

Luke 12-17; John 11 – Ep 200

Luke 12: Jesus Teaches

Beware the Pharisees: Luke 12.1-12

“An innumerable multitude of people”¹ (Luke 12.1)

From natural acoustic settings (e.g., coves or hills) a powerful speaker could address a vast crowd. A crowd of “many thousands” was rare; had the Romans known of such large crowds in the wilderness, they might have detained Jesus. They did not trust large gatherings of people who met without their sanction and whose potentially revolutionary rhetoric they could not monitor. (The theater in the Galilean city Sepphoris seated four to five thousand people, but because it was not in the countryside, any antiRoman rhetoric would have been more quickly an issue.) The odds of Roman interference at this point are small, however; they did not patrol the Galilean countryside, and their highest officers are as yet unaware of Jesus (23:2).²

Beware the leaven of the Pharisees - Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν Φαρισαίων (Luke 12.1)

Leaven (*zymē*) works within dough as a hidden yet powerful force; so, we are to understand, is the hidden vice of the opposition beneath their virtuous veneer. Luke also eliminates the other parties (Herodians in Mark, Sadducees in Matthew) to focus exclusively on the Pharisees.³

“My friends” (Luke 12.4)

Luke uses friendship language and the conventions associated with that language frequently (e.g., 7:6, 34; 11:5, 6-8), but only here does Jesus call his disciples “friends” (*philoī*), a description otherwise found only in the Johannine literature (John 15.13, 14-15; 3 John 15). For the theme of friendship as antidote to fear in face of danger, cf. Epicurus, *Sovereign Maxims* 23, 24, 28, 39.⁴

Be not afraid of them that kill the body (Luke 12.4)

President Kimball said:

“We are lifted by the witness of the modern prophet, Joseph Smith, when he reassures the people of the resurrection. Elder George A. Smith quotes the last public address of Joseph Smith in June 1844, only days before his cruel assassination:

“I am ready to be offered a sacrifice for this people; for what can our enemies do? Only kill the body and their power is then at an end. Stand firm my friends. Never flinch. Do not seek to save your lives, for he that is afraid to die for the truth will lose eternal life. Hold out to the end; and we shall be resurrected and become like Gods, and reign in celestial kingdoms, principalities and eternal dominions...”⁵

¹ ἐπισυναχθεισῶν τῶν μυριάδων τοῦ ὄχλου ὥστε καταπατεῖν ἀλλήλους “There was gathered together a myriad of crowds, so that they were stepping on each other” (Luke 12.1 - my translation).

² Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, IVP Academic, 2014, p. 212.

³ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke* (Volume 3), Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 194.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵ Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Report*, April 1969, Afternoon Meeting 30.

The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say⁶ (Luke 12.12)

The Jewish people viewed the Holy Spirit especially as the Spirit of prophetic inspiration and empowerment; thus when brought before the authorities (12:11) believers would be empowered to speak God's message as plainly as did the Old Testament prophets. (Inspiration does not, of course, imply lack of general preparation or discipline in the subject about which one speaks; disciples memorized the sayings of their teachers in both Jewish and Greek culture, and Jesus' disciples would know his teaching as well as being inspired by the Spirit.)⁷

Elder McConkie taught:

“The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.’ This is a power that none but the saints of God possess. They alone have the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead based on faithfulness. No man of himself could possibly know what to say, either by way of doctrine or of testimony, when hailed before earthly tribunals or when standing in the congregations of the wicked, for no man knows the hearts of men. But God, who knows all things, promises, by the power of his Spirit, to put words into the mouths of his servants. ‘Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say,’ is his word, ‘but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man.’ (D&C 84:85.) Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, after the healing of the man lame from his mother's womb, and Paul before Agrippa, testifying that Jesus rose from the dead, are but illustrations of the power of speech given to the Lord's servants when the need for divine help requires it.”⁸

Parable of the Rich Fool: Luke 12.13-21

Culture

People often called upon rabbis to settle legal disputes. Inheritance disputes were extremely prominent in Gentile courts, where wills would determine inheritance. Jewish law should have been less complicated: the eldest son was supposed to receive double what any of the other sons would receive (Deut 21:17). The proportion of inheritance in a Jewish setting was thus fixed (though particular items may be in dispute), and the plaintiff in this case has every legal right to receive his share of the inheritance.⁹

The Message

Luke 12:13-21 is a parable told by Jesus about a rich man who was so focused on his own wealth and possessions that he neglected to prepare himself for the future or to consider the needs of others. The parable begins with a man in the crowd asking Jesus to intervene in a dispute with his brother over their

⁶ τὸ γὰρ ἅγιον πνεῦμα διδάξει ὑμᾶς ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἃ δεῖ εἰπεῖν “Because the Holy Spirit will give to you all in the same hour the things that are necessary for you to say!” (Luke 12.12 my translation)

⁷ Keener, *Background*, p. 212.

⁸ Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. Deseret Book, 1979-1981, 2: 318.

⁹ Keener, *Background*, p. 213.

inheritance. Jesus responds by warning against greed and covetousness, stating that one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

Jesus then tells the parable of a rich man who had a bountiful harvest and had no place to store his excess grain. The man decides to tear down his barns and build larger ones to store all of his grain and goods.¹⁰ He then tells himself that he can relax and enjoy his wealth for many years to come. However, God intervenes and tells him that his life will be demanded of him that very night, leaving him with no opportunity to enjoy his riches.

The parable warns against the dangers of focusing solely on material possessions and neglecting the more important matters of life, such as relationships and spiritual growth. It reminds us that we cannot control the future and that our ultimate destiny is not determined by our wealth or possessions. Instead, our focus should be on cultivating a meaningful relationship with God and loving and serving others, rather than pursuing wealth and material possessions.

Joseph F. Smith taught:

“And we are told that he turned away sorrowful, because he had great possessions. He would not hearken to, nor obey the law of God in this matter. Not that Jesus required of the young man to go and sell all that he possessed and give it away; that is not the principle involved...The rich man may enter into the kingdom of heaven as freely as the poor, if he will bring his heart and affections into subjection to the law of God and to the principle of truth; if he will place his affections upon God, his heart upon the truth, and his soul upon the accomplishment of God's purposes, and not fix his affections and his hopes upon the things of the world. Here is the difficulty, and this was the difficulty with the young man. He had great possessions, and he preferred to rely upon his wealth rather than forsake all and follow Christ. If he had possessed the spirit of truth in his heart to have known the will of God, and to have loved the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, he would have said to the Lord, "Yea, Lord, I will do as you require, I will go and sell all that I have, and give it to the poor." If he had had it in his heart to do this, that alone might have been sufficient, and the demand would probably have stopped there; for undoubtedly the Lord did not deem it essential for him to go and give his riches away, or to sell his possessions and give the proceeds away, in order that he might be perfect, for that, in a measure, would have been improvident. Yet, if it had required all this to test him and to prove him, to see whether he loved the Lord with all his heart, mind, and strength, and his neighbor as himself, then he ought to have been willing to do it; and if he had been, he would have lacked nothing and would have received the gift of eternal life, which is the greatest gift of God, and which can be received on no other principle than the one mentioned by Jesus to the young man.”¹¹

C.S. Lewis wrote:

“Do ye understand all this, my Son?’ said the Teacher. ‘I don't know about all, Sir,’ said I. ‘Am I right in thinking the Lizard really turned into the Horse?’ ‘Aye. But it was killed first. Ye'll not forget that part of the story?’ ‘I'll try not to, Sir. But does it mean that everything—everything—that is in us can go on to the

¹⁰ Archaeologists have found large grain silos on farms owned by wealthy absentee landowners, such as at Sepphoris, one of the largest and most Hellenized Jewish cities in Galilee. The image in the parable here is that of a wealthy landowner, part of the extremely small leisured class (generally estimated at less than one percent), who need not labor in his own fields. Keener, p. 213.

¹¹ Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, Many Duties of Man, "What the Lord Requires of His Saints," 260-1.

Mountains?' 'Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will *not* be raised again if it submits to death. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Flesh and blood cannot come to the Mountains. Not because they are too rank, but because they are too weak. What is a lizard compared with a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed.'"¹²

“Thou fool...” (Luke 12.20)

“A modern illustration of that principle is suggested in the apocryphal story of two men standing before the casket of a wealthy friend. Asked one, 'How much property did he leave?' Replied the other, 'He left all of it.'"¹³

Seek First the Kingdom of God: Luke 12.22-34

"With all my soul, I plead with members of the church, and with people everywhere, to think more about the gospel; more about the development of the spirit within; to devote more time to the real things of life, and less time to those things which will perish."¹⁴

Always be prepared for the Second Coming: Luke 12.35-59

The coming of the Son of Man is mentioned explicitly only in Luke 12:40, and only with the caution that the time of his coming will be sudden and unexpected "like a thief in the night." But the theme of "returning" and "coming" runs through these sayings (vv. 35, 31, 38, 39, 40, 43, 45, 46). All of Christian existence therefore stands within an expectation. Its fulfillment may be sure, but its timing is unknown. Therefore the attitudes of watchfulness are required, even if the return of the master appears "delayed" (12:45). The reality of the judgment, we learn, is not simply temporal but existential. God judges humans at every moment, and knows whether they have "given rations at the appointed times" or have fallen to beating the servants.¹⁵

Peter’s question: Is this parable just for us or for everyone? (Luke 12.41)

Rather than answer Peter directly, Luke shows us Jesus answer the question with a parable. Jesus’ telling of this parable contrasts a faithful and wise servant to a lazy servant which helps to illustrate the importance of being in the right place and doing the right things. We see this because the servant who is put in charge of his master’s household while he is away is vital to the running of the household and the preservation of the master’s property. When compared to the faithful servant, the unfaithful servant simply assumes that the master of the house will not return anytime soon. Because of his assumptions, he is lackadaisical in his duties and does not do his work. The unfaithful servant is then punished severely for his actions.

As I see it, there are several possible interpretations of Jesus' response to Peter's question are as follows:

¹² C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, Ch. 11, p. 98-105.

¹³ Dallin H. Oaks, [“Tithing,” April 1994 Conference.](#)

¹⁴ David O. McKay, *Conference Report*, Apr. 1968, p. 144.

¹⁵ Luke S. Johnson, p. 205-206.

1. **Jesus' response was specifically given to his Apostles**, thereby reminding them of their responsibility to be faithful and wise servants, to feed the flock, and to be like Jesus. By telling the parable of the faithful servant, Jesus was highlighting the importance of being diligent and responsible in carrying out the duties that God has entrusted to them. He was warning them against complacency and laziness and reminding them that their actions have consequences.
2. **Jesus' response was meant to apply to all people**. By contrasting the faithful and unfaithful servants, Jesus was showing that there are two possible responses to God's call - one of faithfulness and one of unfaithfulness. He was warning everyone that there will be consequences for their actions and that they will be held accountable for the way they live their lives.
3. **Jesus' response was meant to emphasize the importance of being prepared for his return**. By telling the parable of the wise and unwise servants, Jesus was stressing the importance of being ready for his return. He was warning his disciples and all people that they should be prepared for the day when he will come back, and they will be held accountable for their actions.

On the whole, Jesus' response to Peter's question in Luke 12:41-48 emphasizes the importance of being faithful, wise, and prepared in our relationship with God, and it reminds us that there will be consequences for our actions. Perhaps his response was to invite readers to ponder how they might apply his teachings in their lives, no matter their calling or position in the Lord's Kingdom.

"Beaten with a few stripes" (Luke 12.48)

Some ancient laws treated slaves as persons; other laws treated them as property. Although masters were allowed to beat slaves (as they also generally beat their children), it was in their economic interests not to do so often or severely. A major flogging (12:47), execution and disfigurement of the corpse (12:46) reflect the severity of the crime; a master legally had the power of life and death over his slaves. Floggings often preceded executions in general.¹⁶

Luke 13.1-5: Jesus teaches of the need to repent

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish (Luke 13.1-5 KJV).

Historical Background

This is probably a fragmented account of something that Pontius Pilate did in his punishment of the Jews in Galilee. This account in Luke 13:1-2 is referring to the massacre of some Galileans by Pilate's soldiers while they were offering sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem. The incident is mentioned by Jesus as an example to emphasize the point that suffering and death are not necessarily consequences of one's own sinfulness, but can also be a result of broader historical and political circumstances.

¹⁶ Keener, *Background*, p. 215.

This event *may have been*¹⁷ referred to by the historian Josephus:

"So he [Pilate] bid the Jews himself go away; but they boldly casting reproaches upon him, he gave the soldiers that signal which had been beforehand agreed on; who laid upon them much greater blows than Pilate had commanded them, and equally punished those that were tumultuous, and those that were not; nor did they spare them in the least: and since the people were unarmed, and were caught by men prepared for what they were about, there were a great number of them slain by this means, and others of them ran away wounded. And thus an end was put to this sedition."¹⁸

How these people viewed punishment and sin

In popular piety (based on the Deuteronomic promises [see Deut. 28-30]), disaster is taken as a punishment for sin (Job 4:17; Ezek 18:26), and this conviction is reflected in John 9:2-3. as well as the healing stories of Luke (e.g., 5:20-24). Jesus does not dispute the equation but simply questions whether they were more egregious sinners than others.¹⁹

This may have been a set up by Jesus' detractors.

Bishop Moshe bar Kepha taught:

"Some of the Jews came to our Lord and deceptively reported it to him as some of the interpreters had said, waiting, so that if he answered that Pilate did well when he killed them, they could accuse him, saying: He stands against the Law since he (Jesus) justified the killing of those who slaughtered sacrifices to God. And if he answered them that they were wrongly killed, they will complain about him before Pilate that he is standing against the kingdom and the authority of the Romans. Therefore, our Lord answered them differently, and not as they wished and desired. At any rate, whether deceitfully or directly they said this to him, our Lord took up this matter and that what had happened at that time, I mean, the tower [built] in Siloam that fell immediately upon eighteen men and killed them. Concerning these two fearful matters, when he responded to them, he continued his speech for the benefit of the hearers, saying: Do not think that they were killed because they were greater sinners than those Galileans, and it was not that, because they were greater sinners than all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the tower fell upon them and killed them. But these are the proof of punishment the people will receive on the account of their guilt. And even you, if you do not change, returning from bad to good, and believe in me, the punishment of death will come upon you, just like them, and even worse."²⁰

¹⁷ The two incidents related in 13:1-5 are unique to Luke. ***None of the accounts concerning Pilate's penchant for punishing Jews exactly matches this rendition, though they support the picture of him as an administrator who reached quickly for violent solutions*** (Josephus, Antiquities 18:85-89; Jewish War 2:169-177). The point of Luke's recital is less the history of Pilate's reign than of the need to repent. See: Luke Timothy Johnson, [Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke](#), The Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 211. Joel Green also notes that this account is not attested in the histories: "The scenario presented to Jesus is of Pilate's execution of Jewish pilgrims from Galilee, cut down while in the act of offering sacrifices. ***Otherwise unattested, the event thus reported is nonetheless consistent with what is more generally known of Pilate*** according to Jewish sources." See: Joel Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), Eerdmans, 1997, p. 721 electronic version, emphasis added.

¹⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 18, chap. 3, verse 2.

¹⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson, [Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke](#), The Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 211.

²⁰ Abdul-Maasih Saadi, [Moshe Bar Kepha's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke](#), p. 200. Moshe Bar Kepha (813-903 AD) was a prolific writer of the ninth century and a celebrated bishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the ninth century. His writings reflect various aspects of West Syriac theology and ecclesiology, and his literary legacy links

The Tower of Siloam

The “tower in Siloam” may have been on Jerusalem’s city wall above the pool of Siloam; some suggest that it may have been associated with Pilate’s construction of an improved water-supply system for the city. The feast may have been Passover, when nonpriests offered their animals.²¹

Luke 13.6-9: The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

Mark 11.12-14 and Matt 21.18-19 each have a story about Jesus and a fig tree in direct narrative: Jesus finds a tree that does not bear fruit and curses it. Luke's parable may derive from the same tradition, but he turns it in quite a different way. The fig tree and the vine are found together in Micah 4.4 and Joel 2.22 as signs of God's blessings.²²

Luke 13.10-17: A Woman is healed on the Sabbath

You are loosed from your infirmity! (Luke 13.12)

Ancient medical writers used words like “loose” to describe the removal of curvature of the spine and related ailments. The term was also used of freeing people from a demon’s grip.²³

The ruler of the synagogue argues that Jesus should not heal on the sabbath (Luke 13.14).

The synagogue leader’s argument sounds logical: work is forbidden on the sabbath, but that still leaves six days a week for healings. The problem with the argument is that biblical sabbath laws did not restrict God’s activity, and the only physical work Jesus performs on this sick woman is to lay his hands on her (though some Pharisees considered this work). Even Pharisaic rules officially forbade only healing by a physician; they debated the propriety of prayer for the sick on the sabbath.²⁴

Luke 13.18-21: The Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven

Everyone regarded the mustard seed as very small; indeed, something smaller would be hard to see easily. It nevertheless yielded a shrub the size of a small tree (around the Sea of Galilee, it can reach a height of eight to ten feet, though rarely more than five, if interpreters have the correct plant in view), with room for small birds to perch in it (borrowing the language of Daniel 4:12, the splendor of a mortal ruler’s kingdom). According to second century Palestinian teachers the mustard seed was not sown in gardens (cf. Mt 13:31); but outside Palestine (where Luke’s hearers lived) it could be. Leaven, or yeast, would be mixed with flour throughout the dough. The point of both parables (13:18-21) is that the mighty kingdom everyone expects could issue from apparently obscure beginnings—like Jesus and the disciples.²⁵

Luke 13.22-30: Are there few that are saved? The “Two Ways”

the earlier Syriac exegetical tradition (beginning with Ephrem) with the Syriac 'Renaissance' of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.

²¹ Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary](#), IVP Academic, 2014, p. 215.

²² Johnson, p. 211.

²³ Keener, *Background*, p 215.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

²⁵ Keener, *Background*, p. 216.

The image of “the two ways” was common in Jewish (and other ancient) literature; some texts also stressed that the majority of people would follow the way to destruction (see, from the late first or early second century, 4 Ezra 7:3-16, 60-61; 8:1-3). Other Jewish groups besides Christians, like the Essenes, also believed that they were the only saved group. But many mainstream Jews apparently believed that nearly all Israel would be saved in the time to come (cf. Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1).

Will few be saved?

Few as compared to the hosts of men in our present worldly society (Matt 7:13-14), but many when all who so obtain are counted together...The expansion of world population being what it is, we can suppose that the billions who live on earth during the Millennium-and who 'grow up without sin unto salvation' (DC 45:58)-shall far exceed in number the total hosts of men who have lived during the preceding six thousand years. Truly, in the aggregate, there are many who shall be saved!"²⁶

Alonzo Gaskill commented on this idea:

“We must remember – and we must firmly believe -- that the plan of salvation, the great plan of happiness, was designed to work. Indeed, it would not be called the eternal plan of salvation / happiness / redemption / mercy / deliverance / etc. if it did not work – particularly if its primary effect was the damnation²⁷ of the vast majority of God’s offspring.

Yes, agency must be preserved. ***But to design a plan that is so difficult to succeed at that most would fail does not preserve agency. On the contrary, such would thwart both agency and the very thing the Plan was created to accomplish – namely, our exaltation. The thought that God would promote something that would ensure that the vast majority of His children would never again be able to dwell in His presence is incomprehensible.*** And the assumption that our mother in heaven would idly sit back and allow such a guaranteed flop to eternally strip her of any interaction with her spirit offspring is equally unfathomable. Such could not – and did not – happen!²⁸

Luke 13.31-35: Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

“As a hen doth gather her brood under her wings...” (Luke 13.34)

Jewish tradition claimed that Jewish people were under God’s wings, and when a Jewish person converted a Gentile, he or she “brought the Gentile under the wings of God’s presence.” The Old Testament also portrays God as an eagle hovering over its offspring (Deut 32:11; cf. Ex 19:4) and protecting Israel under his wings (Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4), and similarly terrifying Israel’s foes (Jer 49:22). This is but one image of God’s love for his people. Jesus here applies this divine role and image to himself.²⁹

²⁶ Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:475.

²⁷ From an LDS position, to be damned is to be stopped in one’s progression (i.e., to be forever in a non-exalted state). ***It intuitively goes against everything we know about the nature of God to suggest that He would create and institute a plan that would, by design, damn most of His children.***

²⁸ Alonzo Gaskill, [Odd Are, You’re Going to be Exalted, Meridian Magazine, June 25, 2008](#). See also: Bruce R. McConkie, [“The Probationary Test of Mortality,”](#) address given at the University of Utah Institute of Religion, January 10, 1982.

²⁹ Keener, *Background*, p. 217.

Luke 14: Jesus on the Sabbath, in the home of a chief Pharisee³⁰

Luke 14.1-6: A man with dropsy³¹ is healed

Dropsy (edema) causes the body to swell from excess fluids, as ancient medical texts commonly mention. Because the man with dropsy here is in front of Jesus and not on the room's periphery, he might be an invited guest.³²

“They could not answer him again to these things” (Luke 14.6)

Jewish legal experts debated proper sabbath laws among themselves; if one side was silenced and unable to reply, they would be presumed wrong or at best too ignorant of the law to defend their position. Essenes did not permit rescuing an animal on the sabbath, but Pharisees did. Jesus argues by analogy with a principle on which his opponents agreed, and extrapolates by a “how much more” argument (see also Luke 13.15-16).³³

Luke 14.7-24: Parable of the Wedding Feast

Culture

Well-known teachers customarily lectured or participated in dialogues at banquets. Ancient writers sometimes arranged literary discussions as monologues or dialogues in the setting of such banquets; these writings were called symposia. Social status was important in antiquity and was made obvious by the seating of dinner guests at banquets. This status was especially a problem in well-to-do Greco-Roman circles, but seating by rank is well attested in Palestinian Jewish society, including in the Dead Sea Scrolls... Texts reflecting Jewish expectation (as early as Isaiah 25.6-9) often portrayed the kingdom of God as a banquet.³⁴

Application

Elder Dallin H. Oaks³⁵ spoke of this parable when he taught:

In this way the Savior used a current circumstance to teach an eternal principle about attitudes toward others and ourselves. The proud man, who goes to a wedding and compares himself to the other guests, may conclude that he is better than they and seat himself in the highest room. The humble man, who has great reverence and respect for his host and who thinks only of his good fortune to be invited at all, will seat himself in the lowest room. Out of these contrasting attitudes—one pridefully comparing

³⁰ εἰς οἶκόν τινος τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν Φαρισαίων “In the home of one of the Chief Pharisees” (Luke 14.1).

³¹ In Luke 14.2, the term “ὕδρωπικός” is used, which is commonly translated as “dropsy” in English translations of the Bible. Dropsy, also known as [edema](#), is a medical condition characterized by an abnormal accumulation of fluid in the body's tissues, leading to swelling and discomfort. The term “ὕδρωπικός” comes from the Greek words “ὕδρω” (hydron), meaning water, and “ὄψις” (opsis), meaning appearance or vision, (it is also considered to be combined with ὀπτάνομαι, meaning to “see,” or “to appear”) and is thus used to describe the appearance of a person suffering from dropsy.

³² Keener, *Background*, p. 217.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 217-281.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

³⁵ Dallin H. Oaks, [Pure in Heart](#), chapter 6: “Pride,” Bookcraft, 1988.

himself to other men and the other humbly appreciating his inadequacy in the house of his Master—came the Savior's conclusion:

For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:11)...

Differences in money are not the only nesting ground for pride. Differences in talents or accomplishments or positions can also provide occasion for the destructive pride of comparison. In a sermon delivered to members of the Twelve as they were about to leave on their mission to Great Britain in 1839, the Prophet Joseph Smith gave this warning:

Let the Twelve be humble, and not be exalted, and beware of pride, and not seek to excel one above another, but act for each other's good, and pray for one another, and honor our brother or make honorable mention of his name, and not backbite and devour our brother.

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave this specific Illustration:

When the Twelve or any other witnesses stand before the congregations of the earth, and they preach in the power and demonstration of the Spirit of God, and the people are astonished and confounded at the doctrine, and say, "That man has preached a powerful discourse, a great sermon," then let that man or those men take care that they do not ascribe the glory unto themselves, but be careful that they are humble, and ascribe the praise and glory to God and the Lamb; for it is by the power of the Holy Priesthood and the Holy Ghost that they have power thus to speak.³⁶

Those making excuses (Luke 14.16-24)

"The covenant people, Israel, were the specially invited guests. They had been bidden long enough aforetime, and by their own profession as the Lord's own had agreed to be partakers of the feast. When all was ready, on the appointed day, they were severally summoned by the Messenger who had been sent by the Father; He was even then in their midst. But the cares of riches, the allurements of material things, and the pleasures of social and domestic life had engrossed them; and they prayed to be excused or irreverently declared they could not or would not come. Then the gladsome invitation was to be carried to the Gentiles, who were looked upon as spiritually poor, maimed, halt, and blind. And later, even the pagans beyond the walls, strangers in the gates of the holy city, would be bidden to the supper. These, surprised at the unexpected summons, would hesitate, until by gentle urging and effective assurance that they were really included among the bidden guests, they would feel themselves constrained or compelled to come. The possibility of some of the discourteous ones arriving later, after they had attended to their more absorbing affairs, is indicated in the Lord's closing words: 'For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.'³⁷

Luke 14.25-35: Disciple requires sacrifice

Count the cost

³⁶ [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#), sel. Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book, 1938, p. 155-56.

³⁷ James E. Talmage, [Jesus the Christ](#), 218.

S. Michael Wilcox³⁸ taught:

There is a wonderful parable told by Jesus about building a tower. It teaches that we are supposed to count the cost of discipleship as we begin to follow Christ. One should not start the construction of a tower unless we intend to finish it or people will mock us. The Savior ended that parable by saying, “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). The building of the tower—the cost of discipleship—requires the forsaking of all that we have, not necessarily in a material sense, but spiritually. It means our thoughts, our attitudes, our words, our feelings, everything that would not fit perfectly with Christ’s life must be gone. All the dragon skin! All the rabbit fur! All the lizards perched on our shoulders!

“‘Make no mistake,’ [Christ] says, ‘if you let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less, or other, than that. You have free will, and if you choose, you can push Me away. But if you do not push Me away, understand that I am going to see this job through. Whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life, whatever inconceivable purification it may cost you after death, whatever it costs Me, I will never rest, nor let you rest, until you are literally perfect—until my Father can say without reservation that He is well pleased with you, as He said He was well pleased with me. This I can do and will do. But I will not do anything less.’”³⁹ Lewis then quotes George MacDonald, who once said, “‘God is easy to please, but hard to satisfy.’”⁴⁰

“Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he has, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14.33)

The Essenes devoted all their property to the community; some radical Greek philosophers espoused the same kind of teaching. But the rest of early Judaism and, even more, Greco-Roman society in general rejected such fanaticism; Judaism stressed giving to charity but not divestiture of possessions. Jesus’ disciples did not become propertyless but shared all that they had (Acts 2:44-45) Nevertheless, Jesus would sound like one of the radical teachers, because he claims that anyone who values possessions more than people—and so holds onto them rather than meeting known needs—is not being his disciple.⁴¹

Luke 15: Things that are lost

Understanding the Question

I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, ***what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable? . . . To ascertain its meaning, we must dig up the root and ascertain what it was that drew the saying out of Jesus.*** While Jesus was teaching the people, all the publicans and sinners drew near to hear Him; “and the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” This is the keyword which unlocks the parable of the prodigal son. It was given to answer the murmurings and questions of the Sadducees and Pharisees, who

³⁸ S. Michael Wilcox, [Walking on Water: and Other Classic Messages](#), “Of Lions, Dragons, and Turkish Delight,” Deseret Book, 2011.

³⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 202.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁴¹ Keener, *Background*, p. 219.

were querying, finding fault, and saying, “How is it that this man, as great as He pretends to be, eats with publicans and sinners?”⁴²

Things of Increasing Value

The relative value of the lost item increases in each parable: one out of one hundred, one out of ten and finally (15:11) one out of two. Pharisees were generally unimpressed with the moral character of women and, though valuing care for the poor, mostly came from an educated class different from people with just ten coins. They would not readily identify with the protagonist of this story (contrast Luke’s approach in 24:1-11).⁴³

Luke 15.1-10: The Parable of the Lost Coin

The ten silver coins are most likely the woman’s dowry—the only money she brings into the marriage that is technically hers even if the marriage is dissolved. That she has only ten coins (worth about ten days of a worker’s wages) suggests that her father’s family is not well-to-do; she would presumably have married into a household roughly equally poor (marriage within one’s economic bracket was preferred). Given Luke’s emphasis on widows elsewhere and his lack of specification here, she is probably not envisioned specifically as a widow, but a widow with only ten coins would be in an even more desperate condition.

The lamp here is a small, handheld oil lamp, which emits little light but is more helpful than the small (if any) window that may be in her wall. ***The rough stone floors of poor homes had many crevices between the stones, into which coins and fragments of pottery fell so often that archaeologists can now use coins in those crevices to date when people lived in these homes.*** By sweeping with a broom she might hope to hear the coin rattle against the floor.⁴⁴

Luke 15.11-32: The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Here the youngest son comes to the father and asks that the property, presumably the land, be divided up. Under Jewish law a father just couldn’t leave his properties to whomever he wanted. He was required to leave a double portion to the elder son, in this case two-thirds to the elder son and one-third to the younger (Deuteronomy 21:17). But the division was not generally done until the father’s death. One researcher who lived in the Near East for many years has observed that if a son were to ask his father for his inheritance while the father were still alive, he would be implying that he wants his father to die, which would be both a devastating insult to the father and a serious transgression of cultural norms.⁴⁵

“He sent him into his fields to feed swine” (Luke 15.15)

⁴² Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:261-262, emphasis added.

⁴³ Keener, *Background*, p. 220.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220-221, emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Robert Millet, [Lost and Found: Pondering the Parable of the Prodigal Son, *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity: Vol. 4, article 4*](#), p. 97. Here Dr. Millet is quoting Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 161–62.

According to the Mishnah, from subsequent centuries, no one is allowed to rear swine, and according to the Babylonian Talmud, the person who does so is accursed.” Truly, this was as low as a Jewish boy could descend.⁴⁶

“When he came to himself” (Luke 15.17)

When the wanderer comes to himself, “he remembers the other whom he wanted to push out of his world but to whom he found himself still belonging. . . . Through departure he wanted to become a ‘non-son’; *his return begins not with repentance but with something that makes the repentance possible—the memory of sonship. There is no coming to oneself without the memory of belonging.* The self has been constructed in relation to others, and it can come to itself only through relationship to others. The first link with the other in a distant country of broken relationships is memory.” In short, “For him whose project was to ‘un-son’ himself and who is still in a distant country, ‘sonship’ can only be a memory, but it is a memory that defines his present so much that it sets him on a journey back. *The memory of sonship gives hope.*”⁴⁷

As one scholar has written, “The beginning of wisdom is to come to our senses and know the fearful truth about ourselves, that we have wandered and wasted our days in a distant country far from home.”⁴⁸

“His father saw him, and had compassion, and ran...” (Luke 15.20)

It was a breach of an elderly Jewish man’s dignity to run, though familial love could take priority over dignity after a long absence (cf. Tobit 11:9—mother and son). Given the normal garb, the father would have to pull up his skirt to run. Kissing was a conventional greeting for family members or intimate friends; normally it consisted of a light kiss.⁴⁹

Best robe, ring, and shoes (Luke 15.21-22)

The best robe in the house would belong to the father himself. The ring would probably be a family signet ring—hence would symbolize reinstatement to sonship in a well-to-do house. Slaves or impoverished workers often did not wear sandals, though (as here) they carried and tied a master’s sandals. The father is saying, “No, I won’t receive you back as a servant. I’ll receive you only as a son.”⁵⁰

Luke 16.1-13: The Parable of the Unjust Steward

Luke 16:1-13 is a parable of Jesus that has many interpretations. This parable portrays a dishonest manager (Luke 16.1-2) who is about to be fired by his master. In an effort to secure his financial future, he uses his insider position to make deals with his master's debtors, reducing their debts in the hopes that they will be indebted to him and take him in once he is fired. Jesus then praises the manager for his

⁴⁶ Millet, p. 99.

⁴⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 158–59, emphasis added.

⁴⁸ Millet, quoting Richard John Neuhaus, [*Death on a Friday Afternoon: Meditations on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross*](#) (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 4.

⁴⁹ Keener, p. 221-222.

⁵⁰ Keener, p. 222.

cleverness, saying that the people of this world are more cunning in dealing with their own kind than the people of the light.⁵¹

Some interpretations of this story include:

1. **The Parable is about the use of money:** One interpretation of the parable is that it is about the use of money. The manager is commended for being crafty in his dealings with money, and Jesus uses this as an example to encourage his followers to use their wealth to make friends for themselves, so that when their money is gone, they will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. This interpretation emphasizes the importance of using our resources for good, especially in terms of building relationships and investing in the lives of others.
2. **This is a story about gaining and properly using worldly wisdom:** In this interpretation of the parable, we can see that Jesus is emphasizing the importance of worldly wisdom. The manager is commended for his cleverness and skill in deal making, *but he is not commended for his honesty*. This interpretation suggests that we need to be wise in the ways of the world, but also that we need to be honest and trustworthy in our dealings with others.
3. **The Parable is about stewardship:** Another interpretation of this story is that it is about stewardship. The manager is praised for his stewardship of his master's resources, even if it is done dishonestly. This interpretation emphasizes the importance of being good stewards of what God has given us, whether it be money, talents, or other resources.
4. **This is a story about gaining the public trust and favor:** the manager has gained public favor for himself and for the master as a generous benefactor; if the master punishes the manager now, it would appear to the public that he were doing so because of the manager's benevolent actions in lessening the debts of the master's debtors. The criminal manager could certainly be jailed, but he wisely stakes everything on his master's honor as a generous man. Ancient stories often portray powerful persons as appreciating and rewarding cunning, even if it had been used against them ("wisely"—kjv—can mean "shrewdly"—niv, nasb, etc.; cf. Ex 1:10). Some stories (undoubtedly popular among slaves) portray slaves outwitting their masters; although this steward appears to be free (thus "begging" in 16:3), the story line may resemble one with which Jesus' hearers would be familiar.⁵²

Overall, Luke 16:1-13 is a challenging and thought-provoking parable that has been interpreted in many different ways. However, most interpretations emphasize the importance of using our resources wisely, being honest and trustworthy, and living our lives in a way that honors God.

Mammon of Unrighteousness μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας (Luke 16.9)

"The responsibility for each person's social, emotional, spiritual, physical, or economic well-being rests first upon himself, second upon his family, and third upon the Church if he is a faithful member thereof.

⁵¹ "Children of light" appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls for God's special remnant, as opposed to the rest of the wicked world; here the "children of this age" echoes Jewish language for those who live for this age and lack hope for the world to come. There appears to be an implied "how much more" argument (a common ancient Jewish argument): if worldly people can think ahead regarding money, how much more should God's people do so? See: Keener, *Background*, p. 223.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able, will voluntarily shift the burden of his own or his family's well-being to someone else. So long as he can, under the inspiration of the Lord and with his own labors, he will supply himself and his family with the spiritual and temporal necessities of life."⁵³

Luke 16.14-18: The hypocrisy of the Pharisees

Ἦκουον δὲ ταῦτα πάντα καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι **φιλάργυροι** ὑπάρχοντες καὶ **ἐξεμυκτήριζον** αὐτόν **“The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.”** (Luke 16.14, my translation)

This verse sets the context for the rest of the passage. Jesus had just finished telling a parable about a dishonest manager (Luke 16:1-13), in which he taught that it is impossible (at least in one interpretation) to serve both God and money. The Pharisees, who were known for their love of money and their legalistic approach to religion, were offended by Jesus' teaching.

“The Law and the Prophets were until John” (Luke 16.16)

Jewish people sometimes summarized the Bible as “the Law and the Prophets”; many of them believed that after the era of the prophets the prophetic voice had been muted until the messianic time. Thus John introduces the messianic era.⁵⁴

Jesus speaks out against divorce (Luke 16.18)

Jewish law permitted men the right of divorce for almost any reason, although many rabbis disapproved of divorcing on slight grounds. Jesus' statement, however, declares that divorce is invalid in God's sight, so that a subsequent marriage is adulterous. Here Jesus articulates a stronger view of the marriage bond than anyone else we know of in antiquity, and his statement thus intensifies the law of Moses. Like most other statements of general principle in the ancient world (e.g., Prov 18:22 with Prov 11:22; 12:4; 21:9; or Prov 10:15; 13:8; 14:20 with 10:2, 11:4; or 14:24; 16:6 with 15:16; 16:8; 30:7-9; or 11:8; 12:13, 21 with principles such as 2 Tim 3:12), this one does not exclude exceptions (for the innocent party who had no say in the matter, cf. Mt 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor 7:15). Jesus' language is probably *hyperbole (see comment on Mt 5:32; 19:9; Mk 10:9); Jesus' purpose is to protect an innocent party from being divorced, not to punish the party who has been so betrayed. His statement addresses especially the wife because in the traditional custom in Jewish Palestine (in contrast to Roman custom) only the husband had full rights to divorce.⁵⁵

Luke 16.19-31: Jesus tells the Egyptian story of the rich man and Lazarus and its reversal⁵⁶

⁵³ Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 366.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 223-224.

⁵⁶ There are scholars which see a direct connection between Jesus' parable here with Egyptian and Jewish stories that were circulating in his time. See: Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands, 1998, p. 97-118. Many scholars see the parallel between Egypt and Luke's retelling of Jesus' parable in the story of Setme and his son Si-Osiris, a Demotic text written in the second half of the first century. This story was probably a much older tale, as Bauckham relates, and is an account of Si-Osiris taking his father Setme on a tour of the seven halls of Amente to show him the fates of the dead. In the seventh hall, the pauper was seen, elevated to a high rank, near Osiris (p. 98). According to some scholars, there were seven Jewish versions of this story that were circulating, and these all depict a reversal of fortunes. See also:

Joseph Smith made the context for this parable unmistakable. In the Joseph Smith Translation we can see that Jesus was having a forthright interchange with the Pharisees, saying, "You pervert the right way; and the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence of you; and you persecute the meek."⁵⁷ Then he said, "Verily I say unto you, I will liken you unto the rich man," after which he presented the parable (see JST, Luke 16:21, 23).⁵⁸

Jesus' listeners may have been familiar with an old Egyptian folk tale that had been brought to the Holy Land by Alexandrian Jews and altered to fit the Jewish culture. In the story a rich publican and a poor rabbi (a Pharisee?) both died and were buried. In paradise, the rabbi wandered along the beautiful streams, drinking his fill, while the publican stood helpless next to the water, parched; the more he sought to obtain refreshing and life-giving drink, the more it receded from him.⁵⁹

A Great Gulf Fixed (Luke 16.26)

According to divine law, there was a great separation or gulf between the righteous in paradise and the wicked in the spirit prison—those in one part of the spirit world could not associate with those in the other part. Hence, the rich man could not pass into paradise, nor could Lazarus go into the spirit prison. Once Christ conquered death, however, the gulf was bridged. Righteous emissaries of Christ could then visit, minister to, and teach those in the spirit prison, and those who repented with all their hearts and received the proffered ordinances (which are performed in mortal temples) could then leave the spirit prison and enter paradise (see 1 Peter 3:18–21; 4:6; D&C 138).⁶⁰

Jewish literature often portrayed hell as involving burning. The formerly rich man hopes for mercy because he is a descendant of Abraham, but the judgment here is based on a future inversion of status. Jewish people expected an inversion of status, where the oppressed righteous (especially Israel) would be exalted above the oppressing wicked (especially the Gentiles), and also believed that charitable persons would be greatly rewarded in the world to come. But this parable specifies only economic

Day, [Egyptian Stories Recontextualized In Scripture](#). Others invite readers to proceed with caution in drawing conclusions. See: "A Derivative of a Demotic Folktale?" in Outi Lehtipuu, [The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus](#), Brill, 2007, p. 29-38. Lehtipuu, issuing caution in those who say that Jesus' story is completely dependent on the Egyptian text, writes (p. 38) that these ancient stories "indicate that the reversal of fate of rich and poor after death was a well-known folkloric motif that circulated all over the Hellenistic world. In this respect, the Rich Man and Lazarus is not unique but there is no reason to argue for its dependency on any particular, fixed story."

⁵⁷ "The Joseph Smith Translation makes no essential changes in the parable, but introduces it with a statement of the Lord to the Pharisees, with whom he is having a strong confrontation: 'Verily I say unto you, I will liken you unto the rich man.' The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is more explicit when it is read with the knowledge that it was the Pharisees who were selfish and wicked, and who would go to hell for having failed to hear Moses and the prophets during their mortal lifetime. The meaning of the parable is thus changed from general to specific. This one sentence added by the Joseph Smith Translation ties the whole conversation together as mortar ties the blocks of a building or a wall." Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah*, Bookcraft, 1994, 178.

⁵⁸ Donald W. Parry and Jay A. Parry, [Understanding the Parables of Jesus](#), "Lazarus and the Rich Man," Deseret Book, 2020.

⁵⁹ Simon J. Kistemaker, [The Parables of Jesus](#), Baker Publishing Group, 1987, 236. This is one of several stories that were most likely circulating at the time Jesus told this story. See: Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus*.

⁶⁰ Parry and Parry, [Understanding the Parables of Jesus](#).

inversion, and its starkness would have been as offensive to most first-century hearers of means as it could be to many middle-class Western Christians today if they heard it in its original force.⁶¹

Signs, evidence, and power of Spirit filled testimony

"If all the talent, tact, wisdom, and refinement of the world had been sent to me with the Book of Mormon, and had declared, in the most exalted of earthly eloquence, the truth of it, undertaking to prove it by learning and worldly wisdom, they would have been to me like the smoke which arises only to vanish away. But when I saw a man without eloquence, or talents for public speaking, who could only say, "I know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of the Lord," the Holy Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminated my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality were before me. I was encircled by them, filled with them, and I knew for myself that the testimony of the man was true. My own judgment, natural endowments, and education bowed to this simple, but mighty testimony. There sits the man who baptized me, (brother Eleazer Miller). It filled my system with light, and my soul with joy. The world, with all its wisdom and power, and with all the glory and fancy show of its kings or sovereigns, sinks into perfect insignificance, compared with the simple, unadorned testimony of the servant of God."⁶²

Luke 17.1-10: Offenses, forgiveness, and faith

John 11: Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead

[John 11](#) recounts the story of the raising of Lazarus that took place in Bethany. This account relates one of Jesus' most prominent wonders. There are several ways we can read this account:

1. **The Power of Jesus is manifest:** One of the most obvious themes in [John 11](#) is the power of Jesus. By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus demonstrated his divine power and authority. This miracle served as a sign to those who witnessed it that Jesus was not just an ordinary human being, but the Son of God.
2. **The Importance of Faith (πίστις):** Another theme in [John 11](#) is the importance of faith.⁶³ Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the importance of believing in him and his power. When he tells Martha that Lazarus will rise again, he asks her if she believes this. Her response, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" ([John 11.27](#)), is a powerful statement her great faith.
3. **The Humanity of Jesus:** In [John 11](#), we see Jesus displaying a range of emotions, from sorrow over the death of Lazarus to anger at the unbelief of those around him. This chapter serves as a reminder that Jesus was not just God in the flesh,⁶⁴ but also fully human. He experienced

⁶¹ Keener, p. 224-225.

⁶² Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 1:91.

⁶³ πίστις, usually translated as "faith," is also translated as belief in John's gospel. See: Brent J. Schmidt, *Relational Faith: The Transformation and Restoration of Pistis as Knowledge, Trust, Confidence, and Covenantal Faithfulness*, BYU Studies, 2022.

⁶⁴ What do Latter-day Saints believe about Jesus' godhood? We believe Jesus is the Son of God, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh (John 3.16). We accept the prophetic declarations in the Old Testament that refer directly and powerfully to the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of all humankind. We believe that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the fulfillment of those prophecies... We believe that Jesus was fully human in that He was subject to sickness, to

the same emotions and struggles that we do, and was able to empathize with our pain and suffering.⁶⁵

4. **The Promise of Resurrection:** Ultimately, [John 11](#) points us towards the promise of resurrection. Jesus tells Martha that "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" ([John 11.25-26](#)). This promise is not just for Lazarus, but for all who believe in Jesus.⁶⁶ Through his death and resurrection, Jesus has conquered death and given us the hope of eternal life.⁶⁷

"I am the resurrection and the life" (Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ **John 11.25**)

Elder McConkie wrote:

"Immortality/Salvation is in Christ. Immortality comes through him; his resurrection brings to pass the resurrection of all men. Eternal life is his gift to those whose sins he has borne. 'I am the resurrection, and the life,' he said. 'Both immortality and eternal life come because of my atoning sacrifice.' 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' Temporal death and spiritual death are both swallowed up in Christ. 'And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' (John 11:25-26.)"⁶⁸

Jesus wept (John 11.35)

Elder McConkie wrote:

"What a scene this is—the Son of God in tears! And yet God and man are of the same race, endowed in greater or lesser degree with the same characteristics and attributes; why then should not even Deity weep? (Moses 7:28-37.) Moreover, the man Jesus, Mary's Son, the great Exemplar, while he dwelt in the flesh, was subject to every normal mortal feeling and desire. He suffered temptations, pain, hunger, thirst, and fatigue. (Mosiah 3:7.) He rejoiced with his friends, wept with the mourners, loved those who kept his commandments, satisfied his hunger with food, and in all things set a proper example for his fellow beings to follow."⁶⁹

Lazarus was buried in a cave (John 11.38)

People were often buried in caves. Although some tombs were vertical shafts, as a cave this one probably had the body laying horizontally. The body would be left to decompose for one year, then its bones would be placed in an ossuary (bone box), which in turn would typically be slid into a slot on the wall. Stones (often disk-shaped) covered many tomb openings and would keep out animals, the elements and occasionally robbers.⁷⁰

pain and to temptation. We believe Jesus is the Son of God the Father and as such inherited powers of godhood and divinity from His Father, including immortality, the capacity to live forever... In essence, we declare that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and the central figure in our theology. See: [What Latter-day Saints Believe About Jesus Christ](#), accessed 2.21.23.

⁶⁵ See Alma 7.11.

⁶⁶ All are resurrected, see Alma 11. But those that believe will enter into life.

⁶⁷ See Moses 1.39.

⁶⁸ Elder Bruce R. McConkie, [A New Witness for the Articles of Faith](#), Deseret Book, 1985, 153.

⁶⁹ Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "Jesus Raiseth Lazarus from Death," [Doctrinal New Testament Commentary](#), vol. 1, Deseret Book, 1965.

⁷⁰ Keener, *Background*, p. 283.

He stinketh, for he has been dead four days (John 11.39)

This verse is of the greatest importance for John's understanding of what took place. The Evangelist puts some stress on the actuality of the death of Lazarus. He leaves no doubt but that he is describing a miracle of resuscitation. First comes Jesus' command to remove the stone. Then there is Martha's astonished protest based on the certainty that the body would certainly be decomposing for it had already been buried for four days.⁷¹

His face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, "Loose him, and let him go!" (John 11.44)

It must have been a strange sight indeed. John concludes his narrative of the miracle with Jesus' command to loose Lazarus and let him go. We are reminded of synoptic incidents which show a similar thoughtfulness, as when He commanded that something to eat be given to the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5.43). Jesus was never so carried away by the wonder of His miracles that He forgot the needs of the person.⁷²

The Chief Priests and Pharisees counsel together on how to deal with Jesus (John 11.47-53)

The Pharisees and chief priests call together literally a "Sanhedrin," probably referring here to the supreme court of Israel or those of its representatives who are available. Their concern is a legitimate one validated by history: those perceived as political messiahs threatened their own power and Judea's stability, inviting Roman intervention; the Romans accepted only one supreme king, Caesar. Josephus testified to this concern of the priestly aristocracy, and one reason Joseph Caiaphas maintained his office longer than any other high priest of the first century (AD 18–36) was that he kept the peace for the Romans. But this is another touch of John's irony (a common ancient literary device): this was their view, not that of the Romans (18:38; 19:12); and although they handed Jesus over to the governor for execution, the Romans ultimately did take away their temple and nation, in AD 70, anyway.⁷³

"You do not know anything!" (John 11.49)

The high priest presided over the Sanhedrin. To have a high priest inform his colleagues, "You do not know anything," is the epitome of John's irony.⁷⁴

Luke 17.11-19: The Ten Lepers

Elder James E. Faust wrote:

"Leprosy was so loathsome a disease that those afflicted were not permitted under the law to come close to Jesus. Those suffering from this terrible disease were required to agonize together, sharing their common misery (see Leviticus 13:45-46). Their forlorn cry, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us' must have touched the Savior's heart. When they were healed and when they had received priestly approval that they were clean and acceptable in society, they must have been overcome with joy and amazement. Having received so great a miracle, they seemed completely satisfied. But they forgot their benefactor. It

⁷¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans, 1971, p. 559. τεταρταῖος: "he is a fourth day man."

⁷² Morris, p. 562.

⁷³ Keener, p. 283-284.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 284.

is difficult to understand why the nine lepers were so lacking in gratitude. ***Such ingratitude is self-centered. It is a form of pride.*** What is the significance of the fact that the one who returned to give thanks was a Samaritan? As in the story of the good Samaritan, the point seems to be that those of lesser social or economic status often rise to a greater duty and nobility. In addition to personal gratitude as a saving principle, I should like to express a feeling for the gratitude we ought to have for the many blessings we enjoy."⁷⁵

Elder David B. Haight taught:

"As I've read that story again and again, it's made a great impression upon me. How would you like to be part of the 'nine society'? Wouldn't that be something-to be numbered among those who failed to return and acknowledge the Savior for the blessings He had given them? Only one returned.

"It's so easy in life for us to receive blessings, many of them almost uncounted, and have things happen in our lives that can help change our lives, improve our lives, and bring the Spirit into our lives. But we sometimes take them for granted. How grateful we should be for the blessings that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings into our hearts and souls."⁷⁶

Samaritans

Jesus did not avoid Samaritans. In fact, he once stayed for several days in Samaritan villages and taught them. Just as the story of Jonah taught former-day Israelites that salvation was for all of God's children, that all must have a chance to hear and repent, so Jesus pointedly illustrated God's concern for all peoples despite local prejudice. He immortalized the Samaritan people by his parable about a man (a Jew) assaulted along the Jericho road: "A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him." (Luke 10:33.) The only one of the ten lepers Jesus healed who came back to express gratitude was a Samaritan. (See Luke 17:16.)⁷⁷

Go show yourselves to the priests (Luke 17.14)

The Bible had prescribed particular sacrifices if someone's leprosy were cured (Lev 14:1-32). By complying with these regulations, Jesus does nothing to violate the law or to offend the priests.⁷⁸

Luke 17.20-37: Signs of the times, the coming of the Kingdom of God

"The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Luke 17.20)

"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation'⁷⁹; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

⁷⁵ James E. Faust, [Finding Light in a Dark World](#), Deseret Book, 1995, 81, emphasis added.

⁷⁶ David B. Haight, *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 25.

⁷⁷ D. Kelly Ogden, Chapters 2: "Regions and Settlements in the Holy Land," [Where Jesus Walked: the Land and Culture of New Testament Times](#), Deseret Book, 1991.

⁷⁸ Keener, *Background*, p. 225.

⁷⁹ Οὐκ ἔρχεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ [μετὰ παρατηρήσεως](#) The Kingdom of God is not coming [with observation](#)— this communicates that by standing guard and watching, the kingdom will not be seen. παρατηρήσεως is the genitive singular of παρατήρησις, a Greek word denoting observation. It comes from παρατηρέω, meaning to stand and watch, or to observe carefully, from παρα and τηρέω - a word meaning to "attend carefully," or "to guard."

The phrase "the kingdom of God does not come with observation" can be interpreted in different ways, but one common understanding is that Jesus is saying that the coming of the kingdom of God will not be something that can be easily observed or detected in a physical sense. It will not be announced with trumpets or proclaimed by rulers or visible to the naked eye.

Instead, Jesus suggests that the kingdom of God is something that exists within people, and is not necessarily something that can be seen outwardly. This interpretation is supported by the second half of the passage, which states that the kingdom of God is "within you." Some biblical scholars suggest that this phrase could also be translated as "in your midst" or "among you," which would further emphasize the idea that the kingdom of God is not a physical or observable entity, but rather a spiritual reality that is present in the hearts and minds of believers. Joseph Smith adds this JST comment, that the kingdom "has already come unto you."⁸⁰

John Taylor said this about this passage:

"What did Jesus mean, then, when he said, 'The kingdom of Heaven is within you,' or 'among you' (marginal reading.) There certainly must be some mistake here, for Jesus was speaking to Pharisees, whom he had denounced as corrupt men, hypocrites, whited walls, painted sepulchres, etc. Now, who will say they had the kingdom of God within them? ***The kingdom of God was among them. And it did not come with observation, nor with ostentation or pomp; they might have seen it, but their eyes were blinded, that they could not see; their ears were stopped that they could not hear.*** Many of us suppose that if we had lived in their day, we should have recognized it among the miracles, signs, and powers that were manifested by him. But Jesus said, 'My sheep hear my voice, and know me, and follow me, but others do not.' If any man do his will, says Jesus, 'he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' John 7:17. But if they do not, what then? They have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not. The God of this world blinds their eyes, lest the light of the gospel should shine in upon them. Jesus says, 'Except a man be born again; he cannot see the kingdom of God.' And 'except he is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into it.' John 3:3 and 5. ***It therefore cometh not with observation; the Scriptures are clear on the point, and show to the last that when God's kingdom shall be more fully established on the earth, the inhabitants of the earth will be as ignorant of it as the Jews were,*** that Jesus was the Messiah; for the nations of the earth, with their kings, will yet be gathered together against the people of the Lord, to battle, when the Lord himself will go and fight against them, and there will be one of the most terrible slaughters that ever took place on the earth. It cometh not with observation. It is a righteous kingdom, and righteous men can see it, and appreciate it, and those only."⁸¹

"Two grinding together, the one shall be taken, the other left. Two in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Luke 17.35-36)

Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

⁸⁰ "This should be 'the kingdom of God is among you.' This is the marginal reading in most copies of the Bible and this is the interpretation the Prophet Joseph Smith has placed upon it. The kingdom of God was among them from the time John went forth proclaiming the coming of Jesus Christ and baptizing for the remission of sins." Joseph Fielding Smith, [Answers to Gospel Questions](#), 5 vols. Deseret Book, 1957-1966, 2: 24.

⁸¹ John Taylor, [The Government of God](#). Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1852, p. 86-87.

“In the last days, two shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left; two shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left; and what I say unto one, I say unto all men; watch, therefore, for you know not at what hour your Lord doth come.’ (JS-M 1:44-46.) These words can be used in a dual way. They can be applied to the destruction of the wicked in the day of burning, when only the righteous abide the day, or they can be applied to the gathering of the remainder of the elect by the angels, when they are caught up to meet their Lord, with those who are unworthy of such a quickening being left on earth.”⁸²

Wherever the body is, there will the eagles⁸³ be gathered together (Luke 17.37)

“What happens when there is a carcass in the desert, or anywhere else? The eagles come, or the vultures, or the buzzards (whatever they are going to be) from all directions. All of a sudden they appear out of nowhere. It's quite miraculous to see. How do they know? How can they see? Their eyesight is absolutely fabulous. From miles away you see the specks coming, and where the carcass is they gather in a mysterious way from all directions (in a way that can't be explained). This is the way the Saints are going to be gathered in the last days.”⁸⁴

Other interpretations of Luke 17.37

This verse comes at the end of Jesus' teaching on the coming of the Son of Man and is part of a larger discussion on the sudden and unexpected nature of His return (Luke 17.20-37).

The meaning of this verse is debated among scholars, but one common interpretation is that Jesus is using the imagery of vultures gathering around a dead body to illustrate the inevitability of His return. Just as vultures instinctively gather around a dead body, so too will the events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ be unavoidable and inevitable.

Others see this verse as a warning about the consequences of sin and the final judgment, with the vultures representing God's judgment and the dead body representing those who have rejected God and are subject to His wrath.

⁸² Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man*, Deseret Book, 1982, p. 686.

⁸³ καὶ ἀποκριθέντες λέγουσιν αὐτῷ Ποῦ κύριε ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ὅπου τὸ σῶμα ἐκεῖ συναχθήσονται οἱ ἄετοί. “And they answered and said to him, where Lord? And he said to them wherever the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together!” (Luke 17.37, my translation). The parallel in Matt 24:28 has *ptōma* (“fallen body” = “corpse”) rather than Luke's *sōma* (“body”). The ἄετοί may mean “eagles” (as in Exod 19:4; Jer 4:13; Rev 4:7; 12:4), but the carrion metaphor here seems to demand the translation “vultures,” especially since the birds fit broadly into the same category (see Lev 11:13; Deut 14:12). See: Luke Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 266.

⁸⁴ Hugh Nibley, *Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price*, edited by Robert Smith and Robert Smythe, 9.