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THE POOR AND THE INHERITANCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND THE LETTER OF JAMES

by

DANIEL A. GLEICH

A THESIS SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF
COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
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Abstract

Already a rather straightforward reading of the Gospel of Luke and the Letter of James reveals that both of these books have a strong emphasis on the proper attitude towards possessions and on the care for the poor and needy. This thesis is an attempt to describe the connection between the two writings on this subject. It is argued, firstly, that Jesus' blessing of the poor in Luke 6:20 is similar to James 2:5. Secondly, it is shown that many aspects of the portrayal of the poor and their connection to the kingdom of God in the Gospel of Luke are unfolded and applied to the situation of the early church addressed in the Letter of James.

The thesis begins with some methodological considerations and a brief summary of the most important studies in the field of wealth ethics in the Gospel of Luke and in the Letter of James. It is argued that most interpreters have focused on individual wealth ethics, while the present thesis is more concerned about the ecclesiological aspects.

In order to substantiate this claim, the thesis contains four major sections in which different texts from the Gospel of Luke and the Letter of James are investigated. The first section of the second chapter looks at the understanding of the "poor" in six different passages of Luke. The focus here is to understand what is implied in the use of the category "poor." The study of the different texts reveals that not only socio-economically poor people are understood as "poor," but also others who are on the fringes of society. The subject of wealth and poverty is part of the bigger theme of the great reversal. While pious first-century Jews probably expected this reversal to fully happen once the Messiah appears, Jesus redefines the timing and teaches instead an inaugurated eschatological

reversal, which will take place at the end of days but reaches already into the present. Who will then and already now receive blessings does not primarily depend on one's socio-economic standing, but rather on one's response to Jesus and his teaching.

In the second section of the second chapter, seven different passages on the kingdom of God in Luke are discussed. They are grouped according to three different aspects. In the first category two texts on the redefinition of honor and shame in the kingdom of God are addressed. The focus of the second category is on the requirements for receiving and entering the kingdom of God. The three texts in the third category are all about God's promise to care for his people.

The third chapter has again two parts, one about the understanding of poverty and wealth in the Letter of James and the other about how kingdom, covenant and family language is used there. The focus in this chapter is to compare the texts in James' letters with characteristics of Luke's understanding of the "poor" and the kingdom of God. It is argued that James very often admonishes his readers to live according to the principles that Jesus taught and Luke reports. However, James does not simply repeat the Jesus tradition, but rather presupposes, unfolds and applies it to the particular setting of the community he is writing to.

In the conclusion of the thesis, four themes are shown to have crystallized throughout the discussion of the texts in Luke and in James. A brief consideration of further research possibilities closes the thesis.

For Michael Chiu,

who made many of the things

written about in this thesis

come alive to me.

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Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviations

AJT	*Asia Journal of Theology*
BDAG	Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Edited by Frederick W. Danker. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
ESV	English Standard Version
Hist. eccl.	Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
TJ	*Trinity Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

1. Introduction

The problem of weakness and poverty has kept great thinkers busy over many centuries. What is the relationship between the strong, rich and powerful on the one side and the weak, poor and helpless on the other side? How should they interact with each other? Should the weak, poor and helpless serve with the little they have the strong, rich and powerful? Or should the strong, rich and powerful rather use their might to serve the weak, poor and helpless? The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche argued that the two models rival each other in every society. At times that which is strong and powerful is called "good" and that which is weak and cowardly is called "bad." Nietzsche names this model "master morality" in contrast to "slave morality." A "slave morality" replaces the concept of "bad" with "evil". Pity, patience and humility are the good values of this slave morality, while power and pride are called "evil" (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 9.260). While "master morality" considers weakness to be "bad", this does not mean that weakness is condemned or is to be hated, it simply means that it is not good and therefore not desirable. In "slave morality", however, whatever is called "evil" is to be hated and should be exterminated. Elsewhere, Nietzsche clearly connects what he understands as "slave morality" with Judaism and Christianity. In his view they only have the goal to gain power over the strong and powerful, whom they hate deeply (*On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1.13-16).

The New Testament, in contrast, introduces Jesus as the Lord of all (Greek: παντοκράτωρ), the most powerful person on earth (cf. Matt 28:18). His power was so

overflowing that he could even pass it on to others (cf. Luke 9:1). He was so healthy and strong that even people with the most contagious sicknesses did not infect him but rather became well whenever they touched him (e.g., Matt 8:2-3; Mark 5:27-29). Yet the gospels say that Jesus chose to live in a way that Nietzsche would call "slave morality." They even argue that Jesus in a way invented such a morality, contrary to the way things were done in the society around him. The gospels therefore do not see a necessary dichotomy between the powerful and the powerless. It seems rather that Jesus unites both groups, still giving them particular instructions on how to live with each other. But that could neither be called a "slave morality" nor a "master morality" but rather the morality of the Master who became the Slave.

The thesis of this study is that Jesus' teaching on how the rich and the "poor" [1] are supposed to live is a particular emphasis in the Gospel of Luke and in the Letter of James. I will argue that the relationship between the two books is that James unfolds and applies in the context of the early church what Luke also emphasizes in his account of Jesus' life and teaching.

The question is on what a study like this should focus in texts on wealth and poverty in Luke's gospel. Section 1.2 of this thesis will show that many detailed studies on the "poor," on possessions and on wealth ethics in Luke have focused on the question of how Christians should deal with their own money. For example, are they called to give away

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[1] Whenever a group of people in this thesis is called "poor" with quotation marks, the term "poor" is used in a broader sense than just economically poor, even though economic poverty is not excluded per se. The particular connotations are emphasized in the course of the given section. When "poor" is used without quotation marks, then it is intended to refer to economic poverty in general.

all their possessions or should they stay wealthy in order to give continually? Especially Christopher Hays has offered a very helpful and balanced solution to the tensions on this subject in Luke.[2] However, the question remains whether or not this is the only emphasis in the passages on this subject in Luke's Gospel. I will argue that besides the important ethical imperative, to be generous with one's possessions, there is also the communal indicative, namely that many who end up being in the kingdom of God are those who are economically poor.[3] As such, these poor have a special calling: to be examples of believers who are fully dependent on God and only look to him for their needs to be met.

Since Jesus' life, acts and teachings resulted in the emergence of the Christian church, the poor who responded to Jesus' message became also part of the new community. The ecclesiological reality of a socio-economically mixed community is the subject in different parts of the Letter of James, the most dominant being the call for impartiality in the church in James 2:1-7. Bauckham summarizes well how in James the attitude towards the poor is crucial for the new community of believers as a whole.

> God's choice of the poor as heirs of the kingdom ensures that no one else can inherit the kingdom without recognizing the poor as honored by God and without sharing the humiliation of the poor so as to share also their exaltation. In this way, God's choice of the destitute is definitive of the nature of the Christian

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[2] Christopher M. Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics: A Study in Their Coherence and Character*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

[3] Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 34.

> community as a counter-cultural community already living the values of God's kingdom in distinction from those of the world.[4]

With a single-mindedness that comes naturally only to those who have no alternate plan, the poor who seek after God are also models of bold and confident prayer for the rest of the community. In addition, the poor give the rich a chance to use their possessions in a way that has eschatological value. I will argue that all of these different roles that can be seen much more explicitly in the Letter of James are implicitly present already in the Gospel of Luke. James is unfolding and applying Jesus' teaching to the concrete situation of the early church.

I will now describe the methodological approach of this thesis and then will continue with a brief overview of a selection of works published on the subject of wealth ethics in Luke and in James.

1.1. Methodological Considerations

This thesis is not a study of historical developments but rather an attempt to read the Letter of James in light of the Gospel of Luke. However, the selection of these two particular New Testament writings has both a literary and a historical reason. The literary reason is that both Luke and James are known for their particular emphasis on the poor.[5]

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[4] Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage*, New Testament Readings (New York: Routledge, 1999), 195.

[5] Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 357, for example, summarizes his section on the "poor" with the words: "Luke's portrait of the poor is an important part of his gospel and theology." See also Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 159–61; Allen Verhey, *The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 93–95. For James, see Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 46–47; Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 291–93. Verhey, who in general follows Dibelius'

The historical reason is that the meeting of James, the brother of Jesus, and Luke in Jerusalem, around the time of Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea (around A.D. 58-60; cf. Acts 21:18), could be one possible scenario for Luke to collect part of the Jesus tradition he worked into his gospel. Riesner convincingly argues that the circle around James, the half-brother of Jesus, in Jerusalem could very well be the source behind Luke's special tradition.[6] Since both Luke and James incorporate the saying of Jesus about the "poor" and the kingdom of God into their text in a very similar way (Luke 6:20; Jas 2:5), I want to ask in this thesis the question of how exactly such a connection between Luke and James can be described in their respective concepts of the "poor" being inheritors of the kingdom of God.

The approach chosen here is to study key passages on the subject of the "poor" and the kingdom first in the Gospel of Luke. The observations and results of this section will then form the grid through which the investigations of James will be looked at. If Luke's special tradition has its origin indeed in the circle around James, then we can also expect that the treatment of the subject of the "poor" and the kingdom in the Gospel of Luke at least stands in continuity with that in the Letter of James. The focus of this thesis is on

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theory that the Letter of James is only a loose collection of exhortations, still admits: "It is impossible to identify any single theme of James' paraenesis, but there is an unmistakable focus on sympathy for the poor." Verhey, *The Great Reversal*, 135. Davids compares James with the synoptic tradition and argues that James is closer to Luke than to Matthew in three ways: similarity of vocabulary; similarity in eschatology; similarity of social outlook. Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 49.

[6] Rainer Riesner, "Prägung und Herkunft der lukanischen Sonderüberlieferung," *Theologische Beiträge* 24 (1993): 242. Similiarly argues already Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Lucas*, 4th ed., Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche, 1920), 21.

how exactly the continuity between the Jesus tradition in Luke and the corresponding exhortations in James is evident. I will therefore not discuss issues of authenticity and literary dependency, which are discussed in detail elsewhere.[7]

Where I discuss individual passages in Luke and James, my goal is not to interpret the passage as a whole, but rather to observe what it contributes to the subject of this thesis. This does not mean that I will ignore the overall thrust of a passage by picking individual verses out of their context, drawing from them a meaning that contradicts the principal direction of the text as a whole. However, I will not always specifically comment on the main thrust of the passage and other major issues that can be found in the text, if these do not contribute anything to the overall question of this thesis.

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[7] For the Gospel of Luke see especially: Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994); Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: Volume 2: 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996); Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978). For James, detailed discussions of historical issues can be found especially in Luke T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, The Anchor Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Dan G. McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

1.2. Studies on Wealth Ethics in Luke

Having looked at the methodological approach to the subject, I will now describe and comment on some of the most influential works on wealth ethics in Luke and later on those for James. The first work in this overview was published by Hans-Joachim Degenhardt in 1964, and Hays writes that it was "the first full-length study of Lukan property ethics in modern critical scholarship."[8] As such it set the tone for the study of this subject in Lukan scholarship, so that many of the following works in that area had to interact with Degenhardt. It is therefore only appropriate to begin this overview with his book entitled "Lukas: Evangelist der Armen."

1.2.1. Hans-Joachim Degenhardt: *Lukas: Evangelist der Armen*

According to Hans-Joachim Degenhardt, Luke wrote his gospel and Acts in order to reform the church of his own time. Luke was not interested in giving an indifferent and objective presentation of the past but saw rather the time of Jesus as being exemplary for the time of the church.[9] Coming from this general perspective, Degenhardt sees by means of redaction criticism in all the different passages a situation in the church of Luke's time, to which Luke was applying the Jesus tradition. When Jesus tells a parable to "those who are invited" in Luke 14:7, Luke is probably addressing those who participate in the Eucharist,[10] and when Jesus speaks to the host of the meal (Luke 14:12-14), Luke turns to

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[8] Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 3.

[9] Hans-Joachim Degenhardt, *Lukas - Evangelist der Armen: Besitz und Besitzverzicht in den lukanischen Schriften; Eine traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1965), 19.

[10] Ibid., 99.

the church leaders who are the "hosts" of the Eucharist.[11] Furthermore, Degenhardt distinguishes between Jesus' twelve leading disciples (those who are called μαθηταί), who are probably a model for later church leaders,[12] and all the other followers (those who are part of the λαός). From the redaction-critical conclusions mentioned above and from the distinction between the twelve and other disciples, Degenhardt reasons that Luke wants to encourage all the full-time ministers of the church in Luke's own day to give up everything for the work of the gospel.[13] Bovon rightfully criticizes this constriction of Luke's wealth ethics to the elite, especially because of Degenhardt's distinction between the twelve and other followers of Jesus. Bovon argues that in Luke both the twelve and all other followers are understood to be disciples and therefore the teachings on possessions are not to be restricted to the leaders.[14] Seccombe too criticizes Degenhardt for this distinction and argues convincingly that "[i]t makes more sense to see the μαθηταί in Luke as all those who made a positive response to Jesus and regarded him at least as their teacher."[15] The twelve are in Seccombe's view only the disciples par excellence but their discipleship was not fundamentally different, in so far as it was based on their attention to Jesus' teaching.[16]

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[11] Ibid., 101.

[12] Ibid., 33.

[13] Ibid., 215–16.

[14] François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-five Years of Research (1950-2005)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 444.

[15] David P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt. Serie B (Linz: SNTU, 1982), 104.

[16] Ibid. Less detailed but in general very similar is Hays' critique. Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 3–4.

1.2.2. David Peter Seccombe: *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*

In his own work on possessions and the "poor" in the Lukan writings, David Peter Seccombe offers two proposals. His first point is that the "poor" to whom Jesus preaches good news (Luke 4:18) should be understood as a reference to Israel in the tradition of Isaiah.[17] In his second proposal, Seccombe suggests that Luke's synthesis of individual stories and parables on the subject of the "poor" and poverty should be classified in one of four categories: 1) In some passages the "poor" is used as a reference to Israel as a whole; 2) Other passages are about the renunciation of possessions but they are not intended to teach a specific ethical obligation but rather to teach "limitless" discipleship; 3) Some other passages are about the disciples ongoing attitude toward possessions; 4) Again other passages focus on the attitude towards possessions for the community as a whole.[18] Seccombe argues that the application of Luke's material on the subject is to be found in a time of crisis. He concludes his interpretation of Luke 14:25-33 with: "The disciple must continue with his Lord even to the point of turning his back on family, possessions and life itself. In the extreme situation of the last journey to Jerusalem all this was literally necessary. Normally it will not be necessary, but at any moment it could be."[19]

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[17] Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, 35–43.

[18] Ibid., 19–20.

[19] Ibid., 115–16.

Seccombe's study and especially his identification of the "poor" with Israel influenced many other Lukan scholars.[20] However, this interpretation is mainly based on Seccombe's argument that Luke was influenced by Isaiah. Seccombe therefore studies the use of the "poor" in Isaiah and states that "Luke has carried [Isaiah's understanding] into his gospel."[21] It will therefore need to be looked at later in the study of the "poor" in Luke 4:18, whether or not Israel as a whole is indeed the most likely candidate.

1.2.3. Richard Burridge: *Imitating Jesus*

Imitating Jesus is not a book about Luke or wealth ethics in particular, but as the title indicates, the focus is on Jesus' ethics and therefore Burridge addresses both Luke in general and his wealth ethics in particular. The reason this book is included here is because of its "inclusive approach." Burridge makes his case for such an "inclusive approach" by arguing that if one wants to take the genre of the gospels (Burridge classifies them as *bioi*, i.e., ancient "lives")[22] seriously, one cannot separate Jesus' ethical teaching from his deeds. Those deeds are generally characterized by an openness towards the poor, sick, sinners and others at the margins of society. He further argues that because the gospels are according to their genre not ethical handbooks, but rather ancient biographies which usually aim for imitation of the person portrayed,[23] the disciples of

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[20] Warren Heard, "Luke's Attitude Toward the Rich and the Poor," *TJ* 9, no. 1 (1988): 55; Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 6.

[21] Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, 39.

[22] Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 24.

[23] Ibid., 29.

Jesus are first and foremost called to imitate Jesus' inclusiveness in welcoming all who respond to his call.[24]

A main problem in Burridge's work is that he excluded the Letter of James from his study.[25] Surprisingly, this seems to be a current trend in the field of New Testament ethics, since besides Burridge two other major comprehensive studies have completely omitted a discussion of James.[26] This is particularly puzzling, given that somebody like Schrage already in 1982 opened his discussion of James with the statement that "[n]o other New Testament document is as dominated by ethical questions as the Epistle of James."[27]

In his response to Burridge's book, Richard Hays argues that Burridge "downplays the apocalyptic judgement texts in the New Testament. […] The Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels speaks not only gracious words of inclusion but also scathing words of judgement against hypocrites and those who reject his proclamation of the kingdom."[28] As one might expect, Burridge counters in his own response to Hays that his point about inclusiveness is restricted to those who actually respond to Jesus' message.[29] However, I

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[24] Ibid., 55, 78.

[25] The only explanation he gives for doing so is that Jesus is only mentioned twice in James. Ibid., 348–49.

[26] Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996); Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

[27] Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 281. Even though the English translation was published only in 1988, the German *Ethik des Neuen Testaments* was already published in 1982.

[28] Richard B. Hays, "Response to Richard Burridge, Imitating Jesus," *SJT* 63, no. 3 (2010): 333.

[29] Richard A. Burridge, "Response," *SJT* 63, no. 3 (2010): 351.

would argue that Jesus does not limit his harsh words of judgment to those who do not respond. Here, it would of course be important to define what a proper response to Jesus' call looks like. Burridge would probably agree that at least the twelve disciples responded properly to Jesus' call, but even to one of them Jesus says οὐαί (Luke 22:22), which he uses elsewhere to clearly pronounce judgment on those who do not respond (e.g., Luke 10:13; 11:42-52). In James such prophetic judgment is even more prominent (e.g., Jas 1:10; 4:13-17; 5:1-6), but as I will argue, it is first of all addressed to members of the Christian community, and secondly, it is not a prediction of inevitable condemnation but rather a call to repentance (see 3.2). It seems that Burridge makes the same mistake as Dibelius and many other interpreters of James, who argue that his harsh words toward the rich (Jas 5:1-11) only make sense if the rich are unbelievers. However, as becomes clear from the beatitudes and the corresponding woes in Luke 6:20-26, both the blessing and the curse are conditional. If we have to read into the blessing of the poor the condition that they accept Jesus and his message, then we also need to read into the curse of the rich the condition that they persist in their behavior and do not accept Jesus (cf. 2.1.3).

1.2.4. Christopher Hays: *Luke's Wealth Ethics*

Christopher Hays' dissertation is the most recent work on the subject of poverty and wealth in Luke discussed here. The specific question of the study is how seemingly contradictory statements of Jesus on possessions to his disciples relate to each other. The starting point is the tension between statements like Luke 14:33, "any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (ESV), and the fact that some women who provided for Jesus and the twelve obviously did not give away everything they had (Luke 8:1-3). Hays categorizes earlier approaches on this issue according to

their solution. He lists the works of Seccombe[30], Petracca[31] and partially also Horn[32] in the category of the *interim* solution, because they claim that the radical teaching on renouncing all possessions were only meant for a particular time of crisis in the life of the disciples.[33] The other two approaches are what Hays calls the *bi-vocational* solution (esp. Degenhardt[34]) and the *personalist* approach (esp. Luke Timothy Johnson[35]), in both of which he sees shortcomings that he tries to overcome by combining the two into one new approach.[36]

Hays further spends a chapter on the Jewish background of wealth ethics and another chapter on the Greco-Roman background. In both of these chapters Hays highlights the points of contact between them and Luke's writings and shows where Luke adopts something from the particular background and where he rejects it.[37] The central chapter is on Lukan Wealth Ethics in the Gospel of Luke, where Hays argues that the prescribed behavior of the disciples in regard to possessions is consistent throughout the book but

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[30] Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts.*

[31] Vincenzo Petracca, *Gott oder das Geld: Die Besitzethik des Lukas*, Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter (Tübingen: Francke, 2003).

[32] Friedrich W. Horn, *Glaube und Handeln in der Theologie des Lukas*, Göttinger theologische Arbeiten (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

[33] Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 264–65.

[34] Degenhardt, *Lukas - Evangelist der Armen.*

[35] Luke T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, SBL Dissertation Series (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977).

[36] Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 265.

[37] Ibid., 49, 69.

varies according to wealth and vocation of the particular disciple.[38] This major thesis is then cross-checked with the material in Acts, chapter five.[39]

Hays seems to be the most balanced and careful interpreter of the scholars discussed in this section and will therefore continue to be a very helpful discussion partner throughout the section on the "poor" in Luke of this thesis.

1.3. Studies on Wealth Ethics in James

While there are many monograph-long studies on the "poor" in Luke, the situation, as far as I can tell, is very different for the Letter of James. This is rather remarkable, given that Schrage emphasizes the extraordinary density of ethical material in James' letter, which is unparalleled in the New Testament.[40] However, the statement that closely follows in Schrage's work sheds some light on that mystery: "As Dibelius points out, the only form-critical genre found in the epistle is paraenesis, a loose assemblage of individual injunctions […] without apparent organization or logical development."[41] Verhey also builds his chapter on the epistle of James on Dibelius' argument. He even argues that the collection of moral instructions in James has no single focus and therefore defies systematization and summarization.[42] It seems that this judgment led Verhey to just describe with his own words the content of this collection of ethical instructions.

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[38] Ibid., 80.

[39] Ibid., 189.

[40] Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 281.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Verhey, *The Great Reversal*, 133.

Since Dibelius therefore had such an influence on how the ethical content of James has been treated in scholarship, it makes sense to start with his own thoughts on the "poor" in James, as he expressed it in the introduction of his commentary.[43]

1.3.1. Martin Dibelius: *James* (Commentary)

It has often been noted that with Dibelius' commentary on James a new approach of interpreting the πτωχοί started, not only in the field of studies on the Letter of James,[44] but also in gospel studies.[45] He is one of the first exegetes who emphasized the religious connotation of the term πτωχοί, going back to a tradition that is already found at different places in the Old Testament. Dibelius tries to trace James' understanding of the πτωχοί back to its heritage in the history of Israel. He argues that the downfall of the nation and the resulting exile mark the beginning of this development and Isaiah and Deuteronomy are its products. Here the whole nation could be called needy and the divine favor belonged to the "poor." This development also found expression in some of the Psalms, where "poor" and "pious" become parallel concepts.[46]

Rather surprisingly, Dibelius states then that it is probable that "these devout people had their own special religious community."[47] It is not entirely clear from Dibelius'

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[43] Martin Dibelius, *James*, trans. Heinrich Greeven, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 39–45.

[44] McCartney, *James*, 38.

[45] Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 2nd ed., The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 355; John O. York, *The Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke*, JSNTSup (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 54.

[46] Dibelius, *James*, 39.

[47] Ibid., 40.

description, how exactly he came to the conclusion that the existence of such a special community is probable. Nevertheless, he goes on to say that this community later became the "Pharisees," and "poverty" became a religious concept.[48]

From Jesus' own preaching, Dibelius concludes that he is first of all addressing a group of messianic pietists, "who were the heirs of the ardor of the Poor in the time of Jesus."[49] Furthermore, he states that Jesus' own origins lie in this community of pious people who called themselves "poor." It is then also from the perspective of this group, which consisted of small businessman and common people, that Jesus' parables were told.[50] Jesus' preaching revitalized the old movement with its eschatological hope for the salvation of the poor and the destruction of the rich (Luke 6:20ff).[51] This is then also the context out of which the author of James writes his letter to believers who seem to be losing such traditional self-conception and instead are beginning to favor the rich.[52]

Dibelius' agenda is to read the Letter of James in a way that reveals whom the author of the letter favors and what the reason for such favoritism is. Maybe Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*, which Dibelius mentions,[53] inspired Dibelius to trace the use of the "poor" back from the Letter of James to the writings of Israel's downfall and exile. This

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 41.

[50] Ibid., 42.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., 44–45.

[53] Ibid., 39.

would explain, for example, why Dibelius saw James' hatred of the rich as such an obvious reality.[54] In *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche describes the Christians as weaklings, cowering in a dark place and lying to each other by transmuting weakness into merit. They are *unable* to avenge themselves, but they say that they are *unwilling* to avenge themselves. They are miserable in all their weakness but they think that misery is a sure sign that God has elected them. In the end, however, Nietzsche reveals that all those weaklings are full of hatred, not love, which culminates in the hope for judgment day, where the Christians will enjoy the show of unbelievers burning in eternal fire (*The Genealogy of Morals* 1.15). Nietzsche was confident that Christians from the very beginning were guilty of the old Roman accusation of hatred against mankind (Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44; *The Genealogy of Morals* 1.16).

Dibelius seems to follow Nietzsche here at least for the kind of Christianity represented by the Letter of James.[55] In Dibelius' view, the author of James is deeply sympathetic towards the poor,[56] but full of hatred toward the rich.[57] While the author of James is a representative of what Dibelius calls an archaic eschatological pride of the poor,[58] Paul, in contrast, who calls for sufficiency, not poverty, as the ideal (1 Tim 6:17), sounds much more like a philosopher than such an apocalypticist.[59] This shows Dibelius' interest in

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[54] Ibid., 43–44.

[55] Ibid., 49–50.

[56] Ibid., 39.

[57] Ibid., 44.

[58] Ibid., 39, 42, 45.

[59] Ibid., 43–44.

making the Letter of James a document of sub-Christian statements[60] in order to demonstrate the deep abyss that exists between this kind of Christianity and that of Paul.

In the course of this study it needs to be looked at whether or not the two proposals, that James hated the rich and that his letter is a lose collection of statements, prove to be convincing.

1.3.2. David Hutchinson Edgar: *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*

A more recent proposal on how the focus on the "poor" in James should be interpreted comes from David Hutchinson Edgar's 1996 dissertation accepted by the University of Dublin.[61] He argues that James 2:5 is the key verse for the understanding of the social setting of James' addressees. Edgar states that they were a Jewish (Christian) assembly, in which Christian and non-Christian Jews alike met for worship services. In Edgar's opinion, there was not yet a sharp distinction between the two groups at that point anyway.[62] Many years earlier, Hengel argued that the Letter of James is an anti-Pauline polemic, warning his readers of the dangers of Paul's teaching on justification by faith (2:14-23)[63] and also of his missionary journeys (4:13-14), which depended on support from rich patrons. Hutchinson, in turn, now sees in the letter a plea to treat with favor the

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[60] Ibid., 49.

[61] David H. Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, vol. 206 of JSNTSup (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

[62] Ibid., 115.

[63] Martin Hengel, "Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik," in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis for His 60th Birthday*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 253–54.

ascetic itinerant preachers (2:1-13),[64] who are not to be identified with Paul and his followers, but rather with radical itinerant prophets, who continued Jesus' message of the kingdom of God through their teaching and an ascetic lifestyle.[65] It is interesting to notice how Hengel could see in James a clear critique of traveling missionaries, while Hutchinson could vote on the opposite end that the letter is a call to receive traveling prophets. This should caution interpreters of James from basing two much of their interpretation on some theoretical scenario that has no textual basis in the letter itself.[66]

Furthermore, Hutchinson's proposal rests heavily on Gerd Theissen's theory that the source behind the Jesus tradition on wealth ethics in the gospels is a group of ethically radical itinerants, who renounced possessions, home and family.[67] This theory in itself is highly debated. Hays, for example, argues that "Theissen's direct historical evidence for these wandering charismatics derives exclusively from the *Didache* (especially 11-13). But the *Didache* depicts these wandering charismatics as rather eccentric figures on the margins of the Christian movement, and hardly as the primary tradents of authoritative teaching."[68]

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[64] Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 120.

[65] Ibid., 121.

[66] Matt A. Jackson-McCabe, review of *Has God Not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, by David Hutchinson Edgar, *Review of Biblical Literature*, no. 2 (2003), accessed November 28, 2014, http://www.bookreviews.org. See also McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 95.

[67] Gerd Theißen, "Wanderradikalismus: Literatursoziologische Aspekte der Überlieferung von Worten Jesu im Urchristentum," *ZTK* 70, no. 3 (1973): 249.

[68] Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 11–12.

At the end of his chapter on the self-presentation of the author of the Letter of James, Edgar lists the seven most significant concerns shared by the letter and the Jesus tradition found in the gospels.[69]

1. Affirmation of the Lowly and Marginal
2. Reversal of Status
3. Eschatological Expectation/Threat of Judgment or Reward
4. Radical Behavioral Demand
5. God's Mercy
6. God's Giving/Dependence on God
7. The Effectiveness of Prayer

Edgar draws the conclusion that these points of contact between the Letter of James and the Jesus-tradition suggest a certain immediacy between James and the tradents of this tradition,[70] who Edgar then, as already mentioned, identifies as radical itinerant prophets.

Many of Edgar's observations are very valuable and do justice to the text itself. Yet his overall point, to identify the "poor" in James with Theißen's itinerant radicals, is highly questionable. Especially since James mentions orphans and widows as examples (Jas 1:27), it makes no sense to restrict other more general references to poor people to the itinerant radicals.[71]

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[69] Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 68–71.

[70] Ibid., 73.

[71] Matthias Konradt, review of *Has God Not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, by David Hutchinson Edgar, *JBL* 122, no. 1 (2003): 186.

1.3.3. Scot McKnight: *The Letter of James* (Commentary)

The latest contribution to the question of James' understanding of the "poor" comes from Scot McKnight's 2011 commentary on the Letter of James.[72] He makes the case that James is writing to the scattered believers in Judaea and Samaria, which are mentioned in Acts 8:1.[73] This leads him to see, for example, in the good gifts of James 2:17, economic gifts that Paul brought from Gentile believers to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30).[74] McKnight assumes therefore that the community James is addressing is in general very poor and the trials they are facing are actually oppressions by rich and powerful unbelievers.[75] McKnight argues that people in the community were therefore tempted to use violence in order to free themselves from their oppressors (Jas 4:1-2).[76] Those oppressors are identified as the priestly establishment in Jerusalem.[77]

This has of course major ramifications for the interpretation of the text. Everything then needs to be understood in light of that particular situation. The "wisdom" that people should ask for in 1:5 is understood as the ability to endure the oppression like Jesus did.[78] The brief section about the humiliation of the rich in James 1:10-11 is understood as a prophecy against the priestly establishment which was probably fulfilled in the

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[72] McKnight, *The Letter of James.*

[73] Ibid., 68.

[74] Ibid., 126.

[75] Ibid., 68–69, 75-76.

[76] Ibid., 76.

[77] Ibid., 99.

[78] Ibid., 86.

destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.[79] Yet this interpretation is especially unlikely, given that Hegesippus in about A.D. 160 writes that James, the half-brother of Jesus, alone was allowed to enter the holy place (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23.3-6), which Riesner interprets as evidence of priestly or at least Levitical descent.[80] Hegesippus also mentions that James was known to be frequently in the temple, praying on his knees. Even if one sees Hegesippus' account of the Jews' acknowledging James' righteousness and impartiality as legendary, it is striking that the general tone of the account is one of relative harmony between James and the Jerusalem Jews (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23.10). If, however, James would have been known as being part of an anti-priestly movement, as McKnight suggests,[81] such an account, even if legendary, would probably not have been accepted and transmitted.

However, it is very helpful to have in McKnight a constant discussion partner for the Letter of James, especially because the subject of the "poor" plays a dominant role in the overall approach of his commentary and he therefore discusses all those passages in detail which are also relevant for this thesis.

Both the second chapter (on the "poor" and the kingdom of God in Luke) and the third chapter (on the "poor" and the kingdom of God in James) follow the same order. They begin with a survey of the most important passages on the "poor" or wealth ethics in general in the particular book. Then, in the second part of both chapters, those passages

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[79] Ibid., 100.

[80] Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelienüberlieferung*, 2nd ed., WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 213–14.

[81] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 99.

will be discussed that reveal aspects of the kingdom of God and inform the understanding of why the “poor” are particularly compatible with the kingdom of God.

2. The "Poor" and the Kingdom in Luke

Many generations of scholars have worked hard to unfold the meaning of the kingdom of God in the gospels. Much more recently, other scholars began to work with the same determination to rediscover the social dimensions of Jesus' teachings in the gospels. The scope of the present thesis cannot do justice to all the particular questions and problems that are discussed in the still ongoing debate on the kingdom of God and the social dimensions of the gospels. Because the focus of this thesis is to study the characteristics of Luke's portrayal of the poor and the kingdom of God and to compare them with the Letter of James, I will only briefly interact with those debates where it is relevant for the thesis.

2.1. The "Poor" in Luke

Before I discuss different texts in Luke in order to determine particular characteristics of the "poor" in Luke, it is necessary to sketch some of the different aspects that can be subsumed under the adjective "poor." Luke mainly uses the Greek word πτωχός when he explicitly refers to the "poor." Only one time does he use another word (πενιχράν), and even here the word is a synonym for πτωχός, which appears then again in the following verse (cf. Luke 21:2-3). However, as will become clear in this section, there are many other ways in which people are described as "poor" and needy.

Bruce Longenecker offers a very helpful study on how πτωχός is used in the context of Greco-Roman urban societies, in which he revisits earlier attempts to categorize wealth terminology. He argues that the often maintained argument that πένης on the one hand

refers to someone who struggles to survive, while πτωχός on the other hand is used for beggars who had absolutely no resources, is too simplistic.[82] Longenecker then proposes a much more differentiated "economy scale" (ES),[83] with seven different categories (ES1-ES7). Based on the supposed income of people in Greco-Roman urban contexts, Longenecker argues that the richest group of people in society (ES1-ES3) made up 3% of the population. The rest of the population is much more equally spread between the other four levels of the scale (ES4: merchants, traders, etc., with a little surplus (15%); ES5: people with no surplus but whose expenses are just covered (27%); ES6: people whose expenses are sometimes covered and sometimes not (30%); ES7: people who have not enough to survive (25%)).[84]

Such a model is very helpful, bringing several nuances to the economic picture of Greco-Roman urban society. However, Deines rightly emphasizes the limits of such an approach, especially because it "does not sufficiently allow for cultural and geographical differences."[85] That means that even if Longenecker's economic scale is true of urban societies in cities like Rome, Corinth or Ephesus, it is not necessarily true in the rural societies of Palestine. Deines unfolds this more:

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[82] Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 37.

[83] Longenecker's proposal is an adjustment of Steven Friesen's earlier (2004) "poverty scale." Ibid., 44–46.

[84] Ibid., 53. See also the summary of Longenecker's approach in: Roland Deines, "God or Mammon: The Danger of Wealth in the Jesus Tradition and in the Epistle of James," in *Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament: Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen*, ed. Matthias Konradt and Esther Schläpfer, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 338.

[85] Ibid.

> [P]overty in Rome was different from poverty in Galilee, not just because of the difference between the large cities and the more rural areas where the majority of the population lived, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, because participation in socially and religiously desirable activities was different. […] The biblically shaped Jewish value system is not just based on money and possessions, but also on descent, holiness, purity, righteousness, and learning […].[86]

Deines, following the sociologist Mark Granovetter, therefore suggests that poverty should not only be measured according to resources but also by "the degree of 'embeddedness' in a reputable community."[87] How much one is embedded influences not so much one's income as much as the help one can hope to receive, both on an every-day basis and, even more importantly, in times of personal crisis. This redefinition of poverty is very important, because it is in accordance with whom the gospels implicitly understand to be the "poor." For example, the rather rich tax-collectors and sinners that are mentioned regularly in the gospels are not economically poor. However, they are still on the fringes of society, precisely because of their lack of "embeddedness" within a community.

The focus in the discussion of the following texts will be on Luke's presentation of Jesus' own redefinition of poverty. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, there is a continuing comparison between economical poverty and moral poverty. The point Jesus makes however, is not that people should try harder to overcome their moral poverty, but rather that they should become aware of the moral debts they already have. Even more, people desperately need to become aware of their dependence on God in general.

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[86] Ibid., 338–39.

[87] Ibid., 340.

A dominant theme in this context is the great reversal of who is "high" and who is "low." That the idea of such a great reversal is not new is evident from Mary's Magnificat and its Old Testament roots. However, while people like Jesus' mother Mary and John the Baptist probably expected that such a reversal would appear visibly through the Messiah's work in their time, with the wicked political and social orders being overthrown, Jesus teaches an eschatological reversal. As such, Jesus' reversal is not limited to the future day of judgment and the coming new age, but rather through his life and work the eschaton is already inaugurated in the present and therefore the eschatological reversal is also already breaking into the present.

There are many texts in the Gospel of Luke that in one way or another shed light upon the subject of poverty and wealth.[88] However, the focus of this thesis is on the question of what qualifies the "poor" as inheritors of the kingdom of God. Therefore, the following passages are a selection of key texts in Luke that help to answer this particular question.

2.1.1. Luke 1:46-55: The Introduction of the Great Reversal

Even though Mary's Magnificat does not contain any of the typical words for the poor (e.g., πένης, ἐνδεής, πτωχός), the idea is very much present. Two times Mary speaks of being of humble estate, one time about herself (τὴν ταπείνωσιν; Luke 1:48) and one time about those of humble estate in general (ταπεινούς; Luke 1:52). She rejoices that God has looked on her own humble estate and gives the following explanation: ἰδοὺ **γὰρ** ἀπὸ τοῦ

[88] Hays, for example, covers in his dissertation on Lukan wealth ethics the following texts: Luke 1:46-55; 4:16-30; 5:1-11; 5:27; 6:20-38; 8:1-3; 9:1-6; 9:57; 10:1-11; 10:25-37; 11:37-44; 12:13-34; 14:7-35; 16:1-39; 17:22-33; 18:18-30; 19:1-10; 20:45-21:4; 22:35-38; Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, X–XII.

νῦν **μακαριοῦσίν** με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί ("**for** behold, from now on all generations will **call me blessed,**" Luke 1:48; ESV). What she is saying in more general terms is that because God is looking on the one of humble estate (i.e., Mary), the one of humble estate will be called blessed. Mary is therefore not saying that the "humble estate" in and of itself is the cause of blessing, but rather that God has regard for her.

Even though it is much more, Luke 1:48 is also a summary of what just happened to Mary. When the angel came and greeted Mary, he said: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor [εὗρες γὰρ χάριν] with God" (Luke 1:30; ESV). This corresponds probably to the wording of Luke 1:48: "he has looked on the humble estate of his servant" (ESV). Later, when Mary arrives at Elisabeth's house, she is called blessed two times (εὐλογημένη in Luke 1:42, and μακαρία in 1:45) by her cousin, foreshadowing what will happen from now on in every generation (cf. Luke 1:48). Remarkably, Mary is not only called blessed because she is the biological mother of Jesus (Luke 1:42), but also because she "believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45; ESV). Jesus himself makes this distinction even clearer. When a women in the crowd shouts to him, "Blessed [μακαρία] is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" (Luke 11:27; ESV), Jesus replies, "Blessed [μακάριοι] rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28; ESV). Here, it becomes already clear what Luke will emphasize over and over again in his Gospel: Even though there is blessing extended to the poor and needy, their response to it and to the one who offers it is still crucial.

The condemnation of the proud and the mighty in Luke 1:51-52 is in continuity with Old Testament hymnal texts (e.g., 1 Sam 2:7 and Ps 68:1).[89] This is not because might is a bad thing for humans to possess in general, but the focus is rather on those who oppress the people of God with their power and are in enmity with God in their pride. From the way Luke has organized his gospel, the reader will at least later find out in Jesus' parable about the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) that it is because of the rich people's assumed independence from God that they are condemned. This is exactly what Moses had warned the people of Israel of in Deuteronomy 8:11-18.

> Take care lest you forget the LORD your God […], lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, […]. **Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.'** You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Moses knew that once the people of Israel would be out of the wilderness, and therefore out of their immediate dependence on God's provision, they would be tempted to forget that God is the source behind everything they are and have. As with the other prophecies of Moses in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 17:14; 28:58-62), sooner or later they came all true.

Mary contrasts the overturn of the mighty with the exaltation of the humble and needy. Even though the Magnificat has some nationalistic overtones especially at the end (Luke 1:54-55), Mary is not a Zealot and her praise is not a political manifesto.[90] She uses rather

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[89] Bock, *Luke*, 1:156.

[90] York, *The Last Shall Be First*, 54.

the negative statements to emphasize the paradox of the positive statements. God exalts those who are humble, like her, and he fills those who are hungry, while the rich are being sent away empty (Luke 1:52-53).

Raymond Brown sees the hymn as a product of a hypothetical group of Jewish-Christians who called themselves the "poor ones" (Anawim = Hebrew: עֲנָוִים).[91] He shows that the Qumran community probably understood itself along this and other terms and produced psalms and hymns similar in style to the Magnificat. Brown concludes that it is "not farfetched then to suggest that Luke got his canticles from a somewhat parallel community of Jewish Anawim who had been converted to Christianity […]."[92] These hypothetical Jewish Anawim would have seen in Jesus the fulfillment of their own messianic expectations and hailed him with hymns like the one Luke has incorporated into the birth narratives. As is often the case with hypothetical reconstructions that seek to replace a more straight-forward reading, the more detailed they become, the less plausible it is that the little evidence in such a short text can sufficiently be used to substantiate the hypothesis. The same is true here. It is much more likely that Mary, the mother of Jesus, who as a young woman, most likely being without substantial possessions, thought of herself as poor and needy and composed the Magnificat along those lines, than that a whole Jewish group converted to Christianity and composed this hymn. It is especially unlikely, since there is neither any evidence that such a Jewish group who called themselves the "poor ones" existed besides the Qumran community,

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[91] Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 350–53.

[92] Ibid., 352.

nor that any Jewish group as a whole ever converted to Christianity in a time before the Gospel of Luke was written. After all, Mary was a pious Jew (Luke 2:41-42), which implies that she probably knew to some extent the writings of the Old Testament and contemporary Jewish teaching, as far as it was incorporated into Galilean Synagogue services, both of which offer parallels to her hymn (Prov 3:34, Ps 138:6, Sir 3:17-23). Mary's Magnificat sets the tone for the understanding of God's mercy on the "poor" in Luke.[93] God does not favor poverty as a state for people in and of itself, but rather he looks out for those who are humble and who look to him with their needs, not exalting themselves with their seeming independence. This explains why it is not only the literally poor but also the rich tax collectors and sinners who receive God's mercy, if they follow the pattern of the repentant tax collector from Jesus' parable in Luke 18:9-14. Augustine directly connects those two texts in one of his sermons and sees in the Pharisee of Jesus' parable one of those who are rich and who will be sent away empty and in the tax collector one who is hungry and who will be filled with good things (Sermon 290.6).[94] Interestingly, Josephus reports that the Pharisees were those who were known to live a simple life and whose diet was not one of delicacies (*Ant*. 18.12), while on the other hand we now from the New Testament itself that tax collectors were identified with flagrant feasting (Luke 7:34). This paradox shows that even though Mary and others already

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[93] Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 247.

[94] Arthur A. Just, Jr., ed., *Luke*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 26.

understood the "eschatological reversal", Jesus would even redefine who the "poor" and needy and who the rich and proud are.

2.1.2. Luke 4:16-21: The Proclamation of Good News to the "Poor"

Luke 4:16-21 is the first passage in which Jesus himself refers to the "poor." Luke probably inserted Jesus' preaching in the Synagogue in Nazareth as an example of how he preached in synagogues of Galilee and Judea in general.[95] In fact, this is the only example of Jesus' preaching in a synagogue reported by Luke, which is probably one of the reasons why many scholars call this sermon programmatic.[96] Green argues that Luke's introductory comment "as was his custom" in 4:16 not only refers to Jesus' habit of attending the synagogue but refers also to his customary teaching there, as the end of verse 16 also indicates.[97] Even though this is the only example of Jesus' teaching in a synagogue and given that the whole passage is even one of the most detailed accounts of an event in Luke,[98] the actual teaching of Jesus reported by Luke is only one sentence long. Jesus says: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21; ESV). Today's readers who are not accustomed with first-century synagogue practices might infer from the text that Jesus provocatively sat down after reading in order to dramatize what he then makes explicit in his one sentence: This text has now been

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[95] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 207; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 181.

[96] Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 76; Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 277.

[97] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 209. This is also how Marshall interprets it, referring to the parallel expression about Paul's custom to reason in the synagogues in Acts 17:2. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 181.

[98] Bock, *Luke*, 1:394.

fulfilled and that is his "explanation" of the text. However, to sit down after reading was actually expected, since in Synagogue services "[t]eaching in a sitting position was customary."[99] Further, that Jesus' one sentence was only the gist of his teaching and not all he had actually said is also indicated by Luke's introduction: "he began [ἤρξατο] to say" (Luke 4:21).[100] Another hint to the probability that Jesus said more is that Luke most likely inserted within the quotation from Isaiah 61:1-2 a phrase from Isa 58:6. There is much debate about the reason for this combination, but it seems very likely that Jesus preached from both passages and in the same way as Luke narrowed down Jesus' teaching, he also summarized the textual material.[101] However, it is still remarkable that Luke cites the text from Scripture that Jesus read in such length, yet gives only one sentence of his exposition. This editorial decision naturally draws the attention to the content of the quotation from Scripture.

Green makes the observation that the first three lines of the text from Isaiah 61:1 all end with the personal pronoun ἐγώ.

> πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ᾽ ἐμὲ
> οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με
> εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς,
> ἀπέσταλκέν με,

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[99] Ibid., 1:411; Bovon recognizes that sermons were to be delivered in a sitting position, but he adds that the note on how everybody's eyes were on Jesus is Luke's way of dramatizing the scene, in order to indicate that something extraordinary is about to happen (François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, trans. Christine M. Thomas, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 1:154).

[100] Bock, *Luke*, 1:412.

[101] Ibid., 1:405.

This threefold repetition at the end (emphatic position) turns the focus on the goal for which the one who speaks has been anointed: "to proclaim good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18; ESV).[102] This is the first of ten occurrences of πτωχός in Luke. As in Mary's Magnificat, so it is here that the "poor" is not only a reference to those who are financially poor. The quotation from Isaiah 61:2, about "the year of the Lord's favor," is a reference to the Jubilee (Lev 25:8ff.). This special year was inaugurated by the Day of Atonement (Lev 25:9), which indicates that the theme was not only recovery of possessions, but also spiritual forgiveness and salvation (2 Cor 6:2). In Isaiah, this Jubilee terminology refers to the coming of a special time period of which Jesus announces its arrival.[103] Beasley-Murray even argues that Jesus did not just announce the arrival of the new age, but rather that actually through his pronouncement that which has been prophesied attained its fulfillment.[104] This is highlighted in the Gospel of Luke through the fact that "[t]he *proclamation* of release is accompanied by *acts* of release, as elsewhere in the preaching of Jesus."[105]

With words similar to Luke 4:18, in Luke 7:22 Jesus answers the disciples of John the Baptist, who were sent to ask if Jesus is the one who is to come or not. Jesus tells them to report back what they have heard and seen, namely that "the blind receive their sight (τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν), the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead

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[102] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 210.

[103] Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 201; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 1:533.

[104] G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 89.

[105] Ibid.

are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them [πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται]" (ESV). Because the parallels in Luke 7:22 refer not only to Luke 4:18 but to Isaiah 61:1 as well, the implied message is again that the new age of God has arrived. That Jesus has to make these things explicit to John shows that even the most pious and faithful believers of the old period, like Jesus' mother Mary and John the Baptist, do not fully understand the character of the new era (Luke 7:28). They, like many other first-century Jews, were expecting a visible judgment of the enemies of God's people, thereby bringing political independence and economical prosperity back to ethnic Israel.[106] Beasley-Murray comments: "Like a famous predecessor to whom he was compared, John had thought of theophany only in terms of earthquake, wind, and fire; now he is asked to contemplate a different kind of theophany, a 'sound of gentle stillness.'"[107] The point is that everyone was expecting to see Jesus leading the masses of Israelites into some kind of liberty, whereas Jesus redirects the perspective of people like John the Baptist and others so that they see the individual lives that have been changed by him. It is therefore very unlikely that the "poor" in Luke 4:18 refers to Israel as a whole nation, as Seccombe argues.[108]

As already mentioned, Luke 4:16-21 is an example of Jesus' teaching in synagogues and in 4:18 πτωχός is mentioned for the first time in Luke. At the end of chapter 4, Luke narrates how the people of Capernaum come to Jesus and try to keep him in their town,

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[106] Ibid., 87.

[107] Ibid., 81.

[108] Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, 69.

but Jesus says to them: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." (Luke 4:43; ESV) This saying has two obvious parallels to the quotation from Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:18: 1.) the preaching of good news (εὐαγγελίζω), and 2.) a reason for sending (ἀποστέλλω) Jesus. While in 4:18 the good news is not further specified, in 4:43 it is connected with the kingdom of God (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ). This is the first time this phrase appears in Luke. Given the key position of Luke 4:18 and 4:43 in Luke's account about the beginnings of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and the parallels between those two verses, it is likely that "the good news of the kingdom of God" in 4:43 refer back to what is said in 4:18-19 and therefore is to be identified with the "the good news proclaimed to the poor." Both πτωχός and βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ are not mentioned in Luke until they are explicitly brought together in Jesus' first beatitude in Luke 6:20.

2.1.3. Luke 6:20-26: Conditional Eschatological Blessings and Woes

The blessing of the "poor" in Luke 6:20 is a central part of a series of four beatitudes (6:20-23) which are closely connected to four contrasting woes (6:24-26). The following comparison[109] of the Greek text shows the structure and the similarities between the beatitudes and the woes:

	Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-23)		**Woes (Luke 6:24-26)**
20	Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί,	24	Πλὴν οὐαὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς πλουσίοις,
	ὅτι ὑμετέρα *ἐστὶν* ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.		**ὅτι** *ἀπέχετε* τὴν παράκλησιν ὑμῶν.
21	μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες **νῦν**,	25	οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, οἱ ἐμπεπλησμένοι **νῦν**,

[109] Words in **bold** are **conjunctions** and **adverbs** which are parallel in both passages. Words in *italics* are *indicative present* verbs and those which are <u>underlined</u> are <u>indicative future</u> verbs.

	ὅτι χορτασθήσεσθε.	**ὅτι** πεινάσετε.
	μακάριοι οἱ κλαίοντες **νῦν**,	οὐαί, οἱ γελῶντες **νῦν**,
	ὅτι γελάσετε.	**ὅτι** πενθήσετε καὶ κλαύσετε.
22	μακάριοί *ἐστε* **ὅταν** μισήσωσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ **ὅταν** ἀφορίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ ὀνειδίσωσιν	26 οὐαὶ **ὅταν** ὑμᾶς καλῶς εἴπωσιν πάντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι·
23	καὶ ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν ὡς πονηρὸν ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· χάρητε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ σκιρτήσατε, ἰδοὺ **γὰρ** ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ· κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ **γὰρ** ἐποίουν τοῖς προφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν.	
		κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ **γὰρ** ἐποίουν τοῖς ψευδοπροφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν.

2.1.3.1. The Temporal Aspects of the Beatitudes and the Woes

The verbs in the ὅτι-clauses in verse 20 and verse 24 are in the present tense. All the verbs in the other ὅτι-clauses are in the future tense. Beasley-Murray argues that since verses 21-23 describe a future reward, the kingdom promised in verse 20 should be interpreted as a future inheritance too.[110] However, in the ὅτι-clause of the contrasting parallel in verse 24, the reason for the woe to the rich is that they already receive their consolation in the present. The parallelism between verse 20 and verse 24 would be

[110] Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 162. Fitzmyer states in the tradition of Conzelmann that "[i]n the Lucan Gospel the imminent expectation of the eschaton recedes as the evangelist shifts the emphasis in both the beatitudes and woes to the present condition: those who go hungry and weep 'now' and those who are well-fed and laugh 'now' (6:21,25)" (Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 1:633).

destroyed if the kingdom will only be inherited in the future. In addition, Marshall calls attention to the significance of the fact that the Gospel of Luke preserves the present tense in the first makarism and the first woe alongside the others which are in the future tense. He claims:

> We are justified in concluding that the kingdom is so near that the disciples as good as experience it now, or that there is a sense in which they already experience it, even though the rewards associated with it belong primarily to the future. Already the kingdom of God belongs to the poor, and hence they can be sure that they will inherit the blessings associated with it.[111]

2.1.3.2. The Conditionality of the Beatitudes and the Woes

The comparison of the beatitudes and the woes also shows that structurally the first beatitude and woe (vv. 20, 24) are different than the others, the second and the third (vv. 21, 25) are very similar, and the last ones (vv. 22-23, 26) are again different. Bock suggests that the second and the third are subordinate to the first in so far as they name the consequences of being poor/rich.[112] While the first three beatitudes and woes (vv. 20-21, 24-25) seem to be simply socioeconomic in character, the last ones (vv. 22-23, 26) show that the beatitudes and woes as a "whole have a spiritual base."[113] This is also a reminder that the nature of the "blessings" is an invitation and not a *carte blanche*,[114] while the nature of a "woe" is a warning and a call to repentance and not a final

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[111] Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 250.

[112] Bock, *Luke*, 1:575.

[113] Ibid., 1:577. See also Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 109. Given that the fourth beatitude gives a spiritual base to the four beatitudes as a whole, it is not necessary to play Luke off against Matthew's spiritualized version, as, for example, Fitzmyer does. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 1:631.

[114] Bock, *Luke*, 1:408; Deines, "God or Mammon," in Konradt and Schläpfer, 361–62.

judgment.[115] The second time Jesus pronounces a list of "woes" in Luke is at a meal with Pharisees and scribes (Luke 11:39-52). There the "woes" are directed specifically to the Pharisees and scribes and again the reason for the judgment is that their behavior stands in continuity with how wrongly their fathers have treated the true prophets of God in the past (Luke 11:47-51), which is also implied in Luke 6:22-23 and 6:26. This parallel further substantiates the fact that the root of what is condemned in 6:24-26 are not the possessions in and of themselves, but a spiritual attitude of self-righteousness and independence.

It is important to pay attention to the fact that the blessings of the "poor" are not limited to those "poor" who are oppressed by the rich and that the woes to the rich are not limited to those rich who mistreat the "poor." The rationale for the blessing and the woe is given on the basis of what one is lacking or rather what one is not lacking. The woes are addressed to those who are no longer eagerly awaiting the coming of the Lord because their money has become the consolation (Luke 6:24) for which they were supposed to look to the Lord (Isaiah 57:18), like the righteous Simeon did (Luke 2:25).

2.1.3.3. Both the Poor and the Rich are Called "Blessed" in Luke

The Beatitudes received their name from the Latin noun *beātitūdō*, which is a translation of the Greek μακάριος, the first word in any of the four makarisms in Luke 6:20-22. Even though this passage is the one best known for its makarisms, there are several more found

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[115] Bock, *Luke*, 1:582; Degenhardt, *Lukas - Evangelist der Armen*, 53; Deines, "God or Mammon," in Konradt and Schläpfer, 362.

elsewhere in Luke. The following is a chart of the different people Jesus calls blessed and the reason why (if the text states it):

6:20	Blessed are you who are **poor**	for (ὅτι) yours is the **kingdom of God**
6:21	Blessed are you who are **hungry** now	for (ὅτι) you shall be **satisfied**
	Blessed are you who **weep** now	for (ὅτι) you shall **laugh**
6:22-23	Blessed are you when people **hate** you and when they **exclude** you and **revile** you and **spurn** your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!	Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold (ἰδοὺ γάρ), your **reward** is great in heaven; for (γάρ) so their fathers did to the prophets.
7:23	Blessed is the one who is **not offended** by me.	-
10:23-24	Blessed are the eyes that **see** what you see!	For (γάρ) I tell you that many **prophets** and **kings desired to see** what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."
11:28	Blessed rather are those who **hear** the word of God and keep it!	-
12:37	Blessed are those servants whom the master finds **awake** when he comes.	Truly, I say to you (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι), he will dress himself for service and have them **recline** at table, and he will come and serve them.
12:38	If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them **awake**, blessed are those servants!	-
12:43-44	Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.	Truly, I say to you (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι), he will **set him over** all his possessions.
14:13-14	But when you give a feast, **invite** the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed	because (ὅτι) they **cannot repay** you. For (γάρ) you will be **repaid** at the resurrection of the just.

Table 1: Makarisms in Luke

Even though only the first makarism directly mentions the kingdom as the content of the blessing, the contexts of all the sayings in the chart show that the kingdom of God/heaven is the reference point in all of them. Sometimes it is clear that a future aspect of the kingdom is in view, indicated by references to heaven (6:22-23), the resurrection (14:13-14) or the parousia (12:37). At other times, the blessing is either in the present (10:23-24)

or rather unspecified and of more general nature (7:23, 11:28). Whatever the different temporal aspects of the blessings are, the qualities to which they are applied represent a wide variety, and even include opposites (not contradictions). Jesus can, for example, call the "poor" blessed (6:20) and on the other side he can call a person blessed who is wealthy enough to give a feast and to invite poor, crippled, lame and blind people (14:13). In Luke's gospel, these two examples are the first and the last makarism from Jesus. The way these two passages build a carefully balanced framework in Luke's composition can hardly be accidental.

2.1.4. Luke 7:36-50: Moral Debt and a Poor Response

Even though in Luke 7:36-50 there is no direct reference to the "poor," Jesus' parable of two debtors compares the concept of monetary debts to the moral sphere and shows thereby how Jesus redefines the "poor". The following diagram visualizes how the dialogue flows between Jesus and the Pharisee Simon who had invited him. The section of the text that is given here follows Luke's narration of how a sinful woman enters the room and anoints Jesus' feet.[116]

40 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν πρὸς **<u>αὐτόν</u>**·
Σίμων, ἔχω **<u>σοί</u>** τι εἰπεῖν. […]
41 δύο χρεοφειλέται ἦσαν δανιστῇ τινι·
ὁ εἷς ὤφειλεν δηνάρια πεντακόσια,
ὁ δὲ ἕτερος πεντήκοντα.
42 μὴ ἐχόντων αὐτῶν ἀποδοῦναι
ἀμφοτέροις ἐχαρίσατο.

[116] *Italics* are used to highlight the character in the parable whose much *higher debts* have been cancelled and then also for every reference to the *sinful woman* in the dialogue between Jesus and Simon. **Bold** is used for the character with **lesser debts** and for references to the **Pharisee Simon**. In addition, <u>singular pronouns</u> which refer to either Jesus, the sinful woman or Simon have been <u>underlined.</u>

τίς οὖν αὐτῶν πλεῖον ἀγαπήσει αὐτόν;
43 ἀποκριθεὶς **Σίμων** εἶπεν·
ὑπολαμβάνω ὅτι <u>ᾧ</u> *τὸ πλεῖον ἐχαρίσατο*.
ὁ δὲ εἶπεν **<u>αὐτῷ</u>**·
ὀρθῶς ἔκρινας.
44 καὶ στραφεὶς πρὸς *τὴν γυναῖκα* **τῷ Σίμωνι** ἔφη·
βλέπεις <u>*ταύτην*</u> *τὴν γυναῖκα;*
εἰσῆλθόν **<u>σου</u>** εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν,
ὕδωρ <u>μοι</u> ἐπὶ πόδας οὐκ ἔδωκας·
<u>*αὕτη*</u> *δὲ τοῖς δάκρυσιν ἔβρεξέν <u>μου</u> τοὺς πόδας*
καὶ ταῖς θριξὶν <u>αὐτῆς</u> ἐξέμαξεν.
45 **φίλημά <u>μοι</u> οὐκ ἔδωκας·**
<u>*αὕτη*</u> *δὲ ἀφ᾽ ἧς εἰσῆλθον οὐ διέλιπεν καταφιλοῦσά <u>μου</u> τοὺς πόδας.*
46 **ἐλαίῳ τὴν κεφαλήν <u>μου</u> οὐκ ἤλειψας·**
<u>*αὕτη*</u> *δὲ μύρῳ ἤλειψεν τοὺς πόδας <u>μου</u>.*
47 οὗ χάριν λέγω **<u>σοι</u>**,
ἀφέωνται αἱ ἁμαρτίαι <u>αὐτῆς</u> αἱ πολλαί,
ὅτι ἠγάπησεν πολύ·
<u>ᾧ</u> δὲ ὀλίγον ἀφίεται,
ὀλίγον ἀγαπᾷ.
48 εἶπεν δὲ <u>*αὐτῇ*</u>·
ἀφέωνταί <u>σου</u> αἱ ἁμαρτίαι.

2.1.4.1. Parallels between Jesus' Parable and Nathan's Parable

What becomes clear from the diagram above is that the comparison of the two debtors in the parable is applied to both Simon and the sinful women. However, while the parable is about the situation of the debtors and how they are treated, Jesus' question about who will love the moneylender more brings the comparison to a different level. Simon is called to finish the story and to give his own judgment (Jesus' use of κρίνω in verse 43), which is reminiscent of 2 Sam 12:1-7 where David finishes Nathan's parable by

pronouncing his judgment of the situation.[117] Both David and the Pharisee Simon are identified with one of the characters in the parable and after they have given their judgment on the situation, the judgment falls on themselves.

If Blomberg and others are right and we can assume that the women was a prostitute,[118] the parallels to 2 Sam 12:1-7 would be even more significant. The prophet Nathan comes because David committed adultery with Uriah's wife and then even had Uriah killed to keep his act secret. Just like the rich man in the parable who had many sheep but when his guest comes takes the one and only sheep of his poor neighbor, so David, who had many wives, took the only wife of Uriah. Supposing that prostitutes do not only wait for their "customers" but actively offer themselves to them, even though such a "customer" might be the only husband of a wife, the sinful woman could in some ways also be compared with the man who has many sheep who takes the only one of his neighbor. Surprisingly, Jesus' parable – in contrast to Nathan's parable – is not a judgment of the one who has clearly sinned but instead the parable addresses the situation after the sin has been exposed. Jesus is talking about the moment when someone acknowledges his or her sin, repents and is desperate for forgiveness. Again, the parallelism with David is striking. Psalm 32 is a tremendous testimony of a man who has been forgiven much and who responds with deep thankfulness and love, and this Psalm could very well have been

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[117] Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 220.

[118] Craig L. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meals with Sinners*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 133; Bovon, *Luke 1*, 1:293; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 309; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 304.

David's prayer after the incidents of 2 Sam 12.[119] With fewer words, but in the same posture, the sinful woman comes to Jesus weeping.[120] Even though she might have earned enough money in her occupation to be rather well off (Luke 7:46: μύρον is a reference to expensive perfume)[121], she recognizes her poverty before God in the same way King David does in Ps 25. In Ps 25 David calls himself a עָנִי (poor, afflicted, humble; BDB, 776) person, which is the Old Testament term that is often translated in the LXX with πτωχός. David connects this economical term with his own repentance and his plea for forgiveness (Ps 25:18). In a similar way, by telling the parable of two debtors, Jesus compares sins with monetary debt. Both characters in the parable were not able to pay, which could sometimes mean that the debtor would be sold into slavery or put into prison (Matt 18:23-34).[122] If to be poor means that a person has just enough to survive, to be a debtor who is unable to pay his debts could actually be worse. While the poor person might still be free, the debtor and his family could eventually even lose their freedom. In other words, Jesus compares sinners of varying degrees with the most extreme types of poverty. This connection between cancelation of debts and forgiveness of sins was already part of Jesus' teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth in Luke 4:18-19 (cf. 2.1.2).

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[119] John Goldingay, *Psalms: Psalms 1-41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament. Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 1:453.

[120] Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 223.

[121] Bock, *Luke*, 1:702.

[122] Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 91.

2.1.4.2. Simon's and the Sinful Woman's Response

It is important to notice that not only the sinful woman is compared to a debtor, but the Pharisee Simon as well. Even though the debts of the second character in the parable were much less, he still was not able to pay them back. The point is that both the sinful woman and Simon are sinners in need of forgiveness. The question Jesus is raising is who will respond with greater affection to forgiveness? Simon rightly assumes that the one who has been forgiven more debt will also respond with more thankfulness. Jesus affirms this and demonstrates how much more affection the sinful woman has shown him than Simon has. The diagram of the text above shows that everything the woman did to Jesus is much more than the things Jesus confronts Simon with for not providing as the host. The first line about Simon's neglect begins with the word "water" (ὕδωρ) followed by a pronoun referring to Jesus (μοι), while Simon is only included in the verb (ἔδωκας) at the very end of the sentence. The structure of the next line is the complete opposite. Even though the reference to the woman is also included in both verbs (ἔβρεξέν, ἐξέμαξεν), an additional pronoun (αὕτη) for her is emphatically put at the beginning of the sentence and another one (αὐτῆς) towards the end of the sentence. Especially the pronouns are carefully used to stress the interrelationship between Jesus, the Pharisee and the sinful woman.[123] The syntax of this comparison clearly honors the action of the woman and at the same time puts to shame Simon as the host. The great reversal that we have already seen in Mary's Magnificat is present here as well.

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[123] Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 311.

The structure of the other two comparisons (kisses and oil) are identical, but the superiority of the woman's action over Simeon's lack of action is expressed differently. The first comparison makes the point that Simon failed to give Jesus some water for him to wash his feet, while the woman not only wetted Jesus' feet with her tears but also dried them with her hair. In the second comparison, Jesus contrasts the fact that Simon did not greet him with a kiss (φίλημα), while the woman did not stop kissing (καταφιλέω) Jesus' feet. The third comparison is between cheaper olive oil (ἔλαιον), with which Simon did not anoint Jesus' head and the much more expensive perfume (μύρον), with which the woman has anointed Jesus' feet.

The comparison shows that though the sinful woman had so much more moral debt, her response was so much richer than Simon's. Simon, on the other hand, may have had less moral debt, but his response was so much poorer.

2.1.4.3. The Development of Simon

Simon doubted that Jesus was a real prophet, reasoning that if Jesus knew who the sinful woman was, he would have stopped her from doing what she did to him. By telling the parable, Jesus not only proves that he very well knows who this woman is, but that he even knows what Simon is thinking.[124] The allusions to Nathan's parable, indicate that Jesus is even the type of prophet who comes to Simon and tells him a parable in order to reveal how God sees him. Even if Simon thought that Jesus was a prophet when he had first invited him, he probably did not expect that this prophet would have a message for

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[124] Bock, *Luke*, 1:698; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 311; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 309–10.

him like the one Nathan delivered to David. The parallels between these Old and New Testament passages go even further. Up until now everything had served to convince Simon that Jesus indeed is a prophet, but when it comes to the forgiveness of sins, the discontinuity between the two texts points to the fact that Jesus is much more than a prophet. When David hears God's judgment over him from Nathan, he immediately confesses his sin (2 Sam 12:13) and Nathan assures him that *God* has forgiven him (LXX: καὶ κύριος παρεβίβασεν τὸ ἁμάρτημά σου). Jesus, on the other hand, does not explicitly refer to God when he assures the woman that her sins are forgiven (ἀφέωνταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι; Luke 12:48). Even though the possibility that ἀφέωνται is a *divine passive* cannot be ruled out, the response of the other Pharisees in Luke 12:49 suggests that everybody present saw in Jesus' words no reference to God.

Richard Bauckham argues that names in the individual pericopes in the Gospels are often hints to the sources behind these accounts.[125] By implication, these sources were part of the early church and therefore "well known at least in the circles in which these traditions were first transmitted."[126] If Bauckham is right,[127] then we can probably assume that the Pharisee Simon, like King David, understood the parable spoken to him, repented and began to follow Jesus. The very fact that the end of Luke's account is open,[128] with it not

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[125] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 39.

[126] Ibid., 45.

[127] Bauckham refers twice to Luke 7:36-50 as an example of an account where a name is given to indicate who the source behind this account is. Ibid., 40; Ibid., 47.

[128] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 308.

telling how Simon responds to Jesus, could very well be a further indication that Simon at least understood Jesus and his parable and still did not reject him right away, which in itself is already very promising (Mark 4:11-13).

2.1.5. Luke 14:1-24: Jesus' Teaching on Honor and Compassion

As already mentioned (cf. 2.1.3), Luke 14:14 is the last of Jesus' makarisms reported in the Gospel of Luke. It seems as though Luke is using the first (Luke 6:20) and the last makarism as the two ends of an inclusio, advising the "poor" to trust in God and the rich to be generous and to care for the "poor," knowing that their material possessions have no eternal value.

Luke 14:1-24 as a whole is about a meal on the Sabbath to which Jesus was invited by one of the leading Pharisees (Luke 14:1). During the meal four things happen: First, Jesus heals a man with dropsy, which was probably planned by the Pharisees in order to trap Jesus (Luke 14:1-6).[129] Second, Jesus observes how the guests choose the seats of honor and he tells them a parable about the logic of the great reversal (Luke 14:7-11). Third, Jesus addresses the host and gives him advice about the principles that should guide him when he is compiling his guest lists (Luke 14:12-14). Fourth, after one guest blurts out a makarism about those who will eat bread in the kingdom of God, Jesus tells another parable to indicate that those who will be at this great banquet in the kingdom of God might not be those whom the Pharisees would expect to be there (Luke 14:15-24). All of

[129] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1256–1257.

these four parts contribute to the overall theme of this meal-scene, namely the great reversal.

In the first scene (Luke 14:1-6), Jesus asks the Pharisees and lawyers who were carefully watching (παρατηρέω) him if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not. When they deny him any response, Jesus heals the man with dropsy and turns back to the Pharisees and lawyers, confronting them with the fact that they care more for their animals than for fellow people.[130] He is revealing how hardened their hearts are towards those who are poor, sick and needy. They also live according to a great reversal, namely the perverse reversal of valuing the life of animals higher than the life of fellow humans.

In the second scene (Luke 14:7-11), it seems that Jesus is teaching general wisdom, by advising people not to choose the most honored seats in order to avoid being publicly ashamed when a more prominent guest comes and the host has to ask the less significant guest to sit somewhere else. If instead that guest chooses the lowest place to sit, the host might come and offer a much more honored place, thereby publicly honoring this guest. When Jesus gives the logic for such behavior in the last sentence of this passage, it becomes clear that it is not just general wisdom: "For [ὅτι] everyone who exalts [ὑψόω] himself will be humbled [ταπεινόω], and he who humbles [ταπεινόω] himself will be exalted [ὑψόω]" (Luke 14:11; ESV). In Mary's Magnificat we find a similar statement: "he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted [ὑψόω] those of humble estate [ταπεινός]" (Luke 1:52; ESV). The third and last time this combination appears in

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[130] Ibid., 2:1255.

Luke is in Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple. There, Jesus concludes the parable with the statement: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts [ὑψόω] himself will be humbled [ταπεινόω], but the one who humbles [ταπεινόω] himself will be exalted [ὑψόω]" (Luke 18:14; ESV). What Jesus reveals in parables to the Pharisees, he teaches openly to his disciples during the Passover meal: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those in authority over them are addressed as 'Benefactors'; but among you it shall not be so. Rather, let the greatest [ὁ μείζων] among you be as the youngest [ὁ νεώτερος], and the leader [ὁ ἡγούμενος] as the servant [ὁ διακονῶν]" (Luke 22:25-26; ESV). The great reversal is not something that will just happen at the eschaton, but rather it is something Jesus' disciples should actively seek already now. Only the one who will now humble himself can hope for his exaltation in the eschatological reversal.[131]

In the third section (Luke 14:12-14) Jesus unfolds how humbling oneself could look like for someone who is rich enough to be expected to host meals. Such a host should not only invite prominent guests, who would invite him in return, but rather to invite those who are poor, crippled, lame and blind, thereby associating himself with them (Luke 14:12-13). Those less prominent guests would also not be able to invite the host in return, which gives the rich person a chance to have something that he can hope for at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14). Those who always make sure that they receive honor in the present have no prospect of any exaltation in the time to come. If the rich use the

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[131] Ibid., 2:1265.

opportunity to share their possessions and community with the poor this will have long-lasting value, as it is already expressed in Prov 19:17, "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed."

In the fourth and last part (Luke 14:15-24) Jesus makes clear through a parable that everything he had said so far is not to be misunderstood as a ticket one can buy to secure himself a place at the great banquet. Rich people cannot just give money to the poor and thereby secure themselves a place and reward in the coming kingdom of God. Indeed, it is actually the riches (esp. the five yoke of oxen suggests that the person is wealthy) of two of the three invited guests in the parable that hinder them to follow the invitation.[132] They are invited but if they do not respond they will end up missing the great messianic banquet that they are anticipating so much (Luke 14:15). If Pharisees would pay attention, they would see that already many of those whom they would not expect receive the invitation and follow it.

In a sense, the parable of the great banquet is also a parallel to what Jesus has encouraged the Pharisee host to do when he gives a banquet. The following comparison highlights the parallels.[133]

Luke 14:12-14	**Luke 14:16-24**
ὅταν <u>ποιῇς</u> ἄριστον ἢ <u>δεῖπνον</u>,	ἄνθρωπός τις <u>ἐποίει</u> <u>δεῖπνον</u> μέγα,
μὴ φώνει τοὺς φίλους σου […]	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν πολλοὺς […]
	καὶ ἤρξαντο ἀπὸ μιᾶς πάντες παραιτεῖσθαι.[…]
ἀλλ᾽ ὅταν δοχὴν <u>ποιῇς</u>,	

[132] Ibid., 2:1273–1274; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 588.

[133] The <u>underlining</u> shows where the <u>same words</u> are used.

	τότε ὀργισθεὶς ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης εἶπεν τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ·
κάλει	ἔξελθε ταχέως εἰς τὰς πλατείας καὶ ῥύμας τῆς πόλεως καὶ
πτωχούς,	τοὺς πτωχοὺς
ἀναπείρους,	καὶ ἀναπείρους
χωλούς,	καὶ τυφλοὺς
τυφλούς·	καὶ χωλοὺς
	εἰσάγαγε ὧδε.

Jesus repeats in the parable of the great banquet the scene that he had just hypothetically created as an example of how the Pharisees could use their possessions in a way that it would even be honorable in the coming kingdom of God. Given that the banquet giver in the parable clearly stands for God (Isa 25:6),[134] Jesus' recommendation about who should be invited to a feast takes on a whole new dimension. Even though people who were lame or blind were not allowed to serve as priests in the temple (Lev 21:17-23),[135] Sklar emphasizes "that these descendants of Aaron were not to be looked down on, but honored and loved. The Lord himself underscores this by stating that they still have a seat at his table (v. 22)."[136] Therefore, if even God who is absolutely blameless already invited the lame and the blind to his table and will also bring them to his eschatological banquet, how much more should the Pharisees and scribes also invite them now into their houses and to their banquets.

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[134] Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 304.

[135] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1266.

[136] Jay Sklar, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 268.

This whole passage is the last meal Luke narrates that Jesus has with the Pharisees and scribes, and it is also the last open invitation that goes out to them.[137] In Luke 16 the tone changes drastically. The Pharisees only appear as those who love their money and ridicule Jesus (Luke 16:14).

2.1.6. Luke 16:19-31: The Great Reversal as Conclusion

The parable about the rich man and the poor Lazarus is probably the most graphic picture of the eschatological reversal in Luke.[138] It is a warning especially to the Pharisees who turned their nose up at Jesus[139] (Luke 16:14) and a continuation of his message about good stewardship and generous giving (Luke 16:9-13). The poor man in the parable is named Lazarus, which makes him the only character in any of Jesus' parables who has a name. This irregularity has led many interpreters to conclude that the story cannot be called a parable,[140] but there is a better explanation for the appearance of this name. Λάζαρος is the Greek version of the Hebrew name לַעְזָר, which is the short version of אֶלְעָזָר, which means "God helps."[141] The name therefore is probably not a reference to a particular person but has much more symbolic significance in that it underlines that everything this man had in his life on earth was the Old Testament promise expressed in his name that God will help, which already at the beginning of the parable points to the

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[137] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1268.

[138] Ibid., 2:1360.

[139] Ibid., 2:1349.

[140] Ibid., 2:1362–1363.

[141] Ibid., 2:1365; François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27*, trans. Donald S. Deer, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 2:480; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 632.

reversal that will take place. This reversal is especially emphasized through the order in which the different stages of the parable are told. While the description of the rich man's life on earth is the first thing mentioned in the parable, the poor Lazarus' death and his well-being in the afterlife opens the second part of the parable (cf. the formatting[142] of the text below).

Luke 16:19-21	**Luke 16:22-24**
1. Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος, **καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον εὐφραινόμενος καθ᾽ ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς.**	1. ἐγένετο δὲ ἀποθανεῖν τὸν πτωχὸν **καὶ ἀπενεχθῆναι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἰς τὸν κόλπον Ἀβραάμ·**
2. πτωχὸς δέ τις ὀνόματι Λάζαρος ἐβέβλητο πρὸς τὸν πυλῶνα αὐτοῦ	2. ἀπέθανεν δὲ καὶ ὁ πλούσιος καὶ ἐτάφη. καὶ ἐν τῷ ᾅδῃ ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ,
εἱλκωμένος	**ὑπάρχων ἐν βασάνοις,** ὁρᾷ Ἀβραὰμ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ Λάζαρον ἐν τοῖς κόλποις αὐτοῦ. καὶ αὐτὸς φωνήσας εἶπεν· πάτερ Ἀβραάμ,
καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ πλουσίου·	*ἐλέησόν με καὶ πέμψον Λάζαρον ἵνα βάψῃ τὸ ἄκρον τοῦ δακτύλου αὐτοῦ ὕδατος καὶ καταψύξῃ τὴν γλῶσσάν μου,*
ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ κύνες ἐρχόμενοι ἐπέλειχον τὰ ἕλκη αὐτοῦ.	**ὅτι ὀδυνῶμαι ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ**.

The outline above shows how all of the major elements in the description of the lives in Luke 16:19-21 are reversed in the afterlife (Luke 16:22-24). The rich man in the parable

[142] Double underlined are all references to the rich man, while references to the poor Lazarus are curly underlined. Descriptions of **suffering** and **well-being** are both marked **bold** and descriptions of *desires* to receive something from/through the opposite character are *italicized*.

lives in a villa (indicated by the term πυλών in Luke 16:20, which is synonymous for what is elsewhere used for gates into a city or temple; Luke 7:12; Acts 3:10; 9:24)[143], dresses in the finest cloth and feasts every day (Luke 16:19).

The description makes it very likely that the rich man never paid much attention to Lazarus, his hunger and his illness (Luke 16:21), and this is most likely also the reason why his situation in the afterlife changes so drastically, since he knows exactly what his brothers need to hear in order not to end up where he is (Luke 16:27-28). Every comfort he did not provide during his life on earth to Lazarus will then not be provided to him, while Lazarus will receive then everything he was lacking on earth. When the rich man keeps begging Abraham to send Lazarus from the dead to his still living brothers in order to warn them, Abraham argues that this will not help them, because they already know everything they need to know on how to treat the poor from Moses and the prophets. If they do not listen to them, they will also not listen to somebody who is resurrected from the dead (Luke 16:31). This is the final word of the parable and to the Pharisees on this subject. If they reject Jesus' message on how to use their possessions, they reveal their attitude to the whole of Scripture.[144]

The first text in this chapter was about Mary's Magnificat, in which the great reversal is the prominent theme. The last text of the present chapter is again about the great reversal and its implications for the afterlife. While the rich man is a very negative example of

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[143] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1366.

[144] Ibid., 2:1376–1378.

how to use one's money and material possessions, later in Luke's gospel Zacchaeus is presented as a very positive example (Luke 19:1-10), which in and of itself also demonstrates the in-breaking of the great reversal into the present.

2.1.7. Summary: Reversal in Luke

The following is a very helpful summary chart of the favored beneficiaries of Jesus' ministry in Luke generated by Christopher Hays[145]:

Luke 4:18	Luke 6:20-23	Luke 7:22	Luke 14:13.21	Luke 16:20.22
• Poor • Captive • Blind • Oppressed	• Poor • Hungry • Weeping • Persecuted	• Blind • Lame • Lepers • Deaf • Dead • Poor	• Poor • Crippled • Lame • Blind	• Poor • Hungry • Ulcerated

Table 2: Beneficiaries of Jesus' Ministry in Luke

The Old Testament concept that is so prominent in Luke and which unites all these different groups of people as beneficiaries of Jesus' ministry is the "great reversal." This concept is introduced in Luke already in Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). Even though Mary is not directly using language of material poverty, the term which stands behind her references to those of humble estate (עֲנָוִים) is used in the Old Testament for both humble (Ps 25:9) and materially poor people (Prov 14:21) in the same way. However, what Mary did not yet see so clearly at that point and what is not sufficiently clear in Hays' chart is that the "poor" in Luke who will benefit from Jesus' ministry are not only those who are materially poor or physically sick, but all those who are on the fringes of society (Luke 14:23).

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[145] Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, 104.

That is why the sinful woman, even though she was probably not poor in the literal sense, could be compared with somebody who had an unbelievable amount of debts. What qualifies someone to fall into the category of those who are blessed for their poverty is one's posture before God. Typically, those to whom their debt to God is more obvious bow more readily before him and receive his gifts more willingly (Luke 7:36-50). But even to those who are rather well off, Jesus gives the advice to realize that they will not take any of their possessions with them when they die (Luke 16). In the afterlife there will be a great reversal, depending on how one has made use of his means in the present life. Especially those who are not poor and are not aware of their neediness here are in great danger to be the poorest there. Therefore, the best thing to do with one's wealth is to be generous with it and thereby use it in ways that have lasting significance. One very good way to express such generosity is to invite the poor, the sick and the needy to one's table (Luke 14:13), which would foreshadow what will happen in the eschatological banquet. This is one of the ways in which Jesus redefines and already inaugurates the eschatological reversal in the present.

In sum, the "poor" in Luke to whom the kingdom of God is promised are those who are aware of their dependence on God, who look to him for their righteousness (Luke 7:47-50), consolation (Luke 6:24), reward (Luke 14:14) and honor (Luke 1:52) and not to themselves.

2.2. The Kingdom of God in Luke

Much has been written on the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching. The focus of the debate has largely been on the temporal location of the kingdom of God. Over time, the suggestions have ranged all the way from seeing the kingdom of God only as a present

reality (e.g., Albert Ritschl, C.H. Dodd, J. A. T. Robinson) to seeing it only as a future event (e.g., Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer, William Wrede) at the end of time. To escape an either-or decision, some attempted to place the kingdom of God in another sphere altogether (e.g., Friedrich Schleiermacher, Rudolf Bultmann), while others contributed to what would slowly become the consensus, namely that the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching has multiple temporal dimensions (e.g., Wilhelm Bousset, Oscar Cullmann, Joachim Jeremias, George E. Ladd and Hermann Ridderbos),[146] probably best being described with the term "inaugurated eschatology."[147]

The following three assertions are fundamental for how the kingdom of God is understood in this thesis. *First*, even though the Old Testament does not mention the phrase "kingdom of God," the concept is very much present and is expressed in two ways: as the universal kingdom of God and as the particular kingdom of God. The universal kingdom of God includes the whole earth and all people (2 Kgs 19:15), while the particular kingdom is limited to God's chosen people (Deut 33:5).[148] Salvation history represents the in-breaking of the particular kingdom into the universal kingdom, so that all humanity can know who God himself is.[149] *Second*, in Jesus' teaching the particular

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[146] Mark Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: In 20th Century Theology* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997), 3–21. See also Stephen J. Nichols, "The Kingdoms of God: The Kingdom in Historical and Contemporary Perspective," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 28.

[147] Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 43. See also Scot McKnight, "Extra Ecclesiam Nullum Regnum: The Politics of Jesus," in *Christian Political Witness*, ed. George Kalantzis and Gergory W. Lee (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 57.

[148] Bruce K. Waltke, "The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: The Covenants," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 49–51.

[149] Ibid., 61.

kingdom of God is degeopoliticized. While the hopes for a political Messiah who would drive out the Romans from the land were high in first-century Judaism (Pss. Sol. 17:21-25),[150] Jesus clearly taught that his kingdom is not of that nature (John 18:36). *Third*, because Jesus is the king (i.e., the Christ; cf. Mt 1:1, Mk 1:1), with his arrival the kingdom arrives as well and whether or not one will be part of that kingdom depends on one's response to him (Luke 11:20-23).

In this section the focus will be on some characteristic passages where Luke gives us further details about the kingdom which help to understand what it is that makes the "poor" (cf. Luke 6:21) especially fitting for it. Those texts are divided into three categories. The first section is about honor and shame in the kingdom of God. Here, the fundamental difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world will be unfolded. Building on that, the second section is about the humble and eagerly awaiting posture of those who want to be part of that kingdom towards the king himself. A third section explores the fact that people with such a posture will not wait in vain but have the promise of being cared for.

2.2.1. Honor and Shame in the Kingdom of God

Even though there are texts that talk about honor in the kingdom of God, there are no texts that talk explicitly about shame in the kingdom of God. However, shame is implied, where a text is concerned with people who end up being excluded from the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28). In addition, shame is also an important aspect of the kingdom of God

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[150] Clinton E. Arnold, "The Kingdom, Miracles, Satan, and Demons," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 160.

insofar as followers of Jesus need to humble themselves in order to receive honor in the kingdom, which sometimes includes doing things that would culturally be regarded as shameful by other people (Luke 22:26-30). The following two texts feature Jesus' teaching on greatness in the kingdom of God. The first text exemplifies John the Baptist and the second text exemplifies Jesus himself.

2.2.1.1. Luke 7:24-28: John the Baptist as a Double Example

Waiting in Herod's prison, John the Baptist begins to doubt that Jesus actually is the one whom the Old Testament promises would come. Because he cannot meet with Jesus himself, John sends his disciples to ask Jesus for a very clear and straightforward identification of himself and his ministry. Jesus' answer is everything but direct. First, he does not name his role nor his function but rather speaks about the things that are happening (cf. the passive verbs in the Greek text). In other words, he is fully directing John to God who is obviously at work in Jesus' ministry, something many other people come to recognize throughout the Gospel of Luke (e.g., Luke 5:25; 17:15, 18:43). The only reference Jesus gives to himself is at the very end when he says, "blessed is the one who is not offended [σκανδαλίζω] by me" (Luke 7:23; ESV). The term σκανδαλίζω appears elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., Rom 9:33; 1 Cor 1:23; 1 Peter 2:8) and "is used figuratively of someone who refuses to accept Jesus' claims or to draw near to him."[151] In the end, Jesus simply calls John to trust in him, even though the ultimate

[151] Bock, *Luke*, 1:669.

judgment and restoration of justice in Israel that John had expected to arrive with Jesus' ministry is not yet fully there.

After John's disciples leave, Jesus uses the occasion to teach a principle about the kingdom of God by using John as an example. He asks the crowds why they went out to John the Baptist in the days when he was still teaching and baptizing in the wilderness. Surely they did not expect to see any worldly greatness as kings possess with all their luxury. Did they not make the journey to see him because they expected a God-given greatness, like the prophets of former times had? Wholeheartedly, Jesus reassures them that they were right, because John was even more than a prophet, he was the promised messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah. His greatness is of such a quality that Jesus even declares him to be the greatest of all who were born of a woman.

With this elevated language Jesus compares John with everyone the crowd could think of and says that John excels them all. In the last sentence of Jesus' speech as reported in Luke, Jesus uses this graphic image of John in the mind of his listeners to demonstrate that such greatness is not the principle that will work in the kingdom of God. There, the one who is the least will be greater than even John the Baptist. By that, Jesus does not exclude John from the kingdom, especially given that he says in Luke 13:28 that all the prophets will be in the kingdom.[152] The point rather is that in the new age, which John prophesied (Luke 3:15-17) and Jesus inaugurated (Luke 4:18-21), "all scales of

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[152] Ibid., 1:675; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 296.

evaluation will be completely rewritten,"[153] which means that "conventional ways of measuring honor and status [will be] inverted."[154] Kings in their palaces with all their luxury are usually those who receive much honor.

Given that the Jews had had difficulties with kings throughout the past 200 years before Jesus gave this speech, it was easier for them to honor great prophets of the past and in the present, like John the Baptist. However, Jesus makes clear that not even this kind of honor is valid in the kingdom of God. While Jesus speaks here in very general terms to the crowds, he makes this point much more explicit for his disciples during the last supper (Luke 22:24-30).

2.2.1.2. Luke 22:24-30: The Greatest among the Followers of Jesus

That the disciples did not know that the Passover meal was Jesus' last supper, is evident from the fact that they began to dispute who was the greatest among them, which is definitely not an appropriate subject given the immediacy of Jesus' execution. However, Jesus had just announced that one of his disciples would betray him, which explains to some degree how they might have come from considering who could betray Jesus, in other words, who is the least among them, to who is actually the greatest among them. However, Jesus redeems their ignorance by teaching them one more time in detail the characteristics of the kingdom of God. As he did in the speech concerning John the Baptist to the crowds in Luke 7:24-28, Jesus again uses kings as a contrast. This time,

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[153] Bock, *Luke*, 1:676.

[154] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 299.

however, it is not the pomp and splendor of their luxury that is contrasted, but the way they rule over their subjects.

While leaders usually are recognized because they are served by those who are under them, in the community of the kingdom of God it is the other way around. Whoever wants to lead others should become like the least significant and like one who serves the others. Jesus demonstrates that this is the principle of the kingdom by pointing to the way he himself has been in their midst. That such serving is usually not honored but rather can even be very shameful in the eyes of many is evident in Peter's reaction to Jesus' attempt to wash his feet (John 13:8). One way in which Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of God is in living out its principles. It is important that his disciples also live according to those principles because Jesus is assigning (using a form of διατίθημι in the present tense) the kingdom to them, giving them authority for them to join the task already now (Luke 22:29).[155]

2.2.1. Receiving and Entering the Kingdom

While the section on "Honor and Shame in the Kingdom" focused more on contrasting the perceptions of the world with those of the kingdom of God, the focus now lies on the posture and relationship someone has towards the king himself.

In some of the texts in Luke the focus is more on how one receives the kingdom of God (e.g., Luke 12:32, 22:29-30) and in others the focus is more on actually entering or being in the kingdom of God (e.g., Luke 13:28, 14:15). The most explicit sayings of Jesus about

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[155] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1740-1741.

the subject is found in Luke 18:16-30. Even though in Luke's order it is the other way around, I will begin with verses 24-25 so that the problem becomes more visible to which then the solution is given in verses 16-17.

2.2.1.1. Luke 18:24-25: The Difficulty for the Rich to Enter the Kingdom

The pericope of Luke 18:18-30 begins with a ruler (ἄρχων) who asks Jesus what needs to be done in order to inherit eternal life. Bock argues that "ruler" probably meant that the man was a leading person in society, but that he was probably too young (Matt 19:20) to have been a synagogue leader.[156] Luke uses two different verbs (εἰσπορεύομαι, εἰσέρχομαι) to emphasize how hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. It is so hard, that the impossibility of getting a camel through the eye of a needle is even easier.

Two situations associated with Israel's exodus out of Egypt can help in understanding Jesus' point. First, as a result for their disobedience, God tells Moses and Aaron that they will not *lead* (εἰσάγω) the people of Israel into the Promised Land (Num 20:12). This punishment is dramatically recounted again and again in Numbers (20:24; 27:12-14; 31:2) and Deuteronomy (1:37; 4:21), but in most of those instances it is actually said that Aaron and Moses will not even *enter* (εἰσέρχομαι) the Land. Second, after the spies discouraged the people of Israel to take the land, the Lord again punished them and said that no one of that generation would see the land that he had promised to their fathers (Num 14:32). Later that occasion is recounted again:

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[156] Ibid., 2:1476.

> For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into [εἰσέρχομαι; LXX] the land that the LORD had given them. (Numbers 32:9; ESV)

In Ps 95:7-11 the same event is retold and used as a warning for later generations:

> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter [εἰσέρχομαι; LXX] my rest." (ESV)

The problem in both of these cases was that God had promised something (provision of water and to give Israel the land) but Moses, Aaron and the people of Israel acted on their own and did not look to the Lord and did not wait until he would act for them.

This is the background of the early history of Israel that probably informed the way first-century Jews heard Jesus' warnings about not being able to enter the kingdom of God. Given that the poor and otherwise needy are especially named as those who will end up being in the kingdom of God (cf. 2.1) because of their admitted *dependence* on God, it is very likely that on the other side the wealthy are named as those for whom it is especially hard to enter the kingdom because of their seeming *independence* from God. In Luke's gospel, different characters appear who are so independent that asking God for anything seems to be far from their minds, especially because their relationship with God consists of mainly living the right way (e.g., Luke 15:29; 18:11).

One example of such a character is the rich ruler mentioned above. He asks Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life. After Jesus lists some commandments, the ruler answers that he had kept them all since his youth. Jesus answers him, "One thing you still lack [λείπω]. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in

heaven; and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22; ESV). Jesus challenges the rich leader to become utterly dependent on God as the one thing that is still missing for him to be able to inherit eternal life. That is exactly what God expected of Israel in the wilderness before they could enter the land. God's people are always called to look exclusively to him for whatever their needs are. He does not tolerate any other source of comfort, for "no servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Luke 16:13; ESV). Bock summarizes the message of Jesus' response to the rich ruler well: "At the heart of Jesus' request is a call to trust God humbly and live in reliance on God, that is, to live in light of his promise."[157] To live humbly in reliance on God will be unfolded more in the next text and to live in light of his promise is the theme of the last section (2.2.1).

2.2.1.2. Luke 18:16-17: Receiving and Entering the Kingdom

The climax of Jesus' sayings about receiving and entering the kingdom of God is Luke 18:17, because it is the only text that connects "receiving" and "entering". Jesus says: "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (ESV). The context of this saying is that people brought their babies (τὰ βρέφη) to Jesus in order that he would touch them, but the disciples were unwilling to let them draw near (Luke 18:15). Jesus, however, called them and said: "Let the children [τὰ παιδία] come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God"

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[157] Ibid., 2:1483.

(Luke 18:16; ESV). Even though Jesus uses the more general term παιδίον for children of all ages, the examples that were in front of everyone in that situation were probably little babies (βρέφος) and not 12-year olds. Babies, more so than older children, are desperate for help in every situation. The only basic things they can do to stay alive is to breathe air, to swallow and digest food, and to discharge whatever their little bodies do not need. For everything surrounding these things they need someone else to provide.

Two habits of babies are probably helpful to consider in order to see how becoming like them is connected with entering the kingdom. The first is that babies are somehow aware of their dependence on others, which they usually express through loud screaming whenever they realize that they are alone. The second characteristic is that babies have a deep trust towards their mother and in the best case also towards their father. When the mother of the baby comes, continuing the before mentioned scenario, picks the baby up, takes it in her arms and gives whatever it needs, the baby's deep trust calms its awareness of dependence with the result that the baby becomes content again.

These two characteristics are what babies have in common with the pious "poor." They too are aware of their dependence and trust God to provide for them. One reason that Jesus said that one needs to receive the kingdom ὡς παιδίον instead of ὡς πτωχός might be that it is too easy to take "becoming like the poor" literally and thereby to misunderstand Jesus' point.[158] A baby, on the other hand, is a perfect example, because

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[158] For a similar argument that the poor should be seen as an example in the same way as becoming like a child which serves as an illustration of something that cannot be realized externally but rather must be an internal transformation, see Gerhard Maier, *Reich und Arm: Der Beitrag des Jakobusbriefes* (Gießen: Brunnen, 1980), 15.

merely biologically it would be impossible to try to take the comparison literally (cf. John 3:4). But the example of a baby is also very helpful in this context, because they are as needy and dependent as every beggar, even if they are actually the child of a king (cf. Gal 4:1). Their material possessions do not in any way influence their awareness of their dependence on others and their deep trust in someone else.[159]

2.2.2. The Kingdom as the Promise of Provision

Up until now, the focus has been on the requirements for entering the kingdom. However, the kingdom has not yet actually been defined. There is no detailed description of what it is and why it is even desirable to enter it. Luke and probably Jesus as well actually never defined the kingdom of God.[160] However, the texts in this section will describe some of the blessings of the kingdom and thereby also disclose more characteristics of the kingdom and the character of the king.

2.2.2.1. Luke 11:1-13: How the Disciples Should Pray

In the Gospel of Luke, the Lord's prayer is in the context of prayer for daily needs in general, as the subsequent verses show (see Luke 11:5-13). What is often emphasized in the interpretation of this prayer is that Jesus teaches his disciples to address God as "father." Green, for example, gives his whole exposition on Luke 11:1-13 the title "The Fatherhood of God," because he sees in this passage part of the fulfillment of what Jesus announced to his disciples already in Luke 10:22: "All things have been handed over to

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[159] Robert O'Toole, "The Kingdom of God in Luke–Acts," in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell Willis (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 159–60.

[160] Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark through the Epistles," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 104.

me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (ESV).[161] However, not only the role of God as father is present in the Lord's prayer but also that God is king, which is implied in the line "your kingdom come" (Luke 11:2; ESV).

Jesus teaches his disciples that living in the kingdom of God means being in a father-child relationship with God. The already present kingdom of God cannot be entered by some kind of transfer into a different sphere. The kingdom of God is already present because Jesus reveals who the father is (Luke 10:22), thereby making this father-child relationship possible already in the present. However, whoever does not receive this kingdom like a child (Luke 18:16-17) cannot enter it. This implies that whoever does not acknowledge his or her complete and utter dependence on the father, is actually not in the family or kingdom. By addressing God as king, Jesus' followers can pray with hope that God would bring his kingdom to full fruition for the sake of the whole earth. By addressing him as father, they can pray with hope that God would provide for their own daily needs. By revealing the father to his disciples, Jesus opens the possibility for them to ask God for whatever they need as if they were already living in the consummated kingdom of God on earth.

However, not only in the request for daily bread but actually the whole prayer that Jesus gives to his disciples "reflects a spirit of dependence on God."[162] The third request in the

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[161] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 438.

[162] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1056.

prayer seeks God's guidance and protection on a spiritual level, the need for which the people of God must be as aware as in more material matters.[163] This is a common theme in Luke's gospel, especially in Jesus' ongoing dialogue with the Pharisees (e.g., Luke 7:47, 18:11-12).

In the verses subsequent to the actual prayer, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray in general boldly for whatever they need. He does this by challenging the disciples' notion of God with one parable (Luke 11:5-8) and a twofold analogy (Luke 11:11-12). Both of these illustrations function as a qal-wahomer argument (from the greater to the lesser) and therefore God should not be directly compared with the figures in the illustrations but rather contrasted to them.[164] The point Jesus is challenging is that the disciples are actually more confident in the goodness and love of other people than they are in God's. They expect of every man to give of his own goods to his neighbor if he has need. But they do sometimes not expect the same of God, thereby making God subordinate to man.[165] Jesus shows his disciples how ridiculous such thinking is, because if it is even unthinkable for sinful people to give their children dangerous things if they ask for basic food, how much more would the holy and loving father in the heaven provide for the needs of his children (Luke 11:13; cf. Isa 49:15). While Matt 7:11 refers to good things that God gives to those who ask in general, Luke 11:13 names here one specific good

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[163] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 150–51.

[164] Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 375; Bock, *Luke*, 2:1058-1059.

[165] Adolf Schlatter, "Beten oder nicht beten?," in *Die Gründe der christlichen Gewißheit – das Gebet* (Gießen: Brunnen, 1998), 77.

gift, namely the Holy Spirit. This does not exclude that God will also provide for basic needs like food, as the next text will make even more explicit, but emphasizes in continuity with the third request of the Lord's prayer the need for spiritual guidance that God wants to give as well.[166]

2.2.2.2. Luke 12:22-34: No Room for Anxiety

Another example of the texts that stress the kingdom's "consoling dimension"[167] is Luke 12:22-34, which complements Luke 11:1-13 in different ways. First, it states more explicitly than the former text that God will provide for basic clothing and food of his people. Second, in the former text Jesus contrasts God with a man who helps his neighbor out with bread and with a father who gives good food to his child, concluding with a qal-wahomer argument that God will give much more to those who ask him. In the same way, Jesus contrasts people with plants and birds in Luke 12:22-34 and concludes again with a qal-wahomer argument that people are much more valuable to God than plants and animals. Taken together, Luke 11:5-12 and 12:22-34 make the point that both from a human perspective and from God's perspective it makes no sense to doubt that God will provide for those who ask. In Luke 12:22-34 Jesus gives his disciples several reasons for why it makes therefore also no sense to worry and that it is rather much more appropriate for them to approach God in the way that he taught them in Luke 11:1-13.

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[166] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1062-1063.

[167] Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament," in Morgan and Peterson, 136.

The first reason why it does not make sense for the disciples to worry about food and clothing is that life is actually more than food and clothing (Luke 11:23). Marshall suggests that the main idea is that life in general is more valuable than just food and by implication the disciples should therefore be concerned about other aspects that support life as a whole and not just about food. This is to what Jesus himself clung to when Satan tempted him to make bread out of stones (Luke 4:4).[168]

The second reason why the disciples should not worry is that God will provide for them like he also provides for the birds and the plants. The note that the birds do not work in the field is in contrast to what is expected for man to do. The point of the illustration is not that people should not work, but that they should not worry while they work.[169]

The third reason why it makes no sense for the disciples to worry is that worrying is actually useless. Since people cannot even add an hour[170] to their lifetime anyway, why should they worry about the things that will then also not add anything to one's life?[171] Again and again Jesus challenges his disciples not to worry, which Luke records in most cases with the verb μεριμνάω (Luke 12:22, 25,26), but one time also with the New Testament hapax legomenon μετεωρίζομαι (Luke 12:29). This word means in the LXX usually that somebody or something is lifted up (cf. Micah 4:1) and Bock therefore

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[168] Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 526.

[169] Ibid., 526–27.

[170] Both Marshall and Bock argue that πῆχυς refers more to a measure of time rather than size. To add eighteen inches to one's height is for most people not very desirable. See Ibid., 528; Bock, *Luke*, 2:1161.

[171] Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 527; Bock, *Luke*, 2:1161-1162.

argues that it is used here as "a graphic picture of hovering between hope and fear, between heaven and earth."[172] This is how unbelievers are doomed to live (Luke 12:30), but such instability should not mark the followers of Jesus. Instead they should put their energy into seeking God's rule constantly (Luke 12:31; ζητεῖτε = iterative present).[173]

Worries are the precursors of anxiety. Jesus is not only concerned that his disciples would waste their time with unnecessary worries but he cares even more deeply for them that they would not live in anxiety. He therefore even commands them not to worry (μὴ φοβοῦ), because fear is actually a result of a wrong perception of God, whose pleasure it is to give them the blessings of the kingdom (Luke 12:32).[174] These blessings are not only a future reality but even reach into the present. This is implied in the promise that everything believers need will be added to them if they seek first the kingdom of God (Luke 12:29-31). The next text will make these two aspects of the kingdom blessings even more explicit.

2.2.2.3. Luke 18:28-30: Receiving in this Time and in the Age to Come

In the previous section on "Receiving and Entering the Kingdom of God" I already discussed Luke 18:18-27 and why it is so difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The story in Luke, however, does not end there. Peter reminds Jesus that he and the other disciples left everything to follow him. While we would probably expect Jesus to

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[172] Ibid., 2:1163.

[173] Ibid., 2:1164; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 520–21.

[174] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1168; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 530.

rebuke Peter for speaking so boldly, Jesus actually takes him and his concern seriously. Jesus promises Peter and everyone else who needs to leave his house or family for the sake of the kingdom of God that he or she will receive much more already now and also in the age to come, the very thing the rich ruler sought (Luke 18:18).[175]

While the previous texts in this section on provision cover the daily biological needs and the need for spiritual guidance and protection, the focus in Jesus' response here to Peter is on a provision for shelter and relationships. The reward, for example, for remaining single and thereby giving up the possibility of starting an own family is a much larger family already in the present age, that is the community of God's kingdom people (Luke 18:30).[176]

2.2.3. Summary: The Cared-For Community of the Need-Conscious Meek

The goal of this section on the kingdom of God in Luke was to look at what makes the "poor" particularly fit for this kingdom. The first section on honor and shame has shown that in God's kingdom honor is given on a completely different basis than it is in this world. Neither kings nor other worldly leaders are the ones who will necessarily be great in the kingdom of God, nor even the greatest of all prophets. Whoever wants to be great in the kingdom of God needs to humble himself and become a servant to his fellow believers.

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[175] Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament," in Morgan and Peterson, 139.

[176] Bock, *Luke*, 2:1489–1490.

The second section made even more explicit what the fitting posture is for the kingdom of God. As the "poor" are better prepared to receive the kingdom of God because they are more aware of their utter dependence on God, so also every believer needs to become aware of his dependence, like the dependence of babies on their parents.

In the third section three texts were discussed, in which Jesus promises that the father in heaven will provide what his people need in at least three areas: food and clothing; spiritual guidance and protection; shelter and relationships. The point is that God's provision is comprehensive. None of the basic needs will escape God's notice, who takes pleasure in giving his people the blessings of the kingdom in the present and in the future.

2.3. First Intermediate Conclusion: The "Poor" and the Kingdom in Luke

In Luke two kinds of people have been given as examples for what it means to be fit for the kingdom of God: the poor and babies or children. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus tells his disciples to think of God in two ways: as father and as king. This indicates that the kingdom of God is also the household and family of God and the subjects of this kingdom are also the children of the family. As God cares for the poor as their king, he cares for his children as their father. This close connection between the concepts of kingdom and family can also be seen in the way Jesus describes the kingdom of God in his parables. He can speak about the principles of the kingdom of God by telling a parable about a father and his two sons (Luke 15:11-32) or with a parable about a king and his servants (Luke 19:11-27). In the next chapter, we will see how James is using these two concepts (kingdom and family) and how he connects them with his regard for the "poor" in the context of his letter to believers in the early church.

3. The "Poor" and the Kingdom in James

Moving from the Gospel of Luke to the Letter of James is not only a change of authors but also a change of genres. As a gospel writer, Luke is concerned about events in the life of Jesus and what Jesus talked about and did at those events. Most of the time, therefore, Luke tells us something about the context of the situation in which Jesus taught his disciples, an individual, a group (e.g., the Pharisees) or the crowd that followed him. This is completely different in the Letter of James. We hardly know anything about the circumstances for which this letter was composed. Different commentators suggest different scenarios of what the situation might have looked like,[177] but the multitude of proposals alone demonstrates the uncertainty that remains on this issue. Much depends on who the actual author is, which in turn influences the dating of the letter. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a solid argumentation for the authorship of a particular candidate. Even though there is still no broad consensus over this issue, arguments for

[177] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 76, argues that James is writing to a messianic community that faces persecution mainly through economic exploitation. Dibelius, *James*, 46, also thought that the recipients of the letter were poor Christians who were oppressed by the rich, but he denies that the situation can be called persecution. Moo, *The Letter of James*, 24, on the other hand, argues that especially because of James 1:10 one cannot reduce the audience to the poor and oppressed. At least some wealthy believers were also part of the community. Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 29–46, argues that James is a pseudepigraphic letter written between A.D. 100-120. The recipients are the people in a mixed diaspora synagogue of Christian Jews and Non-Christian Jews and the author's intention is to promote peace between those two different groups. Similarly, Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 115, states that "[i]t is not necessary, however, to make a sharp differentiation as to whether this assembly should be seen as either Jewish or Christian," since such a "differentiation would presuppose a much more definitive split between Christians and Jews than is likely for the period of writing of the New Testament texts."

James, the brother of Jesus, as the author are at least as plausible as anything else.[178] This is also the most straightforward reading of the letter, given that James the brother of Jesus is the only sufficiently prominent candidate with that name in the early church who would have lived long enough and early enough to have written the letter.[179] In this thesis, therefore, it is supposed that James the brother of Jesus, who was one of the most important leaders of the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 15:13-22; 21:18; Gal 2:9), is also the author of the Letter of James.

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[178] Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 121, after discussing in detail all the major issues involved in the identification of the author, states: "These arguments do not prove that James of Jerusalem, the 'Brother of the Lord,' wrote the letter. Such proof is unavailable, for the simple reason that, even if early, the document could still have been penned by some other 'James' than the one who became famous in the tradition. But the arguments do tend strongly toward the conclusion that James is a very early writing from Palestinian Jewish Christian source. And James the Brother of the Lord is a reasonable candidate." Adolf Schlatter, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1956), 7–8, is even more confident when he argues that the letter authenticates itself as written by James the brother of Jesus if its content reveals its connection to the writings of the apostles in the New Testament. In the rest of the introduction, Schlatter demonstrates these connections and therefore by implication affirms that James the brother of Jesus is the author. McCartney, *James*, 8–32, presents four different views on the authorship of James and evaluates then the internal and external evidence, and the different possible answers to the question about the remarkably good language and historical issues. He concludes that to suppose that James the brother of Jesus is the author of the letter makes most sense out of the external and internal evidence. For similar arguments, see Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 32–35; Gerhard Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 3rd ed., Historisch-Theologische Auslegung (Wuppertal: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2014), 33–42. Moo, *The Letter of James*, 9–22; Rainer Riesner, "James," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1256.

[179] D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 2005), 621–26, carefully weigh different arguments for and against the brother of Jesus as the author of the letter and conclude that James the brother of Jesus is the most natural candidate in light of the letter's own claims and none of the other arguments decisively contradict that. Another option that would go along well with everything said so far is that James is a pseudonymous letter, only claiming to be written by James the brother of Jesus. Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 223, favors that explanation because that would, in his opinion, fit better to the good Greek used in the letter. Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 10–11, however, argues that there is no sufficient evidence why James the brother of Jesus could not have produced a letter in that kind of Greek, given that Galilee was Hellenized enough for common people to be able to speak and write fluently in Greek.

3.1. James 1:5-8 as Foundation: Asking from the God Who Gives

James opens his letter with a call to rejoice in the fact that trials have come to his readers, because such trials will lead to maturity (Jas 1:2-4). However, knowing well that not all have yet reached such maturity, James continues by urging them to ask for wisdom in the process. What typically distinguishes poor people from others is that they have to ask others for all the things they need. For James to be telling his readers that they should ask for something is therefore the same thing as to say that they are "poor" in a certain way. But where is wisdom to be found and how can it be obtained? I will argue that the answer that is implied in James 1:5 is foundational for the letter as a whole. Wisdom comes from God (cf. Prov. 2:6) and one can receive it by asking for it, because God is *the giving God* (τοῦ διδόντος θεου; the participle διδόντος is used attributively and the aorist is probably a gnomic aorist, describing what is true at all times),[180] that means, "giving" is rooted in his character.[181]

That James is expanding his point from God's willingness to give wisdom to his willingness to give in general is also implied in the following negative argument in James 1:7: "For that person [who doubts] must not suppose that he will receive anything [τι] from the Lord" (ESV).[182] James 1:5 therefore sets the tone because it lays the foundation for the often occurring theme of God's giving in the rest of the letter: God will give

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[180] Chris A. Vlachos, *James*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2013), 25. See also Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 562.

[181] Daniel M. Doriani, *James*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 25. See also McCartney, *James*, 88–89; Schlatter, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 112.

[182] See McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 91; and Dibelius, *James*, 70.

exaltation to the lowly (1:9); he will give the crown of life to those who remain steadfast under trial (1:12); every perfect gift comes from God (1:17); he will give the kingdom of God to the "poor" who are rich in faith (2:5); he gives wisdom that is much better than earthly wisdom (3:17); God gives grace (4:6) and exaltation (4:10) to the humble; and he gives healing to the sick (5:15).

That James' call for "asking something from God because God is the giving God" is a foundational call is further confirmed by the fact that it is unfolded very prominently at the beginning of the letter (1:5-8) and is then again unfolded with an example from Elijah very prominently at the end of the letter (5:13-18). Two major questions that arise are: First, where did James get this concept? Second, how is he using this concept in his own situation?

That God is the *giving God* is manifest already in the Old Testament from its beginning. After God made man he gives him what is commonly called the "cultural mandate," to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion over every living creature on earth (Gen 1:28). The very next thing he says already reveals his character as the *giving God*: הִנֵּה **נָתַתִּי** לָכֶם (behold, I have given you …; Gen 1:29). When God makes a covenant with Abraham, he does it as the God who gives the Land (**נָתַתִּי** אֶת־הָאָרֶץ; Gen 15:18) and a son (**נָתַתִּי** מִמֶּנָּה לְךָ בֵּן; Gen 17:16). For the establishment of the sacrificial system God himself even gives the blood (**וַאֲנִי נְתַתִּיו** לָכֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר; Lev 17:11) as the means of atonement. In his summary of God's self-revelation in the book of Deuteronomy, Waltke writes:

"[God's] goodness is seen in his giving of four gifts to Israel: Torah (Deut 6:24); land (9:4-5; 17:18-20; 26:5-10); prophets (18:22); and priests (18:6-7)."[183]

However, Israel experiences God in the Old Testament not only as the one who initiates gifts, but also as the one who gives when another person initiates and asks for something. The Hebrew verb עתר means in the qal stem "to pray" and one of its meanings in the niphal stem is "to grant prayer." This wordplay actually occurs already in the first verse the verb is found in the Old Testament. In Genesis 25:21 Isaac prays (וַיֶּעְתַּר) to God for Rebekah, because she was barren, and God grants his prayer (וַיֵּעָתֶר) and Rebekah becomes pregnant. Every time the verb עתר is used for someone praying to God for something, the text always says that God granted the prayer (not always by using עתר in the niphal stem). It comes therefore as no surprise that Job's friends argue two times that those who pray (עתר) to God will be accepted (Job 22:27; 33;26). The one who prays to God by implication also humbles himself before God (2 Chr 33:19) and trusts in God (1 Chr 5:20) and therefore will be heard. Eichrodt emphasizes these elements as characteristic of Israel's prayer in the Old Testament:

> The strength and genuineness of the life of prayer in Israel is attested first by the freedom of its cultic prayers and hymns from any trace of hollow pathos or high-flown flattery; rather its marks are a childlike simplicity, sincerity and confidence toward him who has been their God 'from Egypt until now'.[184]

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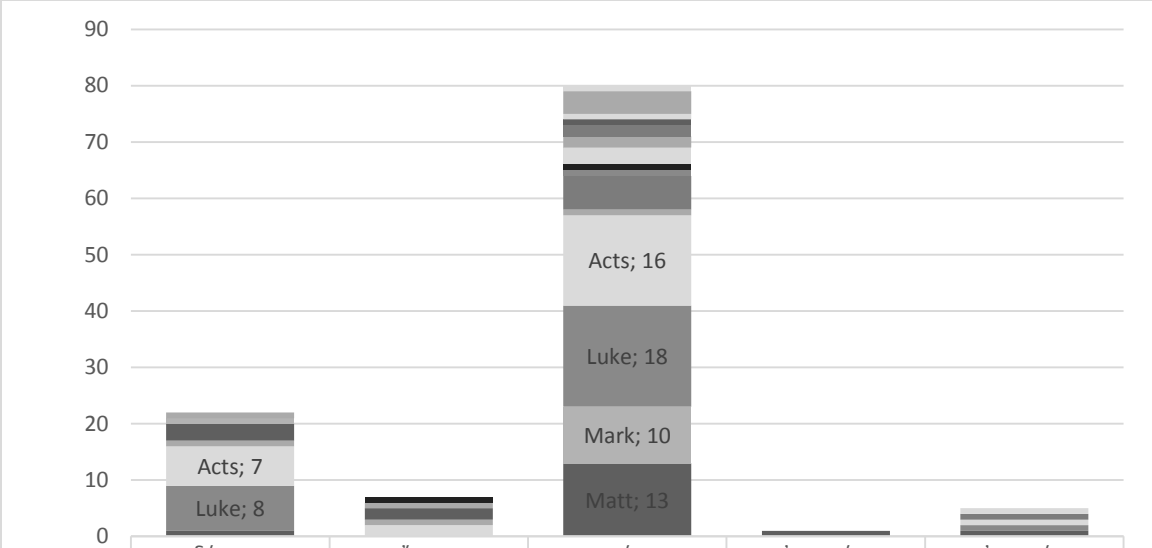
[183] Bruce K. Waltke, "The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: Definitions and Story," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 61.

[184] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:175.

Even though the most condensed version of how humility and trust are intertwined in prayer is probably found in 1 Peter 5:6-7, both of those elements are also connected in James (praying in faith without doubts: 1:5-8; humility: 1:9-11).

Where the Hebrew Old Testament uses עתר for someone's praying, the LXX translates it with δέομαι (e.g., Gen 25:21), εὔχομαι (e.g., Exod 8:26) and once with προσεύχομαι (Exod 10:17). When it is used for God's hearing a prayer, the LXX uses ἐπακούω (e.g., Gen 25:21) and one time εἰσακούω (Isa 19:22). The following graph shows where and in what quantity these verbs are used in the New Testament.



	δέομαι	εὔχομαι	προσεύχομαι	ἐπακούω	εἰσακούω
Jude			1		
3 John		1			
Jas		1	4		
Heb			1		1
1 Tim			1		
2 Thess			2		
1 Thess	1		2		
Col			3		
Phil			1		
Eph			1		
Gal	1				
2 Cor	3	2		1	
1 Cor			6		1
Rom	1	1	1		
Acts	7	2	16		1
Luke	8		18		1
Mark			10		
Matt	1		13		1

Table 3: Usage of LXX Prayer Verbs in the New Testament

What stands out in the diagram above is that Luke-Acts has comparatively the most occurrences of these LXX verbs in comparison with the rest of the New Testament.[185] It

[185] Bock also emphasizes the key role of "prayer" in Luke-Acts. He concludes his section on "prayer" with the statement: "Prayer is clearly of supreme importance to Luke." Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 325.

is important to mention that δέομαι is not only used for "praying." Five of the eight times that δέομαι is used in the Gospel of Luke are about someone begging Jesus, mainly for healing. An important connection with the Old Testament is the use of εἰσακούω in Luke-Acts. In Luke 1:13 an angel announces to Zechariah that his prayers have been heard and that God will give him a son (cf. Gen 25:21). The second time this verb is used is in Acts 10:31 when again an angel appears and announces to Cornelius that his prayers have been heard and that his alms have been remembered before God. In James we see an especially frequent use of προσεύχομαι for prayer, but he also uses the more intense term εὔχομαι. Even though this overview is far from being exhaustive, it can still be seen that there is a continuity of LXX prayer-terminology that reaches especially into Luke-Acts, but also into James.

It has become sufficiently clear that there is a solid Old Testament basis for the statement that God is a *giving God* in James. The comparison of word usages has also shown that there is a very high appearance of LXX prayer terminology in the Gospel of Luke and Acts. To further answer the first question about where James got his idea of the *giving God*, the following section compares how James 1:5-8 corresponds to Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke.

While the basic command to ask God and the promise that it will be given is even verbally found in Luke 11:9-13 and in Matthew 7:7-11 (cf. also Jer 29:12-14), James' more nuanced additional exhortations are unique to his letter.[186]

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[186] The verbal parallels between the two texts are highlighted with "**bold**".

Luke 11:9-13 (cf. Matt 7:7-11)	**James 1:5-8**
Κἀγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, **αἰτεῖτε** καὶ **δοθήσεται** ὑμῖν, […]	Εἰ δέ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας, **αἰτείτω** παρὰ τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ πᾶσιν ἁπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος καὶ **δοθήσεται** αὐτῷ. αἰτείτω δὲ ἐν πίστει μηδὲν διακρινόμενος· ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἔοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ. μὴ γὰρ οἰέσθω ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι λήμψεταί τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου, ἀνὴρ δίψυχος, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ.
πᾶς γὰρ ὁ αἰτῶν λαμβάνει […] ὁ πατὴρ [ὁ] ἐξ οὐρανοῦ δώσει πνεῦμα ἅγιον τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν αὐτόν.	

Even though Luke 11:9-13 is much more compact, the essential idea of James' more detailed additions is also present in the preceding parable about the neighbor who needs bread at midnight (Luke 11:5-8). In section 2.2.2.1 of this thesis I argued that the parable and the following illustration in Luke 11:5-13 contrast man's ability to give with God's much greater willingness to give good gifts to those who ask. However, especially in the parable another point is made, namely that "believers should practice bold, unabashed forthrightness in prayer, which does not hesitate to request the good gifts that God has promised to his people if they ask for them."[187] This is even closer to how James calls for praying without doubts than Luke 11:9-13. Since this parable is unique to Luke, James'

[187] Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 378.

teaching seems to have a connection to the Jesus tradition that Luke worked into his gospel account. It is at least very likely now that James' idea of the *giving God* is rooted both in the Old Testament and in Jesus' own teaching.

The second question about how James used this idea in his own setting can also be answered by comparing James 1:5-8 with Luke 11:5-13. Jesus teaches about asking God in very encouraging terms. He reveals the Father's character to his disciples and unfolds how much more worthy of their faith he is than any human father. Implicitly, there is of course also a critique of those who do not expect God to answer their prayers. The critique is expressed by contrasting God's fatherhood with sinful human fathers. Everyone who acknowledges that human fathers are willing to give their children the good things that they ask for, but does not think that God would at least do the same, makes the pure and holy God worse than sinful man.[188] James makes this implicit critique explicit when he says that whoever does not ask with faith, that is, by "trusting God,"[189] but instead doubts, will not receive anything. James says in 1:5 that God gives simply, or with "singleness of intention"[190] (ἁπλῶς). To respond to these intentions of God with double-mindedness (δίψυχος; cf. the discussion in section 3.2.1) means to profane his name and character.[191]

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[188] Schlatter, "Beten oder nicht beten?," 77.

[189] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 89, argues that "faith" used positively means the act of trusting God.

[190] Ibid., 87–88. Especially the connection to Luke 11:34 and the immediately following critique of double-mindedness in James 1:6-8 makes a translation of ἁπλῶς with "simply" (BDAG) preferable to "generously" (ESV).

[191] McCartney, *James*, 89.

Boldness and faith in prayer come more naturally to those who are desperate for help and who have no place else to turn, while those who live relatively comfortable lives find it harder to get very passionate in asking for something. However, by saying that all his readers need to ask God for wisdom, James makes clear that both the rich and the poor are "poor" in this particular sense. The following section will focus on how those two groups of the "rich" and the "poor" are further portrayed and characterized in James.

3.2. The "Poor" and the "Rich" in James

In James there are several words used to refer to the economic poor. The most obvious one is πτωχός, but it is only used in James 2:1-7 (4 times). The adjective ταπεινός is used one time to identify an economically poor member of the community (Jas 1:9). It is used a second time in a quotation from Proverbs 3:34 where it does not refer to an economically poor person but rather to a person who humbled himself before God. Even though these two adjectives are the only general terms used for the "poor," James also names concrete examples, namely the ὀρφανοί and the χῆραι ("orphans and widows;" Jas 1:27). As it will become clear in the discussion below, ταπεινός is a key term by which the economically poor who trust in God are used as examples of people with the right sense of dependence of and faith in God's care. The πτωχοί, the ὀρφανοί and the χῆραι are in James then the examples of those towards whom true faith, that is lived out, should be demonstrated.[192]

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[192] Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 222.

3.2.1. James 1:9-11: Life According to the Eschaton

Before other aspects of the interpretation of James 1:9-11 can be looked at, the most prominent question in the discussion of these verses needs to be discussed. In 1:9 James calls the lowly (ταπεινός) brother to boast in his exaltation. Most commentators agree that "brother" here identifies the one who is lowly as a Christian believer. In the next verse, however, James calls the rich to boast in their coming humiliation. What causes some interpreters to refrain from identifying the rich as a Christian believer as well is that James omits the addition "brother" and that an authentic call to boast in humiliation seems to them highly improbable.

McCartney, for example, argues that "the withering of the flower in OT imagery refers to judgment and perishing, and it is difficult to see how one could rejoice over the expectation of being humiliated on judgment day, since the humiliation in question would be condemnation."[193] Later McCartney states that "James is closest in wording to Isa. 40, which he may be consciously echoing."[194] If, however, James is echoing Isaiah 40:6-7, it is not clear how this refers to judgment and condemnation. Verse 6 of Isaiah 40 clearly compares all flesh with grass and verse 7 contrasts such ephemeral life with the eternal word of God. The point James is making is therefore rather that all life does not last very long and the reason that this needs to be preached especially to the wealthy is that it hits them more by surprise in the midst of their pursuits.

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[193] McCartney, *James*, 97. See also McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 102.

[194] McCartney, *James*, 99.

McKnight also sees in the rich a non-believer and the language of James 1:9-11 as "sharp and biting, even ironical or sarcastic,"[195] because James calls the rich to boast in his condemnation. However, Blomberg[196] and Moo[197] are probably right in rejecting that James writes here about an non-believing rich man because, as Blomberg and Kamell put it, "[n]owhere else in this letter does James employ a kind of irony in which the actual meaning of a command is the exact opposite of its literal meaning."[198] It seems therefore more likely that James thought that both the lowly person and the rich person were part of the Christian community.[199]

Another debated question is whether or not there is any connection between the different exhortations in James 1:2-11.[200] Dibelius, for example, states that "[t]here appears to be no connection at all between v 8 and v 9, for the doubter is to be identified neither with the 'rich man' [πλούσιος] nor with the 'lowly man' [ταπεινός]."[201] However, it seems that the opposite is true. In section 3.1 of this thesis it has been noted that the doubter's

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[195] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 104.

[196] Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, 150.

[197] Moo, *The Letter of James*, 68.

[198] Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 58. See also Doriani, *James*, 27.

[199] See Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 67–68; Moo, *The Letter of James*, 66–68.

[200] For a discussion of different proposals on the connection between James 1:5-8 and 1:9-11, see Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 194–95.

[201] Dibelius, *James*, 70. Dibelius argues in the introduction of his commentary that the whole letter is a collection of traditional exhortations without an overall continuity (Ibid., 1–11). Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 14–16, rightly criticizes Dibelius' conclusion by referring to the continuous high linguistic standard of the letter. He writes that it is very questionable that James would have only selected traditional material with the same linguistic standard. If, however, James used different traditional material with different linguistic standards and redacted the material, then it would be very unlikely that he did so without any concern for thematic continuity. See also Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 11.

double-mindedness is contrasted with and critiqued by God's single-minded willingness to give to those who ask. The Greek word James uses to express such double-mindedness (δίψυχος) is not found in the LXX and only one more time in the New Testament, namely in James 4:8. There it is used for those who desire to satisfy their passions (Jas 4:2-3). Since James is addressing them directly (cf. the vocative μοιχαλίδες in 4:4), they are most likely also part of the community he is writing to. That means that they try to hang on to both, to God and to their passions (Jas 4:3-4). This fragmentation of their life is probably what identifies them as δίψυχοι.

The solution James offers is repeated several times (Jas 4:6,7,9), but expressed in the most condensed way in the final exhortation at the end of the section: "Humble yourselves [ταπεινώθητε] before the Lord, and he will exalt [ὑψώσει] you" (Jas 4:10). It is probably no coincidence that the same language is used in James 1:9-10. The poor brother[202] in the community is called ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός (lowly, or humble brother), and it is said that exaltation (ὕψος) already belongs to him. The wealthy person, on the other hand, is called to boast in his humiliation (ταπείνωσις). It seems, therefore, that the poor person is characterized as the one who is already so low that it is not necessary to ask of him to humble himself even more, but rather that he should cling to his coming exaltation. Humiliation is a necessary process that the wealthy brother needs to face.

To sum up, the connections between James 1:8, 4:8 and 1:9-10 suggest that the double-minded doubters are most likely to be identified with those who are wealthy (or at least

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[202] The use of family language will be discussed in section 3.3.1.

not poor) in the community James is writing to, who are torn between God and the pleasures of their lives in the world (Jas 4:3-4). There is therefore a thematic continuity between James 1:5-8 and 1:9-11. It is necessary for the rich person to acknowledge his coming humiliation in order to pray without doubting so that he might receive anything from God. Even though this is more clearly unfolded in James 4:1-10, it is already introduced in James 1:5-11.

In light of all of the above mentioned connections between James 1:5-11 and 4:1-10 it is then also reasonable to conclude that the exaltation of the lowly brother (Jas 1:9) and of the one who humbles himself (4:10) is to be understood as a future event that reaches into the present, which could also be called a "proleptic realization of the eschaton."[203] The question remains what exactly it is that is being realized in the present. McKnight sees here a connection to the perfection mentioned in James 1:4, which he argues is a perfection in moral formation. Likewise then, the "being exalted" in James 1:9 means "moral formation and wisdom, and by extension also a life dedicated to pursuing 'justice' (1:20), 'love' (2:8-11), and 'peace' (3:18)."[204] However, it seems more likely that the present proleptic realization of the future exaltation in this context means that God answers the prayers of the humble. This is again more explicit in James 4:1-10, where the problem is expressed in verse 3a ("You ask and do not receive"). The solution, as already mentioned earlier, is given in verse 10a ("Humble yourselves before the Lord") and the result follows right away in 10b ("and he will exalt you"). Since this is the solution and

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[203] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 97.

[204] Ibid.

result to the problem, it is only consistent that the result at least implies the termination of the problem – even though it goes clearly beyond that – so that then the one who asks will also receive.

The rich are therefore also called to live in the present according to proleptic realization of the eschaton. James 1:10-11 describes how at the end of their lives the rich will be stripped of all their wealth. The implication of course is that monetary wealth has no value in regard to one's standing in the afterlife (cf. Luke 12:15-21; 16:19-31). To live according to the eschaton therefore means for the wealthy to live as if their economic wealth had already no value in regard to one's standing in the present. In other words, the wealthy person needs to humble himself. In the two passages that I will investigate in the following sections James gives practical examples of how such humbling can be lived out.

3.2.2. James 2:1-7: No Partiality towards the Rich or the Poor

In James 2:1 the name of Jesus appears for the second and last time in the letter. However, it is used in a word-construction that is very difficult to interpret. The first question here is if ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης refers to *Christ's own faith* that people should imitate,[205] or the *faith in Christ* (i.e., to believe/trust in him).[206] The second question about that construction is how τῆς δόξης corresponds to Christ. The two most common proposals are that either τῆς δόξης refers to Christ's glory

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[205] See, e.g., McCartney, *James*, 135–36.

[206] See, e.g., McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 177.

as an expression for his presence being like God's glory in the temple (1 Ki 8:11),[207] or that it refers to Christ's coming glory in the eschaton.[208]

Without going into too much detail, it seems that the answer to the first question (which faith it is that James talks about) is probably more likely to be that it is the people's faith in Christ. It is clear from the passage as a whole that James is criticizing the behavior of the believers he is writing to because they show partiality and are claiming to be believers at the same time. In other words, while they themselves trust in Jesus they treat, at the same time, other believers as if there is a difference between them. It is therefore more likely that James is also emphasizing in verse 1 the faith of the believers and not Christ's faith. His point therefore is again that double-mindedness that is incompatible with their faith.[209] Like the rich cannot hold on to both their passions and at the same time be friends with God (Jas 4:4), so all believers can also not have faith in Jesus and at the same time show partiality. Those two options are mutually exclusive.

In regard to the second question about the meaning of Christ's glory, it seems that the interpretation of Blomberg and Kamell, which sees the mention of Christ's glory as a reference to his presence, does better justice to the context than an eschatological interpretation.[210] In the immediately preceding verses (Jas 1:26-27) James writes about pure and undefiled religion/worship in the presence of God, which is probably an allusion

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[207] See, e.g., Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 106–07.

[208] See, e.g., Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 107.

[209] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 177.

[210] Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 106–07.

to Psalm 68 (cf. section 3.3.2.3). Psalm 68 speaks extensively about how God in his splendor and power acts among his people (e.g., vv. 7-8, 34-45). By drawing on that Psalm at the end of chapter 1, James uses the Psalmist's image of true worship in the presence of God for his exhortation on visiting the orphan and the widow. It is therefore very likely that the theme of acting according to the faith in the presence of God carries over from James 1:27 to 2:1. Visiting the widow and the orphan is very much in accordance with this faith; showing partiality between the rich and the poor is clearly not. A widow would most certainly have been among the poor that James is naming here. If one fills in "widow" for "poor" in the scenario James unfolds in 2:2-4, the absurdity of showing partiality becomes even more obvious.

James' illustration in 2:2-4 contains two other important questions that need to be answered in order to understand the situation he is addressing. The first question is what exactly the noun συναγωγή means in this context. As already mentioned in the opening section of chapter 3 of this thesis, some commentators argue that the recipients of James' letter are people in a mixed synagogue of Christian Jews and Non-Christian Jews. It is in James' use of the word συναγωγή that they see a major piece of evidence for their theory.[211] However, this is not at all the only possible interpretation. Besides the sometimes stated theory that James is talking about a church-court,[212] the most straightforward and also most plausible reading is that James means the Christian

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[211] See, e.g., Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 39.

[212] See, e.g., Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 109. Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 117, argues in response to such an interpretation of συναγωγή that "there is little evidence from early Christian texts of the holding of elaborate judicial gatherings of the kind portrayed in the rabbinic examples."

gathering and is using συναγωγή synonymously with ἐκκλησία (Jas 5:14). McKnight points out that James uses Jewish language elsewhere (cf. διασπορά in Jas 1:1), and it is therefore not unusual that he would do the same to refer to the community's place of worship.[213] If it can be assumed that James is one of the earliest books in the New Testament, then one should even expect that the language and concept of Jewish gatherings were mainly adopted by the early church. Given that new churches usually began through the preaching of traveling missionaries in the local synagogue of a city (cf. Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:17; 18:4), it is even more likely that the early church saw no need to immediately come up with their own and independent terminology.[214]

The second question is whether or not the poor man and the rich man are actually believers and therefore part of the community, or if they are only visitors. While those theories that see in the gathering either a mixed Jewish synagogue assembly or a Christian courtroom are especially open for the possibility that the two characters are only unbelieving visitors, this option seems less probable if the context of James' illustration is a purely Christian worship congregation. However, the fact that Paul could imagine such a situation (cf. 1 Cor 14:23) makes it necessary to evaluate the possibility that James had a similar scenario in mind. Davids argues that since James mentions that the poor and the rich persons are directed to their seats, they are clearly not part of the community.[215] However, that is not the only possible explanation for James' comment.

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[213] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 183.

[214] Similarly, McCartney, *James*, 138.

[215] Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 109. See also Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 291.

If, for example, we imagine a meeting of the church in a private home (cf. e.g., Acts 2:46, 5:24, 8:3), it would only be appropriate that one of the household members would direct all the people to a particular place. Others have argued that since the rich are clearly identified as enemies of the believers in James 2:6-7, it is unlikely that the rich man is understood as a believer in 2:2-4.[216] By this reasoning, however, the poor man in James 2:2-4 must then be considered to be a believer, because the poor are clearly identified as "good" in 2:5-7. But if the poor man is a believer it is hard to see from the text of James' illustration why the rich man should be different in that regard. It is therefore more likely that both the poor man and the rich man are actually part of the Christian community,[217] maybe even as new converts.[218]

Even though it seems from this and other passages (e.g., Jas 5:1-6) that James is at enmity with the rich, it is important to recognize that he nowhere calls for favoring the poor. Although he knows and writes about a coming judgment, James is not calling believers to proleptically realize it in their community. All he asks is that believers would not show any partiality and this implies that even the poor are not to be favored per se. This is also the view expressed in the Pentateuch, where certain laws are given to prevent judges from basing their decision on either partiality to the rich or to the poor (Exod 23:2-3; Lev 19:15). However, since the poor are often those who are in many ways weaker

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[216] Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 117.

[217] Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 108.

[218] Moo, *The Letter of James*, 103.

than the rich, they are more often than not the ones who are oppressed and who suffer injustice and therefore need special attention and care from others.

In sum, the message of James 2:1-7 (and actually already of Jas 1:26-27) is that in the assemblies of the believers there should be no regard for people's socio-economic standing. Luke does not report a particular saying of Jesus that conveys expressly such a message. However, there are many texts where the core of this message is implicitly there. Jesus himself, for example, makes no distinction between the socio-economic standing of people that he has table-fellowship with (cf. Luke 5:29; 7:36; 24:30), which is one of the most intimate forms of community in first-century Judaism.[219] Jesus also tells his host, a leading Pharisee, on one occasion that he should invite the poor, crippled, lame and blind to his feast (Luke 14:13). In addition, there are many occasions where Jesus taught about the eschatological reversal (e.g., Luke 7:28; 13:30; 16:19-31). Since James teaches the rich and the poor people in James 1:9-11 to live according to this eschatological reality (cf. 3.2.1), it comes as no surprise then that in James 2:1-7 he exhorts all believers to live according to this reality. Thereby, he again makes explicit what is implicit in Jesus' life and teaching.

3.2.3. James 2:15-16: How Believers Ought to Act

Interpreters usually spend most of their discussion of James 2:14-17 on the question of whether or not James is teaching works-righteousness and whether or not James knew of Paul's letters or vice versa. To engage in this debate is not in the scope of this thesis.

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[219] Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 93.

However, what James' illustration reveals about his understanding of how believers should treat the poor does not depend on any particular position in regard to this debate.

The main point of James' illustration is that good religious words should never replace material help if a brother or sister is clearly in need. Interestingly, this is not something that James sees the need to teach the people in the community, but rather he assumes that this is a common understanding upon which he can build his argument. Because everyone would probably agree that sending a brother or sister in need away with some nice words without giving him or her what they need is no good at all, he can use it as an illustration to persuade his audience about the relationship between faith and works.

However, what is probably not so much common understanding is that such behavior should actually arise from one's faith. The following table illustrates how James' illustration corresponds to his argument.

James 2:15-16	**James 2:17**
	οὕτως καὶ
ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχωσιν	
καὶ λειπόμενοι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς	
εἴπῃ δέ τις αὐτοῖς ἐξ ὑμῶν·	ἡ πίστις,
ὑπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ,	
θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε,	
μὴ δῶτε δὲ αὐτοῖς	ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃ ἔργα,
τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τοῦ σώματος,	
τί τὸ ὄφελος;	νεκρά ἐστιν καθ᾽ ἑαυτήν.

Like faith, to tell someone to go in peace is good and not bad at all. What identifies faith as dead and such good words as worthless is when they are not accompanied by concrete physical acts of relief. In contrasting pious talk with faith, James probably makes the point that the people would commonly think that talking in a pious way has something to

do with one's faith, while helping someone in need is just a natural reaction. To such a dichotomy he responds that helping someone in need is actually essential to one's faith. Here we see again how the understanding of God as the *giving God* builds the foundation of James' teaching. In the same way as James calls his readers to pray according to God's character in faith when they ask for something (Jas 1:6), so he also calls his readers to give freely according to God's character in faith when someone needs something from them. As showing partiality is not compatible with faith in Jesus Christ, so refusing to help those in need is also incompatible with this faith. Paradoxically, those who have more material resources are also more tempted to hold back what belongs to those in need.

3.2.4. James 4:13-5:11: Warnings to the Autonomous and to the Rich

In James 4:13-5:11 there are two similar pronouncements, both starting with the prophetic phrase, "come now [ἄγε νῦν]." There are not many parallels to this phrase in the Old Testament (cf. וְעַתָּה לְכָה: Gen 31:44; Exod 3:10; Num 22:6; Neh 6:7). Because of its similar prophetic force, however, James 4:13 and 5:1 most likely alludes to Isaiah 1:18, where God himself says: "Come now [לְכוּ־נָא], let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." It is of great importance that the preceding verses in Isaiah 1 show many parallels to what has also been seen in James. Most prominent in Isaiah 1 is the theme of a kind of religion or worship that is pure and undefiled which is also connected with caring for the widows and orphans (Isa 1:16-17; cf. Jas 1:26-27). Another important theme is that God will not listen to those who pray to him with the wrong attitude (Isa 1:15; cf. Jas 4:3).

In light of these connections the debated question of whether or not James is addressing believers in this section needs to be looked at. McKnight argues that neither the merchants addressed in James 4:13-17 nor the rich land owners in James 5:1-11 are Christians who belong to the community. James is rather pronouncing judgment on the priestly establishment which was fulfilled in the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.[220] To recognize that James' language is prophetic does not, however, require that it is a pronouncement of inevitable judgment. Instead, it seems more likely to see in James' word the same intention that we see in Isaiah 1, which was probably on his mind when he wrote this passage. The behavior of the people that James denounces is admittedly wicked and evil, but so was the behavior of the people of Israel. In Isaiah 1:16-17 God does not smooth over such behavior but calls for radical repentance[221] and this is probably also the appeal behind James' words.

This is not to say that the condemning language in James' passage should be weakened. The seriousness of what James says especially in James 5:1-11 actually builds on Jesus' own warning. Luke 12:42-48 warns believers, not unbelievers, to be faithful in their waiting for Jesus' return and to give fellow believers what they need (Luke 12:42). Those, however, who are not faithful but oppress others while they themselves live in luxury (Luke 12:45), will receive judgment and are expelled to the place where unbelievers will be (Luke 12:46). This is essentially the same warning that James

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[220] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 99–100.

[221] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 101.

expresses in James 5:1-6. While Jesus spoke about these things in a parable, James again makes them more explicit and concrete.

The behavior of the people described in James 5:1-6 is so fundamentally wrong, that James is not even correcting it. This is different in James 4:13-17. In view are probably merchants who were travelling to buy and sell goods in order to make a profit. This is in James' view not in and of itself wrong, but the problem is that those merchants made their plans as if they were in complete control of their lives and everything around it.[222] It is this seeming independence from God that is in James' view so deceiving and destructive. Again, James is essentially building on Jesus' own teaching (cf. e.g., Luke 12:13-21) but James adds a practical example of how one could keep oneself from such autonomous thinking through acknowledging that God is ultimately in control. To use expressions like "if the Lord wills [ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ]" (Jas 4:15) when someone talks or writes about plans is probably a common early Christian practice, as the many records in Paul's writings suggest (cf. Rom 1:10; Phil 2:19, 24; 1 Cor 4:19 has even the same wording: ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήση).[223]

In sum, James 4:13-5:11 belongs to the most alarming warnings in the New Testament, as it uses language that plastically illustrates the eschatological judgment which awaits those who do not repent. However, in continuity with the tradition of judgment

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[222] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 370, argues that there are four different spheres of which those people claim control: time, location, duration of their business, and labors/profits.

[223] Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 198. McCartney, *James*, 227; McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 376.

pronouncements in the Old Testament, the passage in James is still addressed to God's people and there is still room for repentance.[224]

3.2.5. Summary: A Letter to a Socio-Economically Mixed Community

It seems that James is dealing with a Christian community to which both rich and poor believers belong. James uses the most urgent and alarming language possible to warn the rich believers not to live a double life between obedience to God and following their desires for pleasure. Given that James probably experienced God's judgment on such an attempt first-hand (cf. Acts 5:1-10), it is no wonder that this is a major issue for him. Therefore, he takes Jesus' teaching on the subject and applies it now to a socio-economically mixed congregation. James is not compromising any of Jesus' own hard words about the danger of wealth but rather urges the more wealthy believers to see themselves on the same level as the poor and all the believers to make no distinction between the two. In other words, all of the believers ought to live according to the standards of the eschaton. How this anticipatory realization of the eschaton is expressed and unfolded in James' own words will be the subject of the next section.

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[224] Deines, "God or Mammon," in Konradt and Schläpfer, 364; Matthias Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief: Eine Studie zu seiner soteriologischen und ethischen Konzeption* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 160;

3.3. Kingdom and Family Principles in the Church According to James

While scholars have disputed the concept of the kingdom of God in the Gospel of Luke for centuries, research on this subject in the Letter of James is, in comparison, extremely rare. The obvious reason of course is that the Greek noun βασιλεία only appears once in the whole letter. The absence of much royal language can, however, be deceiving, especially if the Jewish character of James' letter is taken seriously. In the Old Testament (LXX), for example, the phrase βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ does not occur at all. Does that mean that the concept of the kingdom of God is absent from the Old Testament? Surely not. The following section will therefore discuss James' use of the language and concept of the kingdom of God.

It will be followed by a section on James' use of family language. As it has become clear in chapter 2, in Luke both the institution of family and the concept of the kingdom are used to describe God's relationship to his people. It is therefore necessary to investigate how James is using these two categories in his letter addressed to believers in the early church.

3.3.1. Kingdom and Covenant Language in James

The following section will discuss different verses in James that either use kingdom or covenant language. The reason the two concepts of kingdom and covenant are put together in this section is that in the Old Testament, God often established his supreme kingship over his people through covenants (Gen 3:15; 9:9-7; 15, 17, 22; Exod 19-24; 2

Sam 7).[225] Given that those covenants were formulated in ways reminiscent of ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties between a higher king and his vassal kings,[226] their form already communicates that God claims royal authority over his people. Further, with the inauguration of the kingdom of God, as it is depicted in the gospels of the New Testament, comes the fulfillment of the promise of the new covenant from Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. Luke 22:20-30).

3.3.1.1. James 1:1: God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

It is often noted that the name "Jesus" is only mentioned twice in the Letter of James.[227] However, in the two cases where it is mentioned (Jas 1:1 & 2:1), it is connected with the two titles "Lord" (κύριος) and "Christ" (Χριστός). Both of these titles have most likely a Palestinian Jewish religious background and both also have clear royal connotations.[228] In 1:1 James defines his own position to God and this κύριος.

Ἰάκωβος
θεοῦ καὶ
κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
δοῦλος

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[225] Waltke, "The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament," in Morgan and Peterson, 76–77.

[226] Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 409.

[227] McCartney, *James*, 4; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 597.

[228] On the Palestinian Jewish religious background of the title "Christ" and its royal connotations, see Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 98–100; McCartney, *James*, 79. For the same background and connotations of the title "Lord," see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Kyrios-Title," in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 131–32.

Usually commentators understand this as James wanting to call himself a servant of both God and Jesus.[229] However, it is also possible that in James' reference to God he implicitly speaks about God as the father. Several observations support this interpretation. First, in the letter of James' brother Jude, which was most likely written after James' letter (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.25), the salutation is very similar to that of James.

James 1:1	**Jude 1:1**
Ἰάκωβος	Ιούδας
θεοῦ	
καὶ κυρίου *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*	*Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*
δοῦλος	*δοῦλος*,
	ἀδελφὸς δὲ Ἰακώβου,
ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς	τοῖς ἐν **θεῷ πατρὶ** ἠγαπημένοις
ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ	καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τετηρημένοις κλητοῖς·
χαίρειν.	

Only those two authors refer to themselves simply as "servants" without any addition like "and apostle," as we find it, for example, in some of Paul's letters (e.g., Rom 1:1; Titus 1:1). Further, in Jude, the reference to God comes later and is supplemented by "father." If it is true that Jude wrote after James, then the reference to James and the parallels in style and content suggest that Jude at least knew James' salutation and maybe even worked it into his own letter. It is then also possible that Jude understood James' use of θεοῦ as a reference to God as father. That such a understanding of James' reference to

[229] Maier, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 52–53; McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 63; McCartney, *James*, 78.

God is at all possible, can be seen in those manuscripts which added πατρός after θεοῦ (429, 614, 630, *pc*).

Second, even though Paul never used in his salutations the exact same combination of God and Jesus the way James does, in the closing of his letter to the Ephesians Paul comes very close.

James 1:1	**Ephesians 6:23**
Ἰάκωβος	
	Εἰρήνη τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς
	καὶ ἀγάπη μετὰ πίστεως ἀπὸ
θεοῦ	*θεοῦ* **πατρὸς**
καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	*καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*.
δοῦλος	

Since Paul and Jude used very similar phrases as James did, but explicitly added "father" after "God," it is very likely that James too implicitly refers to God as father. Given that James frequently refers to God as father elsewhere in his letter (e.g., James 1:17, 18, 27; 3:9), it would be no surprise that he wanted his readers to understand his reference to God in the opening of his letter in the same way.

If the argument stated above is a plausible interpretation of James' salutation, then this would be a first and important indication that James understood himself as a servant in the kingdom of God, which has been established by the work of the Lord Jesus who is the royal Messiah, and which also makes him and the believers his addressees children of God, the Father.

3.3.1.2. James 5:4: The Use of the "Lord of Hosts"

Having looked at James 1:1, where Jesus is clearly called κύριος, it is now important to see how James used κύριος elsewhere with a clear Old Testament connotation. In James 5:4 God is named the "Lord of hosts" (κυρίου σαβαώθ), of which the Hebrew original (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) is used in 1 Samuel 1:3 for the first time in the Old Testament. Waltke notes that in those first occurrences (1 Sam 1-4) of the phrase "[t]he title is used in the connection with Israelite kingship and serves as recognition that God is the Commander in Chief not only of his particular kingdom's army but also of all the hostile kingdoms and their armies."[230] In 2 Samuel 7:8, God gives the following message for David to Nathan the prophet: "Thus says the LORD of hosts [יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת], I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince [נָגִיד] over my people [עַמִּי] Israel" (ESV). God makes clear that he is in control over his people, even though David is king. Firth argues that in 1 and 2 Samuel the occurrences of the title "LORD of hosts" are "clustered in three blocks, each associated with a period of transition, but not elsewhere."[231] In the first period the control of worship shifts away from Eli's family (1 Sam 1-4), in the second period the kingship shifts from Saul to David (1 Sam 15-17), and in the third period the worship and administration shifts to Jerusalem (2 Sam 5-7).[232] The name "LORD of hosts" is therefore deliberately used at the beginning and formation of

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[230] Waltke, "The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament," in Morgan and Peterson, 165.

[231] David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 55.

[232] Ibid.

the institution of kingship in Israel as assurance for the people and the king that God ultimately remains in control over his people.

While 1 and 2 Samuel serve as the general background for the title "Lord of hosts" in James 5:4, there is also a verbal connection of the phrase to the LXX text of Isaiah 5:9.

Isaiah 5:9 (LXX)	**James 5:4**
ἠκούσθη γὰρ	αἱ βοαὶ τῶν θερισάντων
εἰς τὰ ὦτα κυρίου σαβαωθ	*εἰς τὰ ὦτα κυρίου σαβαὼθ*
ταῦτα	εἰσεληλύθασιν

Both Isaiah 5:9 and James 5:4 are in the context of judgment upon those who oppress the "poor."[233] If, therefore, the vineyard song of Isaiah 5 also informs the way James formulates his warnings, then it is even more likely that James is addressing rich people in the community and not outside of it (cf. 3.2.4), since the vineyard is identified as Israel (Isa 5:7) and not as the nations.

In summary, when James uses κυρίου σαβαώθ he alludes to God's ultimate authority and reign over his people. This reign is constituted by God's covenant with his people, which brings with it certain moral obligation, according to which God holds his people responsible. Given that James transfers all of that into the Christian community, it is important to see what kind of covenantal background he assumes.

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[233] Moo, *The Letter of James*, 217.

3.3.1.3. James 1:21-25: Receiving and Living Out the New Covenant

The language James uses in 1:21-25 is reminiscent of covenant language in the Pentateuch. In several passages words (LXX: λόγοι) and the covenant (LXX: διαθήκη) are closely connected (cf. Exod 24:8; 34:27-28; Deut 28:69), so that to keep the words of the covenant is the same as to keep the covenant (Deut 29:8). However, just as James 1:22 emphasizes that the word should not only be heard but also be lived out, in Deuteronomy 29:8 Moses[234] warns the people of Israel to keep and also to do the words of the covenant.

If then James' use of λόγος in 1:21-22 also refers to a covenant, which covenant does he mean? James qualifies λόγος with the *hapax legomenon* ἔμφυτος ("implanted"). This suggests that James could be referring to the new covenant from Jeremiah 31:33, which is also described as being put into God's people and written on their hearts.[235] However, the fact that James has to call his readers to receive (δέχομαι; Jas 1:21) this implanted word and to become a "doer" of it (γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου; Jas 1:22), shows that James sees here an "already-not-yet" characteristic in this new covenant. This indicates that James sees the two concepts of the new covenant and the kingdom of God very much connected, which becomes even more evident in James 2:5-11.

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[234] For a solid argumentation from the internal evidence in the book of Deuteronomy itself, that what is written therein goes at least back to Moses' actual words if not his own writings, see Daniel I. Block, "Recovering the Voice of Moses: The Genesis of Deuteronomy," *JETS* 44, no. 3 (2001): 403–08.

[235] Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 599. See also Konradt, *Christliche Existenz nach dem Jakobusbrief*, 79, who argues that even though the Old Testament concept of an inward law (Dtn 30:11-14; Jer 31:33-34) is implied in James 1:21, ἔμφυτος λόγος is mainly a continuation of the "new birth" theme from James 1:18.

3.3.1.4. James 2:5-11: The Kingdom of God and the Royal Law

There are three ways in which James addresses his readers as "brothers." Most often he calls them just "brothers," a few times he calls them "my brothers" and in three of those cases he says "my beloved brothers." It seems likely that the more James adds to the address the more he wants to emphasize what he is about to say.[236] James 2:5 is one of the three verses where James addresses his readers as "my beloved brothers," thereby probably emphasizing everything that follows. The length of the address, however, is in James 2:5 only one of three emphasizing factors. The other two factors are combined in the imperative Ἀκούσατε, which is emphasized by its position at the beginning of the sentence and by its epical usage in the Old and New Testament.

Foundational here is the שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל (Deut 6:4-5), which Jesus cited first when he was asked what the most important commandment was (Mark 12:28-29). To love God was probably understood by many first-century Jews to be the highest command given in the Old Testament (cf. Mark 12:32-33; Luke 10:27). Jesus agrees with this understanding and directly connects the command to love God with the other command to love one's neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:30; Lev 19:18). It seems that James does the exact same thing in 2:5-11. He applies the second command, to love one's neighbor (Jas 2:1-4, 8-9), in light of the first command, to love God (Jas 2:5). McKnight observes that "James is the

[236] This will be unfolded in more detail in section 3.3.2.1.

only person in the New Testament after Jesus who quotes both sides of the Jesus Creed: loving God in 1:12 and 2:5 and loving others as oneself here in 2:8."[237]

Although it seems that even the Pharisees and scribes agreed on the priority of both of these two commands (cf. Matt 22:34-40; Mark 12:32-33; Luke 10:27), the consistent application of the second seems to have been neglected due to uncertainty about the scope of the command (Luke 10:29). Jesus' parable of the priest, the Levite and the compassionate Samaritan implies that such a neglect of the second command was common in official, pious Judaism (cf. Luke 10:31-32).[238] Implicitly, Jesus of course criticizes the pious Jews for focusing on the first commandment, but neglecting the second (cf. Luke 12:42). James, then, makes this implicit critique again explicit. Jesus said that "on these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 22:40; ESV). James turns it around and argues that if believers show partiality they actually are accountable for breaking the whole law (Jas 2:8-10). His subsequent discussion of faith without works is probably a continuation of that point. Faith would then correlate with the first command to love God, while works would be identified with the love of one's neighbor. That the two cannot be separated remains then in continuity with Jesus' own teaching on the subject.

Given that the love of God and the care for one's neighbor are so prominent in Deuteronomy, which Waltke calls a "covenant renewal document,"[239] it is not surprising

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[237] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 208.

[238] Bock, *Luke*, 1031.

[239] Waltke, "The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament," in Morgan and Peterson, 84.

that James also calls the law "royal" (2:8). McKnight argues that "royal law" is mainly used to refer to the preeminent nature of the singular law of Lev 19:18. He mentions that two other components could be seen in that expression as well, namely that Jesus as the Messiah is also the royal king and his law is royal because it is for the subjects of his kingdom. However, McKnight adds that it is probably unwise to lean on those latter two components, because James' focus is not so much on the royal nature of the law but rather on its preeminent nature. Surprisingly, only a few sentences later McKnight connects this law with the "implanted word" of James 1:18, 21 and sees therein also a reference to the new covenant.[240] Given that the concept of covenant is a subcategory of kingship (cf. introductory section in 3.3.1), McKnight's interpretation of the meaning of "royal law" is not satisfactory.

Johnson argues that especially the proximity in which the "royal law" (Jas 2:8) appears to the "kingdom of God" (Jas 2:5) "suggests a reading like 'law of the kingdom' […], meaning the law articulated or ratified by Jesus 'the glorious Lord,' whose name 'is invoked over them' (2:7)."[241] Since the connection between Jesus' teaching on the two greatest commandments and James' discussion in 2:5-11 has become evident above, it is especially likely that James uses "royal law" in order to connect it with Jesus' kingship and kingdom.[242] McKnight is therefore right to emphasize the connection to the new

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[240] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 206.

[241] Johnson, *The Letter of James*, 230. See also, McCartney, *James*, 147.

[242] See also Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 127.

covenant to which the "implanted word" alludes, because the new covenant is also part of the kingdom of God, which James says that the "poor" will inherit.

If, however, as it has been argued, the community of believers does not consist exclusively of poor believers, but also of those who are rich, why then does James say that the "poor" are chosen to inherit the kingdom (Jas 2:5)? The Greek verb ἐκλέγω ("chosen") belongs to Old Testament covenant language. The following diagram shows the Old Testament books in which this verb occurs ten times or more in the LXX.

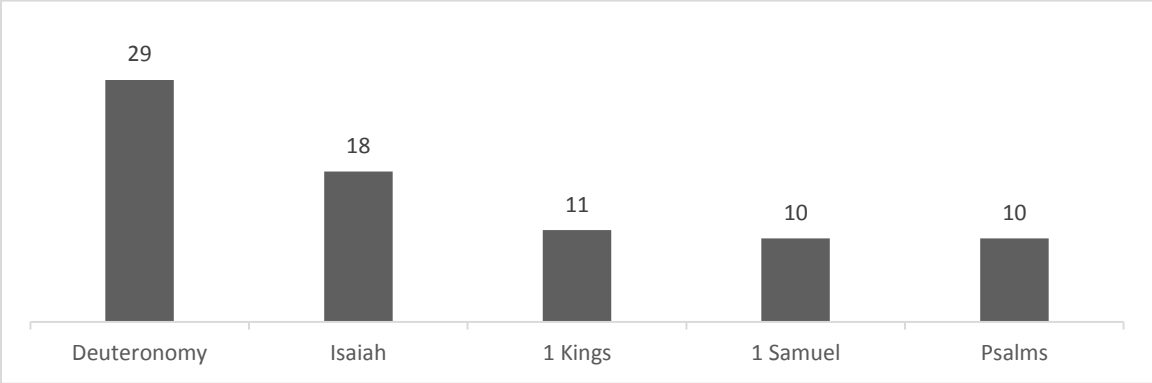

Table 4: Occurrences of ἐκλέγω in the LXX

In Deuteronomy, the subject of the verb in all but one verse is God himself. Only at the very end of Moses' long covenant renewal speech, does he call the people of Israel to choose (ἐκλέγω) life (Deut 30:19), that means to be faithful to the covenant in order to receive its blessings. However, in most of the other 28 instances, where God is the subject of ἐκλέγω, the objects of his choosing are not the people of Israel but a place where he makes his name dwell (Deut 12:11), and where the people of Israel should offer sacrifices (e.g., Deut 12:5-6), celebrate festivals (e.g., Deut 16:16), and so on. In between those more numerous occurrences that mention God's choosing of a place, there are also

scattered verses in which Moses emphasizes that God also chose his people out of all the nations (e.g., Deut 14:2; 7:7-8).

There is only one verse in Deuteronomy where the object of God's choosing is not a place, nor the people of Israel as a whole, but rather the tribe of Levi (Deut 18:5). The passage begins with the order that the people of the "Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel. They shall eat the LORD's food offerings as their inheritance" (Deut 18:1; ESV). The first part is then repeated in verse 2 and supplemented by the promise: "the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them" (ESV).

The calling of the Levites to a special ministry among the people of God, through which they should receive a portion of what the people give to God, is probably the background for how the calling of the "poor" should be understood in James 2:5. Bauckham therefore summarizes well the special place the "poor" have because of their calling.

> They are not the only members, for the kingdom they will inherit God has promised, like the crown of life (1:12), to 'those who love him' […]. But they are the paradigmatic members, in some sense the model to which all other members must conform. Thus, just as Old Testament Israel's election was not for herself alone, but for the sake of the nations, so God's choice of the poor is not for the sake of the poor themselves only but also for others.[243]

The "poor" in the kingdom of God are chosen to be, like Israel, a model for everyone else in that new community. The way the "poor" pray for their daily food, for example, should inspire all believers to pray like they do. The "poor" are also chosen, like the Levites, to

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[243] Bauckham, *James*, 192–93.

be a barometer of the community's obedience to the way God has told them to live with each other.[244] How the "poor" are doing physically in the community, shows how the rest of the community is doing spiritually.

3.3.2. Family Language in James

Already in the previous section on kingdom and covenant language it has become clear that those two concepts are only one way of how James describes the reality of which the new community of believers is part of. Especially by calling God "father" and his readers "brothers," James indirectly describes this community as part of a great family. The picture of a family and the covenant which believers are part of is also what informs James 4:4, where James calls his readers "adulterers". He thereby alludes to the Old Testament covenant relationship between God and his people which was often expressed in marital language (cf. Hos 3:1) and is by implication also family language.[245]

The following sections will focus on the more frequently used family language in James' letter, how it connects with the kingdom-related language and what it contributes to the overall teaching on life as part of the new community.

3.3.2.1. A Call to Impartiality through Exemplified Brotherhood

In 15 of the letter's 108 verses, James calls his readers ἀδελφοί. In 11 of those verses, he adds the personal pronoun μου, and in 3 of those 11 verses he further adds ἀγαπητοί. It seems that James uses the vocative ἀδελφοί often in combination with an imperative for

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[244] Peter T. Vogt, "Social Justice and the Vision of Deuteronomy," *JETS* 51, no. 1 (2008): 39.

[245] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 332.

his readers. The following diagram shows all the instances where James directly[246] gives a command to his readers and demonstrates when and how ἀδελφοί and second person plural imperatives are used in James.

	Conj.	Imperative	Vocative
1:2		ἡγήσασθε	ἀδελφοί μου
1:16		Μὴ πλανᾶσθε	ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί
1:19		Ἴστε,	ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί
1:21	διὸ	δέξασθε	
1:22	δὲ	Γίνεσθε	
2:1		ἔχετε	Ἀδελφοί μου
2:5		Ἀκούσατε	ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί
2:12	οὕτως	λαλεῖτε καὶ ποιεῖτε	
3:1		γίνεσθε	ἀδελφοί μου
3:14	εἰ δὲ	μὴ κατακαυχᾶσθε καὶ ψεύδεσθε	
4:7-10	οὖν	ὑποτάγητε, ἀντίστητε, ἐγγίσατε, καθαρίσατε, ἁγνίσατε, ταλαιπωρήσατε, πενθήσατε, κλαύσατε, ταπεινώθητε	δίψυχοι
4:11		Μὴ καταλαλεῖτε	ἀδελφοί
4:13		Ἄγε νῦν	οἱ λέγοντες
5:1		Ἄγε νῦν, κλαύσατε	οἱ πλούσιοι
5:7-8	οὖν	Μακροθυμήσατε, στηρίξατε	ἀδελφοί
5:9		μὴ στενάζετε	ἀδελφοί
5:10		λάβετε	ἀδελφοί
5:12		μὴ ὀμνύετε	ἀδελφοί μου
5:16	οὖν	ἐξομολογεῖσθε, εὔχεσθε	

Table 5: Vocatives and Imperatives in James

What this diagram shows is that in 11 of the 15 times James addresses his readers as ἀδελφοί he does so in the context of an imperative. In most of the verses, when James directs an imperative to his readers, he also addresses them as ἀδελφοί. In almost all

[246] Not listed are imperatives that are used in a subordinate sense. For example, οἰέσθω in James 1:7 is not a direct appeal to the whole congregation but rather a subordinate part of the main command to ask without doubts (Jas 1:5).

cases where James does not address them as ἀδελφοί, the imperative is connected to an earlier statement and therefore does not introduce a new point in the discourse. This then leads to the conclusion that always when James writes a new command he addresses his readers as ἀδελφοί.

Assuming that James the brother of Jesus most likely wrote the letter (cf. the comments at the beginning of chapter 3), this brotherhood language is especially important. James humbles himself and exalts the others by calling them his brothers, while at the same time he never mentions that he actually is a biological half-brother of Jesus himself. James writes here probably in a similar way as Peter did in 1 Peter 5:1-4, who wrote his exhortation to the elders (πρεσβύτεροι) as a fellow elder (συμπρεσβύτερος), while he calls Jesus the chief shepherd (ἀρχιποίμενος), even though he was appointed by Jesus himself to shepherd (ποιμαίνω) Jesus' sheep (John 21:16). Peter exemplifies thereby what he calls the elders to do as well: "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3; ESV). In the same way, James teaches his readers not to show partiality (James 2:1), and at the same time exemplifies such impartiality by addressing all the believers as "my beloved brothers." Hartin argues that in contrast to the wisdom literature (e.g., Prov 1:8), where the author addresses his reader as "my son," James sees his readers as equals and makes this explicit by addressing them as "my brothers."[247]

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[247] Patrick J. Hartin, *James*, 2nd ed., Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 56. See also Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?*, 101–02.

That not only James and Peter practice such impartiality, but that this is a common characteristic of early church leaders, becomes especially clear in the way Paul writes to Philemon. Paul addresses Philemon in 1:1 as "our beloved fellow worker [Φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν]." Paul makes it very clear that though he is in the position to write in a very different tone ("though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required"; Phlm 1:8), he only appeals to Philemon to take Onesimus back as a beloved brother, if Philemon accepts Paul as a partner (Phlm 1:17). Again, we see this pattern of an apostle with authority, calling another believer not to show partiality (i.e., to treat Onesmius not as a run-away slave, but as a brother in Christ) and at the same time exemplifying the very thing in the way he writes. What stands out is that both James and Paul address those they are writing to as beloved brothers (Jas 1:1; Phlm 1, 7, 20) and they both also call those whom the readers should not treat with partiality, brothers (Jas 1:9; Phlm 16).

This unity and impartiality was hard-fought even among the apostles. When people in the church in Corinth, for example, wanted to play Paul off against Peter or Apollos (1 Cor 1:12) Paul explained that there is no hierarchy among them: "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each" (1 Cor 3:5; ESV). Paul goes on to compare himself and Apollos with workers in the field with different tasks and then states: "he who plants and he who waters are one" (1 Cor 3:8; ESV).

Impartiality is therefore deeply rooted in the apostles' own lives and thinking and is closely connected with the understanding that the new community of Christians is a family of brothers and sisters. When James calls his readers not to show partiality, he

exemplifies it in a way that was common among the apostles, who even practiced the same impartiality between themselves. This understanding of the community of Christians as family is rooted in the fact that Jesus revealed God as father to his disciples (Luke 10:22). The next section, therefore, will focus on how James writes about God as father.

3.3.2.2. James 1:16-18: The Father of Light and the New Birth

One of the three times that James addresses his readers as "my beloved brothers" is in James 1:16. Given that the vocative ἀδελφοί is often used in a sentence where James gives a new command (cf. 3.3.2.1), it is very likely that the intensification that comes with the adjective ἀγαπητός is also used to especially emphasize the following new command. However, it is not entirely clear what is being emphasized, since the command is simply: "Do not be deceived [πλανάω]" (ESV). In the preceding verses (Jas 1:13-15), James argues that nobody can blame God for his own sin, because it is not God who tempts to sin but one's own desires. James makes here a similar argument as John does in 1 John 1:5-10. John warns his readers not to deny their own sin, because otherwise they would actually deceive (πλανάω) themselves (1 John 1:8). Another parallel between James 1:13-18 and 1 John 1:5-10 is that in both God is described as light without any darkness.

James 1:17	**1 John 1:5**
πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δώρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ <u>τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων</u>, *παρ᾽ ᾧ* **οὐκ** *ἔνι* παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς **ἀποσκίασμα**.	Καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι <u>ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν</u> καὶ **σκοτία** *ἐν αὐτῷ* **οὐκ ἔστιν** οὐδεμία.

John strongly warns his readers in 1:5-10 not to deny their own sin, because by doing so they actually despise God's holy (expressed by "light")[248] and blameless (expressed by the absence of darkness) character. James also warns his readers not to revile God's holy (expressed by "light") and blameless (expressed by the absence of shadows) character by denying their own responsibility for their sin (James 1:14-15). In light of these connections, it is probably right to say that in 1:16 James wants to especially emphasize the command "do not to be deceived". People are deceived when they make God responsible for the temptations that come from their own desires and that lead to sin and death (Jas 1:13-14). This is especially problematic because God is actually the one who only gives good and perfect gifts. The combination of "gift" and "good" probably suggests that "good" means "generous" (cf. Sirach 35:10), which would implicitly then refer back to James' foundational statement in 1:5 about God's willingness to give as an expression of his character.[249]

James, however, also connects God's holy and blameless character with his fatherhood. By calling him "father" in 1:17, James actually contrasts God to people's personified sin. James argues in 1:15, that, in the end, sin brings forth (ἀποκυέω) death, while God, on the other hand, brings forth (ἀποκυέω) believers as firstfruits of his new creation (Jas 1:18).[250] However, James is not the only New Testament author to use "birth language"

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[248] To interpret "light" as a reference to moral perfection is also implied in many Old Testament texts (e.g., Isa 51:4; Prov 6:23). See Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 48–49.

[249] McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 125.

[250] Ibid., 124.

to describe the new creation of believers. McKnight summarizes well how this is a common theme in the different writings of the New Testament:

> What John expresses as a "birth from above" (John 1:12-13; 3:3), Paul as a Spirit-created new life (Gal 3:21; Rom 4:17; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:22, 36, 45; 2 Cor 3:6; 5:17; Tit 3:4-7), and Peter as a "new birth" (1 Pet 1:3-5, 23; 2:2-3), James sees as "divine delivery" of the ecclesial community into the world.[251]

Beale argues that James 1:18 is best understood as referring to the inaugurated new-creational status of believers. Even though "first fruits" could also be understood as a reference to the final physical resurrection, the connection with the more obvious phrase "he brought us forth by the word of truth" makes it likely that both statements are about the present beginning of the new creation.[252] Therefore, James probably connects here the family language (God the father brings forth his children), with eschatological language. In making believers a new creation while they are still living in the world, God as their father inaugurates his eschatological kingdom in the present world. This, however, means that those who are made new by the father are to live as brothers and sisters in a way that fits to the new creation, that is, pure and undefiled, thereby mirroring their father (Jas 1:27).

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[251] Ibid., 130.

[252] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 322–23.

3.3.2.3. James 1:26-27: Pure and Undefiled Religion

In these last two verses of chapter 1, James gives two examples of what "pure and undefiled religion" looks like. The first one is very straightforward and practical – to visit the widows and the orphans. There are numerous examples in the Old Testament where oppression of those groups is strongly forbidden (e.g., Exod 22:22; Deut 27:19; Jer 7:6; Zech 7:10) and initially it was even clearly commanded that the Israelites should actually take care of them (e.g., Deut 14:28-29; 24:19-21, 26:12-13). However, an even more prominent theme in the Old Testament is God's own care for the widows and fatherless (e.g., Deut 10:18; Ps 82:3; Hos 14:3). This theme probably reaches its climax in the statement of Psalm 68:5: "Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation" (ESV). This seems to be the background for James' statement about pure and undefiled religion or worship παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί (lit. "in the presence of the God and father"). Worship of God in his presence is also the context of Psalm 68, as it is expressed in verse 4: "Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him [לְפָנָיו; lit. 'before his face/presence' (BDB, 815)]" (ESV). This correlation between what God does and what he now calls the believers to do as well goes even further.

The one who visits (ἐπισκέπτομαι) people in the Pentateuch (LXX) is always God (e.g., Gen 21:1, 50:24; Exod 4:31). Yet James admonishes *believers* to visit (ἐπισκέπτομαι) orphans and widows. It is important here to pay attention to James' word order. Vogt summarizes that in ancient Near Eastern texts and in most of the Old Testament the word order "widows and orphans" prevails. Deuteronomy, however, alters this order so that the succession is always "orphans and widows," which Vogt considers to be a deliberative

change in order "to redefine who was to be considered 'poor'."[253] He goes on to argue that orphans and widows, like Levites, are not to be viewed as being poor, but rather as being without land and therefore rightful recipients of a share from other people's goods. This should then not be understood as an act of charity but rather as a normal, God-ordained means by which they are supported.

Vogt concludes: "By steadfastly refusing to consider aliens, orphans, and widows as 'poor,' Moses in Deuteronomy is insisting that they be integrated fully into the life of the nation, just as the Levites were to be. They, like the Levites, would serve as a barometer for the obedience of the nation."[254] However, next to the very optimistic outlook of Deuteronomy 15:4, "there will be no poor among you," stands the sobering comment of Deuteronomy 15:11, "there will never cease to be poor in the land" (ESV). How do those seemingly contradictory statements go together?

Vogt follows Wright here, who argues that the vision in Deuteronomy 15:4 functions eschatologically, "pointing to a future hope of a people living in blessing and obedience without needs."[255] Vogt compares the tension between the reality expressed in Deuteronomy 15:11 and the ideal of Deuteronomy 15:4 with the New Testament concept of the kingdom of God with its "already" and "not yet" aspects.[256] So when James uses

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[253] Vogt, "Social Justice and the Vision of Deuteronomy," 38–39.

[254] Ibid., 39.

[255] Wright, Christopher J. H., *Deuteronomy*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 189.

[256] Vogt, "Social Justice and the Vision of Deuteronomy," 41.

the same word order that is consistently used in Deuteronomy, he probably picks up that vision of Deuteronomy 15:4 and applies it to the community of believers he is writing to. This is especially likely, given that James was part of the earliest church in Jerusalem, to which Luke actually applies the words of Deuteronomy 15:4.[257]

Deuteronomy 15:4 (LXX)	**Acts 4:34**
οὐκ ἔσται ἐν σοὶ ἐνδεής	οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς

James' call for believers to visit the orphan and the widow is very much connected with both the way God himself acts on behalf of orphans and widows (Ps 68:5), and also with the vision for God's people laid out in Deuteronomy (Deut 15:4). Since the new community is called to live as brothers and sisters, who are made new by the father, they should imitate the father by caring for those who have lost their biological father or husband.[258] Not just out of compassion, but because it is a natural consequence of what it means to be the new community of believers.

3.3.3. Summary: The Christian Community as a Royal Family

Doriani summarizes well the underlying principle that informs James' teaching on how the Christian community should deal with its poor and wealthy members, when he says that "God honors every son and daughter who believes in him. The church is a family, not a club, and favoritism has no place in a family."[259] However, the church is more than a family, namely, a royal family, because the father is also king. This is why the children

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[257] Ibid., 42.

[258] For a similar argument, see the introductory section on the fatherhood of God in McCartney, *James*, 68–69.

[259] Doriani, *James*, 64.

address him both as father and Lord, and why they ask of him with a certainty that he loves to give, at the same time humbling themselves before him and acknowledging his authority and rule. It is therefore no surprise that Paul taught the Greek-speaking churches only two Aramaic expressions (as far as we can tell from his letters) *Abba* ("father;" Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) and *marana tha* ("our Lord, come!"; 1 Cor 16:22).[260] Hurtado argues that those two Aramaic prayer-expressions are probably tradition from the earliest Aramaic church and that Paul taught it to the Greek-speaking churches "to unite believers across linguistic and cultural lines in a shared devotional practice."[261] If Hurtado is right, then it is very likely that James was part of this Aramaic-speaking church from which these two prayer expressions stem. This would not be surprising, given that these are the two concepts Jesus himself taught his disciples, namely to address God as "our father" and to pray that his kingdom would come (Luke 11:2; cf. 2.2.2.1). Either way, both the institution of family and the concept of God's kingdom are clearly present in James' letter. He synthesizes and unfolds the Old Testament background and Jesus' teaching on these issues for the new community of believers and their situation.

3.4. Second Intermediate Conclusion: The "Poor" and the Kingdom in James

James is writing a very densely formulated letter to an economically mixed community of believers. The foundation for everything he calls the community to do is that God is a *giving God*. Because of that, believers ought to ask for whatever they need, passionately

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[260] Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 110–11.

[261] Ibid., 110.

and without doubts. Such bold and single-minded prayer is easier for those who have no alternatives but are fully dependent on God. The "poor" are therefore models for all believers, because the in-breaking of the eschatological kingdom of God in the present means that people should live now according to the standards of the eschaton. Since material wealth has no honorific value there, it should also not define what believers honor in the present.

James, like many other New Testament authors, presupposes a certain familiarity with the kingdom of God on the side of his readers. He therefore never defines or describes it, but often alludes to it. Especially by using the titles "Lord" (κύριος) and "Christ" (Χριστός) for Jesus (Jas 1:1; 2:1), he indicates who the king is and by calling himself this king's δοῦλος, James locates himself within the kingdom. However, James also integrates Old Testament covenantal language through which he connects the promised new covenant with the kingdom of God. He emphasizes the continuity of certain characteristics between the Sinai covenant and the new covenant, namely the care for the widows and orphans and the election of the "poor" as equivalent to the Levites.

A very distinct marker of how these characteristics of the new community find expression in James' letter is the use of family language. James, the biological half-brother of Jesus, addresses his readers continually as brothers. By this he models himself the impartiality that he calls for in the community of believers. This brotherhood language, however, is not just a phrase for social affiliation, but rather an expression of the new reality brought about by God's act of making believers the first fruits of his new creation. Through this new birth of believers, they can call God "father" and each other

“brothers” and “sisters.” This familial relationship between the members of the new community is another reason why partiality is diametrically opposed to their identity.

4. Conclusion: Applied Jesus Tradition in the Early Church

There are many similarities between how Jesus himself cares for the "poor" and needy, both in his teaching and in his deeds, as it is presented in the Gospel of Luke, and the way James addresses such care in his letter. However, James makes more explicit that which in Jesus' teaching was only implicit. This is not surprising, given that Jesus had to teach disciples who were still very much ignorant about the greater mission and identity of Jesus. James, on the other hand, wrote to a community of believers who were most likely already aware of the whole story. The differences between how Luke presents Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God and the way James writes about it can also be explained due to them writing from different points in salvation history. After Pentecost, the early church understood itself as being part of the kingdom of God and they kept preaching it to those who did not yet believe (e.g., Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23). However, the very few references to the "kingdom of God" in the New Testament letters (18 total) indicate that the reality of the kingdom of God was more presupposed than its essence explained in the teaching of the church.[262] This is also true of James.

In the following sections I will summarize how James applies Jesus tradition, which is also retained in the Gospel of Luke, to the early church. Different aspects of the

[262] Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament," in Morgan and Peterson, 143–51.

relationship between the "poor" and the kingdom of God in Luke and James have crystallized into four basic themes which I will now concisely articulate.

4.1. Theme 1: Inaugurated Eschatology and the Great Reversal

Already in Mary's Magnificat, at the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke, the theme of the great reversal appears. Mary proclaims that God exalts the lowly and humiliates the proud. Throughout the Gospel of Luke this whole theme becomes more and more nuanced. While Mary and many other pious Jews probably expected to be able to visually witness this reversal in the form of a political liberation from Roman occupation, Jesus redefines the "great reversal." Among others, he redefines the timing of the reversal. The reversal is one aspect of the inaugurated eschatology and is therefore an inaugurated eschatological reversal. This means that the future reversal at the end of time already reaches into the present. James applies this to the situation of the community in the early church he is writing to. He exhorts the community to live now according to the eschatological reality that the lowly will be honored and the wealth of the rich will be stripped away. There is therefore no room for partiality, but rather all need to become aware of their equal dependence on God.

4.2. Theme 2: The Pretense of Independence vs. Acknowledged Dependence

Moses warned the people of Israel not to forget the Lord when they settle down in the Holy Land and become more and more rich (Deut 8:11-18). He knew that when they have more than enough of everything that they would be tempted to think that man forges his own destiny, forgetting that they received everything they have from God and that they are still dependent on him. This, in fact, often was the case and even in Jesus' time,

after Israel had been in exile, and been governed by different empires, this was still the predominant attitude of many of the more well-to-do Jews.

In his teachings, Jesus used both babies and the pious "poor" as examples of those who will enter the kingdom of God. What both have in common is that they are aware of their dependence and both trust that someone will take care of their needs. These are the characteristics that all believers need to learn from them.

James argues exactly along those lines. He warns believers not to act as if they are in control of their own lives, but to acknowledge freely that all their plans are under God's control. However, God's rule is not that of a brutal dictator, but rather that of a father who loves to give to his children when they ask.

4.3. Theme 3: The New Community as Royal Family

In Luke's account of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, the prayer itself and the subsequent verses emphasize two ways in which believers can approach God, as father and as king. Jesus warned his disciples not to think that God does not care for them, because in doing so they make God worse than sinful human fathers, and even they know very well to give good things to their children. Instead, they should boldly ask their father in heaven for whatever they need.

James unfolds this in more detail. He also admonishes his readers to ask God for whatever they need, because God is the father of light who loves to give good gifts. However, he also warns them not to doubt and be double minded, but rather to pray like the "poor" do, who have little or no options remaining to them.

A second application of that theme in James is that all believers are brothers and sisters. As such they are one family, which implies that there can be no partiality among them. That this is not just a theoretical concept that James is teaching is evident from the way he himself is writing his letters to the community. While he, as the half-brother of Jesus and one of the main leaders in the mother-church in Jerusalem, could write with a very different demeanor, he chooses to write simply as their brother.

4.4. Theme 4: The Election of the "Poor"

James applies Jesus' harsh warnings about wealth to rich believers in the church and exhorts them to live according to the eschaton, that is to live as if in the present material wealth has the same value as it will have in the eschaton. In the same way, he unfolds Jesus' makarism concerning the "poor" in the context of a community of believers. Faith is incompatible with partiality, in the same way as Jesus showed no partiality when he had table-fellowship with those on the fringes of society. However, if believers show partiality in their gatherings, then they dishonor the economically poor who are chosen like the Levites to be the spiritual barometer of the new community. If the economically poor believers are not treated well and cared for, then the spiritual health of the whole community is in danger.

In other words, we can see that James very emphatically expresses what Bovon extracts from Luke: "It [i.e., the Christian attitude towards possessions] is not simply a question of ethics, but above all an ecclesiastical preoccupation. Without sharing and charity, the

church denies what it is."[263] In James the focus is not only on sharing and charity, but to fully overcome socio-economic distinctions and to enable undivided fellowship among believers from all socio-economic levels.

4.5. Outlook for Further Research

The main question that has been touched in this study but never discussed in detail is what the *historical* connection between the Gospel of Luke and the Letter of James is. It has become clear in this thesis that there is a *theological* connection between how Luke presents the "poor" and their relationship to the kingdom of God and the way James unfolds and applies this to the early church. Since most of the texts on Luke's understanding of the "poor" that are discussed in this thesis are part of Luke's special tradition, it seems reasonable to imagine that there might be a common tradition of Jesus' teachings behind the Gospel of Luke and the Letter of James. This would need a more detailed historical study of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts in comparison with the Letter of James.

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[263] Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, 447.

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