', and which can be used both by rich and poor. It could have another religious meaning 'to be humble'. In Zec 9:9, the messiah is also described as being righteous and poor (*ani*), not in economic sense or social sense but humble.⁹³ Similar word is used in Ps 18:27, II Sam 22:28.

According to Zau Lat, *Mahsor* and *ras* are depicted as having negative connotation because they came into being as a result of laziness or excessive living. All other terms of the poor: *ebyon*, *dal*, *mahsor*, *misken*, and even the popular Hebrew word *anawim* which is often depicted as having religious connotation, refer to economically poor who are victims of

⁸⁵Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

⁸⁶Laphai Zau Lat 2007: 1-2. Zau Lat is an Old Testament Professor of Myanmar Institute of Theology and one of the professors of the present writer in his Master of Divinity class.

⁸⁷*Ebyon* connote physical insecurity and homeless (Is 14:30; 25:4; Amos 8:4), those in hunger and thirst (Is 32:6-7; Eze 16:49), those are mistreated by rulers and other evil doers (41:7, Jer 2:34; 20:13; Eze 18:12; 22:29; Amos 4:1), those are facing unfair treatment and being exploited (Job 14:4; 24:14; Amos 2:6; 8:6; 5:12; Jer 5:28).

⁸⁸*Dal* denotes unfair grain taxes paid to land owners (Amos 5:11), Lack of land (Is 14:30), being exploited (Is 26:6; Amos 2:7; 4:1).

⁸⁹*Mahsor* and *ras* is poverty which results from laziness (Pro 16:11; 14:23; 21:5; 24:34) and excessive living (21:17). *Ras* is used in Pro 10:4; 13:23.

⁹⁰See Eccl 4:13; 9:15.

⁹¹Economic oppressed objects (Is 3:15; Eze 18:12; Amos 8:4), victims through deception (Is 32:7), unjust treatment in legal decision ((Is 10:2). In Is 40-60 Israel is called as *ani*.

⁹²Ps 25:9; 69:29, 30, 32, 33; 76:10; 147:6; 149:4. It usually connotes pious and humble. *Anawim* is taken as a plural form of the masculine noun *anaw*. In Zau Lat's view, all the usage: *ani*, *anaw*, *anawim* derived from the same root and have the meaning of the lowly one or ones.

⁹³Kvalbein 1987: 81.

injustice, exploitation and oppression. Nevertheless it is to be noted that in the OT, we cannot see the poor as the receivers of God's salvation. Rather, we can see laws, rules, and wisdom sayings to take care of the poor and to protect them from the oppression of the rich and the powerful.

In the Old Testament, God is seen as the defender of those with an inferior social and economic position (Ps 12:5; 113:7). The king, as God's vice-agent, has the responsibility to defend the poor. That is why the poor are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. The idea that God is the refuge of the poor is also seen in later Judaism (Ps Solomon 5; 10:6; 16:13-15). But poverty was not seen as a virtue at all. Instead, the word refers to poverty in the material sense and the poor refers to potential receivers of other's care in this context.

There is another context. In the Psalmist's lamentation, we used to see, "Hear me God because I am poor and needy." It is obvious that the expression of the poor here does not denote any material or economic need. Rather it could be, as Kvalbein noted, 1) being miserable in social sense for being marginalized or oppressed or with enemies, 2) physical weakness or illness, 3) religious: crying to God for being guilty before God. The description of the term 'poor' here is binding with need, i.e. need of help or forgiveness. Therefore poverty terminology in the Psalms and the Old Testament come to refer to a whole range of need and suffering in addition to literal poverty.

And poverty terminology is also used to describe the nation Israel (68:10), representing the congregation of Israel and called as the poor, it also contains national dimension. The dominant idea behind the poverty vocabulary in the Old Testament especially in Psalm and Isaiah which Luke often quotes is therefore as mentioned above, *dependence* and *need* which could lead a man to call on God who saves him from evil though there is nothing positive about suffering and poverty.⁹⁴

⁹⁴Seccombe 1982: 27.

2.3. The Poor in Luke

The term 'poor' (*πτωχοι* in Greek) occurs ten times in Luke: 4:18, 6:20, 7:22, 14:13, 14:21, 16:20,22, 18:22, 19:8, 21:3, compared to five each in Mark and Matthew.⁹⁵ Luke also uses *πενυχρος* (Lk 21:2) for poor and *ἐνδεης* (Acts 4:34) is also used for needy.⁹⁶ But the most common New Testament Greek word for the poor is *πτωχος* which occurs 34 times in the New Testament. This term basically connotes beggar who always has to depend on the help of others for their living. Luke employs this word in two different contexts: 1) as potential receivers of alms and, 2) as the receivers of the gospel and the kingdom of God.⁹⁷

2.3.1. The Poor as the Potential Receivers of Alms

If we critically look at the form and context of the usages of the poor in Lk 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:3), the character of the poor does not play the dominant role. Instead they are the potential receivers of gifts. It is very important to notice that poverty here is not an ideal state to be strived for. Neither is a hindrance or a condition for salvation. Rather it is a distress, which needs to be helped with.

In the story of Lazarus and the dives (16:19-31), the main actor is not the poor man, Lazarus, but the rich man. Some liberation theologians suggest Lazarus as the main person and argue that the name of the rich man is not given while the beggar's name Lazarus is clearly mentioned in the story. However, the context makes clear that the rich man plays the dominant role in the story. Only the rich man partakes in the dialogue - is the main person. Lazarus is only a figure of contrast.⁹⁸

Also in the story of Jesus' counseling to the young ruler (18:18-23), the prominent role is not the situation of the poor, but the rich man's salvation. The story starts and ends with the rich young man. The expression 'poor' is here mentioned as a distress to be helped. In the story of the tax collector Zacchaeus (19:1-10), the poor are again just the receivers of the help of the rich man who received the message of salvation or the kingdom of God. The main actor again here is not the poor but the converted rich tax collector. In the story of the widow's mite (21:1-4), it is true that the poor widow was the main role player. But the point is that God favored the poor widow not because of her being in poverty, but because of her

⁹⁵Bosch 2005: 113.

⁹⁶In II Cor 8:9, Paul uses the word *πενυης* to describe one who has little.

⁹⁷Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

⁹⁸Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

putting in of all she had to God in spite of her needy situation. I think the common theme of these texts is the warnings of Jesus against the danger of materialism directed to the rich. This important topic will be discussed in more details in the third chapter.

2.3.2. The Poor as receivers of the Gospel and the Kingdom

Unlike the above mentioned contexts, the poor in the context of Lk 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21 are the receivers of the Gospel and the kingdom. The poor in this context play a major role in the story. In Fitzmyer's translation, by following the original Hebrew, Lk 4:18 goes 'to announce good news to the poor he sent me'.⁹⁹ This implies that Jesus is particularly sent to the poor. All other expressions of the poor in the said texts are also presented in the basic message of Jesus concerning the receivers of the good news or the kingdom. These texts thus will be interpreted in more detail to see the real intended meaning of the poor in its specific context.

⁹⁹Fitzmyer 1981: 532.

2.3.2.1. εὐαγγελισασθαι πτωχοῖς (Lk 4:18-21)

πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμὲ οὐ εἶνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν με, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν. καὶ πτύξας τὸ βιβλίον ἀποδοὺς τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ ἐκάθισεν· καὶ πάντων οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἦσαν ἀτεινίζοντες αὐτῷ. ἤρξατο δὲ λέγειν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὅτι σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφή αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὠσὶν ὑμῶν.

Scholars are unanimous in the view of Lk 4:16-30 as a programmatic text of the whole Luke’s gospel. Its importance, as Green notices, is suggested by a number of factors. First, it is the very first spoken word of Jesus to the people in Luke. If we look at a broader picture, in 3:22, we are told that the **Holy Spirit** descended upon him. In his temptation (4:1), it is noted again that being filled with the **Holy Spirit**, he confronted Satan. And in 4:14, it is repeated that Jesus returned in the power of **the Spirit** and began teaching in the synagogue. Following lengthy anticipations, well-preparations and empowered by the Holy Spirit, this is the first words and the first scene of Jesus’ public ministry. Moreover, although it was customary for Jesus to attend the Synagogue and teach on the Sabbath (4:15-16, 31-37, 44, 6:6, 13:10-17), nowhere else do we see the contents of his teaching except this episode.¹⁰⁰

Second, summaries of Jesus’ ministry in Luke-Acts refer back to this episode as paradigmatic for our understanding of Jesus’ vocation (7:18-23; Acts 10:38). Especially, Acts 10:38, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him” no doubt refers back to a paradigmatic text of this episode. Third, the content of Jesus’ message here is momentous as it is setting at the onset of his public ministry. Green is right when he says that these words shape of Jesus’ ministry, and in an important sense, Lk 4:16-30 looks ahead not only in the Third Gospel but also to that of the church in Acts.¹⁰¹

Jesus proclaimed himself as being the coming one in this passage. But in 4:28-30, it is concluded that the intended audiences, the assembly of the synagogue in Nazareth rejected and thrust him out of the city. This fact, no doubt, points forward to the picture of the rejection of Jesus by the Jews and put to death outside the city. That is why Fitzmyer notes

¹⁰⁰Green 1995: 76.

¹⁰¹Green 1995: 77.

that Luke has deliberately put this story at the beginning of the public ministry to encapsulate the entire Jesus' ministry and the reaction to it.¹⁰²

Concerning his reading on Isaiah, Seccombe asserts that Luke indicates the reading as Jesus' own choice (v.17). What he reads, however, is curious, consisting not of a single passage, but of Is 61:1-2a with one line missing and a line supplied from Is 58:6.¹⁰³ The clause about 'the healing of the broken-hearted' in Isaiah (61:1b) has been omitted and about 'release to the oppressed' is added in that place (Lk 4:18b). And he also dropped without continuing about 'our God's day of vengeance' in Is 61:2b. In Fitzmyer's view, the omission of the healing of the broken-hearted is of little consequence; but the omission of the phrase 'our God's day of Vengeance' is Luke's deliberate suppression of a negative aspect of the Deutero-Isaian message.¹⁰⁴

No adequate reason, however, for the omission has been offered. Some scholars, however, see the alternation as simply a case of substitution. Some think that Luke could have deliberately conflated Is 61:1-2 and 58:6 in the interest of his own theology. E. Klostermann explained the association of the two texts on the basis of catch-word ἀψευσις which has been used to denote both forgiveness of sin and release of prisoner.¹⁰⁵ Seccombe also agrees the possible alternative to the catch-word, ἀψευσις which would carry the association. The two passages thus can be related conceptually in a way which introduces the great eschatological Jubilee. Each of the passages, combined in Lk 4:18ff, deals in its original context with the acceptable year or time which is to be understood as Jubilee.¹⁰⁶

Is 58:6 is, no doubt, associated with Is 61:1f in the sense that both Is 58:6 and 61:1f remind us of the Jubilee.¹⁰⁷ Seccombe argues that Is 58, which is teaching about fast, should

¹⁰²Fitzmyer 1981: 529. Lucan form of this story is over twice as long as that of Mark. This has raised the question about the source of this text. But most scholars think of it as the reworking of Marcan source.

¹⁰³Seccombe 1982: 46.

¹⁰⁴Fitzmyer 1981: 532.

¹⁰⁵G.W.H. Lampe says, it introduces Luke's 'favorite theme of release', a word generally used in the sense of forgiveness of sin which is for him the essence of the gospel. But some scholars are skeptical that forgiveness is for Luke the essence of Jesus' mission. See Seccombe 1982: 46-47 and 'ἀψευσις' in *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*.

¹⁰⁶Seccombe 1982: 48-49.

¹⁰⁷Perrot thinks Is 57:15-58:14 was read on the Day of Atonement, and that Is 61:1f belongs naturally to the Day of Atonement which inaugurates a Jubilee. Seccombe sees Perrot's case as unreliable since his explanation belongs here in the modern lection and this practice in the NT time is inadmissible. But Seccombe does not deny the fact that Is 58:6 and 61:1f remind us of the Jubilee. See Seccombe 1982: 48.

not be understood in a moral sense but a description of how He himself will act when He comes to effect the Jubilee release of his people.¹⁰⁸

Some scholars, such as A. Trocme, J.H. Yoder, and A. Strobel, argue that in his sermon Jesus was proclaiming the literal Jubilee.¹⁰⁹ Trocme thinks that Jesus suddenly demanded that the law be put into effect immediately. Seccombe is, however, skeptical to this idea since Jesus in Nazareth episode demanded no Jubilee law to return to the ancestral property. Thus the literal Jubilee does not seem the right explanation. What then are we to make the idea of Jubilee in Nazareth sermon? The important thing to realize in Seccombe is that Luke makes nothing of it in a literal sense. He gives no indication that there was anything special about the Sabbath or the year. The point of departure in proclaiming the Jubilee year in Seccombe's view is that the time of salvation is the time of God's Jubilee. He adds in proclaiming the latter Jesus proclaims the former.¹¹⁰

Concerning the contents of the episode, Green suggests that Luke elaborates the addressees with symbolic meaning. In the expression of 'release to the captives', he suggests that release in Luke is often connected with release from sin or forgiveness of sins.¹¹¹ Seccombe also sees captives in the New Testament period are more likely to have been seen in terms of the overall spiritual-political oppression of Israel, than as literal prisoners or exiles. The demonic bondage into which the nation had fallen was manifested in sin, suffering and political subjugation. Referring to Dopont, he also agrees, 'to send the oppressed in freedom' is open to the same breath of interpretation as 'to proclaim release to captives'.¹¹²

He also asserts that Exile was characterized as darkness, it is thus logical that freedom should be symbolized by the return of sight. Moreover, darkness and light were images for the absence and presence of God.¹¹³ Thus Blindness, in Green's interpretation, is also defined as ignorance of the will of God and receive the blind is also a metaphor for receiving revelation and inclusion in God's family. *To set free* is in the same way elaborated in to release for any tighten, the freeing of slaves, the cancellation of debts and the returning of all

¹⁰⁸Seccombe 1982: 50.

¹⁰⁹A. Strobel calculated that AD 26/27 (which he argues was the year Jesus began his ministry) was a Jubilee year, the tenth (7x7x10) after that instituted by Ezra. By quoting Rabbinic sources, He begins by 464 BC. He links this with the 490 (464+26= 490) years prophecy of Daniel (Dan 9:24ff), and thinks that it was amidst the high expectations associated with this time that Jesus began his ministry.

¹¹⁰Seccombe 1982: 56.

¹¹¹Green 1995: 211.

¹¹²Seccombe 1982: 58.

¹¹³Seccombe 1982: 59.

haul. The expression of the year of the Lord's favor thus makes clear that it is Jesus' proclamation of his salvation.¹¹⁴

The usages here in Lk 4:18 thus imply the symbolic or transferred meaning and it is all about the fulfillment of the prophets and scriptures in the ministry of Jesus and the point, to Fitzmyer, is that 'what was promised by Second Isaiah as consolation of Zion is now being granted in a new sense and a new way'.¹¹⁵ In his view, the Deutero-Isaian verses are part of a hymn (61:1-11), which explains prophet's mission in the consolation of Zion. In using the poor, he suggests that second Isaiah was announcing the consolation of Zion in the postexilic Jerusalem community. The prophetic function of Jesus is thus set forth in Deutero-Isaian terms.¹¹⁶

The three images 'captives', 'oppressed' and 'blind' therefore is the situation of Israel. She suffers captivity and oppression. She is in bondage to Satan, a state of affairs which manifests itself in inner disorder, and outwardly, in the foreign yoke. The people walk in a darkness of ignorance, shame and suffering. But Jesus proclaims that all this is ended.¹¹⁷ E. Bammel has suggested that the above three images are summed up in advance by the expression *εὐαγγελισσασθαι πτωχοις*. If this should prove true, in Seccombe's view, it is wise to conclude that Luke understands the poor in Nazareth sermon as suffering Israel.¹¹⁸

Claiming himself the role of the anointed one who is evangelizer to the poor, Jesus announces his final Jubilee of God, which is the long awaited time of Israel's salvation. Having seen a strong link between Nazareth Sermon with Acts 10:36, "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ- He is Lord of all", Seccombe concludes that the recipients of the 'evangel', i.e. the poor, are the sons of Israel, understood in terms of their great need of healing, understanding, forgiveness, freedom and peace; in short, their need of salvation.¹¹⁹

And in using the emphatic position *'σημερον'* (todayness) it is suggested that it marks an important point in Lucan historical perspective and has a special connotation in Lucan theology. In Fitzmyer's view, Luke sees salvation as a thing of the past as something brought about in the period of Jesus, the Center of Time. The use of 'today' refers immediately to

¹¹⁴Green 1995: 211-212.

¹¹⁵Fitzmyer 1981: 534.

¹¹⁶Fitzmyer 1981: 532.

¹¹⁷Seccombe 1982: 61.

¹¹⁸Seccombe 1982: 63.

¹¹⁹Seccombe 1982: 66.

fulfillment, but that is not restricted to the period of Jesus alone, Luke also sees fulfillment taking place also in the period of the Church.¹²⁰ The point is that what Isaiah announced, Jesus is now seen doing it himself.

In Seccombe's view, it means that this 'evangelizer' is not a 'long-term predictor' like the prophets. He is bound up in the salvation he announces, for he announces its presentness, that God has won the battle, and that peace is already on its way. Seccombe asserts that the idea that the sound of his voice is the trumpet which inaugurates the Jubilee can be seen in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.¹²¹ For one instance, Ps Sol 11.1 goes 'Sound in Zion the signal trumpet of the sanctuary; announce in Jerusalem the voice of one bringing good news, for God has been merciful to Israel in watching over them.'¹²² Of course there is an integral link between Jesus' own victory over Satan's temptations and his appearance in Nazareth to declare the end of Satanic bondage. Following the sermon, his very first work is to cast the demon from a man in the synagogue at Capernaum.¹²³

Therefore, as Seccombe notes, the 'today' in Luke's understanding may have a double sense: it may, in its context, indicate the coming of salvation among the Nazarenes themselves in the person of Jesus, but in the light of the programmatic significance of the story, it also represents the coming of salvation to Israel. The drama of the 'today' in his view is that it transforms a mere reading of scripture into a divine proclamation of the age of salvation. And the divine proclamation also transforms Jesus as the reader of the text into a divine messenger. It makes him the Messiah who inaugurates the salvation of God.¹²⁴

However the Nazareth episode is the story of action and reaction. The story starts with Jesus' action by the power of the Holy Spirit and ends with the rejection of the Nazarenes. In Seccombe's view, Luke wishes this to tell his readers that Jesus the messiah proclaimed salvation freely to all Israel but that from the very beginning his ministry encountered refusal. And rejection of Jesus means also rejection of salvation since he is the one who brings the actualization of his message.¹²⁵ The same thought is expressed in Jesus' answer to the disciples of John (7:18-23) and we will soon have a brief look at that text.

¹²⁰Fitzmyer 1981: 533-534.

¹²¹Seccombe 1982: 64.

¹²²Charlsworth 1985: 661.

¹²³Seccombe 1982: 62.

¹²⁴Seccombe 1982: 66-68.

¹²⁵Seccombe 1982: 69.

2.3.2.2. μακαριοι οί πτωχοι: The Poor as the Disciples (Lk 6:20)

Καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἔλεγεν· Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί, ὅτι ὑμετέρα ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

It is of majority of scholars' opinion that the Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the level place derive from Q material. But Luke's sermon is one-fourth the length of Matthew's and there are noticeable differences in the common subject matter. Luke's sermon on the plain has only 30 verses whereas Matthew has at least 107 verses. Unlike Matthew's nine blessings and no woes (Mt 5:3-12), Luke has four of each, set in parallels: poor-rich, hunger-full, weeping-laughing, rejected-accepted. In literary point of view, Luke's construction in the beatitude is carefully-symmetrical. And Luke's sermon is given on a level place (6:17), not on a mountain as in Matthew (5:1). And Luke has placed the sermon later in his gospel than Matthew does in his, but even so, the contexts are similar. Matthew's version comes after the call of four disciples and a general statement about Jesus' ministry (Mt 4:18-25), while Luke's follow the call of the twelve and the general statement about Jesus' ministry (6:12-19).

Relating the differences, Fitzmyer suggests that Luke seems to have eliminated some materials that were in the nucleus sermon (and in Q) because they were more suited to Jewish Christians concern (e.g. about validation of the law in Mt 5:17-20) and less suited to the Gentiles Christians for whom he has primarily destined his account. And concerning the different places, Craddock insists that both Matthew and Luke seem to be making a theological use of geography.¹²⁶

Matthew sees Jesus in the role of the prophet like Moses in Deut 18:15-18. His sermon on the Mount is conceived of as a new and perfect law compared to the Decalogue given on Mount Sinai. Mountain, thus, plays a very important role in his theology. On the other hand, for Luke, mountain is a place of prayer, and there he chooses the twelve. Now he moves to the plain below to be with the people, with whom Jesus identifies, as at his baptism (3:21).¹²⁷ There he taught them about the message of the kingdom of God under the topic of Blesses and Woes.

¹²⁶Fitzmyer 1981: 627-628. In John S. Pobee and Zau Lat's view, the biblical scholars have a canon that the more difficult and shorter reading is to be preferred as the authentic reading. As such, Lucan version in this verse is depicted as a more authentic and original than Matthew's version. In other words, *the poor in Spirit* in Matthew is a secondary interpretation gloss of *the poor* in Luke version (Zau Lat 2007: 1). But I see the difference as Craddock did, the evangelists' distinctive theological points.

¹²⁷Craddock 1990: 86.

Whereas there is scarcely any parallel in the OT and other Jewish writings for the listings of the beatitudes and woes, a remote parallel is provided by some texts.¹²⁸ For one instance, Tob13:14 says, “Fortunate (*μακαριοι*) are those who love you, they will rejoice over your peace, . . . they will rejoice over you, seeing all your glory.” But Craddock sees the blessings and woes in this passage as a reminder of the difference between the blessings and curses set before Israel in Deuteronomy (Deut11:26-28) and of the New Testament. A major difference here is that in Deuteronomy, Blessings and Curses were contingent on behavior whereas there is no urging to observe the law to receive the blessing and to avoid woe in Luke. Instead it is not the observation of the law as in the Old Testament but the condition, being poor, which is actually the case in this context.

Concerning the identity of the intended audiences, scholars are in different opinions. By saying that the people came from as far as Jerusalem and Judea to the south, and Tyre and Sidon to the north, Craddock believes that Jesus’ ministry and message in Luke are for all since the mention of Tyre and Sidon implies both Gentile and Jewish audience. Within that large audience, Craddock believes that the sermon itself was addressed in particular to the disciples (he lifted his eyes on his disciples, and said, v.20).

However, in relation to Luke’s statement at the close of the sermon, “After he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people” (7:1), which is an indication of the general audiences, Luke, in Craddock’s opinion, probably means that these teachings are for Jesus’ followers (the disciples) and for all who would be the disciples (the people). Craddock concluded that certainly nothing here is exclusive or secretive; the entire ministry of Jesus contradicts that.¹²⁹ But Alfred Plummer insists that the beatitude is addressed to the disciples and in his opinion, there is nothing to indicate that the discourse in Luke is addressed to mixed multitudes, including the unbelieving Jews and heathen. In his view the beatitude would not be true if addressed to them.¹³⁰

I also believe the intended audience to be a specific one, comprising of the disciples only, excluding the general audience with disciples, the would-be disciples and the crowd. It is evident by the use of the second person plural ‘you’. In Betz’s explanation, the use of the third person plural (as ‘theirs’ in Matthew) is intended to statements of facts or doctrinal statements while the second person plural is directed to addressees. So he argues that Matthew’s beatitudes can be applicable to anyone whereas of Luke’s message has a target to

¹²⁸Deut 27:15-26; 28:1-6,15-19, 33:29; Is 5:8-23, 32:20; Sir 2:12-14, 25:7-10, 31:8; Enoch 42:7-9; Hab 2:6-19; Pss 84:4-5, 119:1-2; 144:15; Pro 14:21; 28:14; Tob 13:14, etc.

¹²⁹Craddock 1990: 87.

¹³⁰Plummer 1977: 179.

addressees.¹³¹ It is obvious from the context that Luke's target addressees cannot be anybody than the disciples.

Defining the beatitude by paradigmatic relation, Nolland also argues that the poor in 6:20 is the antithesis of the rich in v 24 and there can be little doubt that it means the literally poor who presently have a hard life (thus the hunger and weeping of v 21), but the context of their poverty, if not its cause, is that they are disciples of Jesus (v 19) who are likely to suffer because of their identification with Jesus.¹³² That is why Fitzmyer insists that Luke's sermon is initially intended and restricted for the disciples only.¹³³ Therefore the argument that the disciples are the intended audience for Luke 6:20 seems the most reliable according to the context.

2.3.2.3. Why are the Disciples blessed?

According to this passage, one has to be poor to be admitted to the kingdom. If literally taken, it seems that poverty is an ideal qualification and the kingdom of God is absolutely reserved for the poor in material sense. But the answer to this question, 'why are the poor blessed?' is not 'because they are poor'. Instead, in spite of their being poor, they are blessed because they are Disciples of Christ and they are promised the kingdom. Nolland argues that nothing in the OT background goes as far as this beatitude in identifying the poor as the recipients of the Kingdom. The weak and the afflicted are certainly seen to be objects of God's special care (Deut 10:17-18; Pss 10:17-18; 68:5-6; 76:9; 146:7-10). The catastrophe of the exile reduced the Israelites to the status of afflicted. The hope of the future intervention of God is to meet the needs of the destitute and the disadvantaged (Ps 132:15; Is 61:1-2, 35:5-6; Mic 4:6-8). The Jewish thought in the later centuries also waited for a greater restoration (Dan 9:24; I Enoch 93:1-14; Neh 9:32-37; Ezra 9:6-9).¹³⁴ It means poverty is not an ideal state but a distress to be terminated.

Schwarz interprets in a different way. He claims, "When Jesus calls the poor "blessed", this is a revolutionary. Salvation is not announced to those who could be expected

¹³¹Benz 1995: 94. While most scholars accept that the third person has better Old Testament antecedents, Marshall asserts that the use of second person form is more appropriate in the prophetic teaching of Jesus with its promise to salvation. See also Marshall 1998: 249.

¹³²Nolland 1989: 281.

¹³³Fitzmyer 1981: 627, 632.

¹³⁴Nevertheless along with these lines, the members of the Qumran community identified themselves as the poor to whom the eschatological promises apply. They were those who continued patiently to bear until the day of the final battle, the affliction and poverty of the exile period, the period of God's wrath, continued and heightened in their own experience of persecution. Those at Qumran felt they had learned the lesson of the exile and gloried in their powerlessness apart from God. Some see the similar nature of the poor in the beatitude with the identification of this group. See Nolland 1989: 282.

to enter the kingdom, the religious faithful and the morally upright, but to those who were despised and who according to the prevailing opinion never had a chance to enter the kingdom.¹³⁵ And Dupont sees that in the beatitudes Jesus is announcing the nearness of the Kingdom of God – which, because God exercises his royal justice in favor of the poor, is a message of good news to the poor. It is, to him, not that the kingdom of God is not also for others, but since a particular function of the ideal king in Israelite as other ancient Oriental ideology was to be protector and defender of the poor, it was for the poor **especially** that the coming of the kingdom was good news.¹³⁶

Nolland sees Dupont's case impressive in many respects. It does not, however in his view, account for the beatitude form in which Jesus' affirmation here is made. He suggests that those in relation to whom beatitudes are spoken of are people who for whatever reason find that they are in a privilege situation, and there is always an implied or explicit contrast with others who do not share the happy state. The expression of the emphatic "yours" in Lk 6:20 has the language of implied contrast: the kingdom is for the poor, whose poverty distinguishes them from others who will not enter the kingdom. So in Nolland's view, Dupont's settings can provide no adequate account of the beatitude's affirmation that the poor are privileged by contrast to others. His rendering of the kingdom can be in no sense especially for the poor. The most he can say is that they specially benefit from it. The best Dupont can give is that the poor should be happiest about the news of the coming kingdom: they stand to gain the most because currently their situation is the worst.

Nolland also sees the rich in v.24 as the literally rich, who are, however, addressed not simply in relation to their material prosperity, but rather in view of the personal orientation that almost inevitably accompanies such material prosperity. And he also sees the poor in v.20 as the literally poor. That is why Fitzmyer asserts that the Lucan form of beatitude stresses the immediacy or actuality of the disciples' poverty; to them now Jesus promises consolation. It is awaited from God himself and from him alone; but it will be forthcoming.¹³⁷

And the advantage of the poor over the rich, in Nolland's view, will be their freedom from that state of mind which ensnares the rich in the limited perspectives of this world, lulls them into a foolish self-confidence, and beguiles them into thinking that their material

¹³⁵Schwarz 1986: 148.

¹³⁶Nolland 1989: 281.

¹³⁷Fitzmyer 1981: 634.

prosperity has its goal simply in their own rich enjoyment of the good things of life.¹³⁸ T.E. Schmidt also argues that the evil of wealth consists not primarily in lack of care for the poor but in independence from God. He even says that the primary purpose of giving alms is to inculcate an attitude of trust in and dependence upon God.¹³⁹ He means that the poor are free from such illusion. Nolland thus denotes,

There is no glorifying of poverty in the beatitudes. To be poor, hungry and weeping is not at all the situation that Luke envisages in the ideal state of Christian existence (Acts 2:43-47; 4:34). While renunciation is a very important theme in the Gospel of Luke, this is never thought of as making oneself poor. The beatitude of the poor connects naturally in the gospel not with the renunciation but with reversal motif (Lk1:52-53; 16:25) and more particularly with the announcement of good news to the poor (4:18; 7:22). These texts imply eschatological fulfillment, and the fulfillment is at least potentially already effected in the provision of the messiah by miraculous concept.¹⁴⁰

This context in no sense thus could mean that all the poor people would be automatically the receivers of the kingdom. Since the beatitude is directed to specific audience, “He fixed his eyes to his disciples. . . you the poor,” the message of Jesus in this context is not that everybody who is poor is blessed, but that the disciples in spite of their bad condition now, are blessed because they are receivers of the Kingdom of God.¹⁴¹

It is therefore sensible to conclude that the poor in the beatitude implies the disciples who are blessed not because of their poverty, but because of their being Disciples of Christ, poor in themselves and their identity with Jesus. Their advantage over the rich is that they are dependent on God, which gives them freedom from a foolish self-confidence of materialism. Most of all they are blessed for their possession, the kingdom of God.

Needless to say, Luke also wants to apply it for his Christian community. In Fitzmyer’s view, Luke’s introduction of ‘now’ (6:21a,c; 6:25a,c) reveals the concern for Christian life here and now and Jesus’ words on the sermon touch on the concern of daily existence.¹⁴²

¹³⁸Nolland 1989: 281-282. To Nolland, Matthew narrows the beatitude, but does not falsify it, when he focuses attention on the attitudinal with his “poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3).

¹³⁹Metzger 2007: 10.

¹⁴⁰Nolland 1989: 283.

¹⁴¹Kvalbein 1987, 80-86.

¹⁴²Fitzmyer 1981: 630.

2.3.2.4. πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται (Lk 7:22)

καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πορευθέντες ἀπαγγείλατε Ἰωάννῃ ἃ εἶδετε καὶ ἠκούσατε· τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν, χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται, πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται·

Scholars think of this passage as Q material even though Luke has modified or transposed some of it. It is believed that Matthew preserves more original form. The episode starts with the question that comes from the imprisoned John. Attempts to explain John's doubts about Jesus have been numerous over centuries. 1) Form criticism or Bultman's school sees this passage as a product of the early Christian community since it reflects the controversy of a later date between disciples of John and of Jesus. 2) Since the patristic period (such as Chrysostom and Augustine), it is interpreted that John used this device to strengthen and improve the understanding of his own disciples about Jesus. 3) The most possible interpretation is that the question expresses John's real doubt, hesitation, or surprise that Jesus was not turning out to be the kind of messiah he expected.¹⁴³

Jesus now makes it clear that he carries no ax or winnowing-fan, and burns no chaff as John proclaimed in Lk 3:17. Instead, he cures, frees, resuscitates; he cares for the blind, cripples, lepers, deaf and even the dead; and he preached good news to the poor. Jesus' words here echo the terms in which Is 61:1-2; 29:18-19; 35:5-6 speak of the coming time of salvation. G.R.Beasley-Murray asserts that John had thought of a theophany only in terms of earthquake, wind and fire while it is a sound of gentle stillness in Jesus' ministry.¹⁴⁴

Jesus' answer to the Baptist includes six expressions: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Seeing a wider context, it is very noticeable that about the poor is stated at last among the six expressions here while, looking at some other places in Luke, it used to be mentioned at first among the listed categories (Lk 4:18; 6:20; 14:13,21; 16:20,22). This is

¹⁴³ Fitmyer 1981: 663-4.

¹⁴⁴ Beasley-Murray 1987: 81.

because it has a different emphasis. In Green's view, it, as mentioned earlier, stands as the final, emphatic position and the word poor interprets and is amplified by the others.¹⁴⁵

Also in Nolland's view, the last phrase, 'the poor are evangelized' which 4:18-19 puts at the first place, forms the climax of the list because it generalizes the preceding items by implying that God's present intervention is not restricted to certain categories of sufferers, but is for all the afflicted.¹⁴⁶ Beasley-Murray also sees the last of the six, 'the poor have the good news preached to them', as the most important deed for John to ponder and understand. It is a proclamation of Jubilee and good news of grace, forgiveness, and renewal of life. It is this proclamation that gives meaning to the acts of grace and power performed by Jesus.¹⁴⁷

The point therefore is that contrast to John's understanding about Jesus' mission as that of a fiery reformer of the eschaton, Jesus' role is the embodiment of the divine blessings promised to be shed on the unfortunate human society by Isaiah. Luke 7:22 is thus to be understood as an echo of the quotation of Is 61:1-2, as presented by Luke in 4:18.¹⁴⁸ Green thus claims that by means of its inter-textual relationship to 4:18-19, this episode is rooted deeply in the eschatological vision of Isaiah, indicating that Jesus understood his healing and exorcisms not simply as 'bringing good news to the poor', but as 'inaugurating the long-awaited epoch of salvation'.¹⁴⁹ The poor in this episode here again by no mean refers to economical poverty but it refers to Israel as a whole, sensing it needs for help, particularly for its salvation.

Following on the declaration of good news, it is said that "Blessed indeed is the person who is not shocked at me." It is beatitude but Jesus' words here imply a warning. Many mighty works characterizing the age of salvation are witnessed, and the poor are having salvation proclaimed to them, but there is a danger that men will stumble at the messenger if they failed to see the messiah. Seccombe is thus right when he says that it is the response to Jesus' person which finally decides whether salvation stays (*μακαριος*) or departs.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Green 1995: 81-82.

¹⁴⁶ Nolland 1989: 332.

¹⁴⁷ Beasley-Murray 1987: 81.

¹⁴⁸ Fitzmyer 1981: 664.

¹⁴⁹ Green 1995: 95-96.

¹⁵⁰ Seccombe 1982: 69.

2.3.2.5. Not the Invited but the Poor (Lk 14:21)

Καὶ παραγερόμενος ὁ δοῦλος ἀπήγγειλεν τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα. τότε ὀργισθεὶς ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης εἶπεν τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ· ἔξελθε ταχέως εἰς τὰς πλατείας καὶ ῥύμας τῆς πόλεως καὶ τοὺς πτωχοὺς καὶ ἀναπεῖρους καὶ τυφλοὺς καὶ χωλοὺς εἰσάγαγε ὧδε.

On the basis of the appearance of a very similar parable in Mt 22:1-14, but with considerable alternation and addition, the above passage is also believed to be derived from Q. Fitzmyer however suggests that Q is limited to vs. 16-21a. He thinks that Luke, in using Q, has prefixed to his own transitional verse, i.e. the remark of the fellow guest about the eschatological dinner in the Kingdom (v.15) and the expression of the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame (v. 21b) is also Lucan redaction.¹⁵¹

Jeremias interprets this parable in its original form as a warning to the pious Jews that if they pay no heed to the gospel call, they will be replaced by the despised and ungodly.¹⁵² However, to F. Hahn, the parable is all about a clear picture of salvation; the stress lies here not on the refusal of the invited to come, but on the readiness of the host to fill the table. Following the passage about Jesus' own behavior in eating with tax-collectors and sinners, the point of the parable is basically the universal offer of the gospel with a subsidiary warning not to refuse the call.¹⁵³

Vogtle, like Jeremias, argues against Hahn and sees, the parable as Jesus' warning to the Jews who refuse the message with the possibility that they will be replaced by the gentiles. Thereafter, Jesus' warning became a reality in the experience of the early church when it undertook the successful mission to the gentiles (something not envisaged by Jesus) and was rejected by the Jews. Hence there was a shift in the interpretation; it now provided a prophetic explanation of what was happening.

There are three invitations here and the first one no doubt is to the Jews. In Vogtle's view, the Gentiles are seen as poor and needy, but they are the ones who accept the invitation

¹⁵¹Fitzmyer 1986: 1052. This parable is also very close, in spite of some different facts, to the parable in Gospel of Thomas (§64), which is the longest units in that Coptic non-canonical Gospel.

¹⁵²Marshall 1998: 584-5.

¹⁵³Marshall 1998: 585.

after the first invited refuse it. And the purpose of the third or final invitation (which is absent in Matthew and therefore suggested as a secondary development) to the people outside the city is seen as an indication of the unfinished task (for the disciples or the church) until the house is filled with guests.

Marshall points out the weakness of Vogtle for his interpretation of the poor as Gentiles. He does not support to take all the details in the story in too literal sense in order to construct a coherent allegory. Instead he suggests that it is best to see the story only as Jesus' comment on the pious in Israel who neither entered the Kingdom themselves nor allowed others to enter (11:52); they are warned that they will be excluded from the kingdom and the way will be opened up to the needy and the outsiders.¹⁵⁴

Fitzmyer, however, maintains that Lucan form of the parable goes allegorically in terms of Luke's idea of salvation-history. He sees the role of Lucan Jesus as kingdom-preacher. He is portrayed as foreseeing the places at the kingdom-banquet occupied not by any of the first invited people because they have excluded themselves. Then it was possessed by strangers from the highways and hedgerows. It is clearly seen in Acts 13:46, "It was necessary that the word of God be addressed to you first. Since you reject it . . . we are now turning to the gentiles."

He thus accepts Jeremias's form of allegorization of the parable, saying, the first or original invitation as the invitation to the Jews; the second or the replacement of the first invitation which is to the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame in the streets and lanes of the city as the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus, who are the outcasts of the town, Jewish people of less noble standing, who really accept the invitation; and the third or final invitation to those from the highway and hedgerows as the gentiles.¹⁵⁵

In the New Testament time, it is clear that the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame (all of them are generally beggars) normally stay in the lanes or on the streets in the city. To regard Gentiles - (thought of as outside the law in Jewish understanding) - as those from the highway and hedgerows is very logical since highways running outside cities and towns, get them connected.

Therefore it is clear that the expression of the poor (a general term for the beggars including the maimed, the lame, and the blind) in this parable infers a transferred sense,

¹⁵⁴Marshall 1998: 586.

¹⁵⁵Fitzmyer 1986: 1053.

meaning the first disciples or believers who accepted the invitation of the gospels. Actually the disciples are not beggars on the streets. But they are outcasts, in material or religious or social sense, compared to the well-to-do pious Jews, Pharisees and lawyers who reject the invitation, and take something else to be much as more important than God's invitation offered in Jesus' message. The poor or the beggars here are the receivers of the kingdom just because they accept the invitation and come to the banquet. That is why Kvalbein asserts that the position as righteous or sinners, healthy or sick, rich or poor, or even as Jews or Gentiles, is irrelevant. When one meets the invitation to the kingdom, only one question counts: your relation to Jesus. . . The blessing of the poor should be read and understood in this broader sense.¹⁵⁶

Fitzmyer also denotes, "God will not drag the unwilling into it against their will."¹⁵⁷ Here T.W. Manson's statement is also worthy to be noted. He asserts,

The Lucan Jesus does not teach, "a mechanically operating predestination, which determines from all eternity who shall or who shall not be brought into the kingdom. Neither does he proclaim that man's entry into the Kingdom is purely his own affair. The two essential points in his teaching are that no man can enter the Kingdom without the invitation of God, and that no man can remain outside it but by his own deliberate choice. Man cannot save himself; but he can damn himself."¹⁵⁸

Needless to say, Marshall rightly asserts that all three excuses in the parable are concerned with the details of the commercial and family life, and fit in with the teaching of Jesus regarding the danger of letting love of possessions or domestic ties interfere with total commitment to the call to discipleship.¹⁵⁹ This is therefore a serious warning again to arrogance and a foolish self-confidence to worldly things or materialism.

¹⁵⁶Kvalbein 1987: 80-85.

¹⁵⁷Fitzmyer 1986: 1053.

¹⁵⁸This is the quotation of Fitzmyer 1986: 1054.

¹⁵⁹Marshall 1998: 588.

2.4. Other Expressions about the Receivers of the Kingdom

2.4.1. The Hungry (*πεινώντας*, Lk 1:53)

πεινώντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξάπέστειλεν κενούς.

The passage does not directly link the exact words ‘πτωχος’ and ‘βασιλεια’. But the implied meaning of the poor and the usage of the word *πεινώντας* (hungry) here is closely related. And the implied meaning of the magnificat is also about God’s salvation and it is more or less related to the kingdom. It is striking to see the intended meaning of the magnificat because it has frequently been taken to mean an evidence of Luke’s concern for the poor. In fact the magnificat in Mary’s song is a song of praise conceiving the coming of the messiah or the coming of salvation of Israel than the liberation of the poor. Salvation is pictured in traditional terms here, especially drawn from the patterns of exodus and new exodus in the Old Testament.¹⁶⁰

Mary’s song in the magnificat unmistakably is similar to Hannah’s affliction in her prayer “those who are hunger are fat with spoil” portraying a symbol of the affliction of Israel (I Sam 2:5). The influence of this song on magnificat has often been noted. Seccombe insists that in the Targum to the song of Hannah, the full and the hungry of I Sam 2:5 are associated respectively with Haman, and Mordecai and Esther. She prophesized, “Of the son Haman those who were full of bread and proud in wealth . . . have been impoverished. Mordecai and Esther who are poor have become rich and have forgotten their poverty.”¹⁶¹ And this idea is always related to establish the kingdom of the messiah. Furthermore the reference to the arm of the Lord (Lk 1:51) in the Old Testament, especially to Isaiah and Ezekiel, unmistakably is used to describe salvation of Israel (Is 51:9; 52:10; Eze. 20:33, etc.)

The poor Israelites, however, are saved not because they are without possessions, but because they are God’s chosen people down-trodden by the nations. In the same way the rich are scattered not because they are wealthy but because they are the proud oppressors of Israel.

¹⁶⁰ Seccombe 1982: 72-74.

¹⁶¹ Seccombe 1982: 80-81.

But it does not mean that magnificat envisages the salvation of every Israel. V. 50 makes it clear that only those who fear him will receive his mercy. Therefore the magnificat, as Seccombe observes, contains nothing of any sectarian interest. It cannot be claimed for the so-called ‘anawim’ whose very existence is doubtful. There is no idea to justify speaking of Luke as a champion of the lower class. It is a song of exultation over the salvation of Israel. The hungry refers to a way of characterizing Israel in her need of salvation.¹⁶²

2.4.2. Not the Righteous but Sinners (Lk 5:32)

οὐκ ἐλήλυθα καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλοὺς εἰς μετάνοιαν.

The text here does not directly talk about the kingdom and the poor. However its message or the theme is closely related to that of the poor and the kingdom. The context of this text is Jesus’ call to the tax collector, namely Levi, sitting at his very office. Moreover Jesus dined with a great number of tax collectors. Therefore the scribes and the Pharisees complained about his acts. At this, Jesus replied, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance”.

Kvalbein sees this text as neither an idealization of sinners nor of the sick. Jesus wants sinners to be forgiven and the sick to be healed. Here no virtue of the tax collectors is mentioned. They are called to be disciples and the kingdom is given to them not ‘because of’, their specific situation, ‘being poor’. But the answer is that ‘in spite of’ being their poor condition or though these tax collectors are seen by their fellow people as sinners and God’s enemies, the kingdom is given to them, which is done by grace alone. At this point Jesus was remarkably different from his contemporaries. The tax collectors were excluded from God’s love in Judaism and Jesus crossed the borders within Jewish society in a new and radical way. He accepted and welcomed the sinners and the tax collectors in his kingdom and they shall be the first to enter his kingdom (21:28-32).¹⁶³

However, the righteous are here not given the admission to the kingdom, because of their foolish self-confidence to achieve the kingdom of God. Not because of their sinful nature, but because of their haughtiness, they got rejected for their being independent from God’s grace.

¹⁶² Seccombe 1982: 82.

¹⁶³ Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

2.4.3. Not the Wise and Prudent but the Simple (Lk 10:21)

Ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἠγαλλιάσατο [ἐν] τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ εἶπεν· ἔξομολογοῦμαί σοι, πάτερ, κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἀπέκρυψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτὰ νηπίοις· ναὶ ὁ πατήρ, ὅτι οὕτως εὐδοκία ἐγένετο ἔμπροσθέν σου.

The text here also does not exactly mention about the kingdom and the poor, but the intended message is closely related as well. The discussion is about the receivers of the revelation from God. The solution of this discussion is given in an antithesis: not the wise and prudent, but the simple. The opposite two groups are put side by side. The former groups are described as wise ‘σοφός’ and understanding ‘συνετός’ while the later groups are described as ‘νηπίοι’, infants, i.e., ‘the childlike, innocent ones, unspoiled by learning with whom God is pleased’. This Greek word is equivalent with the Hebrew ‘*peti*’ and the NKJV renders it as babes. Marshall asserts that by means of this contrast the traditional Jewish estimate of the wise as the recipients of God’s revelation is overturned. That is why Jesus here excludes those who are normally highly esteemed and respected by everybody. The revelation and kingdom of God is not dependent on intelligence.

He also sees that in this expression there is an implicit condemnation of the religious leaders of the community who despite their wisdom have failed to gain the true perception of God and his will. Jesus takes up the thought, for which there was some preparation in the Jewish wisdom tradition and at Qumran, that God addresses himself to the poor and the simple who are prepared to listen to him because they have no wisdom of their own.¹⁶⁴ The simple or the unwise of course does not here designate a virtue but refers to helplessness before God as a baby or a child.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴Marshall 1998: 434.

¹⁶⁵Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

2.4.4. The Children (Lk18:16)

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς προσεκαλέσατο αὐτὰ λέγων· ἄφετε τὰ παιδία ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με καὶ μὴ κωλύετε αὐτά, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

Jesus called them (the children) to him and said, “Let the children come to me and do not try to stop them, for to such as these belongs the kingdom of God.” Oscar Cullman and Jeremias take this as a supportive text to infant baptism. To them, this text enables the church to use this passage as an answer to doubts about the legitimacy of infant baptism; the speculative nature of this suggestion is put by G.R. Beasley-Murray. And Jeremias thinks that Jesus here addresses the parents (as in Mk) rather than the disciples. But to Marshall this is reading too much into wording. Of course it is clearly stated the addressees as the disciples in Luke.¹⁶⁶

Kvalbein asserts that this sentence is the most similar text to the second part of the blessings of the poor in Mt 5:3, ‘for the kingdom of God is theirs’. To him this sentence cannot be taken as a literal promise of the kingdom to all children. Literally the word is a warning not to exclude children from the fellowship of Jesus, and it is also a parabolic speaking about admission to the kingdom for all men. The word *τοιούτος* (such) contains element of comparison and seems to refer to children in some way.¹⁶⁷

If the kingdom is for those who are like children, what is the point of comparison? Some interpreters try to find virtues in children that we should learn from them. Their meekness, humility and unassuming nature might be taken. A popular idea is their being innocent. But Kvalbein insists that this idea is not rooted in the Bible, but in the Greek connection of sexuality with sin. In the Biblical view children, like grown-ups, are sinners too. Another interpretation sees the virtue of children in their being so trusting. And it is said that this text encourages the grown-up to have faith like children. Kvalbein sees this view

¹⁶⁶Marshall 1998: 682.

¹⁶⁷Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

also as unbiblical since the New Testament has many exhortations to Christians to be mature and to test everything critically.¹⁶⁸

Marshall sees the basic thought of this text as that of the sheer receptivity of children, especially infants, who cannot do anything to merit entry into the kingdom.¹⁶⁹ Kvalbein also asserts, “I think all interpretations that try to find positive values in children fail to capture the meaning of the text. Children receive the kingdom not because of their virtues, but simply because they are small and helpless. And God gives his gifts of salvation, without asking qualifications, to all who receive Jesus.”¹⁷⁰

In verse 17, the story reaches its climax and said, “Assuredly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no mean enter it.” The point is that the kingdom of God is for those who see themselves as small and helpless before God in the same way as children are helpless in themselves. Needless to say, there is some debate if the expression of the entry here refers to the future consummated kingdom or as present entry into the enjoyment of the blessings of the kingdom. In Marshall’s view, the former view fits in best with the other teachings of Jesus.¹⁷¹

Therefore, the word ‘poor’ in Luke is mostly used in a transferred sense and the word ‘poor’ in the transferred sense describes everyone’s position before God: helpless and dependent on God’s grace. As Martin Luther’s last words, ‘All men are beggars before God’, all men need the bread from heaven.¹⁷² Fortunately it is offered as a free gift through the gospel. The poor in this sense is thus no other than a warning against self-sufficiency and independence of God’s grace. It is also a serious warning against the foolish reliance on materialism. In fact how one sees mammon and how one uses his property is closely related to how one sees God. Therefore in the next chapter, I will attempt to interpret the texts regarding Jesus’ teaching to the rich to give to the poor.

¹⁶⁸Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

¹⁶⁹Marshall 1998: 682-683.

¹⁷⁰Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

¹⁷¹Marshall 1998: 683.

¹⁷²Kvalbein 1987: 80-87.

CHAPTER III
TO GIVE TO THE POOR AS A CHALLENGE TO
THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM

3.1. Luke and Material Possession

No New Testament writer, except perhaps the Epistle of James, speaks out as emphatically as does Luke about the use of money and wealth. Luke more than other evangelists, preserves sayings of Jesus about the rich and the poor in the gospel. For one instance, Luke only records the story of Lazarus and the dives. He also presents sharing of wealth in Acts as a model for the community of his own day.¹⁷³

In this case, since a number of sayings of Jesus about money and wealth are also recorded in Mark, some scholars are in the opinion that elements of attitude towards material wealth and possessions can be found in the pre-Lucan gospel tradition. Nevertheless it is, as Fitzmyer notes, undeniable that Luke has sharpened the Marcan version. For instances, in Mark 10:21, Mark recorded that Jesus told the young man to sell what he possessed and to give it to the poor and to come and follow him. Luke sharpened the instruction and recorded that Jesus told him to sell *all* that he had (Lk 18:22). Again, whereas in Marcan source, Simon and Andrew, James and John leave their nets to follow Jesus (Mk 1:18-20), Luke depicts Simon, James and John leaving *everything* to follow him (Lk 5:11).

In this respect, Fitzmyer argues that there is no need to think that the element about material wealth is not rooted in the historical Jesus and originate in Luke himself. Rather the point is that Luke has chosen for his own reasons and accentuates it since he sees it as an imperative need in the Christian community for which he writes.¹⁷⁴

Here to me it is very important to be noticed that Luke, as Verhey notes, never presents Jesus as ascetic, as though money is simply “a part of this world,” which needs to be rejected along with the rest of it.¹⁷⁵ He rather teaches about the right use of possessions. In

¹⁷³Fitzmyer 1981: 247.

¹⁷⁴Fitzmyer 1981: 247-248.

¹⁷⁵Verhey 1984: 93-4.

fact Jesus condemned the rich not for their being rich, but for their being arrogant in the use of money and their foolish dependence on it.

One's use of money and his attitude towards wealth is therefore very important and in Luke it is even a sign and a symptom of the arrival of the kingdom of God. When Zacchaeus gave half of his goods to the poor and restored fourfold for his past gouging as a tax collector, it is indeed for Luke an illustration of something else, namely that Zacchaeus received the kingdom of God (Today salvation has come to this house, Lk.19:9). Therefore, it is, in Luke's theology, wise to say that the use of money or possession is a manifestation of the disposition of the self to the kingdom of God.¹⁷⁶

Luke's own emphasis on the right use of possessions is also well evident by his distinctive form of John the Baptist's preaching. This includes the instruction to the people that they should share tunics and food with those who need them (3:11), to soldiers that they avoid extortion and be content with their wages (3:14). The right use of material possession to aid an unfortunate human being is also seen in the parables of the rich fool (12:16-21), the story of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-26), Jesus' instruction to make friends by unrighteous mammon (16:9), and the unique point takes place in the story of Zacchaeus who is obviously a model for Christian disciple (19:2).

Concerning Luke's position on possession, Fitzmyer sees twofold attitude: moderate attitude and a radical attitude.¹⁷⁷ He notes that this twofold attitude is not so explicitly formulated in Luke and Acts but it can be found in various ways. The former attitude advocates the prudent use of material possessions to give assistance to human being less fortunate or to manifest a basic openness to Jesus' message. He puts the Baptist's advice to share (3:11), to use prudently and to make friends by worldly mammon (16:8-9), to give alms (12:42), etc. as the moderate attitude. In Acts Tabitha is also spoken highly because of her many good works and alms (9:36). In Acts 20:35, Paul also instructed the Ephesian elders to toil to help the weak recalling the words of Christ, "It is better to give than to receive".

Nevertheless unlike the moderate attitude, the latter, a radical attitude, recommends renunciation of all wealth or possessions. Fitzmyer puts Jesus' instruction for the missionary journey not to bring bread, money, purse, . . . (9:3, 10:4), Jesus' teaching to the rich man to sell all he has and to give it away as alms (12:33), Jesus' warning to his disciples, saying,

¹⁷⁶Verhey 1984: 96.

¹⁷⁷Fitzmyer 1981: 249.

“Anyone of you who does not bid farewell to all he has cannot be a disciple of mine” (14:33), as an example of a radical attitude.¹⁷⁸

He, however, sees it difficult to insist that the moderate group is responsible to assist the radical disciples in Luke’s view because Luke in the very beginning sees the eschatological dimension in the contrast or the reversal of human condition (1:53, 6:20-24, 16:19-20). He suggests that Luke uses the contrast between the rich and the poor as a divider of human attitudes towards God, towards Jesus and towards his message. For the poor in Lucan Gospel represents generically the neglected mass of humanity who are not the servant of mammon and not piling up treasures for themselves but are rather rich for God. In contrast the characteristic of the rich fool was that he felt no need of God.¹⁷⁹

Luke Timothy Johnson on the other hand insists that Lucan use of the language of possession is not only literally, but also metaphorically or symbolically. Luke uses this word to express the inner response of human hearts to God’s visitation of his people in the ministry of Jesus and to his authority. He rightly says, the rich and the poor in the Lucan writing symbolize the rejection and acceptance of Jesus announcing the new message of God’s salvation and peace.¹⁸⁰

And in Metzger’s view, there are two general consensuses concerning wealth and possession in Luke. To some commentators, the primary reason for giving alms is to improve the conditions of the poor while others emphasize how much a practice might benefit possessors, whether in this life or in the life to come. In other words, some see Jesus concern for the poor and his teaching about giving to alms as a means for resolving social equalities and social welfare.¹⁸¹ We can say that this view as mainly the position of liberation theology. But others interpret and see almsgiving as a means for spiritual health and eternal destiny of possessors, i.e. to securing a place in God’s kingdom. Seccombe for instance asserts, “Possessors are asked to give to the poor because material things exercise too great power over man, binding them to this age and preventing them from embracing the promised kingdom.”¹⁸²

To Metzger, these two trajectories are not mutually exclusive but a matter of emphasis. One can, for instance, foreground concern for the poor as a primary motivation for

¹⁷⁸Fitzmyer 1981: 249-250.

¹⁷⁹Fitzmyer 1981: 249-251.

¹⁸⁰Fitzmyer 1981: 251.

¹⁸¹Metzger 2007: 11.

¹⁸²Seccombe 1982: 195.

almsgiving and still hold that there is personal benefit for possessors.¹⁸³ Since there are a variety of perspectives on poverty and wealth in Luke, I will focus on the three main texts (Lk 16:19-31; 18:26-26; 19:1-9) where Jesus mainly taught about the said topic. Then I will examine other related texts as well in brief.

3.2. Lazarus and the Dives (Lk 16:19-31)

Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος, καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον εὐφραϊνόμενος καθ' ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς. πτωχὸς δέ τις ὀνόματι Λάζαρος ἐβέβλητο πρὸς τὸν πυλῶνα αὐτοῦ εἰλκωμένος καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ πλουσίου· ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ κύνες ἐρχόμενοι ἐπέλειχον τὰ ἔλκη αὐτοῦ. ἐγένετο δὲ ἀποθανεῖν τὸν πτωχὸν καὶ ἀπενεχθῆναι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἰς τὸν κόλπον Ἀβραάμ· ἀπέθανεν δὲ καὶ ὁ πλούσιος καὶ ἐτάφη. καὶ ἐν τῷ ἔθῃ ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, ὑπάρχων ἐν βασάνοις, ὄρᾳ Ἀβραάμ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ Λάζαρον ἐν τοῖς κόλποις αὐτοῦ. καὶ αὐτὸς φωνήσας εἶπεν· πάτερ Ἀβραάμ, ἐλέησόν με καὶ πέμψον Λάζαρον ἵνα βάψῃ τὸ ἄκρον τοῦ δακτύλου αὐτοῦ ὕδατος καὶ καταψύξῃ τὴν γλῶσσάν μου, ὅτι ὀδυνῶμαι ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ. εἶπεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ· τέκνον, μνήσθητι ὅτι ἀπέλαβες τὰ ἀγαθὰ σου ἐν τῇ ζωῇ σου, καὶ Λάζαρος ὁμοίως τὰ κακὰ· νῦν δὲ ὧδε παρακαλεῖται, σὺ δὲ ὀδυνᾶσαι. καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις μεταξὺ ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται, ὅπως οἱ θέλοντες διαβῆναι ἔνθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς μὴ δύνωνται, μηδὲ ἐκεῖθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς διαπερῶσιν. εἶπεν δέ· ἐρωτῶ σε οὖν, πάτερ, ἵνα πέμψῃς αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν οἶκόν τοῦ πατρός μου, ἔχω γὰρ πέντε ἀδελφούς, ὅπως διαμαρτύρηται αὐτοῖς, ἵνα μὴ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλθωσιν εἰς τὸν τόπον τοῦτον τῆς βασάνου. λέγει δὲ Ἀβραάμ· ἔχουσι Μωϋσέα καὶ τοὺς προφήτας· ἀκουσάτωσαν αὐτῶν. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· οὐχί, πάτερ Ἀβραάμ, ἀλλ' ἐάν τις ἀπὸ νεκρῶν πορευθῆ πρὸς αὐτοὺς μετανοήσουσιν. εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ· εἰ Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν οὐκ ἀκούουσιν, οὐδ' ἐάν τις ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆ πεισθήσονται.

Interpreting this passage, commentators have regularly called upon a similar story from Egypt (Setme and Si-Osiris). Metzger says that seven later Jewish versions derived from it and the earliest versions may be found in the Palestinian Talmud. In each of these parables,

¹⁸³Metzger 2007: 9-11.

a rich man and a poor man experience reversal at death.¹⁸⁴ In a Jewish version, a poor *hasid* and a rich tax collector die. The former had no friend in his burial except his pious friend while the latter receives a splendid funeral. The positions of the two men reversed in after-life. The *hasid* wanders amid streams of water in paradise while the rich man stretches out his tongue in vain to reach the water. In Gressman's view, the story travelled from Egypt to Palestine where it was adapted by the Jews.¹⁸⁵

It is assumed that the story must be familiar to Jesus and his contemporaries. However there is a major difference in the two stories. In Jewish- Egyptian story, the fates of the rich and the poor are determined by their good deeds and their bad deeds while there is no any indication of their deeds in the story of Lazarus and the dive. It is thus to be concluded that there is no clear literary dependence of the parable on this story. The parable is to explore independent of the other traditions.¹⁸⁶

3.2.1. Context Study

In Lk 16:14, it is mentioned that the story is told to the Pharisees, money-lovers. It is the only place in the New Testament where Pharisees are accused of being greedy. Seccombe sees the accusation as not for their being rich, but for their being money-lovers (*φιλαργυροι*) since Pharisees were not known for their wealth.¹⁸⁷ Other accusations to the Pharisees and the scribes are also found in 11:39 and 20:47 where accused of being hypocrites. Lk 16:15 implies that their love of money exposed the true condition of their hearts.

In wider context, the whole chapter deals with man's relation to money. The parable of unfaithful steward in 16:1-13 deals more about the right use of wealth, warning against mammon and an exhortation to make friends by giving, etc. Kvalbein sees this parable as the introduction to the story of Lazarus and the dive. The parable gives exhortation to use worldly wealth to gain friends so that they can welcome their helpers into the eternal dwelling. And he sees, the rich man in this story as an illustration of what happens if you don't do this. He was given a chance to help the poor Lazarus. If he had done so, he might have been received into the eternal dwelling. The context deals more about wealth and the right use of wealth. It is thus clear that the main concern in the story is the right use of wealth.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴Metzger 2007: 145.

¹⁸⁵This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 174.

¹⁸⁶Seccombe 1982: 176-177.

¹⁸⁷Seccombe 1982: 179.

¹⁸⁸Kavalbein 1987: 87.

And 16:16-18 deals with the validity of the law. It is clearly mentioned that the rule of the law and the prophets has come to an end and the kingdom is proclaimed. The preaching of the kingdom transcends it but it is not nullified. Its demand remains as long as the world exists (16:17). And 16:18 speaks about the Pharisees' manner of ignoring the intention of the law while preserving the letter.

It is now plain how the teaching about the validity of the law (16:16-18) relates to the main story of Lazarus and the dives (16:19-31). It is, Seccombe sees, a serious warning to the Pharisees to pay more serious heed to the scriptures which will turn them from the love of money to an earnest and truly brotherly care for their fellow Israelites. He also asserts that the warning is relevant for all who neglect the poor since Luke is not writing his gospel to the Pharisees. . . . Any reader rich or otherwise could feel the sting of the parable.¹⁸⁹

It is therefore clear that the two parables in chapter 16 complement one another: the former (1-13) is a challenge to the consistent use of mammon in the face of the coming kingdom and the latter (19-31) is a warning to those who are not persuaded and continue to value the things of this world more highly than the values of the new age. A number of considerations suggest that the whole teaching of this chapter is in the framework of Luke's kingdom expectation. Seccombe sees 16:1-13 is to be best understood in relation to the coming kingdom; 16:16 brings the kingdom into view; 16:25 indicates that the eschatological view of the beatitudes and woes in Lk 6:24 is present and operative in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The parable also demands an Isaiah 58:7 style of repentance is integrally related to the coming kingdom.¹⁹⁰

Concerning the structure of the story, Kvalbein divided it in two main parts: the narrative and dialogue as the following.

1. Narrative Part (19-23)

- a) Their life on earth (19-21)
- b) Their fate after death (22-23)

2. Dialogue (24-31)

- a) The request of the rich man for relief is refused (24-26)
- b) The prayer of the rich man for his brothers is refused (27-31)

From the structure of the story, it is clear that the main person is the rich man since only he takes part in the dialogue. Lazarus, in Kvalbein's view, is only a figure of contrast. The salvation of the Lazarus is not discussed at all. Since his Jewish name, Lazarus which is

¹⁸⁹Seccombe 1987: 179.

¹⁹⁰Seccombe 1987: 180.

the Greek form of Elazar or Eliezer, means God's help, it is presupposed that he is under the promise to Abraham.¹⁹¹

Jesus chooses to name the poor man while the rich man remains anonymous. The point according to Metzger is that Jesus reverses the expectation of the readers by naming the nameless and so dignifying him. He insists that the town's somebody is forgotten; its nobody is remembered.¹⁹² But it seems improbable since the main part of the story deals with the rich man, not Lazarus. We now will try to see its meaning in light of the text.

3.2.2. Reading the texts

This text presents very clearly about two possibilities in life after death. It is however not clearly mentioned why the poor man Lazarus got in heaven while the rich man got tortured in hell. That is why interpretations go in many different directions. A traditional and popular interpretation goes to direction of reversal of fortune in the life after death. The main point of the story, in this view, is seen in verse 24, which is interpreted as giving a sort of balance: suffering in this world will give comfort in the world to come and the well-to-do in this world will suffer. Another direction goes in different way where the interpretation is not seen as a comfort to the poor. Instead it is seen as a picture of how the rich is lost and interpreted as a warning to the rich. It is thus important to explore the intended meaning of the text.

The first section of narrative part (19-21) speaks about the different status of the rich man and Lazarus. The narrator could offer a vivid portrayal of the position of the rich man by using the imperfect tense such as 'customarily donned' (*ἐνεδιδυσκετο*) with a present participle 'being merry' (*εὐφραϊνομενος*). This suggests that decadence and lavish celebration had become a customary way of life extending back many years. The rich man's habit of dressing suggests an association with royalty. Jesus, in Lk 7:25, also remarks that those who wear fine clothing and live in luxury are said to dwell in royal palace. The use of imperfect verbs and present participles such as 'desiring' (*ἐπιθυμων*), 'were falling' (*πιπτοντων*), 'coming' (*ἔρχομενοι*), and 'licked' (*ἐπελειχον*) also clearly portrays the status of Lazarus. This implies that this is not momentary. Instead it suggests that Lazarus had been here for a long time.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹Kavalbein 1987:84.

¹⁹²Metzger 2007: 138.

¹⁹³Metzger 2007: 136.

Here Jesus at no point indicates that the rich man acquired his wealth unjustly. It seems that this man takes what is already his and spends it on his own pleasure. Neither did he mention any good deed of Lazarus. In Metzger's view, the narrator wants to portray how abundance and poverty can coexist in such close proximity for so long without any alternation. Needless to say he also suggests that it is unclear why Lazarus came to reside here and conceivably Lazarus' friends or family members long ago decided to place him directly in front of the rich man's estate because there he would have his best chance of receiving food.¹⁹⁴ Bernard B. Scott also argues that the gate is a metaphor for relational possibility and suggests the rich man "will become the patron of the poor man".¹⁹⁵ But unfortunately the rich man missed his chance and the second section of narrative part begins.

This second section of the narrative part (vv. 22-23) speaks about the after-life of the two men. Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham while the rich man is in Hades. Though it is not clearly mentioned the underlying reason(s) of their fates, it seems that Luke is saying that the kingdom is forever closed to those who close their hearts against the needy. The reason, as Seccombe notes, is that Luke is able to view the ethical demands of Isaiah 58 as equally descriptions of what God would do to save his people in the coming kingdom. He asserts,

"We might therefore be looking at an ethic of anticipatory realization of kingdom conditions: Behavior is to mirror and anticipate the believer's expectation of salvation. If salvation means God will put an end to the oppression of his people (Lk 4:18), his people must cease to oppress one another. If it means an end to hunger and want (6:20f) his people will share what they have now with the hunger and naked. The rich man in Lk 16:19-31 is forever excluded from the kingdom because he allows the continuance of a pattern of relationship between himself and Lazarus which is contrary to what the kingdom promises; he fails to act in Isaiah 58:7 manner. . . . Perhaps the petition 'Forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us' (Lk 11:4) in the course of prayer for the coming kingdom reflects such an ethical pattern; the reconciliation which the kingdom promises is to be practiced among those who wait for it. . . God invites the poor to his banquet so his children will do likewise."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴Metzger 2007: 137, 139.

¹⁹⁵Scott 1989: 151.

¹⁹⁶Seccombe 1982: 182-183.

The dialogue part starts in v 24 and the request of the rich man to Abraham is refused.¹⁹⁷ The second request for his brothers is also declined and was told the validity of the Law and the Prophets for them. In dealing with the validity of the law, it is a big question to what respect the law has retained its value after Jesus' coming. Kvalbein is right when he asserts that the answer to the validity of the law is given when Jesus summarizes the Law and the Prophets in a double commandment of love (Mt 22:34-40). In his view, Luke's Jesus gives a story illustrating practical implication of love for one's neighbor (10:25-37) and the whole New Testament equivocally shows that this was the main impression of Jesus' teaching on the law.

Kvalbein also relates warnings against riches to the double commandment of love. The love of money hinders the love of God as well as the love of neighbor. It also hinders discipleship. The rich man ensnares in this danger that he loved himself and his money instead of God and his neighbor. He thus breaks the law. The law speaks clearly about our duty to God as well as our fellow men. Kvalbein thus does not see the kingdom of God as the main topic of the story since the judgment of the rich man and the appeal to conversion are derived from their failing to hear the law, not from their failing to hear and receive the message of the kingdom.¹⁹⁸

But to me it is undeniably related to Luke's kingdom preaching. I see, like Seccombe, that it is teaching about kingdom behavior anticipating by the message of Jesus, kingdom-preacher, who proclaimed the release of the poor. It is not teaching about the adequacy of the law to inherit eternal life but about how the gospel transcends the law. It is an indirect teaching about God's activity to put an end to oppression, poverty and hunger and his demand to his people to do as what he had done to them. Seccombe insists that the kingdom behavior is more than simply a sign of the true adherence of the law. It is the very life of the kingdom. The people of God must produce a foretaste of the kingdom for in Jesus the powers of the age to come are already invading the present order.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷In v.25, Abraham told him that the great chasm has been fixed between them. Scholars have debated precisely where the places are. A minority insists that Abraham and Lazarus are already in the paradise or heaven and therefore in a different locale from the rich man altogether. Others however suggest that all three men are in hades (The Greek equivalent to 'Sheol') and that their final judgment is still expected. Most of these groups hold the chambers for the righteous and wicked in I Enoch and IV Ezra. According to I Enoch 22, human beings are held in corners within a great and high mountain of hard rock until the final judgment (vv.1-2). While the righteous have access to a spring of water (v.9), those who were not punished or judged during their stay on earth must endure sgreat pain until the great Day of Judgment. IV Ezra 7 also says all persons at death are held in chambers (v.37) until the final judgment arrives. While the wicked immediately wander about in torments the righteous are gathered into their chambers and guarded by angels in profound quiet (vv. 80, 95).

¹⁹⁸Kvalbein 1987: 85.

¹⁹⁹Seccombe 1982: 183-184.

It is in this story thus clear that the main actor is the unnamed rich man, not the named poor Lazarus. We once again fail to find poverty ideal, renunciation and reversal doctrine in this passage. It is not dealing with the topic how the poor is saved, but is dealing with how the rich is lost. In fact, it is teaching about kingdom behavior demanding total compassionate to anyone who is in a position to help any person and a warning not to turn away. In other words, it is a behavior to mirror in light of God's jubilee (Is 61:1-3, 58:1ff; Lk 4:18; 6:20). Its main concern to me is how the people of the kingdom should behave. It is also an alarming bell to materialists or those who are well-satisfied with his possession which hinders to see the needy and the after-life.

3.3. Sell all your Property and give it to the Poor (Lk 18:22-31)

ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἔτι ἔν σοι λείπει· πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς, καὶ ἕξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν [τοῖς] οὐρανοῖς, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι. ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας ταῦτα περίλυπος ἐγενήθη· ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος σφόδρα. ἰδὼν δὲ αὐτὸν ὁ Ἰησοῦς [περίλυπον γενόμενον] εἶπεν· πῶς δυσκόλως οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσπορεύονται· εὐκοπώτερον γὰρ ἐστὶν κάμηλον διὰ τρήματος βελόνης εἰσελθεῖν ἢ πλούσιον εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν. εἶπαν δὲ οἱ ἀκούσαντες· καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· τὰ ἀδύνατα παρὰ ἀνθρώποις δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ἐστίν. Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Πέτρος· ἰδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀφέντες τὰ ἴδια ἠκολουθήσαμέν σοι. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐστὶν ὃς ἀφήκεν οἰκίαν ἢ γυναῖκα ἢ ἀδελφοὺς ἢ γονεῖς ἢ τέκνα ἕνεκεν τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃς οὐχὶ μὴ [ἀπο]λάβῃ πολλαπλασίονα ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ ζωῆν αἰώνιον. Παραλαβὼν δὲ τοὺς δώδεκα εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· ἰδοὺ ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, καὶ τελεσθήσεται πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα διὰ τῶν προφητῶν τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου·

The interpretation of this story plays a very important role in Christian history because it, as many Christian thinkers have asserted, has formed the basis of monastic idealization of poverty.²⁰⁰ It is thus important to enquire if this passage really indicates an ideal of poverty. Concentrating on Jesus' command to the ruler to sell all he has and to give it to the poor, we will examine if Luke intended this to be followed literally. If yes, is it to be followed by all Christians, or by some selected groups? If not, we will see what he did mean.

²⁰⁰Seccombe 1982: 118.

3.3.1. Context Study

Luke takes over this story almost word for word from Mark and follows the order of material in Mark. Examination of the pericope before and after thus favours the common view that Luke followed Mark's version of this story.²⁰¹ But Luke has a slightly alteration. The person in Mark is designated simply as one (εἷς), and as a young man (νεανίσκος) in Matthew (19:20) while he becomes a ruler (ἀρχων, perhaps of a synagogue) in Luke. And in Verse 21a, Luke adds *all* (παντα) to Jesus' command to sell his possessions. And Lucan version does not mention that 'he turned away' (Mk 10:22; Mt 19:22). We are not told precisely the status of the rich man: if his sadness implies that he turned away from Jesus.

With concern to Luke's description of a certain man as an ἀρχων, some commentators, for instance Robert C. Tannehill, assume this man as a Jewish religious leader, possibly a member of Sanhedrin or one of the leaders of Pharisaic movement. But since Luke does not identify him as such, it is prudent to assume only that he holds a position of power. By seeing the parallel texts (23:13, 35; 24:20; 14:1), it seems that Luke is equating this man with the opponents of Jesus. But the rich man is here presented not as his opponent but sympathetically.²⁰²

Moreover, Luke omits Mark's journey setting (Mk 10:17a). He also omits the detail of the man running to Jesus and kneeling before him. Marshall sees that the omission brings out the contrast with the preceding incident more strongly.²⁰³ The preceding episode, parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector (18:9-14), deals with a proper way to find uprightness in God's sight. The following episode, Jesus' calling little children to come to him (18:15-17), deals with a model of those who would enter the kingdom. Then this episode (18:18-23) continues instruction about how one may inherit the Kingdom. In relation to this structure, Fitzmyer asserts that uprightness in God's sight, entrance into the kingdom and the inheritance of eternal life are clearly related; and the following episode (18:24-30) will discuss that relationship as well.²⁰⁴

Marshall divided the conversation in the story in three parts: 1) Jesus protests against the rich man's address as 'good man'; 2) Jesus directs the man to the second part of the Decalogue to which he replies that he has kept all these commandments; 3) Jesus summons the man to sell all he has and to give it to the poor.²⁰⁵ Here again the structure of the story,

²⁰¹Seccombe 1982: 118.

²⁰²Marshall 1998: 684.

²⁰³Marshall 1998: 684.

²⁰⁴Fitzmyer 1986: 1196.

²⁰⁵Marshall 1998: 683.

like the story of Lazarus and the dives, makes it plain that it is the ruler, not the poor, who plays the central role in the story. The poor are mentioned here only as the potential receivers of alms. It is clear that the ruler is the main actor, and the main focus in this story is the ruler's attitude towards God and mammon.

3.3.2. Reading the Text

The story starts by the question of a rich man to Jesus how he may inherit the eternal life. We do not know what prompted the ruler's question. Like that of the story of Lazarus and the dives, Jesus points to him the laws. Looking at wider context, in Luke 10:25, the same question about eternal life is put to Jesus by a lawyer and the same answer is given to him. Seccombe rightly says that Jesus refuses to be seen in the role of a rabbi promulgating new interpretations, embellishments or additions of the Law. Instead he declines to go beyond the published will of God.²⁰⁶ The man responds that he has observed them from his youth at which point Jesus tells him to sell all, give to the poor and come and follow him.

The man simply called Jesus, "Good teacher" and Luke has no mention of the man 'knelt down' as in Mark version (Mk 10:17). It is suggested that the addition 'ἀγαθε' is strange in address to a rabbi. Although it was not strange to speak a man as good, in Marshall's view, it may have seemed unusual to address a man as good; it could be regarded as flattery in which case it was a cheapening of a word that strictly applied only to God. He insists that Jesus' answer is meant to do away with any cheapening of the idea of goodness.²⁰⁷ In fact the ideas that true goodness belongs to God is testified in the Old Testament (Ps 106:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; I Chro 16:34; II Chro 5:13). It however does not seem that there is any entrapment in the ruler's question.

Jesus' denied to be called a good man. Marshall insists that this should not be taken as Jesus' confession of sin. This, he sees, lies beyond what the passage actually says. Rather it is a criticism of the view which sees Jesus as a teacher, even a good teacher. The man's refusal to obey Jesus to whom he called as good teacher shows that he did not really take his goodness seriously. It is therefore clear that the ruler is criticized for using the word in an empty fashion.²⁰⁸

Then Jesus points him the Decalogue: "You know the commandments: you shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness;

²⁰⁶Seccombe 1982: 123.

²⁰⁷Marshall 1998: 684.

²⁰⁸Marshall 1998: 684.

honour your father and mother.” Jesus’ ordering of the commandments follows Deut. 5:17-20 with the exception that placing the fifth commandment (honour your father and mother) at last. Bailey observes that to our knowledge the placing of the commandment on honour to parents at the end of a selection of the Decalogue is without precedent. Children in nearly all traditional societies are expected to care for their parents in old age. But Jesus may be deemphasizing this commandment in view of the rigorous requirement placed upon the disciples who had to leave all including their home.²⁰⁹

Far more important than this, Jesus passed over the first part of the Decalogue and points him precisely the second tablet of the Decalogue. Concerning Jesus’ quotation to the so-called second tablet of the Decalogue, not the first table, Marshall suggests that he was concerned with the man’s attitude to his neighbour; the question of love for God is not raised possibly because nobody could claim to fulfil that commandment fully. . . Here was a criterion by which the man could measure his performance.²¹⁰

The man claimed to have kept all of them from his youth. Then Jesus points out that he lacks only one thing and gives him a further commandment which is to sell all he has and to give it to the poor.²¹¹ If he does this, he will have treasure in heaven, i.e., eternal life. Although only one thing is lacking, it is all-embracing: It involves the selling of all the man has and the distribution of the proceeds to the poor. It is however not to be interpreted literally. It is to me, as Marshall has pointed out, rather a challenge to real and total obedience and a call to discipleship.²¹²

B.W. Bacon sees the rich man as a representative of the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, and interprets the story as an attack on legalistic righteousness. In his view, Jesus’ demand to the rich man to sell all is seen as Jesus’ attempt to expose the true condition of all the rulers in Jesus’ time.²¹³ The first commandment deals with a prohibition to worship idol. In Craddock’s view, the ruler is idolater as well as a materialist since the manner of the ruler exposes money as his idol.²¹⁴ This idol or materialism is in fact what makes him fail to love and give to the poor. This means he breaks the law. He deceives himself in responding Jesus that he had fulfilled it since his youth. That is why Cranfield calls this story as ‘the sharp probe that will show the man his self-deception’. The first commandment is at stake;

²⁰⁹This is the quotation of Metzger 2007: 163.

²¹⁰Marshall 1998: 685.

²¹¹Here Luke, like Matthew, omits the mention that Jesus looks at the man and love him (Compared Lk 18:22 with Mk 10:21). Marshall suggests that the emotion shown by Jesus is ignored.

²¹²Marshall 1998:685.

²¹³This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 119.

²¹⁴Craddock 1990: 213-214.

the ruler must dispose of money which has become an idol.²¹⁵ The fragment from the gospel of the Hebrews, quoted by Oregin, goes:

Jesus says to the ruler, “How canst thou say, I have fulfilled the law and the prophets? For it stands written in the law, love thy neighbour as thyself; and behold, many of thy brethren, sons of Abraham are begrimed, are with dirt and die of hunger – and thy house is full of many good things and nothing at all comes forth from it to them.”²¹⁶

It is a well-known fact that the first tablet of the Decalogue mainly deals with a man’s attitude and duty towards God and the second part of the Decalogue basically teaches about man’s obligations towards his fellow human beings. We can say that the first tablet is the foundation. The point of departure here is that a man cannot fulfil the law in so far as he missed the foundation of the commandment which is to love God and to absolutely obey Him. I would say that the first tablet of the Decalogue, the commandment to worship God alone (not to worship idol or other gods) is the foundation for fulfilling the commandment. It is wise to say that loving God is the foundation of the ethics of the people of the kingdom. It is to be seen as to reinforce this earlier teaching that the way of the kingdom is to follow what is called as the double commandment, by loving God and one’s neighbour.

The ruler’s problem, in Craddock’s view, is evident at two points. Craddock sees that the ruler’s question is flawed, in the combination of ‘do’ and ‘inherit’ in his question, saying, “What shall I **do** to **inherit** eternal life?” He sees these two words as contradictory and insists that *one does in order to earn, not to inherit*. It seems that to him eternal life is to be achieved by his own effort and ability, not to be received as the gift of God. It is a mind-set contrary to Jesus’s words in verses 14 and 17 where Jesus taught about the fact that the humble and the childlike mentality are exalted.²¹⁷

The second problem in Craddock’s is that while there is no reason to doubt that the ruler had kept the commandments from his youth, it is clear that there is one he has not kept, the first and the foundation command in the Decalogue: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex.20:3). It is quite evident when his encounter with Jesus ends sadly when Jesus knows his condition and gives a prescription for life, upon the realization that he cannot serve God and mammon, he has chosen mammon. He is invited to trust God completely, but he cannot or, rather, will not. The reason is that he was enticed by the power of wealth, rested

²¹⁵This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 119.

²¹⁶Seccombe 1982: 119.

²¹⁷Craddock 1990: 213. However, seeing a wider context, I Cor 6:9 goes, “Or do you not know that the unjust ones will not inherit the kingdom of God. This suggests that doing and entering the Kingdom is inseparable. Whereas the Kingdom is God’s gift, it implies that wrong doing could pervert it.

too comfortably on the security of his surplus, moved too far from the cries of the hungry, and depended so much on his property. In short he is idolater.²¹⁸ That is why the man is unable to bear the thought of surrendering his wealth.

As he became very sorrowful, Luke gives the explanation by adding ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος σφόδρα (for he was very rich). It indicates that riches make it impossible for a man to enter the kingdom. The ruler's failure is seen not as a breach of the commandments of the second tablet, but as a decisive failure to enter the Kingdom of God. Seccombe observes,

This is emphasized by Luke who changes Mark's future tense to a present (πῶς δυσκόλως οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσπορεύονται— Lk 18:24; cf. Mk 10:23- πῶς δυσκόλως οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελεύσονται) and it is consistent with his general theological attitude. The Kingdom is present with Jesus, and entry into fellowship with him is entry into the kingdom (salvation). Jesus was not defining the way to life. His ministry was bound up with actually inviting men into the kingdom. . . the one thing lacking should be understood in terms of his need to enter the fellowship of Jesus, and hence into life itself. It is as if Jesus had said, "You have kept the commandment, enter into life."²¹⁹

Luke does not say that the man went away as Mark and Matthew did (Lk 18:23// Mk 10:22, Mt 19:22). But he enlarged upon the sad case by using the Greek word *περίλυπον γενόμενον* (very grieved) while Matthew and Luke use the word ordinarily *λυπούμενος* (grieving). And he said, not solely to him but to those nearby who could overhear, "How hard it for a rich. For it is easier for a camel to enter into a needle's eye." Although his comparison that the camel going through the eye of a needle is a proverb about the humanly impossible, Jesus' statement may be taken as an example of hyperbole. If it is taken literally, Metzger argues, and then Jesus contradicts himself by first acknowledging that some rich person are now entering the kingdom and then claiming that such an event is impossible.²²⁰

In fact, Luke in his gospel does not deal with the fact that the kingdom of God is not open to the rich. In fact, it deals with the danger of riches or possessions, and not with the subject of the improbability of the kingdom for the rich. The story of Zacchaeus in the next

²¹⁸Craddock 1990:214.

²¹⁹Seccombe 1982: 124. Whereas Seccombe's assertion that the kingdom is present with Jesus is good suggestion, I don't agree with him when he says, ". . . entry into fellowship with him is entry into the kingdom (salvation)". As mentioned in the interpretation of the kingdom, 'enter into the kingdom' implies future eschatology (salvation). Entry into the fellowship with him gives only the foretaste of the kingdom.

²²⁰Some scribes apparently sought to soften the hyperbole by substituting *καμilon* (a rope or ship's cable) for *καμηλον*(camel). Metzger suggests that the variant arose because the two Greek words had come to be pronounced alike. But as Bovon argues that the scribal alternation does nothing to soften Jesus' proverb since a ship cable, like a camel, simply cannot pass through a needle's eyes. See, Metzger 2007: 167.

chapter makes it clear that the rich are not excluded from the kingdom (19:1-10). In fact the purpose of this passage is to clearly expose the power and danger of wealth and to warn against idolatry or materialism. This topic, the danger of greed, is also to be seen in the wider context of teaching about the way to gain eternal life given earlier in the gospel (12:15) and about the attitudes of disciples to riches (6:24; 8:14; 11:41; 12:13-34; 16).

When those who listen to him (οἱ ἀκούσαντες) wondered since all of them participate to a lesser or a greater extent in the love of money, the answer is given that, ‘nothing is impossible with God’. Craddock observes that this answer is the same one given to Abraham and Sarah when they were told that they would have a child, the same one given to the virgin Mary as she stood in awe and bewilderment.²²¹

The disciples are not uninterested in his answer and Peter says so in a statement that is half question and half reminder as they have invested a great deal in this venture with Jesus. Jesus answered Peter and all who will hear it saying, “Truly I say to you” (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, in the emphatic form) there is no man who has left house or wife or brother or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and the age to come eternal life” (18:30).

Here it is important to note that in Luke there is no mention of lands in the rewards of this life while both Mark and Matthew includes lands (ἡ ἀγροῦς) in the rewards of this life (Mk 10:30; Mt 19:29). Here, Craddock says, “For Luke, the abundant and multiplied blessings for the dedicated disciples are in all terms of relationships (v. 29), and the history of the church as the family of God confirms the fulfilment of the promise. Those who have interpreted the Christian life as a materialist success story find no support in the Gospel of Luke.”²²² We can say that it severely warns against prosperity theology.

The main purpose of Luke to present this story therefore is again a warning to materialism or making mammon as idol. It makes clear that breaking the first table of the Decalogue, which is the first and the foundation of all, and mainly concerns with doctrine, causes the breaking of the second table, which mainly concerns with ethics. The double commandment, loving God and loving fellow human being, go hand in hand to the people of the kingdom.

The commandment to sell all and give it to the poor is, for some people, too extreme a course. But it is not to be taken literally. In Luke 9:59-62, the two would-be disciples are denied permission to return home and sell what they possess. The first disciples are claimed

²²¹Craddock 1990: 214.

²²²Craddock 1990: 214-215.

only to leave their home, not all their possessions (Lk 18:28). No disciple is demanded to sell **all** (*παντα* in Greek) and give it to the poor. The demand to the ruler is quite exceptional. In this case Seccombe argues,

It is pointless to indulge in psychological speculations. . . Luke gives a simple explanation: *ἦν γὰρ πλουσιος σφοδρα* (v.23). The power of his wealth is exposed. . . The man comes wanting to know the way to eternal life, but, when it transpires that it will cost him his wealth, it is revealed that his love for the things of the world is greater than his desire for the kingdom. . . Not that it was desired that the ruler should fail, but Jesus is unwilling to have a follower with divided loyalties and interests.²²³

The demand to the ruler thus should not be taken as a demand of renunciation or monastic idealization of poverty. The command ‘to give it to the poor’ is applicable to all not only for some, but not in its literal sense. It is intended to expose the power of wealth in human life and in fact is a warning to materialism. The message is very relevant for the materialistic society today.

²²³Seccombe 1982: 127.

3.4. Jesus and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-9)

Καὶ εἰσελθὼν διήρχετο τὴν Ἰεριχώ. Καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ ὀνόματι καλούμενος Ζακχαῖος, καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν ἀρχιτελώνης καὶ αὐτὸς πλούσιος· καὶ ἐζήτηε ἰδεῖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν τίς ἐστίν καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου, ὅτι τῇ ἡλικίᾳ μικρὸς ἦν. καὶ προδραμῶν εἰς τὸ ἔμπροσθεν ἀνέβη ἐπὶ συκομορέαν ἵνα ἴδῃ αὐτὸν ὅτι ἐκείνης ἡμελλεν διέρχεσθαι. καὶ ὡς ἦλθεν ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον, ἀναβλέψας ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν· Ζακχαῖε, σπεύσας κατὰβηθι, σήμερον γὰρ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μέναι. καὶ σπεύσας κατέβη καὶ ὑπεδέξατο αὐτὸν χαίρων. καὶ ἰδόντες πάντες διεγόγγυζον λέγοντες ὅτι παρὰ ἁμαρτωλῶ ἀνδρὶ εἰσῆλθεν καταλῦσαι. σταθεὶς δὲ Ζακχαῖος εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν κύριον· ἰδοὺ τὰ ἡμίσιά μου τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, κύριε, τοῖς πτωχοῖς δίδωμι, καὶ εἴ τινός τι ἐσυκοφάντησα ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν. εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο, καθότι καὶ αὐτὸς υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ ἐστιν·

3.4.1. Context Study

It is a common held view that Luke has derived this episode basically from his special source “L”. And its relation to the preceding episode plays a very important role in Lucan theology. The healing place of the blind man in the preceding story is rendered differently in Luke from other Synoptic gospels. He renders that it happens before his entry (Lk 18:35) instead of taking place as Jesus is leaving Jericho in Mk 10:46; Mt 20:29. In this case, Seccombe insists that Luke has altered the setting of the healing of the blind man and the most probable explanation for this is that Luke wants to take place the story of Zacchaeus at the conclusion of his collection of salvation stories to make it the climax of his presentation.²²⁴

Concerning the periscope of this text, Fitzmyer also interestingly observes, “Following on the episode of the blind man who sought compassion from Jesus that he might

²²⁴Seccombe 1982: 131.

see again (18:41), this episode presents a wealthy inhabitant of Jericho taking unwonted steps 'to catch sight of Jesus'.²²⁵ Brown also suggests that probably Luke has moved the scene geographically to Jesus' entering the city because next he wishes to introduce a colorful scene of his own involving Zacchaeus within Jerusalem.²²⁶ That is why Marshall even asserts that Luke 19:10 climaxes and brings to a close the whole of Jesus' Galilean and Judean Ministry.²²⁷ It makes thus sense that this story plays a very important role in Luke Gospel and he wants to place it at the climax of his presentation of the kingdom of God.

Seccombe also asserts that Luke no doubt has carefully framed the section 18:9-19:10 to represent various sides of the question of individual salvation. With the exception of Jesus prediction to his death (18:31-34), he insists, each part deals with forgiveness, the kingdom of God and salvation (18:14, 17, 24, 29, 42, 19:9). By omitting the discourse on greatness in Mark (Mk 10:35-45), he has brought the healing of the blind beggar into relationship with the rich ruler. He notes that the beggar is the exact opposite in economic terms to the ruler, but receives salvation for his faith in Jesus. The story of Zacchaeus was probably introduced to complement the story of the blind beggar and to provide a contrast to the ruler and to illustrate God' power to do impossible (18:27).²²⁸

With concern to the readers, McCormick sees that the readers of Luke represent a well-to-do society enjoying a bourgeoisie-type of prosperity. And he insists that one of Luke' characteristics is a concern for the salvation of the rich. The stories of the rich ruler and Zacchaeus would fit his assertions. Luke's omission of the name of the Blind beggar (while Mark's clearly mentions that he is the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, Mk 10:46) combined with his naming of Zacchaeus gives evident weight to the latter story. At the very least it indicates that in Luke' mind, Zacchaeus was more important and significant to his readers than a faceless beggar.²²⁹

Though I am well convinced that Luke is interested in salvation of the rich as well, I see McCormick's view difficult to accept that Luke's readers represent a well-to-do society and Zacchaeus was more important than faceless beggar to Luke's readers. In the beatitudes, the poor (most probable the disciples who are really poor, 6:20) are clearly stated as blessed while the rich are claimed as woe (materially rich, 6:24). Luke's purpose in presenting Zacchaeus's story, in my opinion, is the fact that salvation is equally open to the rich and the

²²⁵Fitzmyer 1986: 1222.

²²⁶Brown 2010: 252.

²²⁷This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 131.

²²⁸Seccombe 1982: 130.

²²⁹This is the quotation of Seccombe 1982: 131.

poor. Craddock is right when he asserts, “The account of Jesus and Zacchaeus in Jericho, found only in Luke, recalls the immediately preceding story of the blind beggar. Though one is very poor, the other is very rich; both are blessed with salvation (18:42; 19:9-10).”²³⁰

Moreover, compared to the story of the ruler, both of them are vividly portrayed as rich men. The ruler is, on the one hand, grief-stricken at Jesus’ demand because he was exceedingly rich (πλούσιος σφόδρα, 18:23). On the other hand, despite the fact that Zacchaeus was rich he was saved. Zacchaeus is here given a double description: he was a chief tax-collector and quite wealthy (και αὐτος ἦν ἀρχιτελωνης και αὐτος πλουσιος). It can only be, in Seccombe’s view, a cross-reference and it is a fair inference, then, that Luke wishes to affirm in relation to the story of the ruler, that salvation is open to the rich.²³¹

In short, this story and the preceding passages portray the real contrast lying in the different responses of the two men to Jesus. No effort is made to explain their condition before meeting with Jesus. Jesus meets each with the offer of the kingdom. The ruler meets it as demand and departs sorrowful; Zacchaeus meets it as gracious acceptance. In his joy he resolves to give half of the possessions to the poor and to make four-fold restitution. Some think that Zacchaeus’ response is the fulfillment of the commandment to the ruler. But surprisingly no sacrifice is demanded to Zacchaeus as to the ruler. Seccombe suggests that presumably Zacchaeus remains materially rich.²³²

The context thus makes clear that renunciation is not the issue. In the story, the poverty is not idealized but an object to be helped and terminated. It is thus prudent to suggest that the main actor in this story is Zacchaeus, not the poor. The poor in this story are only the potential receivers of alms which come out of a result of spontaneous conversion of the rich man, Zacchaeus. The context shows rather that hospitality, Justice and compassion arising out of a gracious acceptance of the offer of the kingdom is the main theme of the story.

3.4.2. Reading the Text

Craddock observes that the expression “chief-collector” in 19:2 is a term that appears nowhere else in Greek literature. This implicates Zacchaeus, in his view, more deeply in the corrupt tax system of the Roman government.²³³ That is why he adds ‘and quite wealthy’, the implication is that Zacchaeus’ wealth undoubtedly came from his activity as tax-collector. It

²³⁰Craddock 1990: 218.

²³¹Seccombe 1982: 130.

²³²Seccombe 1982: 132.

²³³Craddock 1990: 218.

is a common held view that in a corrupt system like this, the loftier one's position the greater one's complicity in that system. That is why some have sought to make a hero of Zacchaeus by portraying him as unjustly excluded by the Jews.²³⁴ Therefore, whereas no Zacchaeus' private life is mentioned in the story, it is sure that he is a universally despised sinner in his circle since no one can be privately righteous in this corrupt system participating in and profiting from a program that robs and crushes other persons.

Nevertheless, this is, in Craddock's view, not to say that Zacchaeus is without qualities. His intense desire to see Jesus, overcoming the risk of ridicule and embarrassment, is fundamental to the happy conclusion of the story.²³⁵ Apparently he has heard that Jesus is really a friend of tax collectors and sinners (7:34). In spite of his tiny stature (a mere physical description of Zacchaeus, in Fitzmyer's view), and the crowd that hinders him to see Jesus, he was very eager to see Jesus and was seeking the possible way.

Metzger here interestingly asserts that in seeking Jesus, readers may momentarily align him with Herod who also sought to see Jesus in Lk 9:9. And Zacchaeus' small stature coupled with his willingness to run a head of the crowd and scramble up a sycamore tree encourage readers to align him with the children whom Jesus recently called to himself and likened to those who shall enter the kingdom (18:15-17). The tax-collector's sincere interest contrasts both with the king's bare curiosity and the ruler's self-interest preoccupation over securing his own future. And the tax-collector's spontaneous and joyful reception of Jesus also contrasts with the ruler's silent and indecision (18:23).²³⁶

In Fitzmyer's view, both Zacchaeus and Jesus take the initiative. He observes, "By way of Zacchaeus' initiative, Jesus too takes the initiatives and invites himself to the tax-collector's house for lodging."²³⁷ In spite of Jesus' negative portrayal of the rich in the prior discourse (18:25), he willingly goes to a rich man, not to a poor man, to a tax-collector, not to an ordinary citizen, and to one regarded as a sinner, not to one of the upright. Then the wealthy man, with God's assistance through the needle's eye, inherits the kingdom. Metzger observes, "Having said goodbye to his possessions, he has become Jesus' disciple and successfully passed through the eye of the needle into God's kingdom (18:24-25) and acquired inexhaustible treasure in heaven (12:33)."²³⁸

²³⁴Seccombe 1982: 130.

²³⁵Craddock 1990: 219.

²³⁶Metzger 2007: 172-173. In Michael C. Parson's view, Zacchaeus' small stature would rather connote a "small-mindedness", indicative of poor character for the Gospel's earliest audiences. But most scholars hold to refer to Luke's physical description of Zacchaeus.

²³⁷Fitzmyer 1986: 1221.

²³⁸Metzger 2007: 178.

It is not mentioned that Zacchaeus begs Jesus for mercy. Jesus also makes no reference to Zacchaeus' repentance, conversion and faith. Metzger suggests that at some point during Jesus' visit, probably after a lengthy conversation during which Zacchaeus became acquainted with his reading of the Law and the Prophets and his vision for the kingdom.²³⁹ It is just hypothesis or speculation and it seems to me that Luke is not interested in 'how he was converted' in so much as 'what the result of the conversion is'.

As a result of their meeting, he vows to give half of his possessions to the poor and to pay it back four times over if he has extorted anything from anyone. Some scholars such as Metzger and Fitzmyer see his vow as a response to the grumbling of the crowd.²⁴⁰ On the other hand, Craddock sees this noble act, to give generously to the poor and restitution to anyone he may have cheated, as itself evidence of the radicality of grace and the power of Jesus' good news to him.²⁴¹ This seems to me more credible. Zacchaeus also in my view is not interested to make accuse or to defend to his townspeople's criticism. Instead I see his vow as a result of his conversion. This power of the gospel of the kingdom in Zacchaeus's life is evident in later ecclesiastical tradition that the tax-collector, Zacchaeus became bishop of Caesarea.²⁴²

Zacchaeus is in fact an example of radical repentance. He interestingly even goes beyond the law's requirement for restitution. According to Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:7, voluntary restitution called for a return of the original amount plus 20 percent (one-fifth) only. Compulsory restitution called for doubling the original amount and, only in some cases, repaying fourfold or fivefold (Ex.22:1, 3-4; II Sam. 12:6). Zacchaeus promises to pay back four times over. We can say that he transcends the demand of the law when the kingdom of God belongs to him.

Therefore one category in the end is very crucial, that is the expression "salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham". The meaning of Abraham's son was made clear as early as the preaching of John the Baptist when crowd, soldiers and tax collectors asked him what to do as a result of their baptism of repentance (Lk. 3:10-14). By this parallel text, it is clear that Zacchaeus was not a Jew only by the ancestry but in his

²³⁹Metzger 2007: 180.

²⁴⁰Metzger 2007: 174; Fitzmyer, 1986: 1225. Metzger suggests, "His promise to make fourfold restitution in the event of an unintentional accusation may stem from the townspeople's criticism of him (v.7). Although Zacchaeus does not admit to having brought false charges, he acknowledges that oversights and errors are indeed part of the tax-gathering business and promises to right all wrongs if a legitimate complaint is registered against him."

²⁴¹Craddock 1990: 219.

²⁴²Fitzmyer 1986: 1223.

behaviors (especially behaviors towards the poor) that mark him one who lives a life of repentance.²⁴³ This coins an example of radical repentance.

Furthermore, Metzger suggests to be understood the expression τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ (in this house) as “by means of this house” (dative of means) or “to/ for this house” (dative of advantage). The reading as this phrase in a dative of means would have the meaning that Zacchaeus’ repentance will bring salvation to many in and around Jericho who are poor and oppressed. In other words, by means of the tax-collector’s forth-coming act, valuable resources once owned and managed exclusively by one name will now be distributed among members of the community.²⁴⁴

If this reading is right, it suggests that salvation and conversion should not be confined in the condition of the soul. Instead, like as Zacchaeus offers half of his possessions to the poor, it must go beyond individual and even beyond domestic affairs. It must enhance towards social and economic dimensions. The fact that salvation comes to this house is very common in Luke-Acts (Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15-31; 18:8). But in this story, far more than household, individual salvation goes to the poor and to whom he may have cheated.²⁴⁵ It is prudent to say that this story is not far from social gospel.

The expression ‘to seek and save the lost’ in the conclusion of this story is distinctive of Luke.²⁴⁶ This expression occurs also in the parables of the sheep, the coin and the father (15:6, 24, 32). The gospel of Luke is interested in such a sinner because it shows how comprehensive and far-reaching Jesus’ forgiveness was. The whole episode could also be taken as Jesus’ restoring to the community of God’s people, a person who had been excluded by that community on account of his vocation.²⁴⁷ Thus it is not improbable that how salvation is open to the sinners or the lost as well as how the effect of that grace is powerful are Luke’s main presentation. Craddock asserts,

Interestingly this expression becomes widely used in the church although the lost is a very rare term. . . However the popular use of the phrase ‘to save the lost’ has been much more narrow than in Luke. One hears it almost exclusively in terms of a conversion and often in an even more restricted sense of ‘preserving a soul for

²⁴³Harrelson and others eds., 2003: 1889-1890.

²⁴⁴Metzger 2007: 178. He observes that the emphatic position of *πτωχοῖς διδῶμι* in Zacchaeus’ vow suggests that Zacchaeus’ forthcoming divestiture is motivated not by a desire, for instance, to detach himself from material positions but to make a significant contribution toward Jesus’ mission to improve conditions for the poor (Lk 4:18-19). Pp. 176-177.

²⁴⁵Craddock 1990: 220.

²⁴⁶But the similar ideas, not the exact word could be found in Mt 18:12; Jn 3:17. The expression “you have not sought the lost” Ezekiel 34:4, NRSV is the most similar expression.

²⁴⁷Harrelson and others eds., 2003: 1889-1890.

heaven'. Here in the case of Zacchaeus, his 'being saved' refers to a conversion to be sure, but not in a private sense. Not only is his household involved but also the poor who will be beneficiaries of his conversion as well as all those people whom he may have defrauded. His salvation therefore has personal, domestic, social and economic dimensions. In addition we should not forget that in other stories 'saved' is translated 'made well', 'healed' and 'made whole'. Luke would object to confining the word to a condition of the soul. The whole life is affected by Jesus' ministry, a foretaste of the complete reign of God.²⁴⁸

Therefore, it is very important to be noted that Jesus' visit in Zacchaeus' house was not a delay or a detour on his journey to Jerusalem. In Craddock' view, this was and is the very purpose of the journey. It portrayed the theme of Jesus' ministry, i.e., to seek and save the lost.²⁴⁹ And it also clearly sketches out the true nature of repentance by the confession of the new convert Zacchaeus.

We can conclude that Luke's main purpose of presenting Zacchaeus' story is to explore the importance of hospitality, right livelihood, and compassion which are the fruits of his repentance. No doubt hospitality and compassion play a very important role in Luke's salvation presentation. Craddock rightly asserts that Luke's gospel of grace is joined to repentance and repentance to Luke is not solely a transaction of heart but it bears fruits.²⁵⁰ The theme of the story is in fact to show the way of hospitality, justice and compassion coming out of the power God's salvation, which seeks and saves the lost, since salvation in Luke has personal, domestic, social, and economic dimensions.

²⁴⁸Craddock 1990: 220. This story also provides some parallel to the early church where salvation was accompanied by spontaneous joy and generosity.

²⁴⁹Craddock 1990: 220.

²⁵⁰Craddock 1990: 219.

3.5. Give Alms (*δοτε ἐλεημοσυνην*, Lk 11:41; 12:32-34)

These two texts do not directly link with the word *πτωχος* (poor). But the implied meaning of the phrase *δοτε ἐλεημοσυνην* (give alms) in these two texts, is inseparable with the theme of this chapter, *Give it to the Poor* in the ethics of the people of the kingdom. Especially the latter, Lk 12:32-34, is very much related with possession and the kingdom. I will thus briefly look at these two texts.

3.5.1. Reading Lk 11:41

πλὴν τὰ ἐνόητα δοτε ἐλεημοσύνην, καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντα καθαρὰ ὑμῖν ἐστίν.

Luke places this passage at earlier of Jesus' ministry while Matthew, in a different order, places much of this material at the close of Jesus' ministry (Mt 23:1-36). Unlike Matthew, Luke places this discourse in the home of a Pharisee. We see that Jesus in Luke often was a dinner guest with the Pharisees (7:36; 14:1) and it was the Pharisees who warned him about Herod's desire to kill him (13:31). Marshall also observes that the picture painted here is one of the dangers of Pharisaism, rather than a portrait of every single Pharisee.²⁵¹ Craddock also comments that Jesus and Pharisees had much in common and Jesus, in his criticism, is not an outsider firing broadside at institutionalized religion.²⁵²

The criticism is followed by the command 'give alms'. Fitzmyer observes that Luke has added this verse (11:41), which has no parallel in Matthew. In his view, it stems from Luke's own composition, stressing almsgiving.²⁵³ The criticism and the command of Jesus to the Pharisees come out of legalism which neglects love to fellow human being. So, he suggests the Pharisees that 'if men give alms, then everything will be clean'. Concerning the usage '*τα ἐνόητα δοτε ἐλεημοσυνην*' there are a lot of different translations. Some suggest

²⁵¹Marshall 1998: 490.

²⁵²Craddock 1990: 158-159.

²⁵³Fitzmyer 1986: 943.

to mean 'give alms from the heart' while others hold to mean 'give the content as alms'. But the most possible interpretation is that it means, by using a metaphor of cleansing vessels, inner cleansing of the vessels makes cleansing superfluous.²⁵⁴

Briefly stated, Jesus by this passage wants to warn against people giving meticulous care to legal details and neglecting God's justice and love. It is a warning against the danger of legalism which stresses more on the letter of the law than the spirit of the law. Jesus is sharply critical of religion that has quantified principles and lost its heart. He is opposing legalism which neglects love. That is why some scholars tend to see some of the sayings in this passage as reflecting an attitude to Jewish legalism which is held to be more typical of Jewish-Christian circles than of Jesus himself.²⁵⁵

The main message of the passage is therefore the fact that giving alms or philanthropic activity is the basic source that transcends selfishness, and the only way to overcome idolatry arising out of self-interest and greed which the law forbids basically. True spirituality is not legalism; rather it basically lies in the charitable giving derived from heart. This passage therefore more or less deals with the ethics of the people of the kingdom.

²⁵⁴ Marshall 1998: 496.

²⁵⁵ Marshall 1998: 493.

3.5.2. Reading Lk 12:32-34

Μὴ φοβοῦ, τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον, ὅτι εὐδόκησεν ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν δοῦναι ὑμῖν τὴν βασιλείαν. Πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην· ποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς βαλλάντια μὴ παλαιούμενα, θησαυρὸν ἀνέκλειπτον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ὅπου κλέπτῃς οὐκ ἐγγίζει οὐδὲ σῆς διαφθείρει· ὅπου γάρ ἐστιν ὁ θησαυρὸς ὑμῶν, ἐκεῖ καὶ ἡ καρδία ὑμῶν ἔσται.

A parallel text of this passage is found, but in a different context, in Mt 6:19-21 (in Sermon on the Mount). It seems that Matthew has gathered this teaching into large thematically into the Sermon on the Mount. But Luke gives the report of the quarrelling brothers first (12:13), and then he continues the lengthy discourse about treasure in this world and heavenly treasure. In this case, Seccombe suggests that it, in Luke, moves from subject to subject with a logic more to be expected from occasional discourse than in a literary production.²⁵⁶ Fitzmyer thus sees that the first piece of Jesus' advice in verse 33a (sell your property and give alms) undoubtedly stems from Luke's pen while the rest of verse 33 and 34 are derived from 'Q'.²⁵⁷

Contrast to the land owner worrying about securing food and drink for the future and storing till no place to store his crops for himself (12:17-18) and who is excessively preoccupied with worldly things, Jesus at the preceding passage (12:22-31), encourages his disciples not to worry about their future because God already knows what they need. Then in this passage (12: 32-34), Jesus, in contrast to the landowner who saves only for this world, here again demands the disciples to sell and give alms and to store for heavenly treasure. That is why Seccombe insists that conclusion of the parable of the rich fool is recalled here and Jesus recommends the reverse procedure.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶Seccombe 1982: 146.

²⁵⁷Fitzmyer 1986: 981. Luke, among the canonical Gospels, only talks about the report of the quarrelling brothers. But the parallel form of the saying is found at the end of *The Gospel of Thomas*.

²⁵⁸Seccombe 1982: 153.

As the demand is very high, it is debated about the fact that was this demand meant for general application to all Christians? From the preceding texts, it is clear that this logion is directly addressed to the disciples (12:22). Thus, in Degenhardt's view, it was intended historically for the 'professional' disciples of Jesus and Luke applied it to full-time community servant (*hauptberufliche gemeindediener* in German). Though Degenhardt's audience theory produces very much attractive results, Seccombe, seeing a wider context, suggests that *μικρον ποιμνιον* (little flock) is used as a characterization of the remnant of Israel and Luke himself uses it to describe the church (Acts 20:28).²⁵⁹

Therefore it does not favour the conclusion that the command to sell possession and give alms is intended for a limited group. And it does not seem either that this passage is to be treated as a demand for total renunciation. As Seccombe has observed, Luke would have said *παντα τα υπαρχοντα υμων* (all your possessions) if he wanted to apply it to total renunciation. Furthermore in his view, renunciation is usually represented as a requirement of those entering the company of Jesus. He thus suggests that *δοτε ελεημοσυνην* (sell your possessions and give alms) should not be taken as an entrance requirement to the Kingdom.²⁶⁰ In fact the usage *μικρος ποιμνιον* (little flock) makes it clear that it is meant for the already disciples. They are already in the path of discipleship and he encouraged them to enter more fully into the complete trust in God who stands as guarantor of their future, and attachment to his kingdom.

In verse 32, he repeats to encourage his "*μικρος ποιμνιον* (little flock) not to be afraid".²⁶¹ And he instructed to sell their possessions and give alms. And he promises them that "for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom". Here it is a serious mistake to take this passage literally and meant as a demand to give up normal occupation to spend all their time working for the kingdom. Instead it is, as a demand to all Christians, an

²⁵⁹Seccombe 1982: 148. 'Full-time community servant' is my translation of the German phrase *hauptberufliche gemeindediener*. Ps 77; Mic 2:12; Is 40:11; Eze 34:12, 31; PsSol 17:40; Mk 6:34.

²⁶⁰Seccombe 1982: 153-154.

²⁶¹It is very common to interpret Lk 12:22-34 as a common ordinary human problem for daily living. But in Minear's view, the context suggests that the exhortation here is directed at the specific anxiety which arises out of discipleship. F.F. Bruce also points out the expression *μικρος ποιμνιον* to recall 'the poor of the flock' or 'the little ones' of Zech 11:11 and 13:7 who are destined for persecution and slaughter. This suggests that the passage is not about general anxiety for daily living but particular anxiety arising when a person decides to seek the Kingdom. Facing a threat of lack of food and clothing, hostility giving birth to anxiety is very common to those who confess their faith in Jesus' time as well in in Luke's time. Then Jesus wants to give the solution. Seccombe suggests that the solution in Jesus teaching is not to be found in putting things first and caring more about the kingdom. The answer lies in considering God's providential care for the lesser parts of his creation and the infinitely greater worth of the disciples to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. The promise to all who make the kingdom their first priority is that God will surely supply their needs. Then in Lk 12:32 the solution is given by promising the kingdom. Seccombe 1982: 152.

instruction to detach themselves from the false values and securities of the world. It becomes clearer when the whole passage is summed up by saying “For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be”. Fitzmyer suggests this conclusion to mean that “The heart, as the seat of human yearning, must its proper attraction: a heavenly treasure. . . In such a context one must guard that the heart is not seduced by earthly possessions. . . The sense: If you put your treasure in heaven, then your heart will be set on heavenly thing.”²⁶² We can say that behind this text is the first commandment (Exo.20:1ff and Deut 6:4) which encourage to put God above all and seriously warn against materialism.

And the expression ‘A purse that do not wear out and an unfailing treasure in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys’ suggests something which is to be in constant use, both unchangeable and inexhaustible, and which guarantees the disciples’ well-being now and in the age to come.²⁶³ It is indeed to be understood as a treasure not to be lost through death.²⁶⁴ It may also imply that true Christians are meant to give alms or to be philanthropists because of God’s gift which is the kingdom itself. It will profit the giver as well as the poor because this philanthropic activity will transfer the giver to be possessor and the poor situation much better as well.

This passage thus aims to encourage the people of the kingdom to be more firmly rooted in the kingdom and to bear witness to the reality of the coming kingdom. It is in fact applicable to all Christians to break free of their belongings which captives the mind. This passage therefore really fits our theme: warning against materialism as well as the ethics of the people of the kingdom.

²⁶²Fitzmyer 1986: 982-983.

²⁶³Seccombe 1982: 156.

²⁶⁴Fitzmyer 1986: 983.

CHAPTER IV
THE MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM
AND ITS CHALLENGES TO THE CHIN CHURCHES

4.1. The Growth of Chin Out-migration and the Rise of Materialism

The Chin religious leaders around the globe are unanimous in the opinion that materialism is really a great threat to the Chins both inside and outside the Chin land.²⁶⁵ Money becomes a terrible obstacle to embracing the ethics of the kingdom. It intensifies the attachment to this age in the life of the Chins that even the coming age or eternal life does not play an important role in their life. Possession exercises too great a power over them, binds them to visible ownership in this age and prevents them from embracing the promised kingdom. In this way it gradually induces them to be materialists and even idol-worshippers. All this is unmistakably due to the growth of Chin out-migration to the West during the last decade and because of the influence of Western secularism. But this emergence of out-migration to the West is not also without reasons at all.

The Chin is a separate nationality from other ethnic groups in Myanmar. In her book, *Freedom From Fear*, Mother Aung San Suu Kyi, stated, "The Chins belong to the Tibeto Burman racial group."²⁶⁶ It is also affirmed by Chin scholar and politician, Lian Hmung Sakhong in his book *In Search of Chin Identity*, published by Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS). However, he himself observes that Chin-ram (meaning Chin-land) was once an independent land ruled by local chieftains.²⁶⁷ The point is that Chin-land is a separate nation and a distinct nationality from Burman until the British colonists invaded and ruled it

²⁶⁵Interview with Duh Kam, 29/4/2011; Interview with Tin Kung, 20/2/2011; Interview with Siang Kung, 17/7/2010. C. Duh Kam is the Executive Secretary of Chin Baptist Fellowship of America (CBFA), USA; Tin Kung is the Church Pastor of Western Australia Chin Church (WACC), Perth, Australia; and Henry Siang Kung is the Principal of Chin Christian College (CCC), Hakha, Chin State, Myanmar. They are responsible leaders for the Chin Churches in their respective regions and their reports to me hopefully could represent the status of all the Chins around the globe. I also observe the status of the Chins in Europe and I had a discussion with some leaders of the Chin Churches in Europe. I think our views could represent the status of the Chins around the world. See more at Appendix.

²⁶⁶Suu Kyi 1995: 120.

²⁶⁷Sakhong 2003: 19.

together with Burma proper in 1886. The Chin never fell under any ruling powers including Burmese kings before this British colonialism.

The Chins are also people who have a clear distinctive national identity, inhabiting a territory with its own population within a definite boundary. Chin politician and scholar Lian Uk notes,

The Chin is not by any means to be seen just as a minority group but a 'nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language, literature, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, customary law and moral codes, aptitudes and ambitions; in short we have our own distinctive outlook on life. By all Canons of International Law, the Chin people are a nation'.²⁶⁸

According to the Panglong Agreement, signed in 1947 under the leadership of Burma Independence leader Aung San, ethnic groups were promised equality and freedom religiously and politically. This was how the Chin got united with other ethnic groups in building the Union of Myanmar. But unfortunately, Aung San was assassinated just before Burma got its independence from the British rulers; what were mentioned in the Panglong Agreement had never been practiced and since then the ethnic and minority groups in the country have been suffering discriminations in different forms religiously, economically and socially. The present military government practices human right violations, racial and religious discriminations, torture and even systematic ethnic cleansing (genocide). Under this regime's cruel and inhuman ruling system, the civilians have been trying just for their daily life survival, losing hope and peace in their souls and minds.

Siang Nawl, one of my colleagues, compares the whole Chin-land with a prison-house in which are the people detained. He insists that the entire Chin-land is in captivity with its people being deprived of liberty and freedom. Thus he observes,

It is apparent that we are really captives in our own land. . . The whole Chin Land is like a door-locked chicken-house in which the poultry are left starved with very little food over which they are fighting one another for their lives' sake. The weaker chickens only stare enviously at the stronger ones greedily gobbling up the little food. In consequence, it is reasonable that the poor weaker fowls should be struggling to get out of the house by any means. In the perspective of situational ethics, Christian or secular, the weaker fowls are justifiable to seek any possible way-out for their lives. They are just to fly out through the window. They are fair to get out through the

²⁶⁸Lian Uk 1997:22.

ceiling holes. It is not guilty to create a way-out for an escape to freedom; for life is too priceless to give up to the pitiless. Likewise, freedom is too precious to entrust to the vicious. Loyalty is too invaluable to pay to the unreliable.²⁶⁹

For that reason, thousands of people from pro-democracy forces, ordinary civilians and intellectuals in Chin-land have to find ways to get out of the country to evade the said economic turmoil, the unbearable racial and religious discriminations, and the arrest and persecutions committed by the notorious military regime. And hundreds of thousands of Chin people necessarily decided to leave their homeland for better lives and security.

At first hundreds of thousands of Chin people fled to neighboring countries like India and Malaysia. Until today many Chins are living illegally in India and Malaysia. It is estimated that about 100, 000 refugees are facing various kind of problems including lack of nutrition, healthcare and proper access to education system, information technology, education, healthcare and food, and most of them are with undocumented status that forces them into either wandering in the jungle or hiding most of the time.

The day-to-day life experienced by Chin refugees in Malaysia and India is so desperate that there have been some people who ended up their own life by committing suicide. Some Chin leaders in Malaysia, especially after the year 2000, thus approached UN refugee agency, UNHCR, for international protection. The UNHCR in Malaysia has been working tirelessly to help Chin refugees to get them resettled in what are called the third countries.²⁷⁰ America, Europe and Australia are the destinations for most of the Chin refugees. The number of Chin refugees resettled in the West is increasing every year.

As they come to the western society and their life-style got immediately changed, other worse problems come out again. One of the most important issues, in my opinion as mentioned above, to the Chin communities in the west is western secularism or materialism. It is undeniably a great threat to the Chins. It is sad to say that cases of suicide in the Chin societies, especially among the young people, have been growing more than when they were in the mother land back home because depression and discontentment is ever increasing in their lives in the west. This materialism also creates the breakdown of the community. Mutual respect and concerns for common goodness in the communal life which are the very nature and identity of the Chins are losing for their holds to materialism.

²⁶⁹<http://www.chinlandguardian.com/articles/1140-rebuilding-a-peaceful-chinland-hope-of-a-chin-exile.html>.

²⁷⁰The term 'third countries' is the term used by Chin refugees and does not necessarily mean 'third world countries' meaning poor countries. The first country in the Chin refugee's term is Myanmar, their mother land. The second countries are neighboring countries like India and Malaysia, where most of them stay as undocumented status. So their destinations, the Western countries such as America, Europe and Australia, have become the third countries for the Chin refugees.

This is not only true for the Chins as we know, but this present world order itself is undeniably driven by materialism and even by consumerism. For some people, the term ‘consumerism’ is not a good term to use because it, in their view, dehumanised or degraded human to animal level.²⁷¹ But to me it is not inappropriate since it makes many people falsely believe that possessions of latest model of luxurious goods and money as their god and degrades human position. It is in fact illusions of our age because it is based on an inadequate understanding of what it means to be human.

Furthermore consumerism, in Zau Lat’s view, creates a deep sense of insecurity for the ideal good life, and is based on an imaginary image of advertisements. He notes advertisement continuously spotlights what we lack in comparison to what other possess. It makes us competitive with others in the society, creating discontentment, and thus causes depression and finally till suicide. Christopher Lasch is right when he says that the **maximization** of the external objects leads to **minimal** self where discontentment is ever creating in one’s life.²⁷²

Chin Christians must be thus free from this modern captivity of Mammon and they should overcome materialism. Zau Lat is right when he notes that true freedom is obtained not in independence but interdependence of people. He also notice that true freedom comes from an attitude of joyous reception mainly from God and is lived as a gift, but not a right as Paul noted that uncalculated giving is true freedom from the bondage of selfishness and false value (II Cor 9:6-7).²⁷³

I positively believe that the message of the Kingdom of God indeed becomes an effective tool or alarming bell to cure the threat of materialism, a delusion to trust in worldly possessions and from idol-worshipping. Its basic teaching for the coming world will guide us to see the true nature of life and trust in God. We the Chins dominated by materialism thus must go back to the teaching of Jesus concerning possessions and the kingdom. We must use the message of the kingdom and the ethics of the people of the kingdom in Luke as a mirror for our spiritual journey.

²⁷¹Laphai Zaulat 2007: 9.

²⁷²Kirk 1999: 116.

²⁷³Zau Lat 2007: 9.

4.2. The Impact of Liberation Theology in Chin Churches

All the Chins unanimously will agree that the coming of Christianity contributed to the development and liberation of the Chin people in many respects. The American Baptist Chin Mission applied what used to be called ‘holistic approach of mission’, emphasizing both evangelization and the social development of the people to whom they proclaimed the gospel. Without the social aspect of mission, such as running hospitals and schools, they realized that evangelism alone could not properly relieve the condition of the Chins because the living standard of the Chin people was so low before their arrival in Chin-land.²⁷⁴

Thus, the missionaries were actively involved in the work of developing the people, particularly in education and healthcare. The Chins originally did not even have any writing before the arrival of the White. Thus the missionaries invented Chin writing system, using the Roam scripts²⁷⁵ and established missionary schools at various towns and villages. Notably, the first building they constructed at their headquarters in Hakha, the capital of Chin State today, was not their own residence but a schoolhouse. The Rev. Dr. Joseph Herbert Cope, for instance, came to the Chin Hills on 21st December, 1908 as a missionary but spent almost half of his later 30 years as the Honorary Inspector of Schools under the then British Government.

Furthermore among the eight American missionary couples who worked among the Chins, the Rev. Dr. East, who arrived Hakha on March 21, 1902, and Dr. J.G. Woodin, who arrived Hakha on October 11, 1909, were actually medical doctors. When the Carsons, the first missionary couple, requested the Home Board to send another missionary couple, particularly a medical missionary, Carson noted,

Every disease, and they are heir to them all, is assigned to the possession or influence of evil spirits, and sacrifice and feasting is the only remedy. We are sure that a medical missionary, beside the immense amount of suffering he could relieve, could unlock the heart of the simple people as no other could.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴When Mr. Arthur E. Carson and his wife Laura L. Hardin, the first persons to bring the Gospel Light to the Chin Hills, came to Chin Land on the 15th March, 1899, the living standard of the Chin people were so low that people were practically without decent clothing to speak of. As mentioned earlier, this condition appalled Mrs. Carson so much that she was said to have wept bitterly.

²⁷⁵It was found that A.E. Newland, a British army officer, invented Chin literature in 1894. But it was not in complete form. It is the invention of the missionaries that survived until today.

²⁷⁶This is the quotation of Sakhong 2003: 126-127. Chin scholar Lian Hmung Sakhong sees the missionaries’ effort to medical mission as even weaker and he suggests that if the American Baptist Mission could have spent more resources, wealth and personnel in the Chin fields, the mass conversion probably would have occurred

To show that there was a better way to get treatment, the missionary society thus sent Medical missionaries and practically showed the Chins how to get proper medical care. They built a mission hospital in Hakha and gave medical treatments to various parts of the land. In his report to the Missionary Society in 1906, Dr. East, the medical doctor to the Chins, commented that he had treated 2903 new patients and personally given 4000 treatments. Working among such under developed people, they even showed how to properly dress, and how to cultivate the fields. These noble contributions changed the status of the Chins upside down in one century and now the Chins are at the top rank in literacy among the different major tribes or nationalities in Myanmar. The Chins therefore are greatly indebted to Christianity and the American Baptist missionaries for their invaluable contributions in the past.

Nevertheless, the problem is that the Chin Christians always get confused about the gospel with development and liberation. In fact the mission schools and hospitals were established as the ways and means for spreading the Gospel. Dr East, a medical missionary to the Chins, frankly expressed that they would not for a moment consider any school without religious teaching, and their prime objective was and is to spread the Gospel, and while doing so, they are willing to educate the people also.²⁷⁷

But today most of the ministers and the leaders in the church are inclined to give more attention to social development than to the gospel. Furthermore, due to the political crisis of the country, ethnic people who are oppressed politically, socially, religiously and in every aspect in Myanmar are striving for liberation and freedom. Liberation theology therefore became very popular. This popularity is not also without specific reasons. Among ethnic groups in Myanmar today,

- 1) There is no freedom of speech, even no freedom of worship (formal worship service is allowed, but informal service such as annual conferences and Christian religious ceremonies are restricted).
- 2) Construction of Church buildings is strictly prohibited.
- 3) In various government services, promotion to higher rank is strictly limited to ethnic people and Christians.
- 4) Junta eliminates learning ethnic languages and literature in public schools.

already by the 1910s.
²⁷⁷Sakhong 2003: 139.

- 5) Publication of Christian literature is strictly restricted (even no permission of Bible publication)

Furthermore, the government introduced the so-called the Remote Area Development schools (*Nah tah lah*) which is actually its attempt to assimilate ethnic minority groups into Buddhism and to implement its policy of Burmanization. The students in these schools are forced to be Buddhist. In such a crisis, the Chin Christians must take the responsibility of liberating the Chin people since there is no overt Chin organization except Christian Churches to do so. It has been estimated that 93 percents of the state population in Chin-land are Chins and 88 percents Christians. More than half of the Chin Christians are Baptists. Moreover, Baptist is the only recognized religious organization under Myanmar Baptist Convention, with the registration number issued by the government. There are 873 Baptist churches and over 200,000 Baptist members in Chin State.²⁷⁸

The Baptist churches therefore used to take all responsibilities in taking care of issues of the Chin. We can say that the Chin Baptists serve the Lord as well as the Chin people and Chin-land. The Baptists in Chin State deeply believe that Chin affair is the affair of the Baptists or the Church. That is why Liberation theology is very prominent in Chin Churches. Here are social developments undertaken by the Chin Baptist Churches.

- Upgrading Ethnic literature
- Child-care, Nursery schools, and orphanages
- Ecological prevention and educating the mass
- Health-care, and other development programs, such as water supply, mini-hydro electric project and credit union program
- Relief Program to the victims for natural disasters

I am not, by any mean, opposing social development works run by Baptist Churches because it is in my opinion a God-given historical responsibility for every Chin Church. In fact evangelization needs to target the concept of life, death and salvation, and the missions must deal with spiritual and social aspects of human sufferings and liberty. Rather it is, in my view, of capital importance to the Chin Churches to be able to distinguish between works for gospel and works for human developments - the message of the kingdom of God and the

²⁷⁸This is the quotation of the speech presented to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway by Rev Thawng Kam, former General Secretary of Zomi Baptist Convention (also called as Chin Baptist Convention), in September, 2009. The paper of the speech was prepared in corporation with the present author. The members of Baptist include unbaptized children and young people in the Baptist family because Chin Baptist counts baptized members as full-members and unbaptized as also ordinary members in the Church.

ethics of the people of the kingdom. Most of all we must be careful in applying radical liberation theology, particularly of C. S. Song.

Since the reign of God to Song only implies ethical and social dimensions, it seems that human efforts could build the reign of God. The kingdom of God also seems human creation, not the pure gift of God. Doing good deeds seems helping God to inherit eternal life. Instead, it is to me anticipating or practicing the ethics of the people of the kingdom. Furthermore, since the poor in Luke is taken only as literally poor, it does not seem that God's gift is given to all human beings regardless of race, status and potentiality. It is rather like the word 'poor' in liberation theology refers only to a limited group of the economically and sociologically poor. It is to me unbiblical. The worst of all this is that the reign of God in Song's view seems to imply only the life here and now since a conversion to Song is pluralistic understanding.²⁷⁹ If this interpretation is right, there will be no room for Christian hope and for eternal life or the life after death. It therefore could lead us to Marxism, then Materialism and finally even to Atheism.

It is a well-known fact that liberation theology is more or less related to Marxism. It is evident in Dr. Ernest W. Lefever's (a Church of the Brethren minister) book published by the Ethics and Public Policy Center at Georgetown University, entitled, *Amsterdam to Nairobi: The World Council of Churches and the Third World*. In the book, he observes that the WCC has shifted from its original commitment to peaceful democratic change in the world, to a "theology of liberation" which is Marxist in concept and practice.²⁸⁰ And Marxism more or less is Materialism since *Historical materialism* is first articulated by Karl Marx. He himself never used the term but referred to his approach as "the materialist conception of history."²⁸¹

Materialists are not necessarily atheists. However, Atheism is often a corollary of Materialism, especially in the sense of a denial of a supernatural personal God or any sort of higher creative power.²⁸² Like Liberation theology, historical materialism looks for the causes of developments and changes in human society in the means by which humans collectively produce the necessities of life. In fact unlike personal Materialists, Neo-Marxists are not wealth-seeking but wealth-sharing. But their concern or their way of helping others is only on material sense. I therefore see that biblical interpretation of radical liberation theology, the concerns of which are only justice, love and freedom for the life here and now

²⁷⁹Song 1993: 29.

²⁸⁰<http://www.brfwitness.org/?=377>, September 9, 2010.

²⁸¹<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical-materialism>, September 9, 2010.

²⁸²<http://www.kheper.net/topics/worldviews/materialism.htm>, September 9, 2010.

could finally lead us to atheism. It is a great threat to the Chins who are very much dominated by liberation theology and materialism of the West.

4.3. The Word 'Kingdom' in Chin Concept

The basic message of the missionaries is about the kingdom of God which is to come in the coming age. It is well evident by looking at one of the most popular hymns among the first generation Chin Christians. The following is that hymn as translated by Dr Strait:

*Ni nakin a ceu khua a um ko,
Zumhnak in a hnuah kan hmuh lai,
Khi khin kanmah kan Pa hngak len ko,
Kannih umnak a ser lio dah ngai.*

(There is a place brighter than the Sun, And we will reach it by faith, Our Father is preparing a house for us, That is glittering like silver and gold).²⁸³

The missionaries see the theological similarity between the traditional Chin religious teaching of life after death, called as *mithi khua* in Chin, and the biblical teaching of heaven and paradise. Among the missionaries, Dr Strait did the first scholarly work on traditional Chin religion for his doctoral dissertation, *A History and Interpretation of Chin Sacrifice*, in 1933. He translated the English Bible into Chin and could apply the idioms and concepts of the life after death (*mithi khua*) to help the Chin find a common ground. The point is that traditionally the Chins understand the kingdom in terms of realm.

The author interviewed many Chin linguists concerning the terminology of the kingdom. Most of them are unanimous in the opinion that it mostly implies realm while the meaning of reign is not excluded. Since the Chins had never had 'king and queen', we have no exact translation for kingdom. It is rendered as 'pennak' and it is very ambiguous if this term implied realm (territory) or reign (rule). 'Pen' means 'to rule' and '-nak' is a suffix which makes a verb into a verbal noun. Lian Uk and Steven Ni Kio suggest that the expression 'pennak' does not seem to occur before the translation of the Chin Bible while the expression 'pen' is widely used originally.²⁸⁴ It means this term 'pennak' is the creation of the Bible translators.

²⁸³Sakhong 2003:234. The hymn is very close to the idea of the place prepared by Jesus in John 14 and New Jerusalem in Rev 22. It basically deals with future eschatological kingdom.

²⁸⁴Interview with Ni Kio, 30/7/2010; Interview with Lian Uk, 30/3/2011.

Since the missionary period, the term ‘pennak’ (kingdom) is generally understood to mean the life after death.²⁸⁵ But from the 1980s, since the rise of liberation theology, Some Chin theologians interpret it in a different way to imply reign. Samuel Ngun Ling, the current principal of Myanmar Institute of Theology and one of the most prominent theologians not only among the Chins, but also in the whole Myanmar, notes,

I understand the kingdom as the reign of God as I believe that the Biblical aspect of reign of God refers especially to the prevailing nature of God’s rule over human history without power domination.²⁸⁶

But the biblical interpretation shows that the phrase *βασιλεια του θεου* in the gospels did not correspond to *mulkuth/ malkutha*, but to the Rabbinic phrase *olamhabbah or chajji olamhabbah*, the coming world or ‘life in the world to come’ because Malkuth/ Malkutha is never connected with the verb ‘come’. I am thus convinced that it is imperative to have a correct translation on the Kingdom lest it might lead us to a wrong interpretation. I therefore want to change the translation of the kingdom of God from ‘Pathian Pennak’ to ‘Pathian Penram’ which basically means God’s ruled territory. Ceu Hlun, one of the prominent Chin linguists, who finished his master in linguistics at Illinois University, also agrees to the proposed translation.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵Interview with Biak Nawl, 15/7/2010.

²⁸⁶Interview with Ngun Ling, 29/7/2010.

²⁸⁷Interview with Ceu Hlun, 20/3/2011.

4.4. Pentecostals, Fundamentals and Prosperity Theology

Contrast to radical liberation theology, another problem among the Chin Christians today is the negative implications from some Pentecostal and Fundamental Christians adopting prosperity theology and totally neglecting social work. They are very enthusiastic in teaching and preaching but they are pessimistic concerning society and the life in this world. Such extreme world-denying Christianity made them incapable of doing good deeds for socio-economic transformation because they believe salvation to be realistic and attainable only in the future.

This “world denying theology” makes it difficult to transform the life of the Chins. Song comments on this kind of doctrine as, “To be reconciled to God is to be alienated from the people and to be reconciled with the people was to be alienated from God.”²⁸⁸ Joel Za Hlei Kap, an educated Chin theologian and currently the Vice-Principal of Zomi Theological College, in Falam, Chin State, commented on Christian revival in Chin:

The revival movement overwhelmed the whole land of northern Chin, bringing a new understanding of the world view. Theologically speaking, most of them were dispensationalists. The doctrine of the rapture became the main weapon for persuading congregation. The emphasis on the doctrine of total depravity caused negative understanding of this world. The world is cursed by God containing nothing good, and is the property of Satan. We are not people of this world but the world to come. Therefore, economics, education, and environmental issues had no room in the revival period. The revival movement vividly separated the sacred from the secular. The sacred has nothing to do with secular.²⁸⁹

The world denying Christians close their eyes not to see the poor and are not open to build justice, peace, reconciliation or social development. For example, they teach the negative side of the world and human life, more than the Gospel and salvation. Too much emphasis on the world’s denial of religious teachings creates weaknesses in helping the poor. In contrast to their world denying theology, they also adopt prosperity theology. Giving to

²⁸⁸Song 1998: 27.

²⁸⁹Za Hlei Kap 2007: 18-19.

God in this theology is intended only for receiving and not for the betterment of society. We may say this group as selfish Christians. It is opposite to Jesus's teaching in the gospel.

I am thus critical to such a Christian group, especially Pentecostal and Fundamental churches, who only stress the indicative function of God's gift to men but are very negative to social concern. Whereas the kingdom of God is God's gift to men, not the result of human effort, it should never make us deaf in any way to social services. The *indicative* and *imperative* aspects are found side by side in the New Testament theology. The people receiving the grace are always challenged in the New Testament to learn of what their master behaves (Mt 11:28). The lawyer is commanded to do in the same way as what the Good Samaritan actually did it to the wounded person (Lk 10:37).²⁹⁰

Thus, kingdom behavior anticipating the arrival of the age to come through Jesus has to produce a foretaste of its fruit now in this present life. For in Jesus the powers of the age to come are already invading the present order. It is wise to say that while the gift of salvation is free, it is also costly. It is not simply a way to accumulate merit, but is a living of the very life of the kingdom. Therefore Seccombe is right when he says,

Eternal life is promised to all who leave anything for the sake of the kingdom. It is thus indeed costly, and really only a possibility for those who have relinquished the present aeon in favor of the kingdom.²⁹¹

It is evident that Luke always stresses God's free gift to the poor as well as the active role of those who receive the gift of God. Thus the receivers of the gift of the kingdom are not allowed to be lazy Christians. We the Chins must therefore go back to the message of the kingdom and the roles of its people in Luke.

²⁹⁰Dodd 1961: I-II. In Augustine's view the Good Samaritan represents Jesus and the wounded the saved people. In his interpretation, the true neighbour of the saved people is Jesus who wants them to imitate and learn of him.
²⁹¹Seccombe 1982: 183.

4.5. A Challenge to The Chin Christians as the people of the Kingdom

Majority of the world's population is in fact composed mainly of the poor people. Kirk puts it that as many as 70 percent of all human being in this world as poor.²⁹² The percentage is higher in the so-called third world countries like Myanmar. Daniel J. Adams, an American Missionary to Korea and president of Hanils University in Sheol rightly observes that we are living between the times in Asia.²⁹³ He observes that the *dokkar* (horse drawn taxi) in Indonesia refers to pre-modern; the car or jet represents the modern world, and computer, internet cyberspace and hypertext represents the postmodern world.²⁹⁴

As a developing country, Myanmar is a mixture of premodern, modern and postmodern. Like other developing Asian countries, it is particularly a mixture of these three times: the poor are living under the pre-modern life with no modern technology and information. There is a big gap between the poor and the rich, and urban and rural life. The social structure is like the pyramid shape. The rich or the elite are very few at the top, and some middle class people in the middle part, while the poor make the bottom of the pyramid, the largest in number. Compared to other ethnic groups, the Chins in Myanmar are the poorest of the poor. Some Chin writers have estimated that over 90 percents of the Chin people are to be classified as the poor.

In such a situation, even though there are many social organizations and social workers in the Christian churches, the life of the poor cannot be transformed into a desired level yet. The message of the Kingdom of God as well as the ethics of the people of the Kingdom therefore plays a very important role for the Chin Christians everywhere. The ethics of the people of the kingdom in Luke is very significant especially to the Chin Churches around the globe. If and when all the Chin Christians are convinced of that they are the very people of the Kingdom mentioned in Luke, then their concern for the poor and the needy among their fellow Chins will be a very powerful binding force to make integrated Chin

²⁹²This is the quotation of Zaulat 2007:9.

²⁹³ Adams 2006: 45-47.

²⁹⁴ Adams 2006: 82-92.

people. It will indeed tie them together and strengthen their sense of oneness among their fellow Chins who are exceedingly poor in Myanmar.

It will also serve as a symbol of unity, as a springboard from which all affairs can be made to reflect the common cause, common interest and common goals of the entire Chin population inside and outside the Chin-land. It will be a means for proclamation and demonstration: to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God to the world and to demonstrate kingdom behaviour among our fellow Chins who are severely stricken by poverty. It will also help the Chin people to share a distinct national identity and also a common ideal for peaceful co-existence with all races and religions throughout the world. It will also strengthen an inspiration among the Chins for even freedom and democracy, denouncing all forms of despotism.

CONCLUSION

For more than four decades, the biblical interpretations of liberation theology on the kingdom and the poor have been materialized too much and thus the essence of its true intended meaning had been distorted. On the other hand there are some Christian groups, who also distorted the essence of the gospel of the kingdom since they neglect the ethics of the people of the kingdom. That is why seeking the true intended meaning of the poor and the kingdom, and its ethical implication are in my vein all the time.

The topic of this thesis could be rendered as *The Kingdom, Its Recipients and the Roles of the Receivers of the Kingdom*. It tried to find the implied meaning of the kingdom and the poor in Luke. Then by interpreting the related texts, I was seeking the fact that who the recipients of the Kingdom are. It is found out that the message for the receiver of the gift of the Kingdom is always followed by the command or the roles of the receivers of the gift. This is what we call the ethics of the people of the kingdom. The relevance of the interpreted texts to the Chin Churches around the globe is explored in the final chapter.

I therefore began my interpretation by presenting different views and interpretations of the kingdom of God in brief. Then I was looking into the intended meaning of βασιλεια του θεου in Luke. After surveying the idea of βασιλεια του θεου in the Old Testament and Judaism, it is found that βασιλεια του θεου was not a well-known concept in the Old Testament, Judaism and even in the time of Jesus whereas the idea of God as king was very well-known since the Old Testament time. It was Jesus who made it a central topic in his message. It is also discovered that βασιλεια του θεου in Rabbinic Judaism mostly implies a concrete and future aspect, and more related with *olamhabbah*, coming world than *malkuth*, the reign of God.

Moreover, by terminological analysis of the word βασιλεια, and exploration of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relation of the phrase, we can conclude that βασιλεια του θεου is a message of God's gift and is mostly a spatial concept in Luke. It has come and is present

in Jesus. The presence of Jesus gives a foretaste of the coming kingdom. The new epoch has come as Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom of God, heals the sick and raises up the dead. But it is evidently a reality of eschatological fulfilment in the future. Therefore it is concluded that the kingdom is at present as well as in the future.

Then I examined Luke's use of the word *πτωχος* in the second chapter. It is clearly found that there is a great difference between Jesus' attitudes toward the poor and how he (or the evangelists in the gospel) used the word 'poor' as a description of the receivers of the kingdom. Jesus, no doubt, has concern for the poor. However it is very important not to confuse it with his use of the word 'poor'. Luke used it so many times in a transferred sense meaning helplessness before God.

And it is also to be noted that the meaning of the poor and the implied meaning of the word 'poor' in the text are very different. The meaning of the poor may have economic, political, social and religious sense. However the word 'poor' in the New Testament may have different meanings according to different contexts. For instance, in the context of Luke 4:18-19, it is found that the Poor in the Nazareth episode refers to Israel as a whole. In the beatitude (6:20, 24), the word 'poor' indicates the disciples who are literally poor, hungry, and persecuted for their being Disciples of Christ. Therefore we discover two kinds of the implied meaning of the poor in Luke: receivers of the kingdom (4:18-19; 6:20; 7:22, etc.) and potential receivers of alms (16:13-30; 18:18-30; 19:1-10, etc.).

By analyzing the Nazareth episode (also in the magnificat) I was able to confirm that the poor in this context refers to a traditional characterization of Israel understood in terms of its suffering and slavery. At this very moment the Nazarenes rejected God's ordained kingdom-preacher who announced the fulfillment of their hopes in his presence. Israel's salvation is declared to the whole people, but blessing of salvation is upon the disciples who may rightly be called the poor-hungry-weeping since they only are the receivers of the gospels of the kingdom (6:20; 14:21).²⁹⁵ Therefore it is warned to the disciples of John the Baptist that one must be careful not to take offense at his messianic proclamation since its arrival could be tasted now and then (7:22). The other expressions, which are the implied words for the poor such as sinners, the simple, and the children, are the picture of those who humble themselves and receive the gospel of the kingdom.

We cannot thus see any social-economic or literal implication about Luke's use of the word 'poor' terminology in the above passages we have discussed. In fact the poor regardless

²⁹⁵Seccombe 1982: 95.

of 'rich' or 'poor' in these texts refers to Israel in her need of deliverance and salvation, or those who humble themselves and receive the message of the gospel of the kingdom. Any effort seeking the ground of liberation theology upon these texts thus would be misunderstanding and misusing the true intended meaning of the texts.

Nevertheless as Seccombe has observed, it would be quite erroneous to conclude that Luke has no interest in the poor. He rightly asserts that as God stands to the needy world with the gracious gift of salvation, his disciples should stand to the poor of society in generous open-handedness. This reflects his understanding of salvation as the rescue of 'poor' Israel. What God is to 'poor' Israel, the Israelite should be his poor neighbors.²⁹⁶ And in his view, repentance in Luke's understanding means beginning to act in an Is 58:6f manner. The fruit of repentance in Luke is the restoration of the true brotherhood: the end of oppression and extortion and radical openness to one's neighbor or to the poor.²⁹⁷ The point of departure is that the disciple who had himself experienced this grace towards his own poverty should extend his own generosity towards those literally poor.

The third chapter thus deals with the ethics of the people of the kingdom. The story of Lazarus and the dives makes clear that money will have no value in the coming kingdom. Since the kingdom has now been proclaimed, in a sense mammon has already lost its worth. The only sensible thing to do with it now is to convert it into something which will retain value beyond the changing of the aeons, namely the values of brotherhood and friendship and to give it to the poor. Luke is saying in no uncertain terms that the kingdom is forever closed to those who closed their hearts against the needy.²⁹⁸ The people of the kingdom must embrace the double commandment of love: Love to God and Love to fellow human being.

By the story of the rich ruler, wealth is portrayed as a terrible obstacle to embracing the kingdom. To the life of all men it intensifies the attachment to this age and prevents them from embracing the coming age, eternal life. Briefly stated, it is clearly portrayed how possession exercises too great a power over man, how it binds people to this age and prevents them from embracing the promised kingdom, and how it makes man become materialist and even idol-worshipper. This warning is very relevant to the Chin Christians who are severely dominated by materialism and western secularism.

Fortunately Luke does not stop his presentation only with a warning against the rich. The possibility that the rich can be saved is affirmed by the story of Zacchaeus which is

²⁹⁶Seccombe 1982: 196.

²⁹⁷Seccombe 1982: 183.

²⁹⁸Seccombe 1982: 181.

called the climax of Luke's salvation presentation. By his encounter with the power of the gospel, the rich tax-collector Zacchaeus could pass through the needle's eye to enter the kingdom and could say goodbye to his possessions. His repentance or acceptance of the message of the kingdom results in hospitality, justice and compassion. Taken these two stories together, we can say that Luke addresses the readers with warning and encouragement.

I see the warning and the encouragement very relevant to the Chin Churches around the world. On the one hand, radical liberation theology, which interprets the kingdom only in terms of reign and the poor only in terms of literal poor, thinks more about social welfare than the gospel. This group emphasizes more on development, liberation, freedom and social welfare. On the other hand, there are Fundamentalists or Pentecostals who neglect active Christian participation in social works and adopts prosperity theology in the Chin Churches. And there is a big gap between these two groups.

Kvalbein's statement is very relevant to the context of the Chin churches. He insists that preaching the gospel is not to teach men what to do, but to tell what God has done for us. But the preaching of the gospel should never be separated from the proclamation and application of the law. . . The danger of evangelical Christians has been to stress the gospel in a way that has made them deaf to the demands of the law. And the danger of modern liberal theology is to confuse Law and Gospel by saying that we can bring salvation and build Kingdom of God by our social and political action. That is not biblical.²⁹⁹ Grudem also asserts that if we neglect active striving to obey God, we become passive, lazy Christians. If we neglect the passive role of trusting God and yielding to him, we become proud and overly confident in ourselves. We must maintain faith and diligence to obey at the same time.³⁰⁰

Of course my critical question also is: Does not Christian mission always serve both proclamation and demonstration? Does not Christian message put receiving gift and sharing gift side by side? In this case, Kvalbein rightly asserts,

The people receiving the gifts are challenged to share because the disciple should behave like his master. The materially poor need bread, not only bread from heaven.³⁰¹

It is in fact the very meeting place between the point of indicative part (what God has done for us in salvation) and imperative part (how we are to live in consequence). Because of

²⁹⁹Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

³⁰⁰Grudem 1994: 755.

³⁰¹Kvalbein 1987: 80-86.

what God has done for us, now we should live a manner worthy of our salvation. Moreover, kingdom behavior anticipating the arrival of the age to come has to produce a foretaste of it now in this life. I positively believe that Luke could serve as a bridge-builder between these two extremists.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEWS

I: An Interview with Rev. Dr. Samuel Ngun Ling, Principal of Myanmar Institute of Theology, Yangon, Myanmar (July 29, 2010)

1. How do you understand the concept of the kingdom: Realm or reign?

I understand the kingdom as the reign of God as I believe that the Biblical aspect of reign of God refers especially to the prevailing nature of God's rule over human history without power domination.

2. How do you understand Jesus' teaching on the poor in Luke 6: 20: Physical or Spiritual Poor?

The poor in this text can mean those who are unjustly exploited and oppressed by others. Poverty is not the curse of God upon the poor but it is rather a creation of the rich and the powerful in an unjust and ungodly manner.

3. Do you think that it is easier for the poor to enter the Kingdom than the rich? If, why?

I do not think that way either. The poor are loved by God not because they deserve to be loved than others. All the poor will not enter God's kingdom automatically. Because, there are many poor who are morally corrupted, who lie, who steal, who rob, and who exploit other poor. I do not think that there will be a special reserved grace of God for the poor to enter the kingdom. I believe that God will bless the poor who have purity of hearts and are obedient to the will of God.

4. Do you think that Jesus has preferential option to the poor? If yes, why?

Yes, I think that Jesus had preferential option for the poor on the condition that the poor is being exploited unjustly by others. The whole earthly ministry of Jesus shows that Jesus was always on the side of the poor, the needy, the neglected, and the marginalized, meaning that he demonstrated preferential options for poor in his ministry.

5. What is Jesus' expectation to the poor? Whether to be rich or not?

It should not be the question of being rich and poor here. Jesus wants his disciples to know the truth to make them free, and to bring them to the fullness of life.

6. Are your members spiritual or physical poor?

I would say both. Neither all spiritually poor are physically rich nor all physically poor are spiritually rich. The reverse is also true. It depends much on the commitment of individual believers.

7. How do you usually interpret the Kingdom and the poor in your church?

In my preaching in the church, I usually interpret the kingdom as the sphere of God's reign, where God's love, justice, and peace prevail. I also interpret the poor in the church not as victimized kingdom-seekers but as subjects of their own life and history in seeking God's kingdom.

8. What is the members' response to your message?

Our church members understand kingdom as God's reign which is in aspect imminent and future-oriented. The "here and now" aspect of God's kingdom has impressed people more than its future-oriented (eschatological) aspect of the kingdom.

9. In your opinion, is materialism a threat to Chin Christian Community today? If yes, how to cure it? What will be the most relevant message?

We need earthly materials to build up community but we do not need to be materialistic. There are materials which the church need while there are churches being dominated strongly by materialism and secularism.

10. How to apply Jesus' command, "Give it to the Poor" (Lk 18) in the Chin Community?

When the poor helps the poor, this is a kind of "sharing life." The rich gives because he or she has. The poor gives because he or she concerns. The Chin community needs to develop the idea of "sharing life". This will help Chin Christians to grow more into an integrated community life.

II: Interviews with Rev Dr Henry Siang Kung; Principal of Chin Christian College, Hakha Chin State; and with Rev Sang Hre, Church Pastor of Hakha Baptist Church, Hakha, Chin State, founded by the missionaries themselves and the largest Church in Chin State (July 17, 2010)

1. How do you understand the concept of the kingdom: Realm or reign?

Rev Dr Henry Siang Kung: Realm

Rev Sang Hre: Both . . . and

2. How do you understand Jesus' teaching on the poor in Luke 6: 20: Physical or Spiritual Poor?

HSK: Spiritual poor

SH: Physically Poor

3. Do you think that it is easier for the poor to enter the Kingdom than the rich? If yes, why?

HSK: No! Yes, for Spiritually Poor

SH: Yes, because they are helpless and more dependent on God than the rich do.

4. Do you think that Jesus has preferential option to the poor? If yes, why?

HSK: No! (But yes to those who are materially poor and rich in spirit)

SH: Yes. Because they are oppressed objects.

5. What is Jesus' expectation to the poor? To be richer or not?

HSK: Jesus may not be against the poor to become the rich.

SH: to be possessor of abundant life.

6. Are your members spiritual or physical poor?

HSK: Physically poor

SH: Mostly physically poor.

7. How do you usually interpret the Kingdom and the poor in your church?

HSK: Kingdom as realm and poor as spiritual poor as well as physical

SH: In brief, not just to be rich but to inherit abundant life.

8. What is the members' response to your message?

HSK: Positive

SH: Positive.

9. In your opinion, is materialism a threat to Chin Christian Community today? If yes, how to cure it? What will be the most relevant message?

HSK: Yes, Materialism is a threat really. We have to preach focusing the great different between Liberation and development. We sometimes knowingly or unknowingly mixed Christian liberty with development. The existential interpretation or contextual message based on Lk 4:18-19 may be the most relevant one.

SH: Not so much threat as most of our church members are poor. But to prevent materialism is not unnecessary.

10. How to apply Jesus' command, "Give it to the Poor" (Lk 18) in the Chin Community?

HSK: 1. Charity organization (NGO/ Church) should reach the poorest of the poor.

2. The rich should give more tax, as in European countries.

3. The rich should give the poor not only rice but also how to grow rice. It means children of the poor should have equal opportunity or chance to study higher education.

SH: Our Church literally practices it. We have relief fund and use it to help the poor.

III: Interview with Rev Dr C. Duh Kam, the Executive Secretary of Chin Baptist Fellowship of America, Washington D.C., USA (April 29, 2011)

Could you share us the status of the Chins in America, especially how is secularism or materialism going to affect the life of the Chins in America?

C. Duh Kam: In the past two centuries, Christians in the West carried the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world by sending thousands of Christian missionaries to preach the Good News to all nations as Christ, after His resurrection, commissioned His disciples to do. Since the mid-twentieth century, the Christian faith was no longer the center of Western culture. Today some Christians in the West may be bemoaning their faith's decline. Some people may like to say that Christian America is on its last legs. Some people may like to ask if Christianity's best days are yet to come.

Since 2000 the Chins have been resettled as refugees in North America. The majority of the Chins are resettled in the United States of America after 2006. They began to live in the world where Christianity is losing its influence in the culture of the land and the church no longer occupied the center of culture and daily public prayers to God in school is no longer practiced. The Chins do not have job skills and education to feed their families and need to work very low pay jobs or whatever they can get for their family's survival. Both parents need to be at work for several hours daily away from their children. They need to work on Sunday and cannot go to church. The adults who were raised in a Christian home in their homeland could lose their faith in Christ if they continue to walk on this way for another two decades.

When the Chins who currently live in the West lived in their homeland, the church was not only the center of spiritual life, but also the center of community social life. There is no such thing that absolutely influences the people's life. Christianity was

the life of their neighborhood and community. When they are in very rich country like the United States of America, they can have things that everyone does and need for their daily living entertainment. Children always sit and play computer and TV games after and before school. They watch TV and see various secular shows. Computer and TV take the center of their hearts and minds within few years. It would be very hard for Christ to establish his Kingdom in the hearts of the Gentile Chins in North America.

As soon as they came to the United State of America, the Chin children immediately pick up and fluently speak the language of the country, but parents who do not have basic education in their homeland will never speak or write the language. This causes the need of interpretation between parents and their children. A loving and caring mother's voice will never be sweet to her children as it was in their homeland due to the language barrier. This is the start of division in their family. Her children will start to go on their own way. They are ready to accept the secular life styles and cultures of the West within four/ five years. The church will lose many Chin children in the near future.

Now is a very crucial time for the Chin churches to touch the young Chins in the West with the gospel of Jesus. If we cannot, they will be away from the church and even Christ may not be able to own their hearts and minds.

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