

PART TWO

Laying the Foundations: Israel and Jesus

Our analysis of New Testament texts must again come at the subject of work indirectly. We begin with an analysis of Luke's writings to understand one of Luke's major themes. The first is Jesus' socio-political vision for his disciples. Though we do not usually use these terms, I will make a preliminary argument that the early church can be aptly described as a 'Jesus-centered transnational reconciliation movement.' We will also study Luke's treatment of Jesus' teachings on wealth. In the process, we will survey the references Luke makes to 'stewardship' to more extensively understand the relation of Jesus Christ to Israel and Israel's key texts, like the ones we studied in the previous chapter. To show the significance of understanding Luke as engaging literarily with the Old Testament, we will examine Luke's material on money, almsgiving, and the poor. Not only is the topic of wealth likely to be the most emotional, we will also see the greatest divergence of results with a literary methodology. With that framework in place, we will in the next chapter analyze the idea of Christian stewardship and the problems and limitations in the current way of defining it.

Chapter Eight: The Socio-Economic Vision of Jesus for His Followers

Luke's theological emphases are very relevant to our study of work, since his writings contain references to 'stewardship' and snapshots of the church's early life that have become very attractive as models, even though Luke seems to have little or no developed 'doctrine' of occupational work or vocation *per se*. We can observe the following. (i) Broadly speaking, Luke approves of the two general categories of work: occupational positions that are supported and funded by the church (e.g. the apostles teaching and traveling, the deacons teaching and distributing food), and occupational work in the secular marketplace to support missionary work or to help others in the church (e.g. tentmaking done by Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila, garment manufacture and trade by Lydia, etc.) He does not seem to have an essential problem with Christians in 'secular' business *per se*. However, (ii) he clearly views one's occupational work as ethically subordinate to Jesus; prostitutes are called to give up their profession, although tax-collecting does not receive the same categorical challenge (Levi left his profession, but Zaccheus apparently did not). (iii) John the Baptist's preaching had to do with how one receives payments and handles money, but Jesus went beyond this, as we shall see. Also, (iv) Luke sees the marketplace as a forum for proclamation and a place of dramatic tension. While Greek schools can be a place of engagement, entire industries are threatened by the gospel. For example, magicians peddling spells and towing demon-possessed subjects became hostile to the apostles because their livelihood was at stake. Ephesus erupted in riots incited by idol-making silversmiths afraid of losing their business. And (v) even Roman centurions and magistrates were confronted with the gospel, but it is unclear what these career politicians were expected to do when they became Christians. The same goes for Israelite priests and Pharisaic scribes. We do not know how Luke felt about certain careers or positions that we might consider theologically ambiguous or ethically problematic, since his burden in writing is not to ethically evaluate human careers *per se*. What else Luke might say about Christians and occupational work must be discerned through a deeper analysis of Luke's more central concerns.

But just what are those concerns? Since Hans Conzelmann's *The Theology of St. Luke*, published in 1960, scholars have questioned virtually all aspects of Luke's writings: Luke's use of sources, Luke's reliability as a historian, the relation of Luke-Acts to Paul and his letters, the textual problems in Luke's writings, the presence of atonement theology or lack thereof in Luke's presentation of the cross, the reliability of Luke's presentation of the early church, and Luke's presumed original audience. W.C. Van Unnik said, 'In 1950 no one could have foretold that in the next decade Luke-Acts would become one of the great storm centers of New Testament scholarship, second only to that of the historical Jesus.'¹ Regardless of the particular issue being debated, Luke's vision of Christian ethics has always been near center-stage in the unfolding debate, and in recent times, Lukan ethics has come into especially sharp focus. While John Calvin, for instance, reasoned the basic Reformed posture of creational dominion out of (or into) these passages on stewardship, other scholars argue for a relatively new understanding of Luke, that Luke was concerned with social justice and 'kingdom economics.' Obviously both trajectories are potentially very important factors in a Christian theology of work, and consideration of Luke's writings will unearth more possibilities.

In one sense, the early Christian church understood itself to be, quite simply, a Jesus-centered, transnational reconciliation movement. That is, they existed in multiple nations and people-groups, although those very same nations and groups were often in conflict with each other. The Christians knew they were called to reconciliation and peace with each other to demonstrate the lordship of Jesus. And they were called to win converts and spread to

¹ W. C. Van Unnik, 'Luke-Acts, A Storm Center in Contemporary Scholarship,' in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p.15 – 32.

bless all the families of the earth. True, calling the church a ‘Jesus-centered, transnational reconciliation movement’ is an oversimplification; the church was more than that. But it certainly was not less.

This mission-driven framework has a direct bearing on decisions about occupational work. For instance, all sources I have consulted tell me that the early Christians required Roman army officers conducting warfare to resign once they became Christians.² There were ordinary soldiers in the early church, and they were not asked to resign, but they were also required to be non-participants in war. This position appeared to develop because the Roman army also performed an internal police function, which was deemed acceptable (e.g. by Romans 13:1 – 7). Thus, the early Christians cannot be said to be strictly ‘pacifist’ in relation to all forms of force, but ‘pacifist’ specifically with regards to war. The idolatry involved in being a soldier who swore allegiance to Caesar was, no doubt, an aspect of this ‘pacifist’ position, but war itself was also singled out for critique. Origen, a representative of the Greek church and the Alexandrian school of theology, wrote, ‘We no longer take sword against a nation, nor do we learn any more to make war, having become sons of peace for the sake of Jesus, who is our commander.’ Tertullian, representing the church in North Africa and a Latin Christianity, wrote: ‘Christ in disarming Peter ungirt every soldier.’ There are many other examples, like Clement of Alexandria disdaining certain musical instruments because of their association with war. Brown notes that this type of pacifism – towards international conflict – was a near-consensus view of the early church. The form of occupational work – what we might call offensive warfare – was deemed fundamentally incompatible with the Christian faith, and I believe this incompatibility continues on today.

The most significant New Testament critique of war comes from Jesus’ oft-repeated teachings on loving enemies (Lk.4:14 – 30; 6:29 – 37; 9:51 – 56; 10:25 – 37; Mt.5:38 – 48; 7:12) concretely applied to his advocating non-resistance to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (Lk.12:35 – 13:5; 17:20 – 18:14; 21:6 – 38) and exemplified by his prayer for forgiveness while being crucified by his enemies (Lk.23:34). These correspond – indeed, they both contextualize and give ethical shape – to Jesus’ call for his people to be a new living Temple and to engage all nations with his lordship (Lk.24:44 – 53; Mt.28:16 – 20). When the ‘love your enemies’ ethic is contextualized into Jesus’ mission to all nations, it takes on a significance that is both logical and central: How can Christians make war on another nation when they are commanded by Jesus to love and evangelize that people? The argument from the unity of the church is also significant: How can Christians make war on another nation if and when Christians exist in both? Other New Testament passages support a pacifist position by focusing on the spiritual, and not the earthly, forces against which we battle (1 Cor.2:8; Col 2:15; Eph.6:12). These references broaden out into the politically-oriented cosmology of the early Christians, indicated by the New Testament discussion of ‘rulers and authorities.’ As opposed to war, the socio-political vision of the church makes activities of international peacemaking, diplomacy, and advocacy positively significant for Christians, although my interviews with formal diplomats leave me with the impression that strictly representing your nation’s interests may present a tension for a Christian. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. The burden of this chapter is simply to describe, at a high level, Jesus’ vision of the kingdom of God, as described by Luke.

While the Gospel of Luke describes Jesus’ inauguration of his kingdom, Acts describes the expansion of the kingdom through Jesus’ disciples. The narrative unity of the Gospel of Luke and Acts has been persuasively argued by Robert C. Tannehill along several axes. The word ‘salvation’ (*soterion*) functions as a bookend of Luke-Acts, appearing at the beginning (Lk.2:30; 3:6) and at the end (Acts 28:28) of Luke’s two volumes. This word describes the overall ministry of Jesus throughout both volumes; what makes this especially interesting is that those bookends are or involve direct quotations from Isaiah, and Luke consistently weaves his narrative around quotations from Isaiah. Also, the interlocking narration of the ascension of Jesus and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit connects the end of the Gospel and the beginning of Acts. And most importantly, Jesus’ teaching in the Gospel on including Jews of all sorts – sinners, prostitutes, tax-collectors, and the poor along with Pharisees and fishermen – and Samaritans and Gentiles becomes the disciples’ reality, mission and community in Acts. Even though the disciples are to challenge those who are not yet Jesus’ followers, Jesus’ intention for his disciples is clearly a basic ethic of inclusion, and even hospitality, towards outsiders.

However, when we ask more detailed questions concerning Jesus’ intention for his disciples’ use of money, which has a crucial impact on a Christian approach to occupational work, we enter into a much more involved discussion. Recent scholars, including Halvor Moxnes on the social scientific side and Luke Timothy Johnson and Joel B. Green on the literary side, see in Luke’s presentation of Jesus an ethic of social justice, almsgiving, and friendship with the poor. They detect in Luke a stylistic literary-rhetorical strategy. Johnson and Green have written two popular commentaries on Luke and Acts. Johnson, writes for the *Sacra Pagina* Roman Catholic commentary series and Green, a Protestant, for the NICNT commentary series. Though they belong to two very different church traditions, Johnson and Green generally agree about how best to understand Luke. Both see Luke as confronting

² e.g. Dale W. Brown, “Pacifism” in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, p. 645

Hellenistic culture. Hence both commentaries are replete with references to Hellenistic literature about friendship patterns, views of money and the poor, etc.

Luke supposedly portrays the Pharisees as being 'greedy' in order to woo Hellenistic readers, who considered greed a vice, to Jesus' side. This, they argue, is why Luke calls the Pharisees 'lovers of money' even though they were not historically wealthy as a group per se.³ Christianity, they argue, challenged the Roman patron-client system of friendship where a lesser protégé served a wealthy patron, a system of relations not unlike that displayed in Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy. Green in particular believes that in Luke's language, Mammon (or Money with a capital M) represents a system of reciprocation where favors now are done in exchange for favors later.⁴ Since the poor, the outcast, the low-status sinner, and the weak have much less to offer the more well-to-do in exchange, they were typically ignored and neglected by the rich, the insider, the high-status 'righteous,' and the strong. Mammon as a way of relationship reinforces the division between rich and poor, strong and weak, high status righteous and low status sinner, and therefore, in Green's mind, incurs Jesus' judgment.

This interpretation of Luke is understandably attractive because of the pressing needs of the contemporary world. Certainly it is a vast improvement over the interpretations that overlooked Luke's social consciousness completely; the Protestant near-exclusive emphasis on 'salvation' or worse, 'individual salvation,' had a tendency to boil the high ethical demands concerning wealth down to banal statements. At present, Christians on the popular and academic levels are searching for a theological model for the suburban wealthy to assist the rural and urban poor, and for the wealthy nations of the world the struggling ones. Economists suggest that developing nations be forgiven their loans which they took out from first world banks that they cannot repay. Globally, the difference between rich and poor has increased and absolute poverty has spread. The industrialized developed nations are hard pressed to rethink the privilege they have inherited from the colonial period. A new political arrangement, more democratic and participatory, seems in order. Are Luke's writings especially timely because of his message of social reversal?

Another attractive aspect of this view is the ample literary and archaeological data from which to draw conclusions. Garnsey and Saller summarize Roman society's view of relationships: 'Three rough categories of exchange relationships can be distinguished for analytical purposes according to the relative social statuses of the men involved (though the dividing lines between them were not clear and were sometimes intentionally obscured by the Romans themselves): patrons and clients, superior and inferior friends (or patrons and protégés), and equal friends.'⁵ The Roman philosopher Cicero wrote extensively about friendship in *De Amicitia*. Additionally, Greek works abound detailing the varieties of Hellenistic friendship: equals, friends joined by the common good, friendship between greater and lesser friends, friends who enjoy friendship for its own sake, etc. The Greeks often defined friendship in metaphysical terms like the communion of two souls.⁶ This must not be overlooked, but the aspect of economic sharing between friends was also strong. Plato expressed an ideal of sharing between friends through a common statement put into the mouth of Socrates: 'friends have all things in common.'⁷ While this statement is found throughout Hellenistic literature predating Plato, Plato was perhaps the first to say that this friendship, if widely practiced, would bring about the highest form of the polity.⁸ Though it is unclear how often the Greeks actually did this, sharing all things in common was clearly an ideal. Friendship, while having many components, is certainly fostered by equality.⁹ Diogenes said, 'By friendship they mean a common use of all that has to do with life, wherein we treat our friends as we treat ourselves.' Concerning Pythagoras, Diogenes says, 'He was

³ Halvor Moxnes, *Economy of the Kingdom*

⁴ Joel B. Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Luke* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI), 1997. Green discusses meal etiquette as a social form in Luke 14 (p. 548-563) and 'Kingdom Economics' in Luke 16 (p. 586 – 610). 'Wealth should be used to welcome another cluster of outsiders, the poor who are incapable of reciprocating with invitations of their own or of helping to advance one's own status.'

⁵ For references to Roman and Greek forms of relationship, attitudes to the poor, and Luke's interaction with these norms, I am indebted to Gilles Beckaert for his 1996 thesis, *The Literary Unity of Luke 16* (Berkeley, CA) p.17 – 33. See Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *Roman Empire*, p.148 – 159; and Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.8. For an example of a patron-client relationship, see Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.55. For an example of a friendship between greater and lesser friends, see Pliny, *Epistles*, 4.17.3 and 9.13.6. For a discussion of the differences between Hellenistic friendship and Jewish friendship, see the article by Gustav Stahlin on *philos* in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 9:156 – 159.

⁶ Diogenes, Aristotle, and Euripides contended that a friend is 'a single soul dwelling in two bodies.' Diogenes, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers in Ten Books*, 5.20. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.8.1168B. Euripides, *Orestes*, 1046.

⁷ Plato, *Lysis*, 207C.

⁸ Plato, *Laws*, 5.739

⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 240

the first to say, 'Friends have all things in common' and 'Friendship is equality'; indeed, his disciples did put all their possessions into one common stock.'¹⁰ And while this probably only meant sharing with people of one's own social rank, this ideal seems to have been strategically appropriated by Luke in his description of the early church sharing all things regardless of social rank.

Greek and Roman literature is also replete with attitudes towards the poor. The Greeks felt no obligation towards the poor and viewed their condition as their own fault. Plautus' statement is typical: 'He does the beggar but a bad service who gives him meat and drink, for what he gives is lost, and the life of the poor is but prolonged to their own misery.'¹¹ Classical Greek originally did not have a term for 'alms' or 'gift to the poor'; a Greek term emerged only as the result of Hellenistic Judaism using the Greek language.¹² Greek and Latin literature of the first three centuries C.E. contains little to suggest that the rich felt obliged to do anything for the poor.¹³ The Greek sense of tragedy elicited some pity among the rich towards their fellows who had temporarily fallen into misfortune. 'If a social peer fell on hard times and was being threatened with the need to work, this person was viewed as an appropriate recipient for one's generosity. [But] because the destitute had not experienced a reversal of fortunes, their situation did not evoke the same emotions in the giver.'¹⁴ Plato said, 'The true object of pity is not the man who is hungry or in some similar needy case, but the man who has sobriety of soul or some other virtue, or share in such virtue, and misfortune to boot.'¹⁵ Beggars, in his opinion, had no place in the Republic; they are a sign of 'a defective culture and bad breeding and a wrong constitution of state.'¹⁶ Thus, as Hesiod counseled, 'Give to one who gives, but do not give to one who does not give.'¹⁷ The Greek tendency to separate spirit and body also led to a lack of compassion for the poor: the Epicurean tendency was to indulge the body in selfish licentiousness, while the Stoic tendency was to deny the body and issues of physical importance, like hunger and poverty.

Situating Luke's writings in the social context of the Greco-Roman world is therefore intriguing. Hebraic table fellowship has striking similarities to the Greek symposium, the time of talking and drinking that followed a banquet.¹⁸ In this symposium, a host and guests would recline on couches arranged around the sides of a room. A person's position in the room displayed that person's rank relative to the other guests. The symposium was therefore a social situation in which honor and rank would be played out. This influence seems to be present in Luke 14:7 – 14, where Jesus reclines at the table of a Pharisee whose guests seem to compete for positions of honor. In this setting, Jesus encourages his audience to humble themselves: 'Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted' (Lk.14:11), a statement both Matthew and Luke present elsewhere in settings without meals (Mt.23:12, Lk.18:4). The wider context of Luke 14 further mentions various roles native to the symposia setting: host, guest of honor and main speaker, invited guests, and uninvited guests.

If this is the right way to read Luke's text, then we can see quite readily that, combined with Luke's oft-repeated commands regarding money and the poor, the early Christian ideal of universal table fellowship would have posed a serious challenge to Greco-Roman culture. Luke insists that the poor are not to be ignored. Alms are to be given to the poor without the expectation of a favor in return. Unlike the Greco-Roman world, the poor in the church do not become indebted to the rich in a new client-patron relationship. Instead, they are elevated to the status of equal friend, or at least helped in that direction. Hence Luke portrays the church as simultaneously fulfilling the

¹⁰ Diogenes Laertius (412 – 323 BC), *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers in Ten Books*, 7.124; 8.10. Note, however, that Epicurus disagreed with this view, see 10.11, but Epicurus seemed to have been in the minority.

¹¹ Plautus, *Trinummus*, 399.

¹² Roman Garrison, *Redemptive Almsgiving in Early Christianity* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), p.38.

¹³ Gildas Hamal, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E.*, Near Eastern Studies 23 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.219. See also L. W. Countryman, *The Rich Christian in the Church of the Early Empire: Contradictions and Accommodations* (Edwin Mellen Press: New York, 1980), p.105. Arthur R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, 1968), p.65. W. Den Boer, *Private Morality in Greece and Rome: Some Historical Aspects* (E. J. Brill: Leiden, Holland, 1979), p.172.

¹⁴ Gilles Beckaert, *The Literary Unity of Luke 16* (Berkeley, CA, 1996) p.69.

¹⁵ Plato, *Laws*, 11.939B. Cicero and Pliny the Younger maintained this position. See Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.42 – 50; and Pliny, *Epistles*, 9.30.

¹⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 552D – E.

¹⁷ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 342 – 5, 353 – 4.

¹⁸ Michael Vickers, *Greek Symposia* (Joint Association of Classical Teachers: London, 1978). See also S. Scott Bartchy, 'Table Fellowship' in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 1992), p.796. See also D. E. Smith, 'Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 613.

Greek ideal of friends holding all economic goods in common, and challenging it in that the church shares across all types of people (Acts 2:44; 4:32 – 35).

This interpretation of Luke has direct implications for how Christians think about money, relationships both within and outside of the church, and other subjects. If accurate, then we would expect the equalizing nature of table fellowship to impact social relations inside and outside the formal church community. Luke's presentation of Jesus should be allowed to challenge the status hierarchies that develop in work situations in any context, from villages to major corporations. Any relationship, apparently, is open to scrutiny. In addition, serving the poor is undeniably important. So too is caring for the sick, tending the crippled, and perhaps what we today would call providing humanitarian relief.

Again, the strength of this view is that, on these particular points, it is possible to reconstruct the social dynamics of the first century Mediterranean world. In addition, Hellenistic culture had seeped into Israel at least since the time of Alexander the Great two and a half centuries prior to Jesus' day, especially in the Galilee region. So it is not unreasonable to assume that Jesus himself spoke Greek and was well acquainted with Hellenistic and Roman thoughts and practices, including table fellowship and friendship with sinners. We can be reasonably confident that Jesus himself was conscious of them and deliberate enough in his actions that a later biographer like Luke could simply weave them together for emphasis. On these assumptions, it is also relatively easy to suggest the kind of challenge Luke was making in the name of Christianity.

The presence of ample evidence from Hellenistic and Roman sources alone, however, does not mean that this was Luke's only intention in composing his narratives. Nor does it mean that this is the starting point for deducing how Luke's ethical vision would apply to us today. The ethical combination of table fellowship, redemptive almsgiving, and striving towards the Hellenistic ideal of friendship seems a particularly powerful one, but as I will show below, it does not sufficiently describe Luke's theological concerns. Although this current trend in Lukan scholarship is quite significant as a literary consideration for how Luke challenged his Hellenistic audience, and while it is an improvement over the rather diluted remarks about money made by earlier scholars, and while Green's definition of Money as a patronal system of reciprocity challenged by Jesus seems especially attractive from a psycho-social point of view, I do not think these scholars root their analysis on solid historical, or for that matter, literary, ground. While I wish to express my admiration for the work of these scholars, I will approach Luke from a different direction. I will demonstrate how one must root Luke's criticism of the Pharisees (and Luke's Gospel as a whole) in the historical dialogue between Jesus and Israel, in their conflict over Israel's sacred texts, and also in Israel's ancient dialogue with other nations. I will then show that table fellowship, friendship, and almsgiving take an important but not absolute place in this framework.

In analyzing Luke this way, I am not surrendering to the terms of the old debate over whether Luke's intended audience was either Hellenistic or Hebraic: Many scholars have found that Rudolf Bultmann's polarization of those categories and its subsequent adoption by the German histories of religions school has outlasted its usefulness. One may certainly interpret Jesus in a way that addresses and challenges both, especially if Jesus' native environment had both influences. But, as I will demonstrate below, this is most accurately done with a particular methodology. Luke must be read as first challenging *Israel's* beliefs and practices by accurately portraying Jesus' challenge to Israel's aspirations and interpretations of her sacred Scriptures. Only from that point can Luke be used to address and challenge the beliefs and practices of other nations or people-groups. A critique of the practices of Greco-Roman culture, and thus of contemporary cultures, must be rooted in Luke's presentation of Jesus' engagement with Israel's theological traditions, which are both literary and historic. This, I believe, is where we must root the ethical application of Luke's writings.

For instance, why Luke (and Jesus) saw the Pharisees as 'lovers of money' even though they may not have been relatively wealthy is not hard to explain in a Hebraic framework. One does not have to be wealthy to love money, and while the Pharisees did not have had the most wealth (the Sadducees were the wealthiest party in Israel, and the tax-collectors did not fare badly either), they nevertheless looked forward to a Solomonic golden age where the true Son of David would sit on the throne of a prosperous Israel restored to its land. In other words, they wanted God's kingdom inaugurated in its physical and material sense. They expected a literal fulfillment of passages like this:

He who takes refuge in Me shall inherit the land,
And shall possess My holy mountain. (Isa.57:13)

It will no longer be said to you, 'Forsaken,'
Nor to your land will it any longer be said, 'Desolate'
But you will be called, 'My delight is in her,' and your land, 'Married'
For the LORD delights in you, and to Him your land will be married...
The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm,

'I will never again give your grain as food for your enemies,
Nor will foreigners drink your new wine, for which you have labored.'
But those who garner it will eat it, and praise the LORD.
And those who gather it will drink it in the courts of My sanctuary. (Isa.62:4, 8 – 9)

Serious analysis of Luke must address how Jesus differed from the Pharisees in his interpretation of major 'restoration from exile' passages like this one, especially when Israel's central texts encouraged the belief that Israel would dwell on God's abundantly good land. How did Jesus interpret and apply passages like the one given above? And what does that mean for how we develop ethical vision and narrative inspiration for the church today?

Luke himself shows that the contest for Israel's Scriptures is no trivial issue. He opens his Gospel with the boy Jesus in the Temple demonstrating his precocious understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, foreshadowing a day when his authoritative word would emanate outward from Jerusalem (Lk.2:41 – 52); he closes his Gospel with the bold claim that Jesus and his followers have the correct interpretation of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Lk.24:25 – 27, 44 – 47), since after his resurrection, Jesus appears to disciples on the Emmaus Road and in the Upper Room and interprets Israel's Scriptures for them. This claim is a logically necessary one, not only for Jesus but also for the church, since the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament had to be put forward over against competing Jewish ones. The record of Acts show the apostles very concerned to put forward their interpretation of how the Hebrew Scriptures are fulfilled by Jesus. Luke provides us with a sizable number of examples of Jesus' hermeneutics, as well as that of John the Baptist, Peter, Stephen, and Paul. It is also reasonable to assume that when Luke claims that the Christians have the correct interpretation of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, he is referring us to all the Scripture references and quotations throughout his own writings. We will explore some of those passages below.

Whereas a literary-rhetorical analysis assuming a Hellenistic audience might suggest that Luke made a psycho-social or even a somewhat fictive criticism of the Pharisees to align his Hellenistic audience's sympathies with Jesus, a literary-historical analysis must also assume a Jewish audience and requires a real conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees over the issue of material wealth and a very live ideological conflict over the interpretation of key texts from Moses and the Prophets about Israel's material wealth. To suggest that Luke addressed the Hellenistic world and not the Hebraic is misguided. Luke addressed the Hellenistic world precisely because Jesus addressed the Hebraic. If we make the wrong interpretive choice, we lose both; if we make the right choice, we gain the other as well. In Appendix A, I demonstrate this in our key example text: Luke 16. And while I agree that Jesus in Luke's Gospel must be allowed to again address issues of social inequality and serving the poor, especially in relation to a Christian theology of work, I will demonstrate from within Luke's writings how social justice and the poor can in fact be erroneously placed into the wrong framework as well. We will then draw some conclusions about Christians in work from Luke's writings.