

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Theology of Luke-Acts

Session 5, Christology and Salvation, The New Community

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on the theology of Luke-Acts. This is session 5, Darrell Bock on Theology, Christology, and Salvation, the New Community.

Let us pray. Gracious Father, we thank you for the Word of God. Thank you for Luke and his contribution to the New Testament. Illumine us, we pray, that we might understand his message better and that we might respond to it in ways that would please you. Bless us and help others, we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

We're studying Christology and salvation in Luke's writings and we started to talk about the kingdom of God.

The kingdom is earthly. Jesus will rule as a Davidite on the earth and bring a total deliverance to it as he exercises his sovereignty over all. Such hope is most strongly expressed in Luke 1:32-33, 46-55, 69-75.

The eschatological discourses in the remarks of Acts 1:11 and 3:18-21 show that the future hope has not been consumed in the present inauguration but remains alive, connected to its Old Testament roots. God is faithful and brings all of his promises to fruition, even those made to Israel. We see a little bit of Dr. Bock's dispensationalism there.

Spiritual deliverance, however, is also his. Jesus is the rising sun who shines on those in darkness and leads them into the path of peace, Luke 1:78-79. The promise of the Spirit, Luke 3:15-18, 24-49, Acts 1:8, and the hope of forgiveness of sins, Luke 24:47, are central here.

Jesus' miracles over demons and other forces show he is able to bring such promises to realization. The most obvious subjects of the kingdom to benefit from his presence are the disciples, Luke 18:26-30. All of salvation's benefits are theirs, but potential beneficiaries exist.

For example, anyone who enters the kingdom, Luke 13:23-30, Luke 14:16-24. There are, however, unwilling subjects who will face the reality of Jesus' rule one day. There are willing, responsive subjects, there are potential subjects, and there are unwilling, resistant subjects.

There are, however, unwilling subjects who will face the reality of Jesus' rule one day and are accountable to him even now, Luke 19:27, Luke 21:24-27, Acts 3:20-26, Acts 10:42, Acts 17:30-31. But as for these enemies of mine, Acts 19:27, who do not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me. It's a parable, but it certainly shows Jesus' attitude toward his enemies is one of judgment and wrath.

Thus, everyone has some accountability and has some relationship with the king and, therefore, to the kingdom. The issue is where they fit. The Holy Spirit.

The Spirit as a central figure of redemption moves from the position of being promised, Luke 3:15-18, to being a testifier, enabler for Jesus, Luke 3:21, Luke 4:16-18. The full promise finally comes later when the Spirit falls on all believers, Acts 2:1-13 at Pentecost. Luke explains the event as the sign that the new era has come, Acts 2:14-21, Joel 2:28-32.

The Spirit, therefore, is the gift of the Father through the exalted Son. He is the power, or enablement, from on high, Luke 24:49, Acts 2:30-36, Acts 10:44-47, Acts 11:15-16, Acts 15:8. The Spirit's presence is evidence that Jesus is raised and that Jesus directs his new community from the side of God, the right hand of God.

Luke reassures Theophilus that though the Messiah is dead and seemingly absent, he is present in the gift and presence of the Spirit he has sent. Resurrection and Ascension. Central to the provision of the Spirit is the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

Luke alone mentions and develops the ascension. The ascension links Luke 24 and Acts 1 and is explained in Acts 2:23-24, verses 30-36, Acts 3:14-15, and 21, Acts 4:10-12, and Acts 5:30. A raised Savior is one who can rule and can consummate his promise.

He is one who can forgive and bestow blessing as a sign of that forgiveness. Acts 2:21, 4:12, and 10:43. Jesus' authority is active and is demonstrated in those who work in his name.

Many places in Acts. The first is Acts 2:38, and the last is Acts 19:5, another half dozen in between. Thus, the ascension shows that he is Lord.

Salvation in Jesus' teaching and work. Salvation involves sharing in hope, experiencing the Kingdom, having forgiveness, and being enabled by the Spirit. Jesus reveals himself as the one who brings salvation, while his teaching and work explain what he hopes to bring through his ministry.

He's a teacher and wonder-worker. Luke 4:14 and 15. Luke 4:31, 32, and 44.

His teaching centers in the offer of the Kingdom. The Kingdom's coming is pictured as release and healing in the context of Jubilee. Luke 4:16-21, Leviticus 25:10, Isaiah 61:1-2.

But it also includes a call to ethical honor as a result of experiencing blessing. Luke 6:20-49. The parables show the same combination.

Some, where meal scenes dominate, deal with God's plan. Acts 13:6-9 and also Acts 13:23-40. Acts 14:16-24.

Acts 29:18. These texts not only show the joy of salvation, but picture the table fellowship of the future, which the community can have now without racial distinction. Acts 10, 11 and 15.

Thus, there is to be a unity among the people of God. Beyond unity stands a call for ethical living. This involves relationship with God, mission, and ethical honor.

Love, humility, service and righteousness are to dominate relationships as many parables show. Luke 10:25-37, 11:5-8, 14:1-12, 12:35-48, 15:1-32, 16:1-8, 19:31, 18:32, 19:33, 19:34, 19:35, 19:36. 18:1-8, and 19:11-27.

Jesus did not come just to get people to heaven, to enable them to know the transforming activity of God in their lives. Thus, the community is accountable to God. This is why commitment is so prominent in Jesus' teaching. Luke 9:21-26. Luke 9:57-62, Luke 14:25-35 and Luke 18:18-30.

Cross. In surveying Jesus' work and teaching, we have said little so far about the cross, because Luke's presentation of exaltation is featured more than the cross.

I repeat, Luke's presentation of the exaltation of Jesus is featured more than the cross. Some would deny a saving function for Jesus' work, preferring to argue that Jesus and his death is only an example. Exemplary elements do exist for a church under pressure, but this ethical view of Jesus' death is too limiting.

Tyson stresses, in a 1986 book, how the portrayal of Jesus' death reveals the conflict between Judaism and the New Way. The leaders debate Jesus' claims of authority, while Luke argues that Jesus' death is a necessary outcome of this conflict. Although the cross is less prominent for Luke than for Paul, the cross is important theologically in Luke's teaching.

It does not have merely an ethical or historical function. Jesus is the righteous sufferer, Luke 22 and 23. Two texts, however, especially define Jesus' death.

Jesus' death inaugurates the new covenant with God, Luke 22:20. At the Lukan institution of the Lord's Supper, we read, likewise, Jesus took the cup after supper, saying, after they had eaten, saying, this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. His death inaugurates the new covenant, which is predicted, for example, most explicitly in Jeremiah 31:31 to 34.

And his blood purchases the church, Acts 20:28. In his exhortation to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Jesus says, I'll tell you the truth, it's not in John, nor is it in Luke. Yikes.

20:28. Pay careful attention, he tells the elders, to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God. Some manuscripts have the Lord, which he obtained with his own blood. Shepherds the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Shepherds the church of the Lord, which he obtained with his own blood. This is along with the Lord's Supper saying, are the two places where Luke explicitly speaks of Jesus' cross. Here, Jesus' death is a redemption.

He purchases, he obtains the church, with his violent death, with his blood. And he says Bock is really alert. After summarizing the covenant inauguration and soteriological transaction that occurred with Jesus' death, he says two other images reinforce this view.

Jesus' substitution for Barabbas pictures Jesus' substitution for sinners, especially since all share in the unrighteous choice, Luke 23:13 through 25. The offer of paradise to the thief on the cross pictures Jesus' ability to offer life despite his death, Luke 23:36 to 49. So, these are not explicit references of the cross, but they are, they are, they contribute, they're contributory to that theme.

Jesus' substitutes for Barabbas pictures his substitution for sinners. And Jesus' promising the thief, today you'll be with me in paradise, shows his ability, even on the cross, to offer the guarantee of eternal life. Miracles.

Jesus' authentication comes not only in resurrection but also in miracles, which show the arrival of the new era, Luke 7:22 and Acts 2:22 to 24. Miraculous healing demonstrates the scope of Jesus' authority. He heals the sick, exercises evil spirits, and cures fever, leprosy, paralysis, a withered hand, epilepsy, dropsy, blindness, a flow of blood, and deafness.

He resuscitates the dead and exercises power over nature. Jesus' work testifies to his person and task. His disciples also perform some of these works in Acts, demonstrating that such authentication continues, Acts 3:6 and 16, and that Jesus' authority continues also.

Remember Acts 1:1, I wrote to you, Theophilus, in my former work, what Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up. The implication is, now in Acts, Luke writes about what Jesus continued to do and to teach after he was taken up. At God's right hand in heaven, he does so by the Spirit through his apostles and their disciples in turn.

Jesus and salvation. Although Luke's portrayal of Jesus is fundamentally about his authority, Jesus also brings promise. Salvation inaugurates the kingdom, delivers the sinner, forgives sin, provides the spirit, and calls for committed and faithful living in the context of the kingdom's future consummation.

All of God's covenantal promises are inaugurated by Jesus. Realized are the Abrahamic promise, Acts 3:22 to 26. The Davidic hope is realized, Luke 1: 31 to 33, Luke 1: 69. Acts 2:25 to 36. All of God's covenantal promises are fulfilled.

Another one is the hope of the spirit associated with the coming of the new era and new covenant. Luke 22:20. Acts 2:14 to 21.

Theophilus should be reassured that Jesus can and does deliver on these promises. But who participates in such blessing? How do the members relate to each other, and what is the task of community members? Who makes up the new community, and what is it to be? How does Luke view Christology's effect on the content and task of the new community? The answers to these questions are found in Luke's portrayal of the new community, the church. The new community.

Jesus' new community is not a totally organized entity in the gospel. It does not exhibit all the features of the new Catholicism of the second century. Beyond the 12 apostles and the 72 of Luke 10, there's no formal structure for some time.

Rather, those who become the new community of Acts are called disciples. In the gospel, this group is mostly Jewish. But there are a few hints that the benefits of Jesus' program can extend to Samaritans and non-Jews.

Luke 3:4 to 6. Luke 7:1 to 10. Luke 20:15 to 16 and Luke 24:47.

Although the racial theme is central in Acts, Luke's gospel shows that the message is going out to those on the fringe of society, beneficiaries of salvation. Luke focuses on the reception of the message by social outcasts and women. Luke features the poor, sinners, and tax collectors.

Luke has in view the materially and spiritually poor. This spiritual element is clear in Luke 1:50 to 53, and 6:20 to 23, where the poor and humble, like the mistreated

prophets, are beneficiaries of God's covenant. The poor or rejected are mentioned in several texts.

Luke 1:46 to 55, 4:18, 7:22, 14:13, and so on. Sinners are also special objects of the gospel Luke 5:27 to 32.

Luke 15:1 and 2. Luke 19:7. Tax collectors are also offered hope. They are disliked because they are seen as traitors to Israel for collecting Roman taxes, sometimes exorbitantly so. But Jesus shows they can enter God's blessing.

Luke 5:27 to 32, 7:34, 18:9 to 14, and 19:1 to 10 is the example of Zacchaeus. Finally, Luke features the responsiveness of women. Luke 7:36 to 50, 8:1 to 3, and 48:10, 38 to 42, 13:10 to 17, 24:1 through 12.

Not just women, but widows who represent the most vulnerable people in society. Luke 2:37, 4:25 and 26, 7:12, 18:3 and 5, 20:47, 21:2 and 3. Whether in parable or by example, these women are sensitive to Jesus' message. Though they are on the fringe of first-century society, they are in the middle of Luke's story.

Often they are paired with men. Luke 2:25 to 28, 15:4 to 10, 17:34, 35. Acts 21:9 and 10, to mention a few references.

A clear indication that the gospel is for both genders. Luke's linking in both the gospel of Luke and Acts of women and men together shows both genders are the proper recipients of the gospel. In short, the makeup of this new community knows no boundaries.

The message is available to all, but especially to those who are exposed in society and who as a result are often most suited to respond to the message of hope and reliance upon God. Pictures of response. Luke uses three terms to describe response to the message.

Repent, turn and faith. Repent, metanoia and repentance, metanoia, have Old Testament roots. Luke 11:32 and 24, 43 to 47, where the Hebrew equivalents, mainly shuv, refer to turning around.

In Greek the term has to do with a change of mind. The point is that repentance involves a reorientation of perspective, a fresh point of view. I would add, especially in regard to sin.

When dealing with God's plan, it means to see that plan in a new way and to orient oneself to it by turning from sin to God. Luke demonstrates that the fruit of repentance expresses itself concretely. Luke 3:10 to 14.

Repentance expresses itself in life, especially in how one treats others. Luke paints four pictures of repentance. One, a sick patient in need of medical attention and totally reliant on the skill of the doctor comes to the physician for help.

So, the one who repents comes to God for spiritual blessing and healing. Luke 5:31 and 32. Two, the repentance of the prodigal's action in returning to his father indicates how repentance makes no claims but is totally reliant on the mercy of the one to whom the request is made.

Luke 15:17 through 21. Repentance is a change in attitude about sin because one sees that only God and his mercy can provide relief. The centrality of repentance for Luke is indicated by its summation in Luke 24:47.

Quote, repentance for the forgiveness of sins, close quote, means that one seeks God's mercy through Jesus as one approaches God on his terms, recognizing the need to be forgiven and that only God can provide forgiveness. Three, third example, third picture of repentance in Luke's gospel. The tax collector shows this type of approach to God, though the term repentance is not used there.

Luke 18:9 to 14. Four, also instructive is the response of Zacchaeus. Luke 19:1 to 10.

In Acts, the term is also key. Acts 5:31, 11:18, 13, 24, 19:4, 20:21, 26:20. The verb is also used in Acts 5:31, 11:18, to indicate proper response, to repent.

Luke 11:32, 13:3 and 5, 15:7 and 10, 16:30. Acts 2:38, 3:19, 17:30, 26:20. The term turn, *epistrepho*, appears primarily in Acts but is hardly visible in the gospel.

Luke 1:17, 17:40, 22:33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 32. Acts 3:19, 9:35, 11:21, 14:15, 15:19, 26:18 to 20, and 28: 27. The term, however, is important because it pictures a change of fundamental direction, a reversal of estrangement and portrays what happens with repentance.

Acts 26 is particularly important because the three key concepts of repent, turn and faith appear together and are related to each other. Faith also describes *pistis*, also describes actions that bring benefit to the bearer. Faith expresses itself concretely through the paralytic's friends, Luke 5:20, through the centurion, Luke 7:9 and the sinful woman who anoints Jesus, Luke 7:47 to 50.

The Samaritan leper and the blind man also have faith in Jesus to restore them to wholeness, Luke 17:19, Luke 18:42. In sum, faith believes, and so it acts. Faith also expresses itself concretely in Acts 3:16, 14:9, 15:9, 20, 21, 24, and 24:26.

Belief has various levels. It can be short-lived, Luke 8:12, or increased, Luke 8:50. In Acts, those who respond are sometimes called believers to show the centrality of

faith and its dynamic, ongoing quality, Acts 5:14, Acts 15:5. In short, faith is the recognition and persuasion that God has something to offer through Jesus, namely forgiveness and the blessings of promise.

One must actively embrace faith and call on the name of the Lord, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13. Blessings of the new community. Luke uses various terms in the gospel for blessings offered, forgiveness or release, Luke 1:77 and 3:3. Luke 4:18 and 24.

In the New Testament, Acts 2:38, 5:31, 10:43, 13:38. Life, Luke 10:28, 12:15, and 21, 12:21. Luke 18:29 and 30.

Peace, Luke 1:79, 10:5 and 6, Acts 10:36. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of the spirit also are blessings of the new community, and we've already talked about those. These blessings and the way in which the promise is set forth show that Luke's agenda is not a political one.

Consequently, liberation readings, especially those with a political ideological base or those that attempt to turn Jesus into a political activist, lack support. Jesus did not challenge the current political order of Rome. He worked above and around it.

The church does not stand against the state or with it per se. The church should not be confused with the state, Luke 20:20 to 26. Nevertheless, the ethics of the community does have social implications.

The transformation of people is to be exemplified in this new community, which stands alongside secular institutions. People of this new community who love God should manifest their love by caring for those in the community, Acts 4:32 to 38, and those neighbors outside of the community, Luke 10:25 to 37. If social concern and compassion are visible anywhere, it is in the hope that the new community and its message of blessing and transformation offered to all, as well as in the concrete expression of such care in the generosity, love, and activity of the community.

Opponents of salvation, in contrast to those who are responsive, stand those who oppose and pressure the new community. At the transcendent level, the spiritual forces of evil stand resistant, though powerless before God's plan. Luke 4:1 to 13, 33 to 37, Luke 8:26 to 39, 9:1, 10:1 to 14, and 18, 11:11, 11:14 to 26, and 22:3. For Luke, God's struggle involves not only regaining human devotion, but also reversing the effects of evil forces.

On a human level, the opponents who are the biggest obstacle to the community are the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, that is, the religious leadership of Judaism. Their opposition is virtually constant once Jesus claims to have the authority to forgive sin and challenges the Sabbath tradition. Luke 5:24, and 6:1 to 11.

The roots of this rejection go back to their refusal to respond to John the Baptist. Luke 7: 29 to 30, 21 to 28. At various meals, they are warned, Luke 7:36 to 50, 11:37 to 52, 14:1 to 24. The leaders are at the center of Jesus' condemnation in the journey section, as well as in Jerusalem.

Luke 11:37 to 52, 12:1, 14:1 to 4, 16:14, 15, 24:24, 20:45 to 47. Brawley attempts to picture the Sadducees as the major opponents, with the Pharisees and scribes pictured more neutrally on the basis of Acts. For him, the Sadducees and chief priests oppose Christ, while the Pharisees are less resistant and legitimate key aspects of the Church's message, and they legitimate key aspects of the Church's message by standing up for resurrection.

Now, there's no doubt the Sadducees are portrayed more negatively, but the texts of Luke make it clear the Pharisees and scribes are under severe criticism, as well for rejecting the message. There are, however, exceptions, such as Jairus, Luke 8:41, and Joseph of Arimathea, Luke 23:50 to 53. But it is mostly the leadership who oppose Jesus and plot his demise.

Luke 6:11, Luke 11:53 to 54, Luke 20:19, Luke 22:3 to 6, Luke 22:52, 53, Luke 23:3 through 5. The crowd's reaction, however, is mixed. They have interest in Jesus, yet their response to him is superficial and sometimes fickle. The transition occurs in Luke 9 through 13, chapters 9 to 13.

Jesus offers many warnings to them in Luke 12:49 through 15:24. He rebukes this generation, Luke 11:29 to 32. He condemns various cities of the nation, Luke 10:13 to 16.

And he tells a few parables about the fault of the nation, Luke 13:6 to 9, 20:9 to 19. The crowd's eventual response typifies the general response of most in the nation. The rejection brings warnings of judgment, but such warnings do not represent anger.

They picture prophetic regret, since Jesus weeps for those he warns, Luke 19:41 to 44. In fact, the crowd becomes responsible for Jesus' death when they ask for Barabbas, Luke 23:18 to 25. Jesus warns of the consequences in a final prophetic note of judgment, Luke 23:27 to 31.

There's no doubt that the nation stands accountable for rejecting Jesus, Acts 2:22 to 24, 3:14 to 26, 5:30 and 31. The response of Israel is a tragic one, at least for now. It is in line for blessing, but has missed the day of visitation, Luke 19:44.

Now is the time of the Gentiles, Luke 21:24. Israel is not, however, out of God's plan, for the faithfulness of God's promise to the nation cannot be denied. But Israel is desolate, is Luke's word, until it acknowledges the Messiah, Luke 13:14.

Luke 19:34, 35. Acts 3:14 to 21. In Acts, the nation is warned, again, to change its mind about Jesus and repent, Acts 2:22 to 24, and Acts 5:27 to 32.

Luke has been accused of anti-Semitism, but this is harsh. Luke does not argue that the new community is persecuted by those, Luke does argue that the new community is persecuted by those who fail to respond to the message of hope. Jesus and his disciples consistently offer the gospel to the nation and suffer while making the offer.

The disciples do not create a division, and they do not bring violence to the Jewish community. Those who respond to Jesus are forced out, as the persecution of Acts shows and as Jesus predicted. Luke 12:1 to 12, Luke 21:12 to 19.

But the new community is not anti-Jewish, it is pro-promise. Consistently in Acts, the new community continually returns to the synagogue, at great risk to offer hope to Israel. These enemies are to be loved and prayed for, as Jesus made clear.

Luke 6:27 to 36, 23:34, Acts 7:60. The source of tension, the law, a primary cause of tension in Luke's gospel and Acts, is the new community's relationship to the law. This is a heavily debated area in Lukan studies.

Some argue that Luke is very conservative in his attitude to the law. Others suggest Luke is ambivalent about the law. Luke sees Jewish Christians keeping the law while Gentiles are free on some matters, circumcision and bound on others, idols, meat offered to idols, and immorality.

Others argue the law is part of the old era, and the church slowly came to recognize. Blomberg, 1984. The last position is best.

Most of these matters are made clear in Acts 10:11, and 15, chapters 10, 11, and 15, though the discussions of Luke 6:1 to 11, and 16:16 are also relevant. Law is not binding, though missionary considerations mean it can be followed in matters where central issues of a new faith are not at stake. In Luke's complex view, the law needs to be seen in three different perspectives.

As a legal, number one, as a legal and sacrificial code, and as a sociological distinctive, the law passes away. Luke 6:1 to 11, Acts chapters 10, 11, and 15, as evidenced by change in food regulations, circumcision, and perhaps Sabbath practice. Two, as a promise of the hope of the kingdom, the law is fulfilled.

Luke 16:16, 17, and 24:43 to 47. With its ethical thrust in terms of loving God, loving one's neighbor, and in relation to its moral commands, the law is reaffirmed in ways

that parallel the Old Testament prophets. Luke 6:27 to 49, Luke 10:25 to 47, Luke 10:26, and 27, Luke 16:19 to 31, Luke 18:18 to 30.

The law, or the traditions associated with it, are a central source of irritation in the gospel, especially Sabbath regulations. Luke 6:1 to 11. In fact, Jesus makes the point that what David did on the Sabbath, which is his justifying example, is not allowed in the law, Luke 6:4. It is crucial that the Sabbath challenge comes after Jesus' proclamation, that new wine must come in new wineskins, and that those who like the old will not try the new, Luke 5, 33 to 39.

This remark is part of a dispute about Jesus' failure to follow traditions relating to cleansing. Jesus challenged the law, at least in terms of how it was read in the first century, and his challenge helped produce the opposition to him. Acts make this challenge clear.

The opening up of all foods, the full table of fellowship with the Gentiles, and the refusal to circumcise Gentiles, Acts 10, 11, 15, reflect a rejection of some elements of the law and the tradition that grew out of it. Luke's clear indication that members are charged with denial of most sacred customs and his description of opposition within the new community show that issues related to Jewish roots are alive and a source of irritation, even within the community. Luke 13:10 through 17.

Luke 23:2. Acts 6:11 and 13. Acts 21:28. Acts 25:8. Luke replies that the law pointed to promise. Luke 24:43, 47. Acts 26:14. Luke 24:23.

He also openly describes differences with respect to the law. The argument is that God gave evidence of his acceptance of this new community and its differences from the law by pouring out the spirit on Gentiles, even though they were not circumcised. Acts 11:15 to 18.

God shows his support of the new way with a vision that commands open table fellowship. Acts 10:1 to 33. Luke portrays the taking of vows and other elements of the laws as optional, as long as one does not make those elements necessary.

Acts 15:22 to 29, 21:17 to 26. The exercise of such options might promote unity on some occasions. Luke's resolution is that Jews are free to observe such customs as long as they do not force Gentiles to do so.

This distinction is key and is not unlike Paul's solution in Romans 13 and 14. The law cannot be held as binding. The many texts and acts dealing with this issue reveal some of the concerns Luke was just to treat.

They presuppose a racially mixed community, struggling with its relationship to ancient roots. One can suspect how much tension such racial differences raise in a

new community. Luke is honest about these differences and about the complex solution and compromise that resulted for the sake of the Church's unity, a compromise he endorses in his proposal.

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on the theology of Luke-Acts. This is session 5, Darrell Bock on Theology, Christology, and Salvation, the New Community.