

# Analysing Luke's Special Emphases

**Jesus Christ performed many signs in the presence of His disciples which were not recorded in the gospel accounts, [John 20:30; John 21:25].**

**Each of the gospel writers chose to record certain teachings and acts of Jesus Christ but chose not to record others.**

What a gospel writer decides to record, and the way he decides to record it, is largely determined by his theological emphasis, by the specific points he wishes to emphasise from Jesus Christ's life and teachings.

The study of a writer's choice of material, his reduction of a mass of data into a more concise account, and his organisation of that material, is called "*redaction criticism*."

Redaction criticism involves detailed analysis of the vocabulary of the gospels.

It includes noticing what one gospel account includes or omits when narrating the same story as another gospel writer.

It involves analysing the way passages are arranged and linked together, and the settings in which they are placed.

The first article in this series described some of Luke's main themes, the historicity of the gospel, and the availability of the gospel to all humanity and a favourable view of women.

Let us now see how Luke is inspired to develop these themes.

## Theme development

A simple example of redaction criticism at work can be seen by comparing –

**Matthew 3:1-3** [New King James] *"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight."'"*

**Mark 1:2-3** [New King James] *"As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.'"*

**Luke 3:3-6** [New King James] *"And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."'"*

**Only Luke adds the last part of this prophecy.**

**This additional saying recorded by Luke fits in with the author's concern to show that the gospel has universal significance.**

**Matthew 10:5-15** [New King James] *“These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement than for that city!’”*

Jesus’ commands to the 12 disciples before He sent them out.

**Luke 9:1-6** [New King James] *“Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.”*

**Notice that Luke omits the first part of the command.**

Why?

**Because the gospel accounts were inspired by the Holy Spirit with different emphasis, [2 Timothy 3:16].**

## **Method of linking passages**

Luke’s use of language also helps to further his theological emphasis.

Of interest in this record is the way Luke links stories together, compared with the way that Mark does.

Mark often uses such words as *“immediately,” “anon”* and *“straightway”* to link passages together.

This ties in with Mark’s perspective of Jesus Christ as the active servant of God.

**Luke, however, uses such phrases as *“it came to pass”* and *“it happened,”* they are phrases that flavour the account with the feeling of historical certainty.**

**Luke also tends to be more concerned about the setting in which a saying occurs.**

For example, the parable of the lost sheep is set by Matthew among a host of sayings **not** all directly related to each other, [**Matthew chapter 18**].

In Luke, the setting of the same parable adds to Luke’s emphasis that salvation is **not** just for those whom the Pharisees consider righteous, [**Luke chapter 15**].

The context of this *“lost sheep”* parable is the Pharisees’ accusation that Jesus Christ is eating with sinners.

After telling the parable to the Pharisees, Jesus Christ defends His action as follows –

**Luke 15:7** [New King James] *“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”*

This last sentence is **not** found in Matthew’s account.

Luke then continues on with two more parables on a similar theme that are unique to his gospel.

**Luke 15:8-10** [New King James] *“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbours together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

Followed directly by the parable of the lost son, commonly called *“the prodigal son.”*

**These parables all reinforce the message of universal salvation a greater group than the Pharisees imagined.**

We can gain further insights from examining the structure of this chapter further.

The parable of the lost coin comes immediately after the parable of the lost sheep, they are presented as one saying.

However, in **verse 11** the parable of the prodigal son is introduced with the words, *“then He said.”*

**These introductory words suggest the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin form a distinct unit, separate but on similar theme, from the prodigal [lost] son parable.**

**Also the parables of the lost sheep and lost coin parallel male and female in similar roles, making no spiritual distinction between men and women.**

Both a man rejoicing over a lost sheep and a woman rejoicing over a lost coin are suitable metaphors for Jesus Christ eating and rejoicing with repentant sinners.

The prodigal [lost] son parable extends the same theme, but showing the very personal love and concern God has for all His children, whatever sins they have repented of.

**In Luke 15 we have seen an example of how Luke uses the setting and arrangement of the parable to enhance the message that God is concerned with all human beings.**

There are many more insights into the gospels that await us if we make a careful study of the differences between the four accounts, both in what they record and the way they record it.

Happy hunting!