



## The Gospel of Luke

Luke 19:28-22:71: In Jerusalem

For most of Luke's gospel since 9:51 we have read material that is either unique to Luke or sayings and stories that we also find in Matthew, although in other settings. From this point on, the basic outline of Luke's story coincides with that of Matthew and Mark. Most scholars accept the hypothesis that Luke is indeed following Mark's lead from this point on, although he continues to offer some unique information and perspectives. It is sometimes useful to read with an eye for those distinctive details, such as the extra acclamation of "peace" and "glory" as Jesus enters Jerusalem (19:38) or the very abridged version of the "cleansing of the temple" (19:45-48). The stories of Jesus' controversies with teachers in Jerusalem follows Mark closely. In both Jesus defends his own authority (20:1-19), deflects a question about loyalty to Caesar (20:20-26), trades scriptural quotes to defend belief in the resurrection (20:27-40), and challenges a traditional notion of the Messiah as an offspring of David (20:41-44). He has harsh words for "scribes" (not scribes and Pharisees as in the much longer Matthean parallel, Matt 23:1-36), and kind words for a widow who gives her pennies to the offering box at the Temple (21:1-4).

A Discourse About Final Things

Jesus' final bit of public teaching is a discourse in the Temple about eschatology, the coming trials and tribulations, final judgment and salvation (21:7-33). This discourse too closely follows its Markan model but has distinctive touches which reflect a major Lukan concern. As the opening chapters of the Gospel indicated, Luke sets the story of Jesus onto a global stage, tying events in Palestine to events on the world political stage. His concern with the broad sweep of space and time is also evident in his second volume, which will carry the story of the movement on into the history of the Roman world. Luke's perspective thus seems to be far more opened ended than had been that of Mark, for whom the prophecies of end time events had a vital immediacy. How does this perspective square with the eschatological discourse inherited from Mark?

The discourse begins with the traditional prophecy that the Temple would be destroyed (21:6). To questions about signs by which one might know when that destruction would happen, Jesus responds with warnings about false prophets, predicting that the end is nigh (21:8). Various disasters will take place, including prominently persecution (21:10-19), which we suspect the

Lukan community had indeed experienced (cf. 12:8-12; 14:25-27). One important waystation will be the destruction of Jerusalem (21:20-24). Unlike the Markan version (Mark 13:14-19), this prophecy clearly looks backward to the events of 70 C.E., when Jerusalem was indeed “surrounded by armies” (21:20). Instead of this being a sign of the end, it is only a sign of the end of Jerusalem (21:20), and the beginning of “times of the Gentiles” (21:24). By a subtle change, Luke has transformed a prophecy of the imminent end of things into a prediction of the long-term future. That future will indeed have wars, famines, plagues, and persecutions. It will involve disasters like the destruction of Jerusalem, but the end is not yet. There will, of course, be an “end,” when the Son of Man returns (21:25-28), in imagery derived from Daniel 7:13, and with him will come the disciples’ redemption (21:28).

### The Last Supper

The rest of the story of Jesus’ last days in Jerusalem continues to move along on the path laid out by Mark 14. Another key point where Luke’s perspective is evident is the account of Jesus’ last meal with his disciples (22:14-23). The sayings over the bread and the cup (22:19-20) resemble the forms that Paul records in 1 Cor 11:23-25, and may come from the same tradition of celebrating the Christian eucharist. Of equal interest is the fact that Luke prefaces the words over bread and wine with a blessing over a cup (23:17). Luke may simply be remembering the practice of a Jewish Passover Seder, but he also may have another purpose in mind. The first saying on the cup is framed by two vows that Jesus would not eat nor drink again until he did so in the Kingdom of God. This distinctive touch in the account of the meal is relevant to the shift in eschatological perspective evident in the discourse of the previous chapter. Jesus’ vow and prophecy is in fact fulfilled within the story of the Gospel, at two points, one in the distinctive Lukan story of the encounter with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35) and again when Jesus appears to the assembled disciples on Easter night (24:36-43). Jesus does indeed eat and drink again with his disciples, not in a distant time and place, but in his presence with them as the Resurrected one. For Luke, the decisive moment in the coming of the Son of Man has already taken place.