

## **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Theology of Luke-Acts Session 6, Darrell Bock's Theology, The New Community**

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on the theology of Luke-Acts. This is session 6, Darrell Bock's Theology, The New Community.

We continue our studies together on Lukan theology, working with the gospel of Luke before we, in later lectures, tackle the Acts of the Apostles.

Let us pray. Father, thank you for opening up your holy mouth and speaking forth your word through prophets and apostles of old. We thank you for Luke and his contribution. Illumine our minds, encourage our hearts, incline our wills. To do your will, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

We're finishing up Darrell Bock's introduction to the Theology of Luke-Acts, and he's talking about the new community, the church, and a subhead is pressure against God's plan.

Opposition calls for a strong commitment to Jesus. It is inevitable that every decision for Jesus, with every decision for Jesus, comes opposition. Notes about division come early, Luke 2:34, 35, and divisionary notes are found throughout the gospel. Luke 8:14, 15, Luke 9:21-23, Luke 9:61-62, Luke 12:4-9, and 22-34. Luke 22:35-38. So, I'm repeating those verses: Luke 8:14-15, Luke 9:21-23, as well as 61-62, Luke 12:4-9, 22-34 and Luke 22:35-38.

Already in chapter 2, Simeon says, Behold this child, Luke 2:34 says to Mary, Behold this child, referring to the baby Jesus, is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel. Both the fall and the rising, both judgment and blessing of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed.

So, already in the birth narratives we have this notion that Christ is going to bring division. We find it throughout the gospel in these references, which I have read twice and that's enough. In Jesus' predictions of the Son of Man suffering, being rejected and killed, there's the division.

The elders, chief priests, and scribes in 9:22 are against their Messiah, against the Son of God. Disciples shrink back from responding boldly in the gospel, as Peter's example exemplifies. But the presence of the Spirit in Acts, the Holy Spirit, makes them bold.

Steadfastness and faithfulness are marks of a disciple. Luke's exhortations to steadfastness reveal an element of his purpose and setting. The pressure of this conflict within and about the community raised a need for Theophilus and all other readers to be reassured.

This troubled disciple belongs in the new movement, and he, along with any other Gentiles, has the right to be here. He needs to know that God's plan and blessing are at work in this new community. But if he belongs here, that is Theophilus, what is his call as a member of the new community? What is his relationship to the Jewish promise, to Jewish Christians, and to Jews? The new community did not choose to be separate.

It presented itself as the hope of Israel, but it was forced to become distinct. In its distinctiveness, it became a steward of the Word of God, Acts 6:7. It now houses the true people of God, the repository of the promises given to the patriarchs and to David, Acts 13:21-39.

Some features even mark it as distinct. The newness of the Spirit is responsible for this difference and is the source of enablement by which Jesus expresses his presence, though he is physically absent, Acts 2:14-40, Acts 11:15. Peter is reporting back to the church in Jerusalem his experience at the house of Cornelius.

As I began to speak to these Gentiles, he means the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. God gave physical manifestations of the Spirit's presence exactly to reassure Peter and the other Jewish Christians that the Lord was doing something new and wonderful in incorporating Gentile believers into this new community, the church. Accordingly, the new community is to have a distinct character, unlike the present piety of the leadership or the current cultural standards, Luke 6:27-36, 12:1, 14:1-14, and 22:24-27.

Another subhead under the new community is faith and dependence. The fundamental role of a reorientation to God has already been dealt with under pictures of response. Such basic trust not only begins the walk with God, but sustains it.

Initial saving faith, ongoing faith in the Christian life. Luke 5:31-32, Luke 15:17-21, Luke 12:22-23. Luke 5:31, and Jesus answered them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. Repentance involves turning, turning from sin, and turning to Christ as he is offered in the gospel. That would be an example of initial faith, chapter 12:22-32, speaks of ongoing faith, where Jesus says, don't be anxious, my goodness, God feeds the birds and clothes the lilies, surely

he will take care of you, because an argument from God cares for the lesser creatures, surely he cares for you who are made in the image of God.

You're much more important than the grass and the birds, and God will take care of you as well. That is, don't be anxious, rather live by faith. Instead, Luke 12:31, all the nations of the world seek after these things.

Verse 30, the unsaved people seek after them, and your father knows you need them. 31, instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. That is, those who know the Lord are to live by faith, trusting that their heavenly father, who cares for the sparrows and who cares for the lilies of the field, will care for his children, those who are members of his spiritual family, the New Testament people of God.

Total commitment, another subhead, disciples are to be totally focused on their walk with God. There are to be no higher priorities. Luke 9:23, Luke 9:57-62, Luke 14:25-35.

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and his wife and his children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Is Jesus really teaching literal hatred of one's family? Let's just pick father and mother. No, the fifth commandment is to honor your father and mother.

He's not contradicting the ten commandments. Rather, he is saying, compared to your devotion and love to me, your love and devotion toward even beloved family members appears to be hatred by comparison. In other words, he demands total commitment.

Therefore, Luke 14:33, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. Is he really teaching to give everything away? No. Once again, it's the radical language of what has been called an oriental contrast; God should have first place to such a degree that everything else we have is nothing by comparison.

This focus requires daily dedication and reflection about what is demanded. The reason for this commitment is that the path of a disciple is not easy. It involves cross-bearing, which is a daily endeavor.

Take up your cross and follow me. Disciples, when they heard those words, they understood. And if they ever saw somebody bearing the cross beam of his cross, they knew where he was going.

He was going to be crucified to die a horrible death. So, Jesus, does he mean we should all seek martyrdom? No, it is exactly this notion of total commitment. He means we should, as it were, give up our lives for his sake.

We should put him first in such a way that we die to self, that we count our lives as at his disposal. And yes, if it would involve giving our lives, that would be appropriate, but it usually doesn't. We give our lives in death, but it does involve giving our lives in commitment to him who loved us and gave himself for us.

Another subheading is: Commitment to the Lost. The community has a mission to the lost. Acts details the early accomplishments of this mission, but the gospel of Luke spells out the call.

Luke 24, how important that has been in this study. Luke 24:47. This is what Jesus leaves ringing in the ears of those who read and hear the gospel of Luke.

He opened the minds of the disciples to understand the scriptures. And this is what was written, that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. Luke 24:46, and then verse 47, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things and behold, I'm sending the promise of my father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. The new people of God share a commitment to the lost. They share it with the Lord of the harvest himself.

The gospel spells out the call as we saw in Luke 24 just now. Also, it tells the emphasis, the gospel of Luke. Luke 5:31, 32.

Luke 19:10. The son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost, including tax collectors like Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus.

The gospel of Luke also shares not only the call to go to the lost, not only the emphasis on salvation, but the focus of the mission to tax collectors and sinners. Luke 15 has three parables: lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son. This shows, indeed, the focus of the mission.

The one sheep out of the hundred was very important to God. So, the shepherd leaves the 99 and goes and restores the one. The one coin out of the 10 was important to the woman who swept her floor until she found it.

The one son out of the two, notice the decrease in numbers. One out of a hundred sheep, one out of 10 coins, one out of two sons. It's emphasizes the decrease in numbers, emphasizing the importance.

The son, the one son, is very important to God. That is why there's joy in heaven at the finding of lost things or of lost persons. The church is not an inwardly directed body but an outwardly reaching group.

The theme of testimony and witness in acts also underlines this point. Another subheading is love for God and for one's neighbor. Devotion to God expresses itself in dependent prayer, Luke 11:1 through 13.

Devotion to Jesus is shown to be the right choice of Mary to sit at Jesus' feet, absorbing his teaching and presence, Luke 10:38 to 42. Martha was bustling about and serving and doing nothing wrong. It was a matter of priorities.

Love for Jesus comes first. The care of one's neighbor is likewise an expression of such devotion. And that, of course, is the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25 through 37.

Which of these three, Jesus says at the conclusion of the parable, a priest, a Levite, and the Samaritan are the three, which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers? Jesus says to the lawyer, and he answers, the one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, you go and do likewise. It is no happenstance that the Samaritan is the hero of the parable and that the priest and the Levite were antiheroes.

They had much higher status and much greater power in their society. Good Samaritans were despised by the Jews, but this Samaritan loved his neighbor, gave of his own resources to take care of his neighbor, put himself way out of the way to help, and even gave money to pay for his care, room, and board as the Samaritan continued on his way. That showed becoming a neighbor, showing great love to one's neighbor.

That showed proving to be a neighbor to those in need. In fact, the call to be a neighbor to everyone is what is emphasized. Such care and compassion know no boundaries of race, gender, or class, as Jesus' own ministry showed.

As we'll see when we get to Joel Green's sociological perspective on the gospel of Luke, such teaching was counter-cultural, even radical. And it's evidence of the in-breaking grace of God in a culture; not saying God didn't show any grace before, but in a Greco-Roman culture that had not only no grace but no category for grace, no understanding of the notion of giving, expecting nothing in return. That was totally foreign to the dominant, as a matter of fact, all-pervasive web of patron-client relationships.

Prayer. Prayer is noted by exhortation and example. Luke 11:1-13.

Luke 18:1-8 and 9-14. Luke 22:40. Not only did Jesus teach a model prayer and exhort his disciples to pray, but when he came to Gethsemane, he says in Luke 22:40, pray that you may not enter into temptation.

And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. It's the cup of God's wrath, the cup of suffering, and the wrath of God. Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.

Jesus lived out what he taught. Prayer does not demand. It requests. Humbly relying upon God's mercy and will, it looks to the return of Christ and the consummation of the Lord Jesus.

It rests, prayer rests in God's care and provision of basic needs. It also recognizes that in seeking forgiveness, one should be prepared to forgive it as well. Another heading, persistence and suffering, another subhead under the new people of God.

And many of the texts dealing with persistence we have already mentioned. Luke 8:13-15, 9:23, 18:8, 21:19. Luke 8:13-15, 9:23, 18:8, and 21:19.

The church in Acts often exemplifies such persistence. Acts 4:23-31. This attitude of the disciples is related in turn to patience and expectation.

Another subheading, is "Watchfulness, Patience, Boldness. Disciples are to fear God, not people." Luke 12:1-12.

They recognize that the Lord will return and that they are responsible to him. Luke 12:35-48, 19:11-27, 18:8. Luke 12:35-48, 19:11-27, and 18:8.

They cling to the word, and they bear fruit. Luke 8:15. It is here that eschatology makes its impact in Luke.

Jesus represents both the present and the future. The promises that remain unrealized will come. Luke 17:22-37, Luke 21:5-38.

17:22-37, 21:5-38. The judgment of Jerusalem which came in A.D. 70 is seen as the guarantee and picture of the final judgment. Luke predicts both the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple is a precursor.

It's a sign of the final destruction of evil and the final judgment of God upon sinners. The return of Jesus will be a horrific period in which unbelieving humankind is severely judged, and believers will suffer at the hands of those who do not believe. Luke emphasizes that the return's reality and the accountability that comes with it require that disciples be faithful and that all people respond to the good news.

In Acts, Luke will note that Jesus is, quote, the judge of the living and the dead. Acts 10:42. Acts 17:31.

Not only is the father judge, the son is judge as well. Peter testifies in Acts 10:42, God commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Acts 17:31. God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world. This is Paul speaking.

He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this, he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. It's the prophetic notion of fulfillment now as earnest, as a guarantee of future fulfillment in the presence. As God shows, he's able to work now in results that can be seen as a guarantee of his being able to fulfill his promises in the future, which now cannot be seen.

The Luke in eschatological discourse in chapter 21 makes it clear there is some time before the return. Luke 21:5 to 20. The time of the return is unknown but will come quickly when it comes.

Luke 21. I have not read this yet. Mark has the eschatological discourse toward the end of his gospel.

Matthew in chapters 24 and 25. In Luke, it occurs in chapter 21. Starting with 21:5. And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, Jesus said, as for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

And they asked him, teacher, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place? And he said, see that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name saying, I am he, and the time is at hand. Do not go after them.

And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once. Then he said to them, nations will rise against nation. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom.

There'll be great earthquakes and in various places, famines and pestilences, and there'll be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all this, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you'll be brought before kings and governors for my namesake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.

Settle it, therefore, in your minds not to meditate before how to answer, beforehand how to answer. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You'll be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends.

And some of you will be put to death. You'll be hated by all for my namesake, but not a hair on your head will perish. By your endurance, you will gain your lives.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it. For these are the days of vengeance to fulfill what is written.

Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days, for there'll be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Here, Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem.

And there'll be signs in the sun and moon and stars and on the earth, distress of nations and perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves. People are fainting with fear and with foreboding about what is coming in the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and they will see the son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Now, when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near. Then he told him a parable: look at the fig tree and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves, and you know the summer is already near.

So, also when you see these things take place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But watch yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life. And that they come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and stand before the son of man. And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the



mount called Olivet. And early in the morning, all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

That eschatological discourse in Luke 21 is justly famous. More problematic is how soon Luke anticipates the return. Some texts suggest a high level of immediacy.

Luke 18:8, Luke 21:32, which we just read. When you see these things taking place, you know the kingdom of God is near. But such texts can be read to suggest either that the return is next on the divine calendar, Luke 18:8, Acts 3:18-21, or that the return, when it comes, will come quickly and be resolved quickly.

Luke 17:24-37, Luke 21:25-36. Luke's position expresses uncertainty about the timing of the return and yet the possibility of its coming at any moment. I find Bock to be wise. We have imminent sayings.

We have three kinds of sayings in the Gospels concerning the timing of Jesus' return. Imminent sayings tell us to be ready, that it could happen at any time.

Interval sayings tell us certain things must happen before Jesus comes again.

And most important of all is our ignorance sayings, which tell us we don't know the day or the hour. So, the imminence passages are designed to keep God's people on their toes. The interval passages, telling us certain things must happen before he comes back, tell us not to head up in the mountains with the white robes on and forsake life and culture.

No, we plan, we work, and we look for the Lord to come back. But most of all, the ignorance passages preclude us from foolishly setting dates about things we really don't know. A sad history and record of people doing exactly that have littered the history of church history since the 1800s, when people were already doing that nonsense.

Luke uniquely notes the reality of personal eschatology distinguished from corporate eschatology. That is the awareness of being in Jesus' presence upon death. In two unique texts, Luke portrays death as a transition into paradise.

Luke 23:42 and 43. To the dying repentant thief, Jesus says, truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise. Attempts to move the comma and make this a vague statement about the future, truly I tell you today at some unknown time in the future, you'll be with me in paradise, don't work.

As Howard Marshall shows in his scholarly commentary on the gospel of Luke, perhaps in the New International Greek Testament commentary series. I believe

that's right. And the other passage is the acceptance of a faithful witness by the Son of Man, Acts 7:55 and 56.

The faithful witness, of course, is the deacon Stephen. The hearers are enraged, even as the Israelites of old were enraged at the prophets. Consider Jeremiah's response to the people. And Acts 7:54, they ground their teeth at him.

But he followed the Holy Spirit, Acts 7:55, gazed into heaven and saw the Son of, the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. But they cried out with a loud voice and stoned him to death.

Bach, among others, see the standing as Jesus getting up to welcome with open arms, to welcome his martyr into his presence. So, Luke portrays death as a transition into paradise. The repentant thief on the cross, Luke 22:42, 43.

Or as the acceptance of a faithful witness by the Son of Man, Acts 7:55, 56, acceptance indicated is the interpretation. And I would agree by the Son of Man, by Stephen's picture of the Son of Man, Jesus standing to welcome him. Thus, the issue of a current interim period without consummation is somewhat softened by the presence of the intermediate reality for those who pass away before his return.

I should mention that Joel Green, whose work I highly esteem and from whom I have learned much, is among those leading an effort today to deny the reality of the intermediate state. I respect my brother and appreciate him, but I stand with the church historic and its creeds and confessions and affirm, along with Darrell Bock, and not only those two passages, but Pauline passages as well, in Philippians 1, 2 Corinthians 5 come to mind, the reality of the eternal intermediate state, as well as the eternal one. In all of this, the future helps to give perspective to the present, especially perspective about the readiness to suffer.

I welcome Bach's words. If this is what a progressive dispensationalist does with eschatology, bring it on. It's very edifying.

He certainly has his nose, hand, and heart in the Bible, which is where it belongs. Those things belong. "Joy and praise" is another heading.

Notes of joy resound throughout the Gospel of Luke. They are related to God's plan, Luke 1:14. The angel Gabriel tells John the Baptist, Father Zachariah, but you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

That is John the Baptist's birth. It took Zachariah a little while to believe it, but there was joy indeed. And his being unable to speak was broken by surprising words when

he said his name was John, referring to the child, which was a surprise because it was a new name in that family.

It was the name that God told him to give. Luke 2:10 likewise speaks of joy concerning this time, the birth of Jesus. Angel said to the shepherds, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

They probably understood those words for all the Jewish people. Did God have in mind greater things? Even witness to the Gentiles, I wouldn't be surprised, for unto you this day is born in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Joy throughout Luke is also, Luke's gospel is also connected to the word.

8:13. The ones who are on the rock, this is the parable of the soils, are those who hear, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. Now as this thing unfolds, their end is not good.

They receive it with joy, but they're not true disciples. And it is evident in these four receptions of the word. Only the fourth shows true faith because only that one has fruit that remains.

But nevertheless, the word is associated with joy in Luke 8:13. Joy is associated with mission in Luke 10:17. The 72 returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.

That must have been something. They surprised themselves. No, Jesus surprised them.

They were not stronger than demons or smarter than they were, for that matter. But the son of God was both. It just cracks me up.

And he gave them joy in their authority over demons in his name is the key. There's joy in heaven's reaction to finding lost things and people. Lost Sheep, Luke 15:7. I better check and not trust my memory.

That is correct. Lost coin, 15:10. It doesn't exactly mention joy in heaven in the parable of the prodigal son of the lost son.

Surely it's implied with the part with the party going on. But lots of joy in Luke's gospel. There's also joy in Jesus resurrection and ascension.

Luke 24. How many times has Bach referred to that? In verse 41, Jesus shows the disciples the risen Christ appears and shows them his hands and his feet with the stigmata. And while they still disbelieved, I love the honesty, honesty, and integrity of Holy Scripture, the candor of it, while they still disbelieved for joy.

And we're marveling, he said to them, do you have anything to eat? And he ate some fish to show them that he was not a phantom, but that he was the risen son of God. The hope of the gospel fuels a basic joy and praise to God. Hindrances to discipleship is the final heading under the new people of God.

The role of money is a much discussed Luke topic. Negative warnings and parables abound. Money is a gift from God, but it is dangerous.

Luke 8:14, Luke 12:13 to 21. Luke 16:1 to 15. And verses 19 to 31. Luke 18:18 to 25. But positive examples also exist in the third gospel. Luke 8:1 to 3. Luke 19:1 to 10. Zacchaeus. Luke 21: 1 to 4. Acts 4:36 and 37. Especially debated is whether Luke decries wealth per se.

The example of Zacchaeus, who generously repaid his misuse of funds, but hardly divested himself of every asset, suggests the issue is not what one has, but what is done with what one has. The disciples are said to have left all for Jesus. Luke 18:28 to 30.

A remark that goes beyond resources to leaving family as well. Yet later in the gospel, they exhibit failure when the pressure of Jesus' arrest produces denial. The issue with resources, as with family and fearing people, is not the perfection of one's response or a literal following through to one's last coin, but a fundamental orientation.

A recognition that all of one's life belongs to God and comes from his hand. The rich man would not even consider Jesus' request to sell all, while the disciples and Zacchaeus had entered into the process. In sum, Luke warns that the hindrances to discipleship include not only resources, but fearing people.

Luke 12:1 to 12. And worrying about the cares of life. Luke 8:14.

Concluding, Bock's helpful introduction to Luke's thought. Summary. Luke's gospel is pastoral, theological, and historical.

The reality of God's plan influences how individuals see themselves and the community to which they belong. Old barriers of race are removed. New hope abounds.

There is to be no doubt that the message of Jesus is one of hope and transformation. Anyone, Jew or Gentile, can belong. At the center is Jesus, the promised Messiah Lord, who sits at God's right hand, exercising authority from above.

He will return one day, and all will be accountable to him. His life, ministry, resurrection, and ascension show he has the ability to be trusted. He can bring God's promises to completion, just as he has inaugurated them.

In the meantime, being a disciple is not easy, but it is full of rich blessing that transcends anything else this life can offer. This is the reassurance about salvation that Luke offers to Theophilus and others like him. In our next lecture, we will take a look at some of Joel Greene's very helpful and instructive ideas concerning the gospel of Luke.

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