

## The Gospel of Luke – The Acts of the Apostles

### The Theme of Jesus Restoring Human Sight

#### Introduction Questions

1. What does it mean to really see reality? (like in the movie *The Matrix*: Are you taking the blue pill or the red pill?) Do you think there are aspects of reality that you're not seeing?

*Foreground Action: My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation*

Lk.2:25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for him the custom of the Law, 28 then he took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; 30 **for my eyes have seen Your salvation (soterion)**, 31 which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 **a light of revelation** to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

#### Questions

1. How old might Simeon have been?
2. How good/bad might his eyesight have been?
3. What did Jesus look like as a baby? Like an ordinary baby.
4. So how does Simeon 'see' Jesus? Fundamentally, by the Spirit.
5. What does Simeon say Jesus' future mission is?
6. Where does the phrase "a light of revelation to the Gentiles" come from?

*Soundtrack/Background Music: The Servant's Mission*

- Isa.49:5 And now says the LORD, who formed me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him (for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and My God is my strength), 6 He says, "It is too small a thing that you should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make you a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." 7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and its Holy One, to the despised one, to the one abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers, "Kings shall see and arise, princes shall also bow down; because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you."

7. How influential was the Servant supposed to be?
8. In what sense would the Servant be despised?
9. In what sense would the Servant be honored?
10. What does sight and light have to do with it?
11. What is 'revelation'? A revealing. A disclosure.
12. Why would salvation be put in terms of seeing? What are we supposed to see?

Close: Fanny Crosby, the blind hymn writer.

*Foreground Action: All Flesh Will See the Salvation*

Lk.3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. 3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every ravine will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be brought low; the crooked will become straight, and the rough roads smooth; 6 and **all flesh will see the salvation (soterion) of God.**’

*Foreground Action: Jesus’ Mission to Restore Sight*

Lk.4:14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through all the surrounding district. 15 And he began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.

He stood up to read,

17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, b/c he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

**and recovery of sight to the blind,**

to let the oppressed go free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

20 And he rolled up the scroll,

gave it back to the attendant,

and sat down.

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Questions

1. There was a Roman garrison stationed in Nazareth. How would that have made the Nazareth inhabitants feel?
2. What might they have expected Jesus to say about the Romans soldiers occupying Nazareth? What kind of Messiah were they expecting?
3. What is the soundtrack playing in the background?

*Soundtrack/Background Music: The Isaianic Servant*

- Isa.61:1 The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.
4. Who did the Jews at Nazareth think ‘the poor’ and ‘the oppressed’ were?
  5. What are ways you tend to place yourself in that category?
  6. Who do you expect Jesus to say ‘the poor’ and ‘the oppressed’ are?
  7. But why does Jesus add the phrase, “recovery of sight to the blind” (Lk.4:18)?
  8. Who are ‘the blind’?
  9. Was Isaiah 61:1-2 the only passage Jesus was referring to? Discuss also Isaiah 42:1-7:

*Soundtrack/Background Music: Spiritual Sight to the Nations*

- Isa.42:1 Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one in whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry out or raise his voice, nor make his voice heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not be disheartened or crushed until he has established justice in the earth and the coastlands will wait expectantly for his law. 5 Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it, 6 “I am the LORD, I’ve called you in righteousness; I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you; and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations 7 to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

10. How is that passage connected to the phrase, “and recovery of sight to the blind” (Lk.4:18)?
11. What does sight restored mean in Isaiah 42?
12. So who is Jesus restoring? Who are the poor, the captives, the oppressed, the blind? How does that differ or agree with the Jews in the Nazareth synagogue in their interpretation of Isaiah 61?
13. Why is this “recovery of sight” phrase at the center of the chiasm in Lk.4:18? Because it’s the main point.

Close: Someone who saw Jesus’ mission more clearly than those around him, e.g. St. Francis of Assisi reaching out to Muslim armies.

*Foreground Action: We've Seen the Liberation!*

Lk.10:17 The seventy returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18 He replied, "**I saw** Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." 21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because **You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.** Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. 22 All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to **reveal him.**" 23 Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "**Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.**"

Questions

1. What do the disciples see in their ministry?
2. What does Jesus see in their ministry?
3. Given that Satan owns the nations, as he said when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, what has broken Satan's power? Whose authority is greater than Satan's?
4. Why do the wise and learned not perceive these things? What insight does human wisdom have about the spiritual realm?
5. What did Israel's kings and prophets long to see?
6. Do our eyes perceive this achievement of Jesus?

Illus: The Judas character in *The Matrix*. Why does he choose to live in a lie?

Close: Someone who saw Jesus' accomplishment of rescuing humanity more clearly than those around.

Moravians and Count Zinzendorf

William Carey, inspired by the Moravians and reading *The Voyages of Captain Cook*.

Jesuits

Lk.18:31 Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For he will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 and after they have scourged him, they will kill him; and the third day he will rise again.” 34 But the disciples **understood none** of these things, and the meaning of this statement was **hidden** from them, and **they did not comprehend** the things that were said. 35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, **a blind man** was sitting by the road begging. 36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. 37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” 39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” 40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to him; and when he came near, he questioned him, 41 “What do you want me to do for you?” And he said, “Lord, I want to regain my **sight!**” 42 And Jesus said to him, “Receive your **sight**; your faith has made you well.” 43 Immediately he regained his **sight** and began following him, glorifying God; and when all the people **saw** it, they gave praise to God.

#### Questions

1. Why was it hard for the disciples to understand Jesus? What are the human factors from their end? What are the larger, spiritual factors?
2. Think about the blind beggar on the road to Jericho. What has his life been like? How long has he been sitting there? If the road to Jericho is treacherous and frequented by bandits, what does that mean about his possible life experience?
3. What does the blind man ‘see’ about Jesus even though he’s blind?
4. What does the ‘Son of David’ title mean?
5. Was there dispute about whether Jesus should have been called the ‘Son of David’? Who would have told the blind beggar to be quiet?
- 6.

This is a Messianic identification, obviously referring to Jesus’ legitimate claim on David’s throne, which was by that time considered to be or foreshadow God’s world-embracing reign (Ps.2). We know from very early in Luke’s narrative that Jesus was guaranteed David’s throne (Lk.1:32). So this appellation is no accident, and in its historical context, it is of great significance; many would have disputed Jesus’ claim to that title. So Jesus affirms this personal gesture of faith: “Receive your sight, your faith has made you well” (Lk.18:42). Hence we can reasonably gather that faith in Jesus as the Messianic Son of David, the heir to David’s throne over the whole human world, is the requirement for having one’s spiritual sight healed.

In addition, literarily and (from all accounts) historically, this healing of blindness follows right on the heels of Jesus’ private prophecy of his resurrection to the disciples (Lk.18:33) and the very mysterious editorial statement, “They understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said” (Lk.18:34). This strongly suggests a link between Jesus’ Davidic claim and humanity’s ability to perceive it prior to his resurrection. One can only ask questions: What kind of hiddenness was this? Who hid the meaning of this saying from them? What will allow the disciples to perceive and comprehend this statement correctly? What is the relation between Jesus’ resurrection and the healing of humanity’s spiritual sight?

*Foreground Action: Piercing the Power of Darkness*

Lk.22:28 “You are those who have stood by me in my trials; 29 and just as my Father has granted me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 31 Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” 33 But he said to him, “Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death!” 34 And he said, “I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know me.” 35 And he said to them, “When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” They said, “No, nothing.” 36 And he said to them, “But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. 37 For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was numbered with transgressors,’ for that which refers to me has its fulfillment.” 38 They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.” 39 And he came out and proceeded as was his custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed him. 40 When he arrived at the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” 41 And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and he knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” 43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. 44 And being in agony he was praying very fervently; and his sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. 45 When he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, 46 and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” 47 While he was still speaking, behold, a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss him. 48 But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” 49 When those who were around him saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” 50 And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus answered and said, “Stop! No more of this.” And he touched his ear and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? 53 While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on me; but this hour and the **power of darkness** are yours.” 54 Having arrested him, they led him away and brought him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance. 55 After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. 56 And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, “This man was with him too.” 57 But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” 58 A little later, another saw him and said, “You are one of them too!” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” 59 After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, “Certainly this man also was with him, for he is a Galilean too.” 60 But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. 61 **The Lord turned and looked at Peter.** And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

*Foreground Action: The Blindfolded and the Blind*

Lk.22:63 Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him and beating him, 64 and they blindfolded him and were asking him, saying, "Prophecy, who is the one who hit you? 65 And they were saying many other things against him, blaspheming. 66 When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led him away to their council chamber, saying, 67 "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69 But from now on 'the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.' 70 And they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "Yes, I am." 71 Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from his own mouth." 23:1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought him before Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a King." 3 So Pilate asked him, saying, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him and said, "It is as you say." 4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." 5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place." 6 When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 7 And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. 8 Now Herod was very glad when he **saw** Jesus; for he had wanted to **see** him for a long time, because he had been hearing about him and was hoping **to see some sign** performed by him. 9 And he questioned him at some length; but he answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing him vehemently. 11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating him with contempt and mocking him, dressed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him back to Pilate. 12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other. 13 Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against him. 15 No, nor has Herod, for he sent him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by him. 16 Therefore I will punish him and release him." 17 [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.] 18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!" 19 (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.) 20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, 21 but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify him!" 22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish him and release him." 23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that he be crucified. And their voices began to prevail. 24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. 25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Lk.22:26 When they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus. 27 And following him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting him. 28 But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ 30 Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ 31 For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” 32 Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with him. 33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. 34 But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up his garments among themselves. 35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if this is the Christ of God, his Chosen One.” 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up to him, offering him sour wine, 37 and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” 38 Now there was also an inscription above him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’ 39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?” 41 And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong. 42 And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom!” 43 And he said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.” 44 It was now about the sixth hour, and **darkness fell over the whole land** until the ninth hour, 45 because **the sun was obscured**; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last. 47 Now when **the centurion saw** what had happened, he began praising God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent.” 48 And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when **they observed what had happened**, began to return, beating their breasts. 49 And all his acquaintances and the women who accompanied him from Galilee were standing at a distance, **seeing these things**. 50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man 51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; 52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. 54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 Now the women who had come with him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them **in dazzling clothing**; 5 and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 He is not here, but he has risen. Remember how he spoke to you while he was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” 8 And they remembered his words, 9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. 11 But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and **looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only**; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

Lk.24:13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 **But their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.** 17 And he said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?” 19 And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word **in the sight of God and all the people,** 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to the sentence of death, and crucified him. 21 But we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find his body, they came, saying that **they had also seen a vision** of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but **him they did not see.**” 25 And he said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?” 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures. 28 And they approached the village where they were going, and he acted as though he were going farther. 29 But they urged him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he had reclined at the table with them, he took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, he began giving it to them. 31 **Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.** 32 They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was explaining the Scriptures to us?” 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.” 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how he was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. 36 While they were telling these things, he himself stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be to you.” 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and he took it and ate it before them. 44 Now he said to them, “These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” 50 And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they, after worshiping him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising God.

#### *Analysis*

Sight figures prominently when Luke quotes from the final Servant Song, the Song of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12, as the backdrop and framework of his Cross and Resurrection account. The passage is set off by Jesus’ announcement in Lk.22:37 that he is now fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy, “And he was numbered with transgressors,” which is of course from Isa.53:12. The Suffering Servant prophecy revolves around proper sight: the kings of the earth will ‘see’ the servant (Isa.52:13), and while the servant’s appearance is ordinary and unremarkable (53:2), his achievement in service is utterly astonishing for those who can perceive it spiritually. Namely, “he will sprinkle many nations” (Isa.52:13).

The motif of sight recurs in Luke’s Cross and Resurrection account along the same lines. People ‘see’ Simon Peter and interrogate him, but Simon Peter fails to see the gravity of his own situation. When Jesus ‘looks’ at him, though, they lock eyes and Peter finally sees his weakness (Lk.22:56, 58, 61). The

situation arises that Jesus is blindfolded, while it is his inquisitors who are spiritually blind. This is underscored by Luke's omission of the phrase 'you shall see' from Jesus' mouth when he claims that he, as the Danielic Son of Man, will be seated in power on the clouds of heaven (Lk.22:69, compare Mk.14:62, Mt.26:64). If this omission is significant to Luke, as we contend, then Luke is emphasizing the Jerusalem leadership's spiritual blindness: Even when Jesus is vindicated as the Messiah by the destruction of Jerusalem, they will not perceive it as such.

Furthermore, Luke seems to be drawing contrasts between those who see Jesus as the suffering servant and those who do not. There is a contrast between the two rulers (Herod and Pilate), who 'see' Jesus (Lk.23:8) with physical but not spiritual eyes, and the two Emmaus disciples, who eventually do see Jesus both physically and spiritually. There is a contrast between the Israelite people, who were 'looking on' at Jesus on the Cross, and the centurion who praised God because he 'saw' Jesus give up his spirit (Lk.23:47). And there is a contrast between the multitude and the disciples. While the multitude who 'observed' these occurrences (Lk.23:48) beat their breasts in lament, Jesus' acquaintances stood at a distance, emotions unrecorded, 'seeing these things' (Lk.23:49). While darkness falls on Israel when Jesus breathes his last, suggesting either that the light of the world had, in some sense, gone out, or that Israel had been judged to be spiritually blind, Jesus' male and female disciples are prepared to see light: angels in "dazzling apparel" and then Jesus himself.

Like the theme of table fellowship, this theme of sight reaches its climax in the accounts involving the resurrection and the encounters between the disciples and the resurrected Jesus. The strange unnamed obstacle to human sight strikes again, since the Emmaus Road disciples' eyes "were prevented from recognizing him" (Lk.24:16). Moreover, during the conversation the two disciples have with the unrecognized Jesus, the limit of their human sight is discussed. The women who saw the empty tomb reported what they saw to the men. "They had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive" (Lk.24:23). But when some of the male disciples went to the tomb, they saw that the tomb was indeed empty, but "him they did not see" (Lk.24:24). Only after Jesus breaks bread with the two disciples on the Emmaus Road does the mysterious barrier fall. "And their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (Lk.24:31). Although Jesus vanishes immediately afterwards, the apostles are given an extended time with the resurrected Jesus, who says to them, "*See* my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, touch me and *see*, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you *see* that I have" (Lk.24:39, italics mine). Though the apostles are somewhat unique in their sensory experience of the resurrected Jesus, Luke at least implies that faith in the resurrected Jesus causes true spiritual sight to be restored for all who believe. Disciples in general can now perceive and recognize Jesus in the exposition of Israel's Scriptures and in the breaking of the bread. The disciples see that Jesus' death had atoning value as Isaiah foresaw and that Jesus would indeed "sprinkle many nations."

We can also integrate Luke's theme of sight into its primary literary reference point, the Hebrew Scriptures. In Israel's Scriptures, human sight becomes a major issue from the fall, where Adam and Eve's eyes were opened to self-centered and self-focused sight. The topic of sight weaves its way through the patriarchs in intriguing ways,<sup>1</sup> is used in the book of Samuel to describe humanity's inability to perceive God's dealings, and is used repeatedly by Isaiah as a metaphor for restoring both the Gentiles and Israel. Sight is taken up by Luke in these passages we have noted, significantly, by quoting all of Isaiah's Servant Songs. Of particular importance is Luke's portrayal of Jesus' resurrection as, in some sense, reversing or overcoming the fall; self-centered sight at the fall is countered by Christ-centered sight at the resurrection. Luke even uses the same phrase: "And their eyes were opened" (Lk.24:31, quoting Gen.3:7). Luke is sounding a note resonating deep within the symphony of the Hebrew worldview. Although we cannot make all the literary connections here, it should be abundantly clear that Luke is indeed engaging primarily in a literary correspondence with Israel's Scriptures, and secondarily with Hellenistic sources.

This is why the contest for Israel's Scriptures is of paramount importance for Luke and why he ties sight into it. The newly founded Christian church must 'see' in Israel's Scriptures not only the Messiah, but the Messiah's mission to all the world. All humanity, not just Israel, is eligible to participate in God's new humanity and to eventually inherit all of God's new creation. Luke's use of the theme of sight is his way of emphasizing the new creation, including a new humanity founded on and derived from the bodily resurrection of Jesus. God has designated a new humanity, not around a disembodied Jesus, but a concretely embodied resurrected body, which signals the beginning of the new creation with a new human head. Because this is an act of new creation, it has its roots farther back than Abraham, all the way

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<sup>1</sup> See Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, p.xxxx

to Adam and the creation, and thus embraces all humanity in principle. Significantly, a mission to the whole world is given to the disciples in this context, which is the correct interpretation of Israel's Scriptures. To perceive this is to 'see' truly.

*Foreground Action: When the Scales Fell Off*

Acts 9:1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 5 And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.' 7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. 10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' And he said, 'Here I am, Lord.' 11 And the Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.' 13 But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.' 15 But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.' 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; 19 and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, 20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' 21 All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, 'Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?' 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 28:16 When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him. 17 After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he began saying to them, 'Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death. 19 But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation. 20 For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel.' 21 They said to him, 'We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere.' 23 When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. 24 Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. 25 And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, 'The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, 26 saying, 'Go to this people and say, '**You will keep on hearing but will not understand; and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; 27 for the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them.**' 28 **Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation (*soterion*) of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.**' 29 [When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.] 30 And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.