

The meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts: An enquiry into Luke's understanding of salvation.

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ABSTRACT

Through a contextual reading of the selected passages in Luke-Acts, this study seeks to present Luke's understanding of the meaning of salvation in his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The first chapter gives an introduction by way of showing the main motivation for the study and lays foundation for the whole project. The second chapter provides a brief analysis of various interpretations of Luke's understanding of salvation. The focus is on three selected scholars, namely Hans Conzelmann - *The Theology of St Luke*, Howard Marshall - *Luke – Historian and Theologian* and Jacob Jervell - *Luke and the People of God*. Their views are presented and evaluated in line with the main objective of the project.

The third chapter is the backbone of this project. It is an exegetical study of five key selected passages that clearly focus on salvation in Luke-Acts. Through a careful exposition of each of these passages, the aim is to understand Luke's understanding of the meaning of salvation. A number of scholars are consulted in this chapter to sustain the main theses of the project. The research also contextualises this project in the sense of relating the findings to the socio-economic and socio-political historical background.

The fourth chapter reflects on the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts. In a sense it wraps up the main argument and presents findings more clearly and openly based on the exegetical work of chapter three. It is argued in this chapter that Luke's salvation encompasses a total transformation of human life: sociologically, politically and spiritually. The final chapter brings the whole project to a full circle as it serves as a summary and conclusion of the whole project. It draws conclusions of the project with practical implications for the Church in South Africa in the 21st century.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

1.1 Background

In one of our postgraduate New Testament classes at George Whitefield College, we had an intense discussion and debate about what Luke¹ meant by salvation in Luke-Acts. Students quoted different scholars as they argued their points. At the end of the discussion there was no unanimity. It became clear to me that there were various understandings of the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts, and that my view was not as clear as I always thought. In order to gain a better understanding of the scholarly debate, I began to read in greater depth around the subject. During this reading, I observed that more scholarly discussion centres on Luke's message of salvation and treatment of the Jews and Gentiles than on the meaning of salvation. Many scholars would agree that salvation is at the heart of Luke's theology and purpose.² Some scholars accuse Luke of holding negative views against the Jewish community in favour of the Gentiles,³ while others defend him against the charge of anti-Semitism.⁴

Further reading around the subject of salvation in Luke-Acts led me to realise that our class discussion was a reflection of the literature that we read independently. My interest in understanding the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts is my conviction that different understandings of salvation will inevitably give birth to different views of Christianity. This will

¹ I refer to Luke as a conventional short hand for the author of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, not because I have concluded that Luke wrote the two volumes.

² Some of the recent studies on salvation in Luke-Acts include: F. Thielman, 2005; F. Bovon, 2006; P. Doble 1996; J.B. Tyson 1999; M.A. Powell 1992; N.T. Wright 1996 and several articles by various scholars in I.H. Marshall and D. Peterson (*eds*) 1998 and G.J. Steyn 2005.

³ They claim that Luke holds the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus, God's appointed Messiah. Among these scholars is J.T. Sanders 1987.

⁴ Scholars like I.H. Marshall 1970 and J. Jervell 1972 argue that Luke does not only present negative information about the Jews but a positive picture as well. They highlight the birth and infancy narrative as well as the number of the Jews who were converted.

tend to divide the Church whose unity Jesus prayed for in John 17 and for which he laid down his life.⁵

1.2 Problem Statement

For several decades scholars have wrestled with the issue of salvation in Luke-Acts. Judging from the number of books written on Luke-Acts, one could conclude that there is no need for any further research into the issue. Among the leading scholars in this field is Hans Conzelmann. His influential, yet controversial book, *The Theology of St Luke*⁶, was not only ground breaking, but has for many years been viewed as a bench mark in Lukan studies. Subsequently, many Lukan scholars followed in his footsteps and used his material as their point of departure. Conzelmann (1961:97-101) claims that Luke's view of salvation is influenced by the delay of the *parousia*. He insists that Luke abandoned the imminent eschatological message of the early Christians and replaced it with timeless ethical exhortation, which he calls "redemptive or salvation history." In other words Luke changed the traditional story of Jesus and the eyewitnesses to suit his own theological framework. Conzelmann (1961:90) further argues that Luke had a "tendency to put all the blame on to the Jews" for resisting and trying to derail God's salvation.

Despite his detailed analyses of the means and methodology of salvation, Conzelmann does not explain what he means, or what Luke meant, by salvation. The closest we could get from him is that salvation has "two aspects." Firstly, it is "from above" meaning "from the doctrinal standpoint." Secondly, it is "from below" meaning "from the standpoint of discipleship." He maintains that this distinction is possible "because in Luke the objective salvation that Christ has won and its subjective appropriation no longer form a unity...as they did before" (Conzelmann, 1961:207). For Luke, according to Conzelmann (1961:225), "the individual is incorporated into the Church and in this way the acute problems of eschatology and of continuing life in the world are solved." In other words, Luke's attempt to explain the delay of the *parousia* has made the Church almost the end in itself. He maintains that eschatology in Luke "has become an idea which now influences ethics indirectly, by means of the idea of judgement" (Conzelmann,

⁵ The apostles also worked very hard to unite the Church by clarifying things that were not clear and they held meetings to resolve disputes (Acts 15). Like their leader, Jesus, many of them laid down their lives for the Church.

⁶ English translation of *Die Mitte der Zeit* (1953). C.M. Tuckett (1996:33) points out that the original title of the book is "The Middle of Time" but was mistakenly titled "The Theology of St Luke."

1961:232). It is a serious deficiency of his study that he nowhere engages with what Luke meant by salvation. However, his argument merits critical engagement to establish its accuracy.

It is worth noting that Conzelmann's influence is diminishing slowly since the emergence of scholars such as Jacob Jervell - *Luke and the People of God*, and I. Howard Marshall - *Luke – Historian and Theologian*. Marshall⁷ (1970:19) first challenges Conzelmann's claim that Luke twisted the original understanding of the imminent return of Christ and replaced it with salvation history. He insists that Luke is a reliable historian who "was concerned that his message about Jesus and the early church should be based upon reliable history" (1970:18).⁸ According to Marshall (1970:85), Luke is more concerned with "the saving significance of history rather than with the history itself as bare facts."

Marshall (1970:116 & 157) argues that salvation is the main theme of Luke's writings. In his book, he summarises what he sees as the main emphases of Luke-Acts under the broad ideas of: God as Saviour (chapter 5), Jesus as the one who accomplishes God's salvation (chapter 6), apostles as the witnesses of this salvation (chapter 7), and people as the recipients of God's salvation (chapter 8). Marshall appears to think that Luke wanted his readers to know that Jesus came "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10) and that the means of salvation is to "believe in Jesus" (Acts 3:38).⁹

However, Marshall (1970:94) like Conzelmann, does not enquire deeply into what Luke meant by salvation. Instead, he builds on Walters'¹⁰ definition that "salvation means the action or result of deliverance or preservation from danger or disease, implying safety, health and prosperity." Marshall (1970:95) further states that salvation in a general sense "denotes the sum of the blessings which God bestows upon men in rescuing them from every human distress and from divine judgement itself." While his scholarly work is plausible, and his engagement with Conzelmann's thesis is commendable, it is doubtful whether the acceptance of Walters'

⁷ Based on Marshall's third edition (1988).

⁸ Marshall dedicates chapter 3 to show that Luke is a reliable historian.

⁹ This message of salvation is presented as early as in 1:47 of the gospel.

¹⁰ Walters (1962:1126-1130). In the 3rd Edition which Howard Marshall is a consulting editor, the definition is slightly revised and expanded but the thrust of the message is relatively still the same.

definition of salvation is doing justice to Luke's understanding of the concept.¹¹ Would it not be more helpful if Marshall openly stated what he believes Luke meant by salvation, since he argues that it is the main theme of Luke-Acts? Marshall also omits any detailed discussion of the salvation of the Jews in the light of their rejection of Jesus, which is a prominent question in Luke-Acts.

Jervell (1972:55) has challenged the well established scholarly opinion that only after Israel had rejected salvation the apostles turned to the Gentiles. He maintains that there is no salvation apart from that of the Jews. He stresses that "it is more correct to say that only when Israel has accepted the gospel can the way to Gentiles be opened." Jervell (1972:44) highlights the "mass conversion of the Jews" through the book of Acts (2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:42; 12:24; 13:43; 14:1; 17:10-12; 19:20; 21:20). For Luke, according to Jervell (1972:43 & 56), "the mission to Jews is a necessary stage through which the history of salvation must pass in order that salvation might proceed from restored Israel to the Gentiles." He points out that after the Jews, the first group of people who received the message of salvation was God-fearers and not pure Gentiles (Acts 13:43, 14:1; 17:4, 12). Furthermore, the mission to take the message of salvation to the ends of the earth is a direct command from God (Luke 24:47; 13:47; 15:16; and 10:43).¹² Once again, like Marshall and Conzelmann, Jervell does not explain what Luke meant by salvation.¹³ The important contribution of Jervell, in this paper, is his argument that without the Jews, there is no salvation for the Gentiles. His argument will be explored in this study.

Although the scholarly discussion of salvation in Luke-Acts is at times complex, it is clear that Jesus and salvation almost always stand at the heart of it.¹⁴ Careful evaluation of available literature suggests that room exists for a more conclusive investigation of the meaning of

¹¹ Marshall uses Walters' definition of salvation without specifically grounding it in Luke-Acts. The problem with this definition, good as it is, is the fact that Walters is looking at salvation as a broad biblical theme and not specifically as it occurs in Luke-Acts. Some of what Walters says obviously applies to Luke's writing, but it could not be crystallised because of the space, and the fact that it was not his aim to explain Luke's understanding of salvation.

¹² Backing this argument, Jervell (1972:58) says "before God instituted the Gentile mission through the Cornelius event, before the Jews had the possibility of rejecting the gospel, Peter knew of the acceptance of the Gentiles." This argument is based on Acts 3:11-26.

¹³ The weakness in Jervell and Marshall seems to be the fact that they wrote their books with specific readers in mind. So they seek to answer or respond to a particular argument.

¹⁴ This is the case because the apostles made it clear in their preaching that Jesus is the Saviour (Acts 5:31; 13:23) and that "salvation is found in no one else" (Acts 4:12).

salvation in Luke-Acts. Green (1965:125) is probably correct when he says “it is astonishing ... that in view of the frequency with which Luke uses salvation terminology, more attention has not been paid to it.” A possible explanation as to why scholars have not sufficiently covered the subject might relate to their focus upon their debate about the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles and Israel and the church. Green (1998:83-106) is an exception among contemporary scholars who deal with the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts. While brief, his work is insightful. Nevertheless, the important question still remains to be answered with greater clarity: what understanding of salvation does Luke present in his two volume work?¹⁵ This is the problem which this mini-dissertation seeks to research.

Questions arising from this problem are:

- a) What do the scholars say about the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts?
- b) Does Luke understand salvation as spiritual, physical, social or political; or all of these?
- c) Does he think salvation is individual, communal or national?
- d) How does Luke relate to the Jewish hope of salvation?
- e) What are the characteristics of a saved community according to Luke-Acts?

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Aim

The main aim of this research is to seek to understand the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts by interacting with specific key passages of the New Testament, as well as grappling with other available scholarly material on the subject.

2.2 Objectives

In an attempt to pursue the aims of this mini-dissertation, the following specific objectives should be attained:

- a) Review and critique some modern Lukan scholars who have covered the subject.
- b) Study specific key passages in Greek and English texts of the New Testament to establish the following:

¹⁵ The goal of this study is not to give a definition of the term “salvation” but to seek interpretive understanding.

- I. The relationship between spiritual and physical salvation in Luke-Acts.
- II. The relationship between Luke's understanding of salvation and the Jewish hope of salvation.
- III. The characteristics of a saved community according to Luke-Acts?
- c) Present the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts.
- d) The implication of Luke's understanding of salvation for the Church in the 21st century.

3. CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this study is that salvation, in Luke-Acts, means total deliverance from anything that hinders people from knowing and enjoying God and from participating in his kingdom.¹⁶ I will argue that salvation according to Luke is:

- a) Both spiritual and socio-political (Luke 4).¹⁷
- b) Available to all people, though it is offered to the Jews first (1:69-75).
- c) A present reality that can be experienced by people now (Luke 19:9),¹⁸ even if it is not present in its fullest form. Luke's work is an invitation to everyone to come and see, as well as experience, this salvation in Christ.¹⁹
- d) A climatic future hope. The fullness of salvation will be enjoyed when Jesus returns in glory to bring everything to an end (Acts 1:11). It is this hope of Christ's return that enabled the saved Christian community to persevere under severe persecution and rejection in the early stages of the church (Acts 5, 7, 8).

4. METHOD OF RESEARCH

The author of this study writes from a reformed evangelical perspective. It will be qualitative in nature, focusing mostly on published work and on original text. Several modern Lukan scholars will be reviewed to more carefully define the important questions, and to suggest possible

¹⁶ Bock (2004:360) puts it well when he says "salvation involves sharing in hope, experiencing the kingdom, tasting forgiveness, and participating in the Spirit's enabling power, especially for mission."

¹⁷ By "spiritual salvation" I mean people will be saved from hell to heaven. By "socio-political salvation" I mean that the people will be delivered from political oppression, as was harboured by sectors of the Jews, and physical conditions that hindered them to freely worship God, be it blindness, poverty or riches. Salvation means a total renewal of the person's life.

¹⁸ According to Luke the arrival of Jesus meant the arrival of salvation for the lost (Luke 19:10). It is for people irrespective of their nationality and race but it starts from the house of Abraham.

¹⁹ Luke is calling people to come and enjoy the blessing found in Jesus almost in the same way as Philip called his friend Nathanael - "come and see", the one Moses and the prophets spoke about is here (John 1:43-51).

solutions. In dealing with passages, I will not attempt to exegete everything in detail, but to enquire what light they show on how Luke thought about salvation. Exegesis will be based on The Greek New Testament and will utilise English New Testament commentaries such as Bock, Geldenhuys, Nolland, Marshall and others. In grappling with the meaning of the salvation word group and grammatical composition, I will make use of Louw and Nida, Kittel and Friedrich and Wallace. The theological methodology used in this study will follow the hermeneutics of the Biblical Theology perspective as set out by Rosner (2000:3-11). In broad terms I will attempt to apply the methodology of the historical method, by which I mean to attempt to understand what Luke is saying in the light of what can be known about his own historical context. Other important New Testament tools such as journals, monographs and dictionaries will also be consulted to establish the evidence of the text on the different facets of salvation in Luke-Acts.

Salvation terminology appears at least twenty-two times in Luke-Acts.²⁰ It is clearly beyond the bounds of this study to do detailed exegesis on all of Luke's references to salvation. Instead, I intend to focus on the following five passages, and will refer to other relevant texts to sustain my argument.

- a) Luke 1-2
- b) Luke 4:16-30
- c) Luke 7:36-50
- d) Luke 19:1-10
- e) Acts 2

The logic behind choosing these passages is that the first one (Luke 1-2) is full of salvation terminology. It can be argued that it serves as a foundation for the theological ideas of the rest of Luke-Acts.²¹ The second passage (Luke 4:16-30) does not contain explicit salvation terminology, however Jesus declares his mission in a way that seems to describe salvation. It is also regarded as programmatic of what unfolds in the rest of Luke-Acts. The third passage (Luke 7:36-50) clearly links salvation with the forgiveness of sin and Jesus declares salvation to

²⁰ Salvation terminology includes: save (Luke 6:9; 9:24; 19:10; 23:35, 37, 39; Acts 2:40), saviour (Luke 1:47; 2:11), salvation (Luke 1:69, 71; 2:30; 3:6; 19:9; Acts 4:12; 13:26, 47; 28:28) and redemption (2:38; 21:28; 24:21).

²¹ Minear (1966:129) argues that "the whole fabric is a witness to the marvelous response of God to the covenant promise." For him these two chapters are critical if one hopes to understand Luke.

an individual. The fourth passage (Luke 19:1-10) shows the availability and accessibility of salvation. Marshall believes this is the climax of the salvation story. In the last passage (Acts 2) salvation is vigorously proclaimed and many are saved.

CHAPTER TWO

EVALUATION OF VARIOUS SCHOLARS' WORK

1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of salvation in Luke-Acts is hotly debated and discussed by Lukan scholars. There are several views on how Luke understood salvation. Some scholars, such as Sanders, highlight Luke's negative treatment of the Jews in relation to salvation. His understanding of Luke is that the Jews "are the enemies of Jesus" (Sanders, 1987:3). Others, such as Jervell and Brawley, claim that Luke does not condemn all the Jews. In his monograph, Brawley is very much in agreement with Jervell's view that Luke treats the Jews positively. He maintains that salvation for the Gentiles did not come at the expense of the Jews. According to Brawley, Luke also treats the Pharisees positively, as can be seen in Luke 17:20; Acts 5:34-39; 15:5; 23:6-10. They are "respected and authoritative representatives of Judaism....and can be used as a point of contact" (Brawley, 1987:84).

Other scholars such as Conzelmann focus a lot of their attention on Luke as a theologian who is committed to edit the story of salvation to suit his theological conviction. Still others, as in the case of Marshall, focus on defending Luke, insisting that he is a reliable historian. Despite the variety of views, several scholars, such as Green, Bock and Marshall, agree that salvation is a very important theme of Luke's two volume work. Under "method of research" in chapter 1, I mentioned that salvation terminology appears more than twenty times; Luke uses the language of salvation more than any other New Testament author.²² Marshall (1970:92) highlights that σωτήρ, σωτηρία and σωτήριοι are not found in the other synoptic Gospels, though they are not exclusive to Luke's writing. The nature and scope of this dissertation unfortunately do not allow for the inclusion of a number of other notable scholars. The focus will, therefore, be on the

²² Luke commonly uses σώζω "to save" 6:9; 7:50; 8:12, 36, 48, 50; 9:24 (2x); 13:23; 17:19; 18:26, 42; 19:10; 23:35 (2x), 39; σωτήρ "savior" 1:47; 2:11; σωτηρία "salvation" 1:69, 71, 77; 19:9; σωτήριοι "salvation" 2:30; 3:6; λύτρωσις "redemption" 1:68; 2:38; 21:28;24:21.

following three key scholars, who are considered to have made a significant contribution to Lukan studies: Hans Conzelmann²³, Howard Marshall²⁴, and Jacob Jervell.²⁵

2. KEY CONTRIBUTORS

2.1 Hans Conzelmann

It could be argued that Hans Conzelmann is the most influential author of the last 50 years in the studies of Lukan theology. In his momentous and yet controversial book *Die Mitte der Zeit*²⁶, Conzelmann labours to clarify Luke's theology. His endeavour was ground breaking. He was viewed for many years as one of the leading scholars in this field and his book was, for many years, a bench mark in Lukan studies. Many Lukan scholars have followed in his footsteps and used his material as their point of departure. Paging through various books published in the last ten years, it is noticeable that Conzelmann is still frequently quoted, either in support of or in opposition to his position.

In reading of the Gospel, Conzelmann (1961:97) claims that Luke reconstructed "the original conception of the imminence of the Kingdom ... based on certain considerations which with the passage of time cannot be avoided." He argues that this hope was on the verge of disillusionment because of the delay of the *parousia*. In Conzelmann's understanding, Luke stepped in to address this situation. Therefore the whole of Luke's view of salvation according to Conzelmann is influenced by the delay of the *parousia*. He insists that Luke abandoned the imminent eschatological message of the early Christians and replaced it with timeless ethical exhortation. He calls this "redemptive or salvation history." In other words Luke changed the traditional story of Jesus and the eyewitnesses to suit his own theological framework.

²³ Conzelmann (1915 - 1989) was a German scholar who made many significant contributions to the New Testament research in the twentieth century. One of his major works was the book this research is evaluating *Die Mitte Der Zeit* (Tübingen, 1954). The title literally means 'The Middle of Time', which was translated into English under the title, *The Theology of St. Luke*.

²⁴ Marshall is a highly respected Research Professor of New Testament who is based at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. He has published numerous scholarly books.

²⁵ Jervell is a Norwegian theologian, professor emeritus, author and priest. He was a prorector at the University of Oslo from 1977 to 1980. He is a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. He has been a visiting professor at Yale and Aarhus.

²⁶ A more correct translation would be "The Middle of Time" but it was mistakenly titled "The Theology of St Luke", as Tuckett (1996:33) points out.

Conzelmann (1961:90) further argues that Luke had a “tendency to put all the blame on to the Jews” for resisting and trying to derail God’s salvation.²⁷

2.1.1 Three stages of salvation

Conzelmann (1961:16-17) maintains that salvation, in Luke’s writing, emerges in three distinct ‘epochs.’ First, is the period of Israel that ends with John the Baptist (Luke 16:16). Second is the era of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 4:16ff.; Acts 10:38). Finally, comes the era of the Church since the Ascension.

Let us unpack these epochs briefly. The first epoch, which Conzelmann describes as the period of Israel, ends with John the Baptist. According to Luke 16:16, “the Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.” Conzelmann (1961:23) argues that in this verse Luke “provides the key to the topography of redemptive history.” According to him, this passage shows that “there is no preparation before Jesus for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, that is, of the ‘Gospel’ in Luke’s sense.” Essentially, he stresses that there is no link between Jesus’ ministry and that of John the Baptist. John was not a forerunner but the last man of the Old Testament prophets.

Second, is the era of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 4:16ff.; Acts 10:38).²⁸ The ministry of Jesus is the centre that holds together the past and the future. Conzelmann claims that “when Jesus was alive, was a time of salvation; Satan was far away, it was a time without temptation” (Conzelmann, 1969:16). He divides the ministry of Jesus into three: first is the gathering of ‘witnesses’ in Galilee (Luke 4-9:50), followed by the journey of the Galileans to the Temple (Luke 9:51-19:27), and concluding with the teaching in the Temple and the Passion in Jerusalem. The ministry of Jesus then closes with the dawn of salvation which focuses on resurrection and

²⁷ Conzelmann claims that Luke makes a distinction between ‘Israel’ and ‘the Jews.’ Israel is associated with the repenting Jewish people and Jews are associated with unbelieving Jewish people. This is made clear in his analyses of Acts 13:46 where he says “the Jews are now called to make good their claim to be ‘Israel.’ If they fail to do this then they become ‘the Jews’” (Conzelmann, 1961:145). Israel is now the people of God, the new community which is the Church (Conzelmann, 1961:167). Nowhere in the Gospel or the Acts of the Apostle does Luke replace Israel with the church! Instead he refers to the repentant Jews as Israel but not the church or the Gentiles.

²⁸ Tuckett (1996:33) suggest that the era of Jesus was, according to Conzelmann, the “middle of time” as he called his original book.

ascension. This section is not precisely delineated, one presumes it is from Luke 19:28-24:41 (Conzelmann, 1969:17). According to him, these three events are a foundation upon which the Church will be built.

Finally, comes the era of the Church. Conzelmann claims that this era requires patience, which can only be found in looking back to the ministry of Jesus and looking forward to the day of the *parousia* (Conzelmann, 1961:16-17). Luke's great achievement according to Conzelmann (1961:13-14) is his deliberate reflection on the problem of the *parousia*. "He confronts the problem of the interval by interpreting his own period afresh in relation to this fact; in other words, the treatment of his main problem is the result of coming to grips with his own situation." The situation is bad and the church is faced with a gigantic question "what is the new message now that Jesus has not returned as soon as was expected?"

In Conzelmann's reading of Luke, the Church becomes almost an end in itself because its time of existence is indefinite, and the return of Christ is pushed into the distant future. The eschatological hope is not lost, it is very much part of the Church message, it is the time that is postponed to an indefinite future. In essence this is an era of teaching and encouragement as the Church has to manage the time between the ascension and the *parousia*. In Conzelmann's understanding, this era is not the time of salvation but a building up of hope in the light of the *parousia* that is to come. The *parousia* is not salvation, nor the means of salvation, but the end of salvation history (Conzelmann, 1961:17). Scholars such as Käsemann (1964:28) concur with Conzelmann, and point out that the original eschatology is "replaced by salvation history, which is characterised by an historically verifiable continuity and by a process of ever-extending development." In support of Conzelmann's view Käsemann (1964:28) insists that "you do not write the history of the Church if you are expecting the end of the world to come any day."

Furthermore Conzelmann (1961:95) maintains that the outpouring of the Spirit was no longer regarded as "the start of the *Eschaton* but the beginning of a longer epoch, the period of the Church." For him "the Spirit Himself is no longer the eschatological gift, but the substitute in the meantime for the possession of ultimate salvation." This is a stark contrast to Peter's sermon in Acts 2 where he claims that the Holy Spirit initiates the end. Peter urged his hearers to repent

because the outpouring of the Spirit was a sign of the beginning of the last days and the clear approach of the Day of the Lord. This point is discussed in more detail in point six of chapter three, which is the exposition of Acts 2. Based on the amount of criticism Conzelmann has received for his divided epochs, it is clear that his scheme is unconvincing.

2.1.2 Review of Conzelmann's thesis

Conzelmann's approach in this subject has evoked widespread scholarly response. Some claim that his three epochs are a figment of scholarly imagination. Among these is Morris (1988:34) who argues that Conzelmann's structure is artificial and one "Luke would never have recognised." While others, such as Tuckett (1996:35), complain about the lack of clear lines between the epochs.

It is important to point out that Conzelmann's first epoch goes against Luke's presentation. Luke 1:76 describes John the Baptist as a prophet of the Most High who will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Jesus. In Luke 3:2-6; 16-18 John is presented as a preacher who called people to repentance in *preparation* for the one greater than him. It is not clear why Conzelmann would come to this conclusion as there is nothing in Luke 16:16 which indicates that there is no preparation for the ministry of Jesus. It is also not clear where John does fit it. Does he belong "to the era of the Old Testament and not the new Christian dispensation for Luke" (Tuckett, 1996:35)? It has been pointed out by Reicke (1962:51-62) that John was a forerunner who belonged to the old covenant and who appears to prepare the way for the new covenant.²⁹ Conzelmann is also accused by Morris (1988:34) of building "far too confidently and far too much on his exegesis of a particularly difficult verse in Luke 16:16."

Another challenge with Conzelmann's categories is a lack of clarity as to where the line can be drawn between the time of Jesus and that of the church. Questions have been asked by scholars such Tuckett (1996:35) as to where the Church takes over. Is it when Jesus dies or at the time of resurrection? It is at the ascension or at Pentecost with the dawn of the Holy Spirit? Based on his use of Pentecost, one can infer that the Church era began with the outpouring of the Spirit in

²⁹ Reicke (1962:58) argues that Luke's aim "is to show how God made use of the Temple, its worship, and one of its priests, to announce the coming of the precursor of Jesus. This emphasizes for us the connection between the Old Testament and the New."

Acts 2. Sweetland (1990:56) suggests that “Luke sees both the ministry of Jesus and the time of the church as eschatological. The Spirit is at work and salvation is being offered to human beings both during the ministry of Jesus and in the preaching and missionary activity of the church.” For Luke, according to Sweetland (1990:56), “Jesus is not a hero of the past, but the Lord of the present.”

It is interesting to note that Conzelmann describes Jesus’ era as a “Satan free” era until the passion in Luke 22:36. Among scholars who reject this view is Tuckett (1996:35) who argues that Conzelmann’s description is “questionable.” What does he make of demon possession (11:14-20); the setting free of “a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years” (13:16); the act of Judas Iscariot, which is clearly ascribed to Satan (22:3) and Satan’s request to sift Peter (22:31-32)? These examples seem to indicate that Satan was very active during the ministry of Jesus. Conzelmann’s claim is also rejected by Marshall who argues that Conzelmann “overlooks 11:16 and is forced to give an artificial sense to Luke 22:28” (Marshall, 1970:87).

2.1.3 Practical implication of salvation

Conzelmann’s book has five “parts” and the final one is dedicated to “Man and Salvation.” This part focuses on the last of his three epochs, which is the Church, and gives detailed analyses of the message of salvation. As one reads this section carefully it becomes apparent that Conzelmann fails to explain clearly what he means by salvation, or what Luke meant by it. He argues that for Luke, “the content of salvation is ζωή or σωτηρία and the basis of it is forgiveness, which in turn is conditioned upon repentance (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 8:22; Luke 24:47)” (Conzelmann, 1961:228-229). He divides salvation into “two aspects.” Firstly, it is “from above” meaning “from the doctrinal standpoint.” This, although it is not developed much, seems to refer to the teaching or the message of the church. Salvation comes through preaching that leads to repentance and conversion motivated by judgement (Conzelmann, 1961:227). Secondly, it is “from below” meaning “from the standpoint of discipleship.” Here the emphasis is on perseverance and the critical role of the church. It provides consolation in times of persecution and suffering and makes people aware of God’s protection (Conzelmann, 1961:210).

Essentially Conzelmann argues that according to Luke if an individual is to enjoy salvation, he needs to repent of sin and receive forgiveness which will make him acceptable in the church. His conclusion is vulnerable to criticism because he tends to link salvation too tightly with the Church. For him the Church brings the message of salvation and grants the assurance of salvation. He argues that “for Luke the believer must be indissolubly bound to the Church, if he is not to sink either into speculation or into eschatological resignation” (Conzelmann, 1961:208). This is the case because the Church, with the help of the Spirit, has “the task of making endurance possible” (Conzelmann, 1961:210, 213). At the same time Conzelmann (1961:230) argues that the Spirit is not “the blessing of salvation” but “the provisional substitute for it.” This view leads him to believe that believers do not possess eternal life, but the hope of it, because “eternal life is removed into the distant future.”

In Conzelmann’s (1961:225), reading of Luke “the individual is incorporated into the Church and in this way the acute problems of eschatology and of continuing life in the world are solved.” With this he suggests that Luke’s attempt to explain the delay of the *parousia* has made the Church almost the end in itself. This is evident in the shift of emphasis. Conzelmann (1961:227) argues that “with the decline of the expectation of an imminent *parousia*, the theme of the message is no longer the coming of the Kingdom....but the ‘way’ of salvation, the ‘way’ into the Kingdom.” Once an individual is incorporated he must learn, through preaching, a new way of life in the light of the Kingdom and Judgement that will come in a distant future. He also maintains that eschatology in Luke “has become an idea which now influences ethics indirectly, by means of the idea of judgement” (Conzelmann, 1961:232).

In Conzelmann’s argument it is not clear whether salvation means to be part of the Church or if the Church is an important tool that keeps people saved while they are waiting for the *parousia*. His presentation does not help us understand what it means to be saved. Does it mean taking part in the church life or learning the ways of the Church? If the Church’s responsibility is to “make endurance possible” and “develop an ethics of martyrdom” how does this bring about salvation to the members (Conzelmann, 1961:210)?

Conzelmann's interpretation of Luke's view of the Church, though it is the last of his three epochs, is that it is in fact very far from salvation. This is the case because in his understanding salvation is something in the past and the future. The past leads to belief and the future brings hope. His argument that believers do not possess salvation, but the hope of it, goes against Luke's message. Part of Conzelmann's struggle in this section is that he neglects Acts 2:42-47 which specifically shows that salvation is not something that belongs only in the distant future. Luke says "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." The people gathered together joyfully because they were saved; though this picture does not present the fullness of salvation. Bovon (2006:300) points out that "the most frequent Lukan use of σωζέειν and σωτηρία designates a present reality: God has already intervened; the era of salvation has already begun; eschatological peace and joy are as present throughout in Acts as they are in the Gospel." Luke's depiction of a present era of salvation is the real challenge to Conzelmann's schema.

Part of Conzelmann's problem is his insistence that the birth and infancy narratives are not significant in Luke's understanding of salvation. His reasoning for the "great omission"³⁰ is that objections might be raised, presumably by scholars, concerning the authenticity of these first two chapters. In his analyses, the possibility of the objection has sufficient ground to ignore all statements that are peculiar to these chapters (Conzelmann, 1961:118). One is left wondering if the value of engaging these chapters does not outweigh that of ignoring them. Another reason why the narratives are problematic for him is that "the characteristic features they contain do not occur again either in the Gospel or in Acts" (Conzelmann, 1961:172).

It is difficult to agree with this conclusion as John the Baptist appears again, preparing the way as it was promised. This is a very important role as it directly fulfills the role of the promised Elijah.³¹ Mary was pretty much part of Jesus' life. She was there even when Jesus was resurrected (24:10). The absence of Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna and Gabriel is not a sufficient reason to ignore the whole section of the Gospel. There are several characters in the Gospel that only appear in one story like Zacchaeus (19:1-10), and Ananias and

³⁰ This is the term he uses to highlight Luke's exclusion of Mark 6:45-8:27 in his Gospel (Conzelmann, 1961:52).

³¹ During his ministry Jesus described John the Baptist as the promised Elijah in Matthew 11:14; 17:11-13. See the promise from Malachi 4:5 and Luke 1:17.

Sapphira (Acts 5) yet Conzelmann does not dispute the authenticity of these stories. His argument has failed to convince, and scholars such as Marshall (1970:96-97)³², Oliver (1964:202-206), Ravens (1995:24-49) and Minear (1966:120-121) have criticised him for his failure to take account of the birth and infancy narratives in the Gospel of Luke.

Oliver (1964:202-206), for example, stresses that the images and concepts in the birth narratives are consistent with the rest of Luke-Acts. He suggests that Conzelmann's struggle is that the narratives tend to support a theology of salvation history which he sought to deny. This point is also supported by Minear (1966:121) who argues that "if Conzelmann had taken full account of the nativity stories,... his position would have been changed at several major points." For him "Conzelmann bases his analyses of Luke's theology not on the whole corpus, but on the chapters of the Gospel beginning with Luke 3" (Minear, 1966:121). He concludes that "Conzelmann could arrive at his understanding of Lucan theology only by ignoring or rejecting the evidence provided by the birth narratives" (Minear, 1966:124).

Furthermore, by neglecting these chapters, Conzelmann failed to keep his own promise of studying "the whole of Luke's writings as they stand" (Conzelmann, 1961:9). His argument against the infancy narratives does not only fail to convince, it also raises more questions. Could it be that the reason given for omission was a careful plan of trying to prove a point that could have been too difficult to prove with the birth and infancy narratives? This could be the case because these two chapters talk about the announcement of salvation which many faithful Jewish believers were waiting for. The narratives also speak positively about the Jews who fully embraced the fulfilment of the promise, which clearly does not sit well with Conzelmann.

Another example is his argument from Luke 16:16 that "there is no preparation before Jesus for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God" (Conzelmann, 1961:23). He then gets stuck in the mud because he does not know what to do with Luke 1:77, where Zechariah, the man filled with the Holy Spirit (1:67), prophesied that John will be called a prophet of the Most High who will go on before the Lord to *prepare* the way for him. This statement of Zechariah clearly links John to Jesus. When he baptised people they asked if he was the Christ and he stated that the

³² Marshall's contribution will be covered in more detail later.

one more powerful was coming. In other words, John was indeed *preparing* the way for the Mighty One.

While Conzelmann's book has been influential, his thesis has been challenged at many levels. Several claims are either not substantiated or lack biblical foundation. For example Conzelmann (1961:23) claims that John did not proclaim the Kingdom because it was not yet possible for him to know anything about it. For Conzelmann only Jesus possesses this knowledge. The question is, what was John proclaiming before Jesus? Luke 3 indicates that he was proclaiming the message of salvation, which inevitably leads to the Kingdom. Without the Kingdom there can be no salvation.

2.1.4 Summary Conclusion

It is clear that Conzelmann's reluctance to engage with the birth and infancy narratives, made it difficult for him to adequately see the link between the promised salvation and its fulfilment in Luke's writing. His conclusion is, in fact, unfortunate because it seeks to remove the readily available salvation and replace it with hope for something that is almost unachievable. This points to the real danger of interpretive strategy which ignores the foundation of the Gospel and does not embrace Luke's presentation of salvation or what it means for those who are being saved. It is amazing that, in Conzelmann's book, there is no single paragraph that grapples specifically with the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts, although he has spent time discussing it. He emphasises the delay of the *parousia* and Luke's attempt to re-interpret the original understanding, but loses sight of the key theme of the Gospel.

Conzelmann also exaggerates his claim that the first Christians lived with great hope of the imminent *parousia* of Jesus. A careful examination of his book reveals a weak exegetical work that has failed to convince many scholars. As a result, his thesis has faced severe criticism from scholars like Marshall (1970), Morris (1988), van Unnik (1973), Sweetland (1990), Tuckett (1996:36-43) and Reicke (1962), who all reject this claim. The general criticism is that he fails to engage with passages where Luke points out the nearness of the end. Some suggest that it was not the delay which Luke is addressing, rather what happens during the delay. Still others accuse him of sacrificing the present accessibility of salvation in favour of the distant future.

It is van Unnik's (1973:108) conviction that the delay of the *parousia* is "highly overrated." He rejects the idea that the delay of the *parousia* wrought havoc in the early Church and argues that "the faith of the early Christians did not rest on a date but on the work of Christ" (van Unnik, 1973:108). For Reicke (1962:77) "it is a mystery how Luke can be accused of 'de-eschatologizing' in his Gospel. The idea of joy at the closeness of salvation and the hope that the kingdom of God will promptly become a reality are nowhere so clearly worked out as in these birth narratives." His conclusion is that "it is erroneous to suggest that Luke in any way de-eschatologized the gospel" (Reicke, 1962:87). While Sweetland presents two points against Conzelmann's argument: First, "Luke has retained a number of traditional sayings about an imminent judgement (3:7-17), or an imminent coming of the Son of Man (21:27, 32) or the kingdom (10:9)." Second, "Luke has added to this traditional material, saying about the imminence of the coming of the kingdom (10:11; 21:31 or judgement (18:7-8)" (Sweetland, 1990:55). This view is also backed by Morris (1988:41) who argues that "the thought of the near return of Christ did in fact dominate the thinking of the early church." If anything "the church certainly looked for an interval before the return of Christ, as is shown, for example, by the fact that no Christian ever advocated that the preaching of the gospel should cease when Christ died" (Morris, 1988:41). Morris (1988:41) further points out that "the duration is nowhere specified." He also highlights passages such as 12:35ff; 17:22ff and 21:25ff and concludes that Luke "looks for the coming of the End when the salvation of which he writes will reach its consummation" (Morris, 1988:41; 42).

Marshall (1970:110) argues that Luke has not replaced eschatology with salvation-history to address the problem of the delay of the *parousia*. It is Marshall's conviction that "the early church thought of the period of the coming of Jesus as the decisive action of God in fulfilling his promises of salvation, which then became effective in the witness of the church" (Marshall, 2004:146). The momentous event is not the immediate return, but the importance of the return, for human salvation. He insists that Luke's purpose was not to address the delay of the *parousia*, but simply "to present the Gospel of salvation to his readers in order to lead them to faith or (as in the case of Theophilus) to confirm their faith" (Marshall, 1970:84). In fact the "the inclusion of the *parousia* as the end-term in a salvation-historical scheme corresponds to early Christian thought" (Marshall, 1970:86).

2.2 Howard Marshall

2.2.1 *Salvation is rooted in history*

Conzelmann's work was not challenged seriously for several decades before Howard Marshall's book, *Luke – Historian and Theologian*, emerged.³³ Marshall challenges Conzelmann's view on at least two fronts. First, he argues against Conzelmann's view that Luke was a theologian, and therefore not a reliable historian. According to Marshall (1970:46-47), Luke has not "historicised" the Gospel message, rather he gave a faithful portrayal of the ministry of Jesus, and the life and the challenges of the early church. Marshall dedicates the third chapter of his book to argue for Luke's trustworthiness as a historian, and he provides a clear and coherent guide to Luke's theology of salvation based on an historical foundation.

It is Marshall's conviction that while Luke is a theologian, he is also a reliable historian since his theology is based in history. For Luke, according to Marshall, history is a way of presenting the story of Jesus in order to lead people to salvation. Furthermore, Marshall (1970:85) points out that Luke was concerned "with the saving significance of the history rather than with the history itself as bare facts." His interpretation of Luke suggests that Luke believes that history is an important part of eschatology because it gives tangible examples of God's saving acts. According to Marshall (1970:19), Luke did not distort the historical events, he simply "used his history in the service of his theology." His argument is that Luke drew out theological meaning from the historical events.³⁴ He also denies that "salvation-historical" or "history of salvation" is distinctively Lukan, nor is it Luke's theological purpose to bring it to expression (Marshall, 2004:84; 86). The reality is that "the emphasis falls upon the presentation of the story of Jesus, as in the other Gospels, in order to lead men to salvation" (Marshall, 1970:84).

³³ This summary of Marshall is based on the third edition (1988).

³⁴ This would be in line with the Old Testament where many historical events are recorded factually and interpreted theologically because the Israelites knew that their God was with them and directing them. The Church, from its inception, followed this pattern and combined factual elements with theological interpretation. In the book of Acts, Luke gives names of people and places where events took place because he wanted to ground his work in history.

2.2.2 Luke's Theology of Salvation

Marshall argues that the central theme and main thrust of Lukan theology is that “Jesus offers salvation to men” (Marshall, 1970:116).³⁵ He highlights that this great salvation is not only the over-arching message of Luke, but it also points squarely to Jesus (Marshall, 1970:94). The Gospel of salvation is revealed in Jesus, the “Son of Man who came to seek and to save the lost” (19:10), hence Luke describes him as the Saviour. With this, Marshall seeks to show that Luke is an evangelist, with a clear concern to lead people to salvation, on the basis of a reliable record of the historical facts. In his book Marshall highlights at least five elements that point to the significance of salvation in Luke’s writings, namely the frequent use of σώζω, the scholarly interest in Luke’s theme of salvation, the direct link of salvation to Jesus, God’s salvation within the historical context of Israel, and what one must do to be saved. In the next paragraphs these points will be expounded briefly.

First, in chapter four, Marshall points out that the use of the verb σώζω “is proportionately no more common in Luke than in the other gospels” (Marshall, 1970:92). In a footnote, Marshall (1970:92) points out that it is used 17 times in Luke’s Gospel, 15 times in Matthew’s Gospel, 14 times in Mark’s Gospel, 13 times in Acts, and six times in John’s Gospel. However, Marshall (1970:92) further argues that the words “σωτήρ”, “σωτηρία and σωτήριοιον” are much more Luke’s “own property”, as they do not appear in Matthew and Mark. The noun “σωτήρ” is used twice in Luke’s Gospel and twice in Acts, and appears once in John’s Gospel.³⁶ Meanwhile, σωτηρία is used four times in Luke’s Gospel, six times in Acts and only once by John’s Gospel.³⁷ Finally σωτήριοιον is used twice in Luke’s Gospel and once in Acts, and does not appear in any of the other Gospels.³⁸ He highlights that they “occur eight times in the Gospel of Luke and nine times in Acts (Marshall, 1970:92). Among the Gospel authors it is Luke alone who calls Jesus Saviour.

³⁵ It lies beyond our present purpose to discuss in detail whether Marshall is correct or not in presenting salvation as a central theme of Luke-Acts. Scholars such as Green (1965:125) and Giles (1983:10) support this view. Our interest is to understand what he thinks Luke means by salvation. Marshall (1970:89) also rejects the scholarly consensus that Luke presents the Kingdom of God as a main theme; this will also not be discussed in this research.

³⁶ It appears in John 4:42 where the Samaritans confess him to be the “Savior of the world”.

³⁷ John uses σωτηρία only once in 4:22 where Jesus argues that salvation is from the Jews.

³⁸ See his footnote for the actual Bible references (Marshall, 1970:92).

Second, in the same chapter, Marshall presents Luke's theology of salvation as a survey with special focus on various scholars who have contributed to the debate. Through this survey he (1970:84) argues that "something like a consensus of opinion exists regarding the theology of Luke." This consensus "is expressed in the use of the term 'salvation-history'." The writings of Luke present the Christian message in the form of history; a history which embraces both the ministry of Jesus and the activity of the early church" (Marshall, 1970:84). He questions the consensus by asserting that while "salvation-history" is present in Luke-Acts, "the idea is not distinctive of Luke, nor was it his theological purpose to bring it to expression." He further argues that Luke places "emphasis upon the presentation of the story of Jesus, as in the other Gospels, in order to lead men to salvation" (Marshall, 1970:84).

Third, in chapter five Luke presents "God the Father as the ultimate source of salvation" and discusses that "the life of Jesus was seen as being a fulfilment of the will of God expressed in the Scriptures" (Marshall, 1974:103; 105). Jesus brings the salvation of God to the sons and daughters of Abraham. Luke wants his readers to know that God is in full control of everything. Fourth, chapters six and seven describe, in detail, the ministry of Jesus which grounds God's salvation within the historical context of Israel. According to Marshall this is important because he is seeking to prove that Luke is both an historian and a theologian. He strongly argues that history informed Luke, and shaped his theology, as he revealed God's plan of salvation to his readers.

Fifth, in chapter eight he poses the ultimate question that the Jewish audience asked Peter in Acts 2:37, "what must I do to be saved?" In this chapter Marshall reveals the proclamation of salvation and the response of the audience to the powerful message about the risen Lord. It is in this chapter where the message of salvation becomes a reality. In chapter nine, which is the final chapter of his thesis, Marshall acknowledges that Luke is more than an historian and a theologian; he is an evangelist with a mission. He argues that "the chief historical event in which salvation was revealed was the ministry and the person of Jesus" (Marshall, 1979:216). Therefore Luke wants his audience to know that salvation can be experienced in Jesus, the long awaited Saviour. He calls people to accept the message of Jesus in order to "experience the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Marshall, 1979:216).

2.2.3 Reflection on Marshall's thesis

With such clear dedication to the notion of salvation, it is worth exploring Marshall's work briefly. We seek to understand what he means by salvation and whether his understanding ties up with Luke's meaning of salvation. The first thing to point out is that Marshall (1970:94) does not attempt to give his understanding of the meaning of salvation in Luke's writings. He refers to the definition of Green (1965:125):

“Salvation means the action or result of deliverance or preservation from danger or diseases, implying safety, health and prosperity. The movement in Scripture is from the more physical aspects towards moral and spiritual deliverance. Thus the earlier parts of the Old Testament lay stress on ways of escape for God's individual servants from the hands of their enemies, the emancipation of his people from bondage and their establishment in a land of plenty; the later parts lay emphasis upon the moral and religious conditions and qualities of blessedness and extend its amenities beyond the nation's confines. The New Testament indicates clearly man's thralldom to sin, its danger and potency, and the deliverance from it to be found exclusively in Christ.”

Marshall (1970:95) concedes that this definition has too broad a range of meaning. The other weakness of this definition is that it does not really explain what *Luke* means by salvation, as it looks at the general theme of salvation in the whole of Scripture. Marshall (1970:95) narrows it down by pointing out that the verb $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\zeta\omega$ in Luke “refers to healing from disease or to deliverance from other threats of life and safety.”³⁹ According to Marshall, the “link between the healings wrought by Jesus and the spiritual salvation which He brought to men ... is the power of God revealed in Jesus in response to faith” (Marshall, 1970:95).

Through the brief exposition of various Old Testament quotes from the New Testament, Marshall (1970:98-99) suggests that Luke's understanding of salvation would include deliverance from enemies as God exalts the humble and fills the hungry, the redemption of Israel through the raising of the horn of salvation, and the forgiveness of sin. In his concluding summary Marshall (1970:102) states that the ultimate source of salvation is God the Saviour, that Jesus brings peace and leads people to glorify God. He also states that salvation is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promise for the Jews but reaches to the Gentiles. This is all true but the question still remains: “what would this salvation look like to an ordinary Jew or a Gentile? What is its actual content?”

³⁹ Marshall cites Luke 6:9; 8:36, 48; 17:19; 18:42 and 8:50 as example in the Gospel.

2.2.4 Summary Conclusion⁴⁰

Marshall's book has, for several years, probably been the best to adequately engage with and respond to Conzelmann, and the contemporary scholars, concerning salvation in Lukan studies. It is interesting to notice that, after all the 'salvation' word comparison, statistical analyses and exegesis, Marshall (1970:95-99) still equates salvation to forgiveness of sin as Luke's prominent theme. While this view of salvation is part of the picture, it is clearly inadequate and does not do justice to everything that Luke has to say. For example one is also left wondering if he is not spiritualising Luke's social concern when he argues that "the thought of God as Saviour is related to His eschatological action in exalting the humble and filling the hungry with good things" (Marshall, 1970:98).

Did Mary understand salvation along these lines? Did she not expect God to turn tables and reverse the fortunes for Israel? Was salvation in Luke 4:18-21 really understood by Luke and the hearers of Jesus to mean the forgiveness of sin? Does it not challenge Marshall's understanding that the first question posed to Jesus after the resurrection in Acts 1:6 is directly political? The hailing of God's kingdom must have meant more to Jesus, the Israelites and Luke the evangelist, than the forgiveness of sin. Otherwise what is the good news Jesus will bring to the poor and what freedom is promised to the prisoners? This argument will be expounded in the following chapter as we exegete some passages.

2.3 Jacob Jervell

Jervell has challenged Conzelmann's view and the well established scholarly opinion that Luke describes the rejection of the Christian proclamation by the Jewish people. This opinion argues that the apostles took the Gospel to the Gentile nation only when Israel rejected it. In his book, *Luke and the People of God*, Jervell argues that Israel accepted the Gospel of salvation and took it to the Gentile nations. His thesis is clearly explained in the second chapter of his book, *The Divided People of God: The Restoration of Israel and Salvation of the Gentiles*. It could be summarised in two points: First, he argues that Israel received the Gospel, and by so doing received salvation (Jervell, 1972:45). Second, Israel preached the message of salvation to the

⁴⁰ It has been a disappointment to discover that the academy has not engaged Marshall on this work. This in essence has made it a challenge to engage scholars as there has been too little material. I have found nothing other than two simple reviews that have not contributed to the purpose of this research.

God-fearers, and later to the Gentiles, to fulfil the Old Testament promise (Jervell, 1972:43; 45). Let us study these points in more details.

2.3.1 Israel received salvation

In his writing Jervell argues against the notion that the Jews rejected their Messiah and, as a result of that the Gospel, was then proclaimed to the Gentiles.⁴¹ Jervell (1972:45) argues that Luke seeks to show that tens of thousands of pious Jews received salvation and become faithful believers (Acts 21:20). Jervell (1972:55) insists that there is no salvation for the Gentiles apart from the Jews. According to him “it is more correct to say that only when Israel has accepted the Gospel can the way to Gentiles be opened.” This is obviously a reactionary statement that swings the argument to the other side of the pendulum. It has been challenged by Bosch (1991:96) who argues that Jervell “goes too far.” He suggests that “it is the combination of acceptance and rejection by Jew, or...it is the division within Judaism, between the repentant and the unrepentant, which opens the way for the Gentile mission” (Bosch, 1991:96).

Furthermore, Jervell (1972:44) highlights the birth and infancy narratives, as well as the “mass conversion of the Jews” through the book of Acts, as the evidence that it was not the marginalized or disgruntled Jews who warmly embraced the salvation, but the faithful Jews who kept the law in their hearts.⁴² Jervell maintains that it was important for Luke to show his readers that many faithful and Torah observant Jews accepted the Gospel. Jervell also highlights that, for Luke, the distinction between the faithful and the unfaithful in Israel is not based on the observance of the Torah, but on acceptance of the Gospel, since both still observe the Torah.

Jervell (1972:137) argues that, in Luke’s understanding of salvation, the Torah is fully valid for Jewish Christians because “it is the sign of Israel as the people of God.” He sustains this argument by pointing to the birth and infancy narratives, where Luke, “depicts in detail how all the ritual prescriptions of the law are performed by Jesus’ parents” (Jervell, 1972:138). Furthermore, Jervell (1972:144) says even the Gentiles had to observe the Torah by keeping the part of it which was required for them to live together with the Jews (Acts 15:29; 16:4; 21:25).

⁴¹ Scholars such as Morris (1988:38) argue that “the Jews rejected their Messiah” and that “it was their refusal of God’s gift which meant that the church became pre-dominantly Gentile (Acts 13:46ff).”

⁴² Luke 1-2; Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:42; 12:24; 13:43; 14:1; 17:10-12; 19:20; 21:20.

Tyson (1999:95) points out that Jervell's treatment of Luke-Acts breaks new grounds, and goes against the grain, "which largely maintained that Luke, in Acts, is describing the history of a movement that progressively distances itself from Torah-observance and Jewish restrictions." God's salvation and God's Torah are part of the same system that seeks to bring people to God, and to make God known to his people.

According to Jervell, Luke thinks "the mission to Jews is a necessary stage through which the history of salvation must pass in order that salvation might proceed from restored Israel to the Gentiles" (Jervell, 1972:43). He grounds his argument on the passages in Luke's writings that point to the Old Testament command that salvation will start from Jerusalem to the ends of the world (Jervell, 1972:56).⁴³ Jervell is convinced that Gentiles have a share in salvation, and Luke wanted to show this to his audience. With this argument, Jervell challenged the well-established scholarly opinion that the apostles took the message of salvation to the Gentiles only after Israel had rejected it.

How did Israel accept salvation, since it is clear from the Gospel and Acts that not all Israel accepted Jesus? In Jervell's interpretation of Luke, the Gospel "has divided Israel into two groups: the repentant and the unrepentant" (Jervell, 1972:42). The repentant are describe as 'purified', 'restored', 'true Israel' and the 'empirical' Israel is the unrepentant portion of the Jews (Jervell, 1972:43). In other words the believing Jews are understood by Jervell (1972:43) to be 'Israel' to whom, and for whom, the promises of salvation have been fulfilled. Tyson (1999:106) points out that according to Jervell, Luke refers to the unbelieving Israel as "the Jews." In other words there is a portion of the Jews that has excluded itself from God's promises of salvation and forfeited its membership in the people of God, by rejecting Jesus and his message of salvation, even though they observe the Torah. But the faithful Israel will bring salvation to the ends of the world. The unfaithful cannot hinder the fulfilment of the promises to Israel and the Gentile world.⁴⁴

⁴³ These passages include Luke 24:47; Acts 3:25; 10:47; 13:47; 15.

⁴⁴ On the issue of who 'Israel' is, Jervell sometimes confuses the terms. Jervell (1972:42-43) says "in Acts 'Israel' continues to refer to the Jewish people... repentant and obdurate Jews." In the same paragraph he changes his tune and says "'Israel' does not refer to a church that is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, but to the repentant portion of the 'empirical' Israel." In other words 'Israel is only those who have accepted salvation within the Jewish community.

2.3.2 Israel preached salvation

According to Jervell (1972:45), Israel did not only receive salvation, but also shared it enthusiastically with the “God-fears” and the Gentiles of the synagogue. He points out that after the Jews, the first group of people who received the message of salvation were not idolatrous Gentiles but God-fearers (Acts 13:43, 14:1; 17:4, 12). Jervell (1972:45) points to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27) and Cornelius (Acts 10:2) as examples. Even the preaching of the Gospel to the pure Gentiles was the work of the faithful Jews, Paul being one of them. Furthermore, the mission to take salvation to the ends of the earth is a direct command from God (Luke 24:47; 13:47; 15:16; and 10:43). Backing his argument, Jervell (1972:58) highlights Acts 3:11-26 and suggests that “before God instituted the Gentile mission through the Cornelius event, before the Jews had the possibility of rejecting the Gospel, Peter knew of the acceptance of the Gentiles.”

However, scholars such as Maddox, (1982:32 & 42) criticise Jervell for directing “his studies disproportionately towards Acts” and for “the inadequacy of his exegesis of certain key passages.” As a result of this, he presents Luke as pro-Jewish. According to Maddox (1982:36), Jervell (1972:141) arrived at his conclusion that “Luke knows only one Israel, one people of God, one covenant” because he (Luke) is pro-Jewish and therefore in favour of the law. He points out that Jervell’s argument that “Luke labours to prove that the salvation of the gentiles occurs in complete accordance with the law; no transgression has taken place, the law is not invalidated, abridged or outmoded”, should be watched carefully (Maddox, 1982:36). According to Maddox, Jervell is misleading when he claims that, on the basis of Acts 10:2,4,22, “Cornelius himself keeps the law...but without the one necessary thing, circumcision.” He argues that Acts 11:17 shows that “God’s gift has been given to the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jewish believers, and the qualification for it is belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, without any mention of the Law” (Maddox, 1982:36).

2.3.3 Summary Conclusion

Like Marshall and Conzelmann, Jervell does not adequately explain what Luke meant by salvation. I pointed out in chapter 1 that the lack of clarity about the meaning of salvation is a weakness in Jervell and Marshall. Part of the challenge seems to be the fact that they wrote their books with specific readers in mind. So they seek to answer or respond to a particular argument.

From reading Jervell's book, one gets a feeling that he suggests that salvation means accepting Jesus' teachings. This acceptance leads to restoration for Israel and inclusion for Gentiles. Jervell reminds his readers that salvation comes in the form of a message and is received by faith. For him the 'repentant' or 'pure Israel' is the one which accepted Jesus as Lord and believed the message he preached.

The important contribution of Jervell, in this paper, is his argument that without the repentant Jews, there is no salvation for the Gentiles. This argument creates a brotherhood link between the Jews and Gentiles, and seems to be in line with the Scripture. Jesus himself was a Jew from a very faithful Jewish family. Almost all people who took the message of salvation from Jerusalem were Jews who believed. Most of the Gospel and Epistle writers were Jewish men, who wrote not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well.

The infancy narrative and the story of Zacchaeus, which will be discussed in the next chapter, are unambiguous about Luke's commitment to the salvation of the Jews. Scholars, such as Morris (1988:38), argue that "the Jews have a special place in the divine economy and to the end it is 'the hope of Israel' that the gospel preachers proclaim (Acts 28:20)." Bosch (1991:105) highlights that the Gospel is for both because they both need a Saviour in their respective situations. The Jews have to repent of their part in the death of Jesus (Acts 2:36-40) and the Gentiles are to repent of their idol worship (Acts 17:29). Therefore Jervell's work is important in Lukan studies, and deserves attention because it really does present something different and fresh, especially its understanding of Luke's record of the treatment of Gentiles and Jewish people with regards to the promised salvation.

3. CONCLUSION

It is clear that, within the field of New Testament studies, the writings of Luke continue to provide excitement. Several positions have been put forward, consensus reached, reviewed and challenged. The field is plain and new consensus is yet to emerge. As one discovers new books, commentaries and journal articles, it becomes obvious that the debate is nowhere near the end. There is a vibrancy and activity that takes scholars in different directions with different emphases.

The goal of this chapter has been to trace the debate and highlight key contributions on the specific theme of salvation. I engaged with Conzelmann's theology concerning the delay of the *parousia*, his three epochs of salvation history and his view of the birth and infancy narrative. I argued that although he has a lot to say about salvation, it is really not clear what he means by salvation or what he thought Luke meant. As far as Marshall is concerned, it was argued that his work is good, but also lacks a clear definition of salvation. His work seems to focus more on challenging Conzelmann's thesis, with little emphasis on Luke's meaning of salvation. As for Jervell, he does not explain the meaning either, although he argues that the Jews received this salvation and spread it as they preached it to the Gentiles. His argument on the Jews and Gentiles is important, as I will be arguing in the next chapters that salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles. I believe the evidence in favour of Jervell's argument is overwhelming in Luke's writings.

In the following chapter the focus will be on the establishment of the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts, which is the main point of this research. Special attention will be given to specific texts that will exhibit Luke's understanding of salvation. In this way, this research hopes to contribute some fresh insight to the very challenging, yet important writings of Luke.

CHAPTER THREE

EXEGESIS OF KEY TEXTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of salvation has been at the forefront of scholarship for decades.⁴⁵ Luke uses the word salvation “σωτήριον” or “σωτηρία” at least ten times in Luke-Acts.⁴⁶ Among the Gospel authors, it is Luke alone who calls Jesus saviour “σωτήρ” (2:11). It is however surprising that despite all the hard work, scholars have not adequately addressed the *meaning* of salvation within the context of Luke-Acts. Many scholars, like Marshall, Green and Bovon, agree that salvation is a prominent, if not main theme of Luke’s writing. Marshall, for instance, has argued that salvation is the main theme of the Gospel, while Green (1989:21) claims that salvation “lies at the heart of Luke’s theology...” Yet they do not explain what the term means. It seems scholars presume that Christians understand the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts.⁴⁷ Now that we have studied key contributors to the scholarly discussion, let us turn our focus to Luke’s own writings for insights.

In the introduction to his Gospel, Luke makes it clear that God is actively involved in bringing about salvation to his people. God has a plan of salvation in which various people, angels and Jesus will play different roles in bringing it to fruition. The Holy Spirit is also heavily involved, as he fills people so they can carry out their responsibilities correctly (1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25; 3:22; 4:1). Luke announces salvation through the preaching and teaching of Jesus (9:24; 19:9). The message is that salvation is for all (3:16), but only those who respond to God’s call will enjoy it (13:3; 15:7; 16:30). Jesus backs his message with miracles that only God can do (3:39; 5:13, 20-25), he challenges the well established religious practices enforced on people’s lives by

⁴⁵ See Green, J.B. 1997, *The Gospel of Luke: NICNT*. Michigan: Eerdmans, Green J.B *The Message of Salvation*. Ex Auditu 5 (1989) 21-34., Marshall, H.I. 1970. *Luke – Historian and Theologian*. Great Britain: Paternoster, Conzelmann, H. 1961. *The Theology of St Luke*. New York: Harper and Row.

⁴⁶ Luke 1:69, 71, 77; 2:30; 3:6; 19:9; Acts 4:12; 13:26, 47 and 28:28. John’s Gospel uses this word once (4:22), whereas Matthew and Mark do not use it at all.

⁴⁷ Other major contributions to Lukan writing, like Bartholomew, C.G., *et al*, 2005, *Reading Luke (vol. 6): Interpretation, Reflection, Formation (Scripture and Hermeneutics Series)*, Gloucestershire: University of Gloucestershire, do not have any chapter dedicated to the subject of salvation, though it is a prominent theme of the Gospel.

the religious leaders (6:1-11; 13:10-17; 18:9-14), and opens his arms wide towards repenting sinners (23:39-43) and the poor and marginalised (7:11-17, 36-50). Luke wants to assure his readers that salvation has come and they must believe it. But what does salvation mean and what does it look like?

As I mentioned in chapter 1 under the heading “Method of research” it is beyond the bounds of this study to do detailed exegesis on all Luke’s references to salvation. Instead, I intend to focus on the following five passages Luke 1-2; Luke 4:16-30; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 19:1-10; and Acts 2. The logic behind choosing these passages is that: The first one (Luke 1-2) is full of salvation terminology. It can be argued that it serves as a foundation for the theological ideas of the rest of Luke-Acts.⁴⁸ The second passage (Luke 4:16-30), does not contain explicit salvation terminology. However, Jesus declares his mission in a way that seems to describe salvation. It is also regarded as programmatic of what unfolds in the rest of Luke-Acts. The third passage (Luke 7:36-50), clearly links salvation with the forgiveness of sin. Jesus declares salvation to an individual. The fourth passage (Luke 19:1-10), shows the availability and accessibility of salvation. Marshall believes this is the climax of the salvation story. In the last passage (Acts 2), salvation is vigorously proclaimed and many are saved.

2. THE BIRTH AND INFANCY NARRATIVES – LUKE 1-2

2.1 Salvation as the fulfilment of prophecy

The answer to the question of this research could be unearthed as early as in the first two chapters of Luke’s writing. Through these chapters, Luke roots the story of salvation in the fulfilment of the old promise, the account of which gets unfolded throughout his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The theme of fulfilment is a dominant tone of the birth and infancy narratives and Luke elaborates on it by a pattern of repetition. I have mentioned in my previous chapter that several scholars have correctly pointed out that Conzelmann made a mistake when he ignored the Lukan birth and infancy narratives with regards to the fulfilment of the promised salvation. These first two chapters of Luke’s Gospel are critical in Lukan theology. In this

⁴⁸ Minear (1966:129) argues that “the whole fabric is a witness to the marvelous response of God to the covenant promise.” For him these two chapters are critical if one hopes to understand Luke.

section, Luke claims that he has “carefully investigated” and is writing “an orderly account”, so that Theophilus “may know the certainty of the things you have been taught” (1:3-4).⁴⁹ The infancy narratives partly seek to reveal the fulfilment of God’s promises and partly foster an enthusiastic sense of expectation, compelling the reader to think that some of the unfulfilled promises will be fulfilled in the following chapters of the Gospel and Acts.⁵⁰ As he builds the foundation for the rest of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, Luke creates an expectation that Jesus will be busy saving people.

According to Minear (1966:129), “the whole fabric is a witness to the marvellous response of God to the covenant promise and prayers of Israel, a response which is announced by angels and which releases the Holy Spirit to do its predestined work.”⁵¹ On the other side Green (1997:50) argues that “Luke 1:5-2:52 introduces God, who is out to fulfil his redemptive purpose, while other characters are introduced as persons with whom and through whom God’s aims will be advanced.” Bock (1996:58-59) suggests that in telling the detailed birth narratives, Luke “has not only explained how the plan of God is advanced, ... he also reveals the character of those surrounding the birth of these two great men of God. All the figures involved are examples of spirituality as they respond to what God is doing among them.” These are committed men and women who were patiently waiting for, and probably teaching others about, the coming deliverer. Their testimony would carry a lot of weight because they are known to be servants of the Lord. A message from the angel could not simply go unnoticed because he speaks for God. Zechariah was a priest, Mary was a faithful Israelite, Simeon was a man who received messages from God and Anna was a prophetess. People in Israel had every reason to believe these people as faithful communicators of God’s word.

⁴⁹ In this paper I will not assess or engage in the debate concerning the historicity of Luke’s writing, as my focus is on the message he was conveying.

⁵⁰ Fulfilment is an important theme in Luke’s writing. Luke carefully and continuously points to the Old Testament to prove his argument, as can be seen in the following examples: Luke 1:1, 21; 4:21; 9:31, 51; 18:31; 21:22, 24; 22:16, 37; 24:44; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 13:27,33.

⁵¹ Minear (1966:111, 130) laments the fact that many Lukan studies in his time simply ignore the infancy narratives. He argues that unless the narratives are taken seriously, the scholarly work would start from “wrong assumptions” and “wrong questions” would be raised which would lead to “unsupported conjectures and ultimate frustration.”

Luke uses the fulfilment message as evidence that salvation is a big part of Israel's expectation and he believes it is about to be fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. One of the significant elements of Luke's composition, is the way in which he links the story of John and Jesus to the Old Testament story with rich Old Testament imagery and allusions. John the Baptist represents Elijah (1:17) who was expected to come before the great Day of the Lord.⁵² He is therefore the best candidate to bring the "knowledge of salvation" to Israel. Several events take place in the temple⁵³ which stresses the fulfilment.⁵⁴ The narratives and songs (1:46-55, 68-79) are rooted in the faithful God who has remembered his covenant and is about to bring it to fruition. In Caird's (1963:48) reading of the birth and infancy narratives, these chapters of Luke "epitomize the spirit of expectancy which pervades the whole of the Old Testament." People were eagerly waiting for God to act on his promise and the birth narratives reveal the relief and joy, experienced by some people in Israel, when they learned that the promised Saviour had come.

Luke introduces his audience to Zechariah and Elizabeth, an old devoted, yet childless priestly couple, who were upright and blameless in the sight of God (1:6-7).⁵⁵ Their situation, and that of Israel, was soon to change as the angel Gabriel tells Zechariah that he will have a special son whom he must call John.⁵⁶ From the announcement, it is clear that John's life is dedicated in service. John will be filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15). He will bring Israel back to the Lord (1:16) and "will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah" (1:17).⁵⁷ The forerunner's responsibility would be to prepare the way for the Lord by bringing the message of repentance and reconciliation between God and his people. Could this announcement by Gabriel

⁵² Malachi 4:5.

⁵³ The deliberate use of the temple setting informs the readers that there were other faithful Jews who were eagerly waiting for that moment when God would bring about his salvation in the history of Israel.

⁵⁴ The setting is meant to take the reader back to the Abrahamic promise (Gen 12:1-9) and Hannah's praise song (1 Samuel 2:1-10). The horn of salvation message would take the readers back to 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalms 18:2. There are also several other Old Testament allusions, or direct quotes in the Gospel and Acts, that help readers link the new story to the old.

⁵⁵ To those who were familiar with the Old Testament, they could easily associate Zechariah and Elizabeth's problem to that of Abraham and Sarah, in Genesis 18, or that of Elkanah and Hannah in 1 Samuel 1, even though we are not told that the later couple was old. This would also increase hope to the reader, that if God was able to reverse the situation for the two couples, what could stop him from doing the same for Zechariah and Elizabeth?

⁵⁶ The son will be so special that he should not take wine or any fermented drink. This was not a normal case in Israel, as wine and fermented drinks were categorized as clean food that could be consumed in the presence of the Lord (Deut 14:26).

⁵⁷ Green (1997:62) points out that God's promised intervention was a double edged sword. It deals with the problem of childlessness in the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:13-14), and at the same time turns out to be divine intervention on behalf of Israel too, for John will have a role in restoring Israel to God. (1:16-17, 76-79).

be the first announcement of salvation for Israel in the narrative? Will Luke be telling his readers that salvation means returning to God?

The angel Gabriel appears again, this time to Mary,⁵⁸ the virgin engaged to Joseph, a descendent of David.⁵⁹ She is told that she will also have a special Son, whom she must name Jesus. He will be called “the Son of the Most High” (1:32) and “his kingdom will never end” (1:33).⁶⁰ The description of the child depicts the Messiah of the Old Testament.⁶¹ The concept of repentance and reconciliation is now joined with the concept of the kingdom. Jesus, as an anointed King of the eternal kingdom, would now begin to bring together the people who will live for God in the kingdom. Mary is a chosen instrument. Unlike Zechariah, who doubted the message, Mary responds with humility and trust: “I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said” (1:38).⁶² She is excited, not only because of God’s kindness to her personally, but because God has remembered to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants in accordance with his promises (1:55). She understands that God will now establish the kind of the kingdom that Israel has been patiently waiting for. When she meets Elizabeth, she burst into praise.

The Magnificat (1:46-55), is the first of four hymns in the narrative and reveals a deep sense of gratitude. Mary understands that the nation will soon be saved “by God my Saviour” {θεῶ τῷ σωτηρὶ μου} (1:47). God has taken a momentous step forward in the plan for saving the nation.⁶³ As a faithful Jew, she sees another life changing act in the great plan of salvation that will change the life of the nation forever.

Having shown the fulfilment through the experience in the life of Mary, Luke then introduces his readers to the Benedictus (1:68-79), the second hymn in the Gospel. In this hymn Zechariah is

⁵⁸ This is a direct fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy (7:14). Mary, although she is a virgin, will have a son. Those who know the Old Testament would begin to make the connection, which might have been Luke’s intention.

⁵⁹ To mention that Joseph was a descendant of David is critical, because it links the baby Jesus to the line of David, and fulfils God’s promise that David’s kingship will remain forever (2 Samuel 7).

⁶⁰ Green (1997:91) argues that “Jesus is ‘Son of God’, not as a consequence of his assuming the throne of David (as in Ps 2:7), but as a result of his conception, itself the result of the miraculous work of the Spirit.” In other words Jesus is not declared a ‘Son of God’ but born a ‘Son of God.’

⁶¹ 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

⁶² Bock (1996:58) reminds us that Mary’s response, simple and humble as it is, was in actual fact no small matter; “she is being asked to bear a child as a virgin without being married. In standing up for God she will probably become the object of much doubt and ridicule.”

⁶³ The declaration of God’s act in Deuteronomy is almost the same as that in Exodus 3:7-10. Luke wants his readers to see the link between what Mary was seeing and what Moses recorded in the Pentateuch, specifically Exodus and Deuteronomy, which are important books in the life of Israel.

revealed praising the Lord, and pointing to God's faithfulness, because he "has raised up a horn of salvation" (1:69) for Israel "as he said through his holy prophets of long ago" (1:70).⁶⁴ The horn will mean destruction to the enemies of God and to Israel; it will be a sign of mercy because God has "remembered his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham" (1:72-73). At least three times Zechariah stresses that the coming salvation is in line with the promise (1:70, 72-73). He employs the salvation word group at least five times: redeem (68), salvation (69, 71, 77) and rescue (74).⁶⁵ Salvation is undoubtedly a very important message for Zechariah, and he also appears to emphasize deliverance from enemies. Is Israel's deliverance from her enemies part of what Luke meant by "salvation"?

Next comes the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*⁶⁶ (2:14), where the heavenly hosts and angels burst into praise for the great plan of salvation that will bring peace and favour to God's people. This peace is directly linked to the birth of Jesus. When the shepherds saw Jesus they left Bethlehem praising God because a "Saviour has been born" (2:12). They left Bethlehem and began to spread the news and all who heard them were amazed. This was no ordinary child, but the Saviour, which meant the arrival of salvation for the people of Israel.

Clearly the birth of Jesus bears the richest significance to the faithful Israelites. This can be seen in the *Nunc Dimittis*,⁶⁷ the fourth and final hymn of the infancy narrative. It comes from Simeon and completes the "promise-fulfilment-praise chain" (Bock, 1994:241). Luke depicts Simeon as a prophet in his own right. When he sees Jesus, he thanks God for keeping his promise. He greets Jesus with great joy and says he may now be dismissed in peace "for my eyes have seen your salvation" {ὅτι εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου τὸ σωτήριον σου} (2:30).⁶⁸ For Simeon, seeing Jesus was as good as seeing the promise of salvation coming to its fulfilment before his very own eyes. Those who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (2:25) could now burst into praise

⁶⁴ The horn is usually associated with power or strength in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 33:17 Moses says God will "gore the nations" with his horns. Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1, 10) praises the Lord for raising her "horn" and exalting "the horn of the anointed one." The term "horn of salvation" is probably taken from 2 Samuel 22:3 and Psalms 18:2.

⁶⁵ Louw and Nida 21.25-32, 37.128 (1988:241-242, 488).

⁶⁶ *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is Glory to God in the highest in Latin. It refers to the opening line of the hymn.

⁶⁷ *Nunc Dimittis* is a name that comes from the hymn's opening phrase in the Latin version.

⁶⁸ Green (1997:148) points out that "'salvation' introduced in 2:30 might be rendered 'instrument of' salvation." This translation emphasises the fact that Jesus is the main role player in bringing salvation to Israel.

because the saviour had come.⁶⁹ Bursting into praise is also echoed by those who saw Jesus raising the young man from the dead. They said, “God has come to help his people” (7:16). Jesus later confirmed that responding with praise was appropriate because seeing him was a blessing (10:23-24). Simeon was blessed to be among those who waited and saw God’s salvation! For Simeon, the arrival of the baby Jesus confirmed the arrival of the long awaited restoration of the nation. Jesus is the light of the world that will reveal God’s salvation to the Gentiles and restore glory to the people of Israel (2:32). A careful reading of this short hymn would help us see that the glory which Simeon is speaking about is not very different to the one declared by the “great company of heavenly host with the angel” in 2:13-14. It is about God’s glory because when all is said and done, both Israel and Gentiles will give glory to God.

Anna, the prophetess, concurs with Simeon as she claims that Jesus signals the long awaited redemption, “λύτρωσιν”, of Jerusalem (2:38). With redemption, Anna is announcing that God has begun to fulfil his promise of salvation by sending Jesus. Therefore, the coming of Jesus, the Saviour and Redeemer of Israel, calls for praise from God’s people, and this is demonstrated by all characters involved in the first two chapters of Luke, including the angels (1:14).⁷⁰

The way in which Simeon and Anna declare this salvation raises questions. Does Luke identify salvation with the national restoration of Israel; or is national restoration a part of his concept of salvation; or does he translate national restoration into something else? Either of the former then raises the question of how this salvation is to be experienced by Israel. Practically, how would salvation come about for Simeon if he believes he can now die because he has seen it; and how is this salvation to be experienced by Israel? How is Israel redeemed? These questions will be the focus of the following chapter. What is clear in Luke 1-2 is that salvation comes as a fulfilment of the promises made to Israel, promises which appear to envisage national restoration of some kind.

⁶⁹ παράκλησιν “consolation” can also be translated as “encouragement” or “comfort.” See Louw and Nida 25.150 (1988:306) and Danker (2000:766). These possible translations would take us back to Mary’s song which is full of comfort imagery.

⁷⁰ Luke seeks to emphasise that all human characters involved in the narrative are not just devout, godly people guided by the Holy Spirit, they are also law-abiding Jews who fully embrace Jewish prophecy and practices.

2.2 Salvation as the restoration of Israel

In the birth and infant narratives Luke focuses almost entirely on Israel's restoration and on Jesus as a key role player.⁷¹ Luke is not only committed to show that Jesus is the promised Messiah, he also links him to the restoration of Israel. According to Luke, Israel will be restored on three fronts: spiritual (1:16-17; 76-77), physical⁷² and political (1:32-33; 51-53). The three components of restoration are critical because one without the others would be incomplete.⁷³ Therefore, the message of salvation is of national importance to Israel because God's kingdom that will last forever is about to be established (1:33). People of Israel would not want to miss the moment they all have been waiting for. Luke demonstrates, through the Magnificat, Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis, that Israel anticipated a kind of salvation which would touch all aspects of their lives. Steyn (2005:95) says "it is a total restoration on all levels of society." Looking at the narrative language, Green (1997:88) insists that "it is difficult to imagine that the anticipated redemption will be anything but a nationalistic restoration of Israel." Jesus will be the King and Lord of all. Elizabeth readily confesses him to be her Lord (1:43). Luke believes that the arrival of Jesus means the beginning of the restoration of Israel. Commenting on different elements of salvation from Zechariah's perspective, Green (1997:114-115) says:

Zechariah's song brings together these seemingly disparate conceptions of salvation – and he does so in a way fully congruent with important strands of soteriology in Second Temple Judaism, where forgiveness of sin and restoration as a people were woven into the tapestry of divine redemption. For Luke, the reconciliation of God's people and deliverance from enemies are both part of one divine movement. For him, visions of salvation cannot be categorised as social or religious or political for the epoch of peace is characterised by all of these. Salvation of God's people inevitably means deliverance from enemies.

2.2.1 *Spiritual restoration*

By spiritual restoration we mean reconciliation with God and forgiveness of sin. In this process of restoration, John would play a critical role in making sure that people hear and understand the message and respond appropriately. According to the angel Gabriel, John will bring many

⁷¹ There is no other section in the New Testament that places such a strong emphasis on the salvation of the Jews. The Book of Romans presents the case but I am not sure it is as clear and strong as this section of the Gospel.

⁷² This motif is not as dominant in the birth and infancy narratives and will not be discussed in this section. It is however worth noting that it is one of the dominant themes of Luke: 4:38-41; 5:12-26; 6:10-11; 7:1-17; 8:26-56; 11:37-45; 13:10-17; 17:11-19; 18:35-43.

⁷³ A rebellious nation cannot really enjoy God's blessing if it is delivered from the enemies but is not reconciled to God, nor will they enjoy fellowship with God if they are physically or politically subdued by foreign nations.

people back to God and prepare the nation for the Lord (1:16-17). In the Benedictus (1:76-77), John is the messenger who will run before the Lord to prepare a way for Jesus. John will point people to him because Jesus brings the knowledge of salvation “σωτηρία” through the forgiveness or remission of their sins {ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν}. John’s ministry would really be good news for Israel because he would act like a prophet. The reconciliation and forgiveness of sin that Jesus would bring has two aspects: first, God steps into the world to announce the arrival of salvation. This coming of salvation requires Israel to turn away from the sinful life and seek God. Failing to do this would mean missing out on God’s offer. Therefore the nation’s response to God’s intervention is critical. Second, Israel will be restored because God will forgive their sins. In other words there is no restoration without repentance and forgiveness. God has initiated the process and Israel should respond appropriately.

2.2.2 Political restoration

The political restoration comes through deliverance from enemies. This concept is introduced by Gabriel when he says Jesus “will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (1:32-33). This raises the hope that the glorious throne of David will soon be restored. In other words, Israel will soon be free from her enemies, or even be feared by neighbouring nations, as it was in the time of David,⁷⁴ and respected as in the time of Solomon.⁷⁵ The Magnificat also demonstrates this hope beautifully as Mary pours out her heart to the Lord in praise for what she believes is as good as done. She believes that the proud have been scattered (1:51), the powerful rulers have been dethroned (1:52), and the rich have been sent away empty handed (1:53). God has reversed the human fortunes for the sake of Israel’s restoration.⁷⁶ Mary celebrates because she understands that God’s saving purpose includes her and her people (Marshall, 1970:98).

Zechariah also believes that the moment Israel has been patiently waiting for has finally arrived. The anointed One of God, who will bring about their salvation, has come. The Lord has made

⁷⁴ 2 Samuel 8:1-14.

⁷⁵ 1 Kings 4:29-34; 10:1-13.

⁷⁶ Mary’s hope for the reversal of fortunes is not out of place. She could be thinking about the Old Testament expectation (Num 10:35; 1 Sam 2:7-8; Ps 68:1; 89:10).

“redemption for his people” {λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ} (1:68) and “raised up the horn of salvation for us” {ἤγειρεν κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῖν} (1:69). The emphasis on redemption and salvation is based on the Lord’s strength. Israel will be redeemed from her enemies because the Lord is Mighty. In other words, without the Lord, Israel would never be able to redeem herself. According to Zechariah, the coming horn of salvation is like an unstoppable tsunami that will wash away all the enemies of Israel. He is convinced that true restoration will be experienced when the nation is saved from her enemies as this would bring freedom for them to worship God without fear. This is critical because it focuses attention on the fact that an oppressed people cannot express themselves freely and openly.⁷⁷ It also emphasises another dimension. Bock says, “God saves for service” (1994:186). For Luke, service is an appropriate response to God’s salvation. This was also made clear by Moses when he warned Israel not to prostitute herself as this would lead to rejection and exile. Since the salvation hope of Mary and Zechariah is painted in Exodus colours, it is correct to combine the celebration of freedom with an appropriate response to God the Saviour.

2.3 Salvation is available to Gentiles

While it is true that salvation in the first two chapters is primarily for Israel, it is equally true that it is not totally exclusive. In fact “Luke’s Gospel makes it very evident that God’s plan to save is not restricted to Israel” (Viljoen, 2003:201). Simeon claims that salvation is “prepared in the sight of all people” (2:31). He introduces a new concept in the story which includes Gentile nations in God’s salvation.⁷⁸ For him, this salvation is prepared for all to see and, hopefully, participate in. It is not only Israel who will witness it as it unfolds, otherwise Jesus would not be a light for the Gentiles as Simeon indicates (2:32). In this text Simeon claims that Jesus is the light for both Israel and the Gentiles, although with a different function: a light for “revelation to the Gentiles” and a light for “glory to Israel.” Jesus is ‘revelation’ to Gentiles because his light will dispel darkness which is usually associated with sin, ignorance, suffering, and death, depending on context. Jesus will reveal God’s mercy and glory. Bock (1996:93) says Jesus is a “‘revelation’ to Gentiles for they will be brought into blessing through his ministry in a way they could have hardly imagined before his coming.”

⁷⁷ Psalm 137 paints the problem of oppression and worship clearly.

⁷⁸ Scholars like Bock (1994:243), Geldenhuys (1988:119) and Green (1997:148) also argue that λαῶν does not refer only to Israel, it includes Gentiles as well.

God's salvation will be something that all nations will see and experience if they put their trust in his anointed Saviour. "Luke emphasised that Jesus came to accomplish a universal redemption, the Redeemer of the whole world. ... Jesus offers forgiveness, salvation and liberation of all people, to Jews, Samaritans, pagans, rich, poor, sinners, outcast, men and women, people of all generations" (Viljoen, 2003:203). Salvation is good news for all regardless of their heritage. Green (1965:126-127) concurs with this when he points out that this salvation is for the Jews (Acts 2), Gentiles (Acts 13), God-fearers (Act11:14), slaves (Acts 16:17), and jailers (Acts 16:31)." Salvation is for all, even the robber received this salvation in the dying moments of his life (23:39). According to Reicke (1962:64), Luke's "desire was to liberate his gospel from a too narrowly exclusive Judaism." It has been pointed out by Morris (1988:39) that Luke "takes the genealogy of Jesus right back to Adam (3:38), the progenitor of mankind, and does not stop at Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation."⁷⁹ Gentiles will indeed benefit from God's salvation because it is a universal phenomenon.

Jesus is 'glory' for Israel because they are a special chosen nation. They are destined for great things because Jesus is in their midst. All nations will look up to Israel for salvation, as the prophet Isaiah said a long time ago (Isaiah 60:1-3). In Isaiah 60:1-3, we see the same glory revealed to Israel while darkness covers the earth. But the prophet make it clear that "nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn." Unlike the time of Samuel (1 Samuel 8) where Israel looked up to the nations, this time all nations would want to be like Israel or at least benefit from Israel's salvation. This great salvation will be like an oasis in the desert that brings life to a hopeless situation. Every nation under the sun will seek and find this oasis. Luke indicates that the anointed Jesus is too precious a gift to be exclusive. The salvation he brings would go beyond the borders of Israel. Bock (1996:93) argues that Jesus is the magnet that makes Israel great because when the promises of God come, they come through him. Jesus is a shining star that will guide nations from darkness to light.

Zechariah has already alluded to the divine saving light (1:78-79) that will "shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death." Zechariah, although he is a spiritual man, identifies

⁷⁹ Morris (1988:39) highlights that Luke speaks about the Samaritans (9:51-54; 10:30-37; 17:16), Gentiles (4:25-27; 7:2-10).

himself with those whose feet will be guided into the path of peace. He shows an understanding that the way to salvation is to be in the light. Is this light cosmic or only for Israel? Could this be the same light as the “light for revelation to the Gentile” as Simeon believed? Zechariah does not explicitly link it to the Gentiles, but it is not likely that he viewed it as an exclusive event. As a faithful Jew he would understand that God’s plan of salvation was to bless not only Israel but the nations as well. This promise was made to Israel as early as in Genesis 12:2-3 when God called Abram. He told Abram that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” God’s agenda of salvation has always been cosmic in scope but through Israel.

Zechariah does not specify the manner in which God will intervene, but understands the immensity of the coming salvation. It can be suggested that this salvation will be shared by both Israel and Gentiles, and Zechariah will be part of the benefiting group. This is possible because Jesus is the light of the world and God’s salvation will bring light to all his creation. That is why John the Baptist says “all mankind will see God's salvation” (3:6). This is in line with the praise of the heavenly host and angels in 2:14. Green (1997:137) points out that “‘those whom he favours’ cannot be limited to its application to Israel only. Rather shalom for Israel is tied up with shalom for the cosmos.”

2.4 Summary conclusion

In these first two chapters Luke calls all the people of Israel to accept the fulfilment of the promise and to embrace Jesus as a deliverer. Luke has made it abundantly clear that salvation comes about through Jesus. Other characters like Simeon, Zechariah, Anna, John the Baptist and Mary are all witnessing an amazing act of God in bringing about his salvation to Abraham’s dependants (1:54-55). Jesus is the one to save Israel and fulfil her promised hopes and aspirations. Luke also shows that Israel believed that Jesus, the “shining light”, will draw the nations into his kingdom. Israel hoped to see many nations calling upon the name of the Lord for their salvation. God will not reject them but will save them from darkness into light. Luke points out that this salvation is available now that Jesus has come. At the same time he reminds his readers that salvation has a future aspect which points to the ultimate deliverance of God’s people (24:49).

Salvation is primarily for Israel, both sinners and faithful. It is both spiritual and physical as the Magnificat displays. Jesus is the Saviour of Israel but the nation has to accept him and renew her commitment to God through his ministry. Luke suggests that the only way to return to God, and enjoy his salvation, is by accepting Jesus whom God has anointed to save. Obviously in the narratives Jesus is only a baby, so the way to believe in him is to trust the words of the prophets, angels and the other people closely involved. One wonders what might become of the promised salvation, if the recipient nation rejected the promised Saviour, the scenario which will unfold as the story proceeds.

A bird's eye view of the Gospel reveals Jesus reaching Israel but also touching the lives of Gentiles like the Roman centurion (7:1-10) and the Samaritan leper (17:11-19). When he appeared to his disciples after the resurrection (24:47), Jesus told them that "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." This shows that the scope of salvation was never directed exclusively to Israel, although Luke places a lot of emphasis on Israel in the prologue. This could be his way of establishing the fulfilment, which is very important in Luke's writing. Otherwise Israel would not enjoy the glory that is rightfully hers which would, in turn, tarnish the light for Gentiles.

At this point it may be worth noting that salvation for the Gentiles takes a different shape to that of Israel. The Gentiles' salvation would come when the light for revelation has come to them. It would expose their sins, lead them to repentance and God would forgive their sins. Some would be healed (7:3; 8:26-39). But political salvation is exclusively for Israel.⁸⁰ The birth and infancy narratives leave the reader with strong desire to know how this salvation will become a reality in Israel. In essence, it prepares the readers for Luke 4:18-30, which is our next focus.

⁸⁰ Maybe, without pushing the text too much, the Gentiles will learn to treat the Jews with respect and not seek to oppress them anymore, because they would now be grafted into the same new family.

3. THE YEAR OF SALVATION – LUKE 4:16-30

3.1 The plan of salvation

In this section Luke shows that Jesus is a pious Jew who “went into the synagogue as was his custom” (4:16). He shows that Jesus was still committed to the work and the house of his father as he claimed earlier (2:49). Although Jesus’ inaugural sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth does not use the “σωτηρ” word group, it does use terminology that may prove to be synonymous or explanatory of the concept. For example in 4:18 he speaks of “preaching the good news.” This good news is for the “poor”, yet in another context the good news is about “the Kingdom of God” (4:43). The news is good because of the coming of salvation. This section of the Gospel is very important because it is widely regarded as a programmatic text of Luke-Acts.⁸¹ In this passage Jesus reveals his mission and links it to the fulfilment of the promise, as we have seen above.

Given the scroll of Isaiah, Jesus unrolled it and began to read “πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμὲ οὐ εἶνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν με κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν.” Luke tells us that the “eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him” (4:20). Nothing was amazing about his reading as probably many of them had heard it before. They gave him all their attention, with great anticipation, to hear what he would say about the passage. They expected him to explain the Scripture in the traditional way of teaching. That was not to be, Jesus shocked everybody when he declared that “Σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφή αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὠσὶν ὑμῶν” (4:21). This was a radical claim to messiahship. Jesus, in a sense, declares that the long awaited promise of salvation is now at hand. What people expected to see when the Messiah comes, they can now prepare to witness in Jesus’ ministry. With the repeated first singular personal pronoun “me” in 4:18-19, Luke again stresses that Jesus is the one who brings these blessings to Israel. This emphasis is also in line with the message of the birth and infancy narratives.

Since Jesus is quoting part of the Isaianic hope of salvation, focusing mainly on Isaiah 61:1-2 and a line from Isaiah 58:6, we may ask how people understood Isaiah?⁸² How did they expect this salvation to come about? The reading suggests that Israel expected somebody more special

⁸¹ See Bock, 1996:134; Green, 1997:207; Marshall, 1978:177-178 and Nolland, 1989:195.

⁸² See Bock (1994:404-405) about Jesus’ use of Isaiah’s text. Our focus is the impact of salvation rather than the tactical use of Isaiah’s work.

than a prophet to totally deliver them from their various unfavourable situations. The saviour would declare freedom through the words of his mouth, and would perform mighty deeds that would bring about deliverance. Isaiah 58 calls for repentance and Isaiah 61 points to the power of the Anointed One. His act of deliverance would not only mean freedom, but would also reconcile sons and daughters of Abraham with God. The nation “will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour” (Isaiah 61:3). This conveys the same message as that of Simeon (2:32). The nation will enjoy relief from physical and spiritual bondage and be like an oasis in the desert where all other nations will come for salvation. Peace, justice and righteousness will reign when this promise is fulfilled in its totality.

With Isaiah’s background in mind, we can now turn to Jesus. How is he going to bring this salvation to Israel? With the help of the Spirit of the Lord, Jesus will preach the good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, release the oppressed, and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.⁸³ His ministry will involve authoritative proclamation, which will need to be followed by the performance of mighty deeds if anything is to be achieved. His programme will reverse Israel’s fortunes as Mary indicated (1:51-53). The poor will be relieved of their unfavourable spiritual and social conditions, the prisoners will be free, the blind will receive sight and the oppressed will go free. What would people have thought when they heard this in the time of Jesus? Their hopes would be renewed and faith revived. For them to experience the year of the Lord would be something very special. Bock (1994:407) suggests that “the audience would think immediately of the coming of God’s new age of salvation.”

“Today” salvation has come in the house of Israel. Through Jesus’ ministry people will experience God’s salvation and his hearers will see it unfolds starting from “today”. The term “today” is important for Luke. A quick word search shows that Luke uses the word “today” several times to convey the immediacy of God’s salvation.⁸⁴ When Jesus came to meet

⁸³ The concept of the Spirit of the Lord resting on a person is associated with a special task that sometimes requires supernatural strength (Gen 41:38; Exod. 31:3; Num. 11:17). Isaiah’s passage links the Spirit with the power to bring about justice and righteousness (Isaiah 11:2; 32:15-16; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21).

⁸⁴ 2:11; 4:21; 5:26; 12:28; 13:32-33; 19:5, 9; 22:34, 61; 23:43.

Zacchaeus, twice he said “today”, first with reference to staying in Zacchaeus’ house and second declaring the arrival of salvation (19:5, 9).

Luke also links the immediate fulfilment of the promise of salvation with the deliverance from demon possession and healing, in the same chapter. The deliverance from possession is an evidence of the power and authority of Jesus. Conzelmann (1961:36-37) argues that the “present” fulfilment is not the arrival of salvation, rather a picture of the future time of salvation “that is now the ground of our hope.” This is incorrect, as Luke clearly uses “today” in this passage to stress the immediate fulfilment of the promise of salvation which Mary, Zechariah, Simeon and Anna mentioned earlier. The fulfilment of the promise to the people of Nazareth sends a clear message that the eschatological promise of the prophets, about the coming day of the Lord, has come and can now be experienced. From today, God will bring about redemption and deliverance and God’s people do not have to wait any longer, although obviously it is not yet a complete fulfilment.

3.2 The recipients of salvation

In his speech Jesus lists people in different categories: the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed. Is Jesus talking about a physical or a spiritual condition? Are the “poor” in Luke’s Gospel to be identified with the hungry, the marginalised, those who are burdened, or the lost sinners? Scholars hold very different interpretations. Nolland (1989:197) warns that the “poor” should not be spiritualised because Jesus “is deeply concerned with the literal, physical needs of men ... as with their directly spiritual needs.” Green (1997:210-211) points out that numerous attempts to define the “poor” as “spiritually poor” or “economically poor” are inadequate as they do not fully address ancient Mediterranean culture and the social world of Luke-Acts. He argues that “in that culture, one’s status in a community was not so much a function of economic realities, but depended on a number of elements, including education, gender, family heritage, religious purity, vocation, economics, and so on” (Green, 1997:211). This argument is helpful in refuting the narrow categorisation of the poor to socio-economic or socio-political, but it still does not adequately explain what Luke meant by the “poor”.

Seccombe (1983:39) argues that Luke has carried into his Gospel the understanding of the Old Testament, particularly Isaiah's, that the "poor" is a characterisation of Israel as a nation in great need of salvation.⁸⁵ This argument is insightful as it takes the reader back to Mary who saw the "poor" as the descendants of Abraham (1:55). The "poor" are people in great need of God's salvation, as we have witnessed in the birth and infancy narratives. This understanding is also clearly proclaimed by the Psalmist.⁸⁶ Israel is afflicted and in desperate need of salvation. However, the argument is not a full picture. Jesus, the appointed Saviour of Israel, is rejected by some within Israel, which, in a sense, divides the nation. As Simeon warned: "this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel" (2:34). Which of the two groups remains the true Israel?⁸⁷ This is an important question, even though it cannot be tackled adequately in this paper. Seccombe (1983:69) admits that the rejection of Jesus means the rejection of salvation. Could those who reject Jesus still be described as the "poor" in need of salvation?

Through the beatitudes (6:20-22), Luke makes a distinction between the poor and the rich. In the beatitudes, Jesus says the Kingdom of God is for the poor, and the poor are those within Israel who respond appropriately to his call irrespective of their socio-economic or socio-political status. This interpretation of the beatitudes does not spiritualise the "poor", but gives a clear indication that poverty of the spirit transcends all socio-political and socio-economical structure. Otherwise hunger with future satisfaction would make no sense, as physically hungry people need food if they are to live. At the same time, Nolland's warning not to spiritualise the text (Luke 4:18) is taken seriously because there is strong evidence that Luke was really concerned about the physically poor (Nolland, 1989:197).⁸⁸ For example, the rich ruler (18:18-30) was rich and felt he did not need God's salvation more than he needed his wealth, whereas Zacchaeus (19:1-10), though rich, was poor because he understood that all he had was not worth anything compared to the salvation that Jesus offered. The question then is, will Israel stand in the false

⁸⁵ Seccombe dedicates chapter two of his book to this discussion, and covers various possible interpretations of the "poor" before he comes to his conclusion.

⁸⁶ Psalms 9:11-12, 17-20, 10:1-4, 17-18; 12:1-5; 18:25-29.

⁸⁷ Before Jesus, the nation stood as one holding on to the promise, but after Jesus it was left deeply divided. The division was seen by Simeon and lasted throughout Jesus' ministry. Eventually the sword pierced Mary's soul and Jesus' body.

⁸⁸ Luke 11:41; 12:33; 14:13, 21; 18:22; 19:8; 21:2-3.

riches of self sufficiency and resist the call or does she see herself as poor enough that she will receive salvation from the son of Joseph (4:22)?

Although we have not had the time or the space to fully explore the rich depths of Luke's use of the "poor" in his Gospel, we can see that salvation in Luke is not something that seeks to deal with a particular part or condition of people's lives. It is holistic and requires a radical change of mindset for all the people of Israel if they are to really enjoy God's salvation. Luke also shows that salvation not only changes people's status with God, but it changes their lives as well. Zacchaeus (19:1-10), the paralytic (5:17-26), the centurion (7:1-10)⁸⁹ and the sinful woman (7:36-50) are some of people whose lives were transformed by God's salvation.

The mission to bring sight to the blind is directed to both physical (7:21; 18:35-43; Acts 9:18-19) and spiritual blindness (2:30; 7:39; 18:10; Acts 2:17; 26:18). Spiritual eyesight is directly linked with "revelation and experiencing salvation" (Green, 1997:211). Zechariah "saw the rising sun" with spiritual eyes (1:78-79) and so did Simeon when he saw God's salvation (2:29-32). John the Baptist declared that "all mankind will see God's salvation" (3:6). God will open their spiritual eyes, as the natural eyes could not see. Luke tightly links sight with salvation and blindness with darkness.

Concerning the captives, Luke uses proclaim "κηρύξαι" as a tool that will bring about release "ἄφεσιν".⁹⁰ Reference to prisoners or captives "ἀίχμαλώτοις" in this context most likely refers to various spiritual and socio-political conditions. Jesus could be referring to Israel in captivity, since Isaiah (Isaiah 61) proclaims freedom. He could also be referring to Israel under the control of the Roman rule with limited opportunities of worshipping her God. Seccombe (1983:58) argues that "by the New Testament period captives are more likely to have been seen in terms of the overall spiritual-political oppression of Israel, than as literal prisoners or exiles." This could explain why Luke presents Jesus going around setting captives free declaring freedom by confronting demons (4:31-37), healing the sick (4:38-44), challenging the religious leaders of their oppressive interpretation of the law (6:1-11; 14:1-14) and forgiving people their sins (5:20;

⁸⁹ The Centurion is an outsider but displays an incredible faith that even amazed Jesus, the kind of faith that Jesus had not seen in Israel!

⁹⁰ ἄφεσιν can also be translated as "forgiveness" or "cancellation" of sin (Danker, 2000:155).

7:47). According to Luke, Jesus is a strong man who can defeat Satan and release captives (11:21-23). Luke does not present any account of Jesus physically releasing people from prison except the great escape of Acts (Acts 5:19).⁹¹ What are we to make of this? Is Luke implying that captivity has to do with demons, health and sin or are these simply some of the examples of the work of Jesus that he could record? Luke does indicate that release has something to do with setting people free from various oppressive circumstances that imprison them.

3.3 The present time of salvation

A careful reading of Luke shows that most of the activities of Jesus that bring about salvation are wrapped up with a picture of Jubilee, or the year of the Lord's favour.⁹² But what is the relationship between salvation and Jubilee? What is Luke's understanding of salvation in the light of Jubilee? Luke presents Jubilee as a time of joy, peace and total freedom that would enable people to return to their rightful place and worship God without fear. Unlike the claim of Trocmé (1973:30-35), Luke does not stress a return to the land, or literal Jubilee observance, as found in Leviticus 25.⁹³ Instead he associates Jubilee with "the time of salvation" (Seccombe, 1983:56). Nolland suggests that Luke represents salvation with Jubilee imagery but without calling for an implementation of Jubilee legislation. For him, "Jubilee release is not spiritualised into forgiveness of sin, but neither can it be resolved into a programme of social reform; it encompasses spiritual restoration, moral transformation, rescue from demonic oppression and release from illness and disability" (Nolland, 1989:202). While Hertig (1998:167) says "Jesus' jubilee mission was holistic in four aspects: it was proclaimed and enacted, spiritual and physical, for Jews and Gentile, present and eschatological."

⁹¹ Even this passage does not directly link Jesus to the setting free of the disciples. It is the "angel of the Lord" that opened the prison doors.

⁹² The concept comes from Leviticus 25, where slaves go free, debt is cancelled and the land returned to original owners every fiftieth year.

⁹³ Trocmé (1973:30) argues that "Jesus demanded that the law be put into effect immediately. This implied, among other things, expropriating the lands of the wealthy and liquidating the usurious system from which the ruling classes lived." He bases his argument on two principles: first, "God is the owner of the land of Israel", second, "God is the liberator of his people" Trocmé (1973:34-35). In Trocmé's reading of Luke, Jubilee "is a moment of justice, a sabbatical moment which occurs at regular intervals to regularise the relationships between God and His people." He thinks that Jesus' message of salvation meant political freedom through the restoration of land to the rightful owners. Trocmé (1973:52) concludes that the thesis of the Nazareth sermon is that "Jesus was truly proclaiming a Jubilee in Nazareth. The implementation of the four jubilean prescriptions had a central place not only in Jesus' ethics but also in His proclamation of the kingdom of God and His theological teaching." Although his argument is interesting, his efforts to sustain it have failed to convince many scholars, such as Nolland (1989:202), Hertig (1998:167) and Seccombe (1983:56), as there is no strong evidence in the Gospel that Jesus called for a literal Jubilee observance, as found in Leviticus 25.

The Lukan Jubilee has full societal and spiritual ramifications, as those who receive salvation will have to serve the Lord sacrificially.⁹⁴ Some of those who are saved are called to be the fishers of men (5:10), and others are restored into the fellowship with God, which naturally leads to life of service (5:27) and worship (7:36-50). With this analogy, Luke seems to stress the point that people will either be free in Christ, or remain prisoners in Satan's dominion, irrespective of the political and economical circumstances. Bock (1994:410) says "the passage takes that picture of freedom to show what God is doing spiritually and physically through his commissioned agent, Jesus. Jubilee, by analogy, becomes a picture of total forgiveness and salvation, just as it was in the prophetic usage of Isaiah 61." The programmatic text makes it clear that healing, deliverance from demon possession and rescue from oppression are all part of God's salvation for his people which Luke presents as Jubilee.

3.4 The warning of missing out on God's salvation

Despite excitement about this time of salvation and the claim of fulfilment promises, there is a real danger of missing out on this great and long awaited salvation. Jesus' ancestry raises questions that make people doubt his identity and authority - "Isn't this Joseph's son?"⁹⁵ The central question here as Seccombe (1983:68) puts it is "how can the son of Joseph be the one to inaugurate the age of salvation?" How can Jesus, whose ministry is questionable, be the Saviour?

There is no doubt from the text that the audience nursed a sceptical view of Jesus, to which he responds with a strong warning. He reminds them that while salvation is theirs, it may be given to Gentiles if they reject it, as Israel did in the days of Elijah and Elisha.⁹⁶ His response is clear evidence that Jesus understood their question to be an element of rejection. Jesus reminds them that these two well known and respected prophets delivered lowly Gentiles, despite the fact that there were many widows and lepers in Israel who needed the same deliverance. Jesus hints that

⁹⁴ Zechariah had mentioned earlier that God saves so that the saved may serve him (1:74).

⁹⁵ Green (1997:215) incorrectly argues that "son of Joseph" is presented in a positive light.⁹⁵ This is not true, because in their hearts they ask, as Seccombe (1983:68) puts it: "how can the son of Joseph be the one to inaugurate the age of salvation?" Meanwhile Prior (1995:96) argues that the congregation's amazement at Jesus' words of grace refers to his citation of Isaiah's salvation, which omits an expected judgement upon enemies. He further points out that the crowd's astonishment is "tainted with criticism" not admiration (Prior, 1995:97).

⁹⁶ Elijah saved a widow from Zerephath (1 Kings 17-18) and Elisha healed Naaman, a leper from Syria (2 Kings 5:1-14), despite the fact that there were many widows and lepers in Israel.

Israel, who should benefit from God's mercy, might not because of her disobedience. Worse still, he equates that bad event in Israel's history to the current people of Israel.⁹⁷ Israel must turn to God before it is too late. This warning indirectly introduces the Gentile mission into the picture of God's salvation. According to Luke, God is ready to bless the Gentiles if Israel continues in her sin and rebellion.

The vivid example sends a chilling message to his audience – God will save even the lowest of low people. This point is nicely illustrated by Hertig (1998:170) when he says “both these stories depict God's grace poured out not only upon Gentiles, but upon the lowliest of the low class among the Gentiles, a widow and a leper.” Luke will show again, later on, that salvation comes even to those whom the religious authorities think do not deserve it. This concept of salvation was a hard pill to swallow for those who believed that salvation was theirs alone.

The rage response of the audience reveals two critical things: First, it confirms that they were questioning Jesus credibility as he did not, in their understanding, fit the profile of the expected Messiah. Second, it shows that they understood his story about Elijah and Elisha, but failed to see the real warning in the message. They rejected his message and ignored his warning. Instead of repenting, they pushed him out with an intention of murder (4:29). The irony, as Green (1997:217) points out, is that “he who has been anointed to proclaim the year of the Lord's ‘favour’ (4:19) himself does not receive the ‘favour’ of his own town people.” Their rejection of the Saviour leaves the readers wondering how the nation of Israel can be a shining light for the Gentiles (2:32) and the oaks of righteousness Isaiah (61:3) mentions? Will Jesus now turn to the Gentiles as he warned? Will Israel lose out? This event points to the eschatological nature of God's salvation. The fulfilment is not yet complete, but progressing. This will become clear as we continue to grapple with the key passages.

3.5 Summary conclusion

The exegetical insight of Luke 4:16-30 indicates that Luke understood salvation to mean freedom from foreign dominion, be it social-political or the power of darkness. This freedom

⁹⁷ Jesus, later in the Gospel, told the parable of the great banquet (14:15-24), again warning Israel of refusing God's invitation to take part in his plan of salvation.

comes to those who are poor enough to seek comfort in Jesus, the promised deliverer. Luke claims that, through Jesus' ministry, the poor will receive the good news of salvation, the prisoners would experience freedom, the blind would see God's salvation, the oppressed would experience the year of Jubilee. For Luke, all this points to God's great salvation that comes in different forms and shapes for people in different circumstances. Ultimately, this salvation would have one great shape and form in the end, as all those who are saved, are saved into the same salvation. God's salvation flows through Jesus into Israel and then moves to all the nations. In Luke's understanding, the Nazareth sermon is the beginning of the new era of God's salvation that would leave the nation divided.

4. A SINNER IS SAVED – LUKE 7:36-50

4.1 Salvation and forgiveness

So far we have seen the promise and fulfilment of God's salvation 1& 2. We have also looked at the programme of salvation. Now we are introduced to the actual act of salvation. In this section, Luke introduces the forgiveness of sin as part of God's salvation. Jesus forgives sin and pronounces salvation to the nameless sinful woman (7:48-50).⁹⁸ He then tells Simon, his host, that the sinful woman's many sins have been forgiven (7:47).⁹⁹ Note that forgiveness is in the past tense; the act of forgiveness has already taken place and is now being confirmed. Her gratitude follows it, unlike Mary's praise, which speaks of the future salvation that is as good as done (1:51; 53). But there could be a link here that Luke wants us to see. Mary saw the future which the sinful woman has now experienced.

Normally $\sigma\upsilon\zeta\omega$ could be translated as heal, cure or make you well, but in this case it clearly refers to something more. This woman is not healed, but saved. How is she saved, or what does Luke's salvation consist of in this regard? Could this sinful woman be numbered among those

⁹⁸ Luke has a lot to say about sinner(s) 5:30, 32; 6:34; 7:34; 13:2; 15:1-2, 7, 10; 18:13; 19:7.

⁹⁹ Luke shows again that Simon and his guests, just like the audience in the synagogue (4:22), began to doubt Jesus' prophetic credentials – if this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him (7:39) and his identity - how can he claim God's prerogative in forgiving the woman (7:49)? Yet again, Luke reveals that Jesus is aware of Simon's doubt, and he tackles it with a simple parable. The parable exposes Simon's deep thoughts about Jesus and, at the same time, it gives meaning as to why the woman is showing such gratitude. Green (1997:310) says Simon's concern might be justifiable because the woman's action could "have been regarded (at least by men) as erotic". This suspicion could be strengthened by her reputation as a sinful woman.

who were waiting for the consolation of Israel (2:25) and the redemption of Jerusalem (2:38)? Her sinful lifestyle points to the contrary. She could not be numbered among the *faithful*. However, she may fall within the category of the lost children of Abraham, whom Jesus came to seek and to save (19:9-10). Luke seems to be teaching his readers that salvation is not only physical healing, it also incorporates reconciliation and restoration. In this case the woman's forgiveness means a "starting point of her walk with God" (Bock, 1994:708). Since she is now reconciled and restored through the forgiveness of her sins, she is now acceptable to God. She can "depart with a sense of God's blessing as Jesus tells her to go in peace" (Bock, 1994:708). She was away from the love of God and now is restored into the fold of the saved people of God. This reconciliation and restoration calls for two things: First, as she goes in peace, she must now live a life in the light of her forgiveness. Second, from now on people should treat her like a clean person and give her respect, like other godly women, because she has been forgiven.

4.2 Salvation is a gift received by faith

What is the basis of the woman's salvation? Is she saved because she loves Jesus or does she love Jesus because she is saved? The use of ὅτι "because or since" seems to indicate that her salvation is grounded in the forgiveness of her sins. The love that she shows to Jesus is the result of God's acts of mercy towards her. And therefore, or for this reason, "οὐ χάριν" further links the statement of love to the act of forgiveness. The creditor has cancelled debts and the recipient is now showing her appreciation.¹⁰⁰ Bock (1996:219) supports this view by arguing that "the basis of love is a previously extended forgiveness that produces a response of love."¹⁰¹ Marshall (1978:306) suggests that "the woman's forgiveness is declared to be on the grounds of her faith, not of her love." This argument is based on 7:50 where Jesus says "your faith has saved you". This means her love is driven by her faith in Jesus which comes from the experience of forgiveness. This is in line with the birth and infancy narrative where God initiates salvation. With this parable, Luke makes a direct link between forgiveness, faith, and salvation. Several

¹⁰⁰ The question of whether Jesus and the sinful woman have met before or not is not really within the scope of this research. We can mention briefly that the parable seems to imply a personal encounter. The love of the two debtors is based on personal contact with the money lender. They know that they are now debt free because they have been told so by the money lender. Geldenhuys (1988:234) argues that the woman had already met Jesus "whether as one among the multitudes who had listened to his teaching, or as one whom he had addressed personally." Several other scholars, such as Bock (1996:219), Green (1997:313-314) and Marshall (1978:306-307), hold this view as well.

¹⁰¹ Also see Bock, 1994:703 for more explanation.

times in Acts of the Apostles Luke again links forgiveness with salvation.¹⁰² The idea being that God forgives his people so they can enjoy his salvation.

4.3 Danger of unresponsiveness

Jesus tells Simon that he loves less because he is forgiven less, at least in his estimation. He is accused of failing to fully appreciate God's forgiveness because he probably thinks he could have been saved without it. He may have thought his religious commitment, good life and uprightness in the community would earn his salvation. Luke points out the importance of forgiveness, as it is one of the central elements of salvation. Simon and his friends must learn from the sinful woman the appropriate way of responding to God's salvation. If they fail to do so, they too may miss out like Israel in the days of Elijah and Elisha. Although Jesus does not use that example here, it can be inferred as the warning is relatively similar to the one above.

4.4 Summary conclusion

The pronouncement of salvation to the sinful woman brings the narrative full circle. The birth and infancy narratives left us wondering how this salvation will become a reality in Israel. Now we see it taking shape. The parable highlights the message of Jesus that he came to call sinners to repentance (5:32). Like Simeon (2:29-30), the forgiven woman can now go in peace for she has seen and received God's salvation through faith in Jesus. She came to Jesus as a sinful woman and left him as a restored child of Abraham. She can live her life without shame and guilt.

This event must have sent a strong message to the unforgiving Pharisee and his friends, because Luke links salvation directly to the forgiveness of sin.¹⁰³ The parable gives a clear message that Jesus loves repenting sinners, and his willingness to forgive extends to those who are downtrodden, even to this notorious woman. The woman is a practical example of what it means for Jesus to seek and save. He seeks and saves sinners irrespective of how low they have sunk in

¹⁰² Acts 3:19, 26; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 22:16; 26:18.

¹⁰³ Several times in Acts, Luke links salvation to the forgiveness of sin (3:19, 26; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 22:16; 26:18).

their sins. If this is the time of salvation as we have seen in Luke 4:18-21, then the sinful woman has benefited from it, together with many others.¹⁰⁴

5. THE LOST IS FOUND – LUKE 19:1-10

5.1 Salvation of the chief tax collector

The story of Zacchaeus is unique to Luke's Gospel and epitomizes the message of Jesus that "he came to seek and to save the lost" (19:10). This is one of the stories where Jesus seeks a person as opposed to where people come to Jesus. The story shows another angle of salvation. Geldenhuys (1988:469) describes the story as a "beautiful example of the triumph of the forgiving grace of God in the action of Jesus." Zacchaeus was a man whose life was driven by the love of money. Although he was of the family of Abraham, he lived his life away from God.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, which means he was at the top of the profession that was despised by many because it was associated with dishonesty and conniving with the Roman government, the enemy of the nation. Although he was rich, he was viewed as a sinful man and an outcast. Luke says Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus but could not because of the crowds. He ran ahead and climbed a tree along Jesus' path just to have a glimpse of him. Zacchaeus received far more than what he had hoped for when Jesus told him to come down immediately because he (Jesus) must stay at his house today. Jesus was to be Zacchaeus' guest and the use of $\delta\epsilon\iota$ makes the visit a divine necessity.¹⁰⁵

Loewe (1974:326) says "Jesus' coming to Zacchaeus' house belongs to the preordained divine plan." Jesus insists that his work depends on it. It is a duty he has to fulfil if his message of salvation is to make a difference in the world. The point is that Zacchaeus was the kind of person Jesus came for. Today this lost son of Abraham will be brought home. Bock (1996:479) says "Jesus' stay with the tax collector is a necessity because it pictures what his ministry is all

¹⁰⁴ Luke consistently shows Jesus bringing to reality some of the things he promised to do in 4:18-19. People are delivered from demon possession (4:31-37; 8:26-39), healed from sickness (4:38-44; 5:12-26; 7:1-10), and the dead are brought back to life (8:49-56).

¹⁰⁵ Loewe (1974:325-326) shows other places where Jesus emphasises the necessity of promise fulfilment (2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7; 24:25-27; 24:44). Jesus' task is to fulfil the Scriptures, Moses, and the prophets.

about – to lead to God those whom others have given up.” Marshall (1978:697) calls this necessity a time “for the fulfilment of God’s plan of salvation.” Zacchaeus responded to Jesus’ call with joy and delight (1:14) and welcomed him into his home.

The crowd on the other hand was shocked and responded with murmuring to Jesus’ willingness to be hosted by a tax collector.¹⁰⁶ People were outraged because Jesus identified himself with a chief of sinners. Marshall (1978:697) argues that this act of Jesus is “tantamount to sharing in his sin” in the eyes of those who witness the incident. He risked rejection and mockery from the crowd and the religious leaders. Luke shows that Zacchaeus is not to be deterred by the crowd. In the midst of muttering, questioning and doubting, Zacchaeus stood and declared to Jesus that he would give half of his possessions to the poor and return four times more to those he may have defrauded.¹⁰⁷

This is his practical “fruit in keeping with repentance” (3:8) which shows that he is more committed to his saviour than he is to his material possessions. He was not going to serve two masters (16:13), or hold tightly to his possessions like the rich ruler (18:18-30).¹⁰⁸ Zacchaeus’ response showed at least two things: first, he was concerned with restitution. People must have that which was wrongfully taken away from them. Trocmé (1973:50-51) associates this act of Zacchaeus with the literal call of the Jubilee laws. He also implies that those who did not practice the Jubilee were excluded. This is incorrect because Jesus does not command Zacchaeus to give anything to anyone. Zacchaeus understood that what he did was wrong, sought to correct it and live a different life – a life of obedience to his Lord. Second, he demonstrated his great appreciation to Jesus for salvation.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ διεγόγγυζον is used again in 15:2 where Pharisees and teachers of the law were grumbling that Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. Is there an echo here of Israel’s murmuring in the wilderness?

¹⁰⁷ Zacchaeus willingly imposes the Mosaic Law on himself which indicates that he was willing to start a new life, even if that meant losing half of his possession. Scholars, such as Bock (1996:479) and Marshall (1978:698), point out that Zacchaeus penalised himself with the standard law required for rustlers (Lv. 6:1-5; Ex. 22:1; 2 Sam. 12:6).

¹⁰⁸ Jesus does not commend Zacchaeus for his willingness to give away half of his possession because this is not the point of the story. The important thing is the manner in which Zacchaeus responded to Jesus’ call.

¹⁰⁹ It is worth noting that throughout the narrative, Jesus and Zacchaeus do not engage with the murmuring crowd. Luke’s focus is not on the crowd but on Zacchaeus, who is the object of God’s grace.

Zacchaeus correctly associated the coming of Jesus to his home as a sign of acceptance, reconciliation and fellowship. The moment of his restoration has come with the coming of Jesus. Yes “today” is Zacchaeus’ day of salvation. Luke’s “today” plays an important role in this section as it communicates the immediate availability of salvation, just as it communicated the immediacy of the fulfilment of Scripture in 4:21. Luke communicates that the day of salvation which Mary and Zechariah spoke so passionately about, and which has been witnessed in the case of the sinful woman, is once again experienced by Zacchaeus, the unlikely candidate in the eyes of the crowd. From today, Zacchaeus will be counted among those who are saved (7:50; 13:23; 17:19; 18:26, 42). Luke’s emphasis on “today” will help us to understand later that he is not concerned with the delay of the *parousia* but the progress of salvation itself, from Jerusalem to the ends of the world.

5.2 Salvation for the son of Abraham

Jesus also said something about Zacchaeus’ salvation when he said “this man too is a son of Abraham.” This is important to Luke as it takes his readers back to the promise-fulfilment story. Abraham was an important figure in Jewish history. Mary praised God for “remembering to be merciful to Abraham (1:55), and Zechariah praised God for the horn of salvation, that has redeemed Zacchaeus the son of Abraham (1:68-69), and for remembering the “oath he swore to our father Abraham” (72-74). If Jesus came to save the children of Abraham, then Zacchaeus should be accepted into the fold. Loewe (1974:330) says “in the eyes of men Zacchaeus is to be rejected as a sinner. Jesus, on the other hand, singles him out for favour.” The claim that the chief tax collector is a true heir of Abraham’s promise must have been scandalous for those who had discarded Zacchaeus due to his trade. But John had already warned the religious leaders that they must repent and stop justifying their unbelief by claiming to be sons of Abraham. He warned that God could raise the sons of Abraham from stones (3:8-9). Zacchaeus is a perfect example of what God can do to bring about his salvation. He was a man rejected by his own people and he wandered like a lost sheep without a shepherd. Today he is restored into the family. His restoration is along the same lines as the two parables in Luke 15:1-10. The shepherd seeks the lost sheep and restores it into the flock, and the woman cleans her house carefully in the quest of finding the lost coin. Jesus sought and found the lost Zacchaeus.

It is worth noting that Luke says nothing about faith, repentance or forgiveness in relation to Zacchaeus' salvation. Jesus simply declared the arrival of salvation to Zacchaeus' house. How is he saved or what could salvation mean for him? His salvation came in the form of restoration. This means that his sins were cancelled, and he was now in a healthy fellowship and communion with God. Like the sinful woman, his life was filled with joy and peace. The great day of the Lord will be a joy for him, rather than a moment of pain and gnashing of teeth (13:28-30). God's restoration also brought about transformation in the life of Zacchaeus. From now on he would live like the faithful Israel waiting for the ultimate salvation, just as Simeon and Anna waited for the arrival of Jesus.

Green (1997:672) suggests that salvation "signifies Zacchaeus' vindication and restoration to the community of God's people."¹¹⁰ This is partly true, and Jesus demonstrated this inclusion by sharing a meal with him in his house. He was vindicated from the hostile crowd that saw nothing good in him and probably thought his sins were beyond salvation. But this argument does not give the full picture. Salvation, in this narrative, also vindicated Jesus because it illustrates "God's power to do the impossible" (Seccombe, 1983:130). It reveals that Jesus is what he claims to be, an anointed one of God. Zacchaeus could be vindicated and restored into the family of God by Jesus, because God has given him the power to do so.

Zacchaeus' response to Jesus speaks volumes of his faith in him. Luke implies faith, repentance and forgiveness in the narrative. Zacchaeus believed that Jesus was a Saviour and understood what Jesus meant when he pronounced salvation, hence he responded with faith and displayed practical signs of repentance. The outward evidence of his faith was his willingness to live his life for Jesus. If he did not believe, he could have rejected Jesus' invitation and not offered half of his possessions to the poor. By pronouncing salvation, Jesus also implied that he had forgiven Zacchaeus his sins. He is saved because he is the sinner that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save" (19:10).

The theme of seeking can be traced back to Luke 15, where Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. In all these parables something special is lost and later

¹¹⁰ Ravens (1991) also holds this view.

found, even the son who returned was “lost and found” (19:24). In essence, Luke presents Jesus in this narrative as the divine shepherd of Ezekiel 34, who will come to rescue the sheep from all the places where they are scattered. The shepherd will round them all up and drive them home, where they rightfully belong. Luke also demonstrates that Zacchaeus’ sins are not beyond God’s love and mercy, though the religious leaders thought so. Others like him will be saved as we have seen in the story of a sinful woman (7:36-50).

This section ends on a high note as Jesus restores Zacchaeus into the family of God and, at the same time, Jesus fulfils his own divine mission “for the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Marshall (1978:695) argues that Jesus’ words in verse 10 “may fittingly be regarded as the epitome of the message of this Gospel.” According to Marshall, the narrative is the fitting climax of Jesus’ mission, and the story of salvation in the Gospel. If it is true that verse 10 is the epitome of the story, it would be reasonable to infer that Luke wants everybody to see the meaning of God’s salvation in the life of Zacchaeus.

5.3 Summary conclusion

This story carries similarities with the story of the sinful woman. The religious leaders struggled to understand why Jesus would allow a sinful woman to touch him, and in this case they struggled with how he could eat with a sinner. The two characters were outcast and had no place in the life of the people of God, according to the religious leaders. Jesus acknowledged that they were sinners but in both cases he welcomed them graciously, accepting them into the family and publicly declaring their salvation. Zacchaeus’ story also stands in contrast to the rich ruler who rejected God’s salvation because he was not willing to let go of his material possession (18:18-30). Zacchaeus was ready to let go of more than half of his wealth as a token of appreciation. Bock (1996a:1520) says “Zacchaeus’ encounter with Jesus has led him to change the way he handles money - from taking advantage of people to serving them.” From now on he will not collect any more than what was required (3:13). Although he is described as a sinner, the Lord had lifted him from his humble state (1:52), while the rich ruler who was “holy”, as he claimed to have kept all the holy laws of the Lord, was sent home empty handed (1:53).

What does salvation mean in this passage? It means to be restored into the family of God. The outcast sinner is now accepted in the holy family of God. The relationship Jesus had with Zacchaeus is a visible example of what it means to be saved. Having been reconciled Zacchaeus could now enjoy a new fellowship with God. Zacchaeus is a classic example of the lost sheep which could not possibly return home on its own. It had to be rescued and that was the real blessing for Zacchaeus. With this narrative, Luke wants people to know that the good shepherd has come to save God's people from their sins. They must be willing to be gathered. Those who reject the shepherd will remain lost and wander around like the grumbling children of Israel in the desert. This is the message that religious leaders and the outcasts need to take to heart. It is an encouraging and rebuking message at the same time, depending on what one does with Jesus.

6. SALVATION FROM JERUSALEM TO THE END OF THE WORLD – ACTS 2

6.1 Salvation beyond the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel ends with death and resurrection, and the stories of Jesus appearances were heard by many. In Acts, Luke confirms that Jesus did appear to his disciples. There are at least four things, in this section, that Luke wants to clarify concerning the meaning of salvation. First, people who believed Jesus' message must have wondered how their salvation would come about since he was dead. What would salvation look like for them?¹¹¹ Second, Luke wants his audience to know that although Jesus was rejected by his own people, God has vindicated him. He has done so by raising him from the dead. Third, Luke wants them to know that Jesus has not abandoned his mission of seeking and saving the lost. It has simply taken another form, now the disciples have taken the responsibility. Fourth, Luke introduces the Holy Spirit. He wants people to understand the critical role of the Holy Spirit in God's plan of salvation. The Holy Spirit enables his disciples to bring the message of salvation to the people of the world with boldness.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Although there were rumours that Jesus rose from the dead, many people must have wondered how it would all pan out in the end now that the leader was dead.

¹¹² The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an important part in the Gospel narrative, and Luke is the only one who records it. Marshall (1980:68) highlights that "it is the first occurrence of this experience."

6.1.1 Salvation and Resurrection

Peter tells the people of Israel that the same Jesus they crucified, has been raised from the dead by God, and is now pouring out the Holy Spirit. He assures them that the death of Jesus was not a defeat but the fulfilment of the divine plan of salvation. It was God who handed Jesus over to fulfil what he had foretold, through the mouth of the prophets, that the Messiah would suffer (3:18; 13:27; 17:3; 26:23).¹¹³ There was no accident in Jesus' death and the promise of salvation is still being fulfilled.

The evidence of this claim is that God raised him from the dead as death could not keep hold of him (2:22-24). Peter sustains his argument of God's foreknowledge by appealing to Psalm 16:8-11 (2:25-28). He argues that this passage is not about David, "for his soul did not go to the abode of the dead and his flesh did not undergo decomposition" (Bruce, 1988:65). He points out that David's bones could still be found in Jerusalem. Peter insists that the Psalm is about Jesus, the descendant of David, and points out that Jesus' body did not see decay because God raised him to life, and "we are all witnesses of the fact" (2:32).¹¹⁴ This is the crux of Peter's sermon and an important point for Luke, because it does not only bring Jesus back into the picture, but it brings to life the message of salvation. People who lost hope when Jesus died would now realise that it was not all lost, as some religious leaders would want them to believe. Jesus is alive and so is God's plan of salvation.

6.1.2 Salvation and Jesus exaltation

Once it is established that Jesus is alive, Peter says "therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (2:36). He wants them to know that Jesus is now exalted to the right hand of God in heaven. Bock (2007:136) highlights that the term "Lord" shows Jesus' lordship over salvation and the distribution of salvation's benefits. This is also Peter's argument when he says Jesus "has received from the Father the

¹¹³ The theme of the suffering Messiah is also prominent in the Gospel of Luke (9:22, 44; 13:33; 17:25; 18:31-33; 22:37; 24:25, 46).

¹¹⁴ This was alluded to when Luke mentioned that Joseph was from the line of David in the birth and infancy narratives (Luke 2:4).

promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear” (2:33). God has made him Lord over everything and Luke uses “Lord” frequently in Acts to stress the authority of Jesus.¹¹⁵

Luke also refers to Jesus as “Christ”. The point he seeks to emphasise is that Jesus is still the appointed Messiah despite Israel’s rejection and attempt to derail him from his mission.¹¹⁶ Through the words of Peter, Luke highlights for his audience that Jesus is now more in control than ever before. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is strong evidence for all to see that Jesus is the exalted Lord and Christ. Turner (1996:297-306) argues that the outpouring of the Spirit is a messianic act that seeks to bring about restoration to Israel. Again Peter sustains his argument by appealing to Psalm 110:1, the passage that Jesus had already linked to himself.¹¹⁷ Jesus’ death, resurrection and exaltation are important to Luke because they testify to the message of salvation. Those who doubted Jesus can now see that salvation has come. They can know for sure that Jesus was truly the promised Christ.

6.1.3 Salvation and the Holy Spirit

In the Gospel, Luke correlated the birth of Jesus with the Old Testament promise of God’s salvation. When Jesus started his ministry in Nazareth, he linked his work to the fulfilment of the promised salvation. Throughout the Gospel, Luke revealed Jesus saving people from various situations. In this section of Acts, Luke reveals the exalted Jesus pouring out the Holy Spirit. Why is this important for Luke? How is the Holy Spirit related to Luke’s understanding of salvation?

In Luke 4:18-19, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jesus to save people. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples to reach the world with the same message of salvation, starting from Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.¹¹⁸ According to Luke, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is critical to God’s salvation. First, the Holy Spirit enables disciples to declare the message of salvation boldly and clearly. Second, He enables the hearers to understand the

¹¹⁵ Acts 4:33; 8:16; 11:17, 20; 15:11, 26; 16:31; 19:5, 13, 17; 20:21, 24, 35; 21:13; 28:31.

¹¹⁶ Bock (2007:136) argues that the term “Christ” is a key title for Luke (Luke 2:11, 26; 3:15; 4:41; 9:20; 20:41; 22:67; 23:2, 35, 39; 24:26, 46; Acts 2:31, 38; 3:6, 18, 20; 4:10, 26; 5:42; 8:5, 12; 9:22, 34; 10:36, 48; 11:17; 15:26; 16:18; 17:3; 18:5, 28; 24:24; 26:23; 28:31).

¹¹⁷ Luke 20:42-44.

¹¹⁸ The Day of Pentecost was an important fiftieth day after the presentation of the first harvested sheaf of barley and was known by Hebrew speaking people as “feast of weeks” (Bruce, 1988:49-50).

message and to respond appropriately. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that on the Day of Pentecost people heard the message of salvation in their own vernacular languages (2:11) and three thousand were saved.¹¹⁹ Third, the Spirit would guide the disciples as they went about proclaiming the message.¹²⁰ All these three steps are important because Luke wants people to understand that salvation means reconciliation, and living for Jesus. Living for Jesus means applying the Gospel in real life. Without understanding there can be no application of the Gospel and without the Holy Spirit there can be no understanding. So the goal of the gift of the Holy Spirit is to *fulfil* the mission of Jesus, which is to bring about salvation. That is why the Holy Spirit and salvation become inseparable in the Acts of the Apostle.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit amazed the visitors, and they realised that the event was special and meant something, but did not know what that could be.¹²¹ The conjunction ὅτι also clearly links their response to what they hear. They all wondered, and asked: are not all these men Galileans? Could it be that with this question, Luke seeks to remind his readers of the response of the people of Nazareth? When Jesus told them that the Scripture is fulfilled in their hearing they asked: “isn’t this Joseph’s son” and how could he be the Messiah?¹²² How was it possible that the disciples could speak these foreign languages? And most importantly “what does this mean” (2:12)? Again Luke frames the event almost the same way as he did with the naming of John where people asked, “what then is this child going to be?”¹²³ Luke uses these recurring questions to help his audience link the current event to the message of salvation preached by Jesus in the Gospel.

The amazement and confusion driven by the desire to gain understanding of the event, gave Peter a solid platform to refute the mockery and to explain to those who sought the meaning. Luke records that, from Peter’s sermon, about three thousand people were saved and joined the

¹¹⁹ Bruce (1988:52) highlights that the speaker uttered words in a language of which he has no command in normal circumstances.

¹²⁰ Acts 11:12; 13:2; 20:22-23; 21:11.

¹²¹ Luke records that people were amazed when they heard the loud sound. Bruce (1988:54) argues that τῆς φωνῆς ταύτης in 2:6 refers to the languages not the wind. It was the sound of a familiar language, coming from unlikely people, that amazed the visitors. They were amazed by the disciples’ ability to speak intelligibly in foreign tongues.

¹²² Luke 4:21.

¹²³ Luke 2:66.

growing new community of saved people. This is important for Luke because it shows that salvation is not just something in the far distant future. This massive conversion is Luke's practical example that salvation is not only available but accessible now to those who would respond appropriately.

With Acts 2, Luke also seeks to achieve two other important stages of salvation. First, he inaugurates the new era of the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit in the life of the new community. Jesus may be gone, but he is still saving people through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Second, Luke lays a foundation from which the saved community will reach others. This community is in total contrast to those who still supported the crucifixion of Jesus. Luke explains that this was a united learning community dedicated to serve the exalted Jesus as Lord and Saviour of their lives. For them, salvation did not only mean living for Jesus, it also meant serving the world with the message while waiting for his ultimate return. They understood that physical death did not mean a loss of salvation, hence they were willing to die for the Gospel.

There were many others who were saved during the ministry of the apostles and other disciples. This was the case because those who repented and believed received the Holy Spirit. They in turn became witnesses for Jesus "from Jerusalem...to the ends of the earth" (1:8).¹²⁴ The Holy Spirit was with them, and helped them, as they declared the message of salvation. Bock (2007:99) points out that in Acts "the Spirit fills for service (9:17) or to speak God's word" (4:8, 31: 13:9-10). This is in line with Luke's Gospel, as Zechariah said that God will save his people so that they can serve him.¹²⁵

6.2 Repentance, salvation or judgement

If Jesus is exalted by God and the Holy Spirit has come as he promised (24:49), what does that mean to those who rejected him and are charged by Peter? It can only mean judgement. The freshness of Jesus' death in people's minds, and Peter's charge, must have sent a chilling message to their hearts. The good news is that Peter offers salvation not judgement. Peter argues that the resurrection and exaltation are a public vindication of Jesus and calls Israel to

¹²⁴ Again this verse demonstrates clearly that salvation was never intended for Israel only but for all human kind.

¹²⁵ Luke 1:74.

repentance. If people fail to repent they will then have to face the consequences of their unbelief because “salvation is found in no one else” but Jesus (4:12). The sermon leaves nothing to chance and Israel is called to turn from the wicked ways that led to the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter urged them to save themselves from “this corrupt generation” (2:40). He borrows this term from Moses who used it to warn his people of the impending judgement that was to fall on them due to their unbelief.¹²⁶

It is noteworthy that the “wicked generation” did not enter the Promised Land, but perished in the desert, with the exception of the obedient Caleb and Joshua. The wicked generation forfeited the right to be children of God and were refused entry into the land they dreamed of and lived for. The warning for Israel from Peter is the same. If Israel now continues with unbelief how shall they escape God’s judgement for rejecting such a great salvation which was confirmed to them with signs and wonders?¹²⁷ The point made is that they cannot escape on their own, just like the wicked generation described above. They are on the path that leads to judgement and destruction, the total opposite of God’s promise of salvation. This is a sad contrast to the hope of Mary, Zachariah, Simeon and Anna. The glorious picture of salvation is now promising to be a dreadful day of judgement. How could it be that the nation that has waited so long for the Messiah would crucify him when he finally comes? Peter says the Day of the Lord is not going to be good news to those who rejected God’s salvation. He paints this picture clearly in his sermon (2:19-20).¹²⁸

For the first time after the crucifixion, people were confronted with the consequences of their actions and could not point fingers at the Roman authorities or anyone else. The convincing message of Jesus’ exaltation and the inescapability of judgement, pierced their hearts. The evidence presented was too strong to ignore or dispute. It became clear to them that there was no excuse in their failure to accept God’s salvation. Clearly Peter gave them more than they

¹²⁶ Moses also reflects on this theme again in his song in Deuteronomy 1:35; 32:5, 20.

¹²⁷ Hebrews 2:3.

¹²⁸ Bruce (1988:61-62) argues that the signs of nature in Acts 2:19-20 may have more relevance in the present context than is sometimes realised. People still remembered the events on the day Jesus was crucified, which Luke has mentioned in the Gospel (Luke 23:44-45). According to Luke even the centurion acknowledged that Jesus was a righteous man (Luke 23:47).

bargained for when they asked for the meaning of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; just like Zacchaeus when he wanted to see Jesus.

Has their unbelief excluded them from entering God's Kingdom, like the old generation? Most importantly, have they really lost their salvation? Is there any way they could be restored? They asked Peter and the other disciples, "Brothers, what shall we do?" This is an important question for Luke, which he repeats when the Roman jailer questions Paul and Silas in Acts 16:31. He wants his reader to understand that sinners can be saved and, through the mouth of Peter, he tells them how. "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (2:38), Peter proclaims. His call was in line with Joel's appeal to his fellow men when he said "rend your hearts".¹²⁹ He assured his fellow Jews that the promise of salvation was still available to them, their children and for those far off, if they are willing to repent and put their trust in Jesus. Salvation is still theirs only if they can change their attitude and humble themselves before the exalted Saviour.

With this, Luke shows that salvation is tightly linked to repentance. If his hearers do not repent, then they will not enjoy God's salvation, even though it is available. Luke claims that the Lord pours out his Spirit in order to save his people, hence Peter calls them to repentance. God is as committed to his mission now as he was then, and the exalted Jesus has ushered in a new beginning by pouring out the Holy Spirit to his disciples. This is a fresh start for Israel and a chance for her to turn to Jesus in faith. For Luke, turning to Jesus is not only appropriate but is the only way of accessing and appropriating God's salvation (2:21). Consequently, if people reject this chance, and fail to repentant, they will then face God's judgement. The link between salvation and judgement is very clear in Peter's sermon. Those who are saved will enter the kingdom of God, and those rejected will perish like the wicked generation of Moses.

6.3 The Fulfilment of Joel's promise of salvation

Through Peter's sermon, Luke also deliberately links Pentecost to the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy in Joel 2:28-32, which speaks of the great Day of the Lord. Bock (2007:96) argues that

¹²⁹ Joel 2:13.

this promise could be traced back to the Old Testament.¹³⁰ Turner (1996:272-273) presents four points which he believes provide a “theological undergirding” for the application of Joel. The fourth one is important to mention as it gives insight to Peter’s sermon. He argues that “the nature of the exaltation in question, and of the gift which flows from it, involves such a close identification with ‘the Lord’ of Joel’s citation that Jesus may be presented as the redeemer upon whose name men should call for salvation.” Luke wants his audience to understand that Jesus is now pouring out the Holy Spirit to bring about salvation to those who will call upon his name, as Joel promised. For Luke the message is clear: what God promised has come to pass or is coming to pass, first with the arrival of Jesus and now with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Joel believed that the outpouring of the Spirit would inaugurate the beginning of the Day of the Lord. Luke, through the words of Peter, teaches that the final act of the Day of the Lord, which comes with both salvation and judgement, is now taking place. As the Lord provided salvation from the locust plague, so he offers salvation from the impending judgement. Treier (1997:17) points out that Joel used “the promise of future salvation to call for a present response” (Joel 2:32) and Peter uses the present event to point both to the immediacy of the Day of the Lord and to the future (2:17). Peter’s ultimate goal is twofold. First, is to warn people of the real danger of missing out on God’s offer of salvation. Second, is to see people of Israel being restored just as the Magnificat, the Benedictus, and the Nunc Dimittis declared. God has remembered his covenant and is bringing salvation to his people. Thus the eschatological significance of the covenant is critical in Peter’s sermon. In this passage Peter declares that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit “is the inauguration of the eschaton”, as Treier (1997:22) points out.

Bock (2007:112) argues that the link of the Spirit with the Day of the Lord would not have been a foreign concept, as it is in line with Numbers 11:29. Israel knew that the Spirit would play a crucial role in God’s plan of salvation. Therefore, we should not be surprised that people wanted to gain meaning about the Pentecost event. Bruce (1988:72) points out that the salvation which Joel spoke about was to be enjoyed by a “remnant” of Israel. Luke agrees with Joel that salvation will be for those who call upon the name of the Lord. The important thing, in this passage, is that Jesus is now the Lord. “Peter urged his hearers to make sure, by a repentant

¹³⁰ Numbers 11:29; Isaiah 32:15; 44:3 and Ezekiel 36:27.

calling on the Lord, that they belonged to this remnant and saved themselves from that perverse generation” (Bruce, 1988:72). Peter’s claim that his generation is perverse is in line with the way Jesus described the same generation. He called Israel an “unbelieving and perverse generation” (Luke 9:41); and in another case he described her as “wicked generation” (Luke 11:29). Pentecost brings the message of Joel to its climax and Peter claims that the people bear witness. The Spirit has come, the call has been made and thousands have called upon the name of the Lord and have experienced God’s salvation. Now a saved community, that lives for Jesus, is growing steadily.

6.5 Summary conclusion

Acts 2 is a decisive call to salvation. Israel is called to repentance that will lead to salvation. This salvation means living for Jesus and serving his mission. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an amazing return of God to his people. With Pentecost, Luke seeks to inform his readers that salvation is still available in the midst of the impending judgement. Those who did not believe during the earthly ministry of Jesus can still come in and be part of the saved people of God. It is not too late to turn away from the “wicked generation” and to turn to the family of God. Bock (2007:108) says Peter’s speech “is one of the most important theological declarations in the New Testament. It highlights who Jesus is and explains how one can know what God was doing through him.” Most importantly, this passage shows that salvation means nothing less than living, and even dying, for Jesus. Living for Jesus means rejecting the old faith and old practice, which would inevitably lead to persecution and even death.

7. CONCLUSION

The exegetical work of the five passages has given us some insight into Luke’s understanding of salvation. In the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke we noticed that he calls all the people of Israel to accept the salvation that comes through Jesus, the promised Deliverer of the Old Testament. We noticed that Jesus brings both the promise and salvation. In these chapters the call is primarily for Israel. This is important because, it is Israel who will become a blessing to the world.¹³¹ Mary, Zechariah, Simeon and Anna envisioned a different Israel as a result of the birth of Jesus. Those who would believe in him would have their lives transformed. In the

¹³¹ This promise can be traced all the way back to Genesis 12:1-9

fourth chapter of the Gospel, we observed that Luke's salvation is both spiritual and socio-political. He reveals how Jesus would go about bringing this long awaited salvation. He would deliver his people from political and spiritual oppression. The prisoners would experience freedom, the blind would see God's salvation, and the oppressed would experience salvation and peace that can only be associated with the Day of the Lord.

Luke then moves on to show how this salvation could become a reality in people's lives by sharing stories of people who experienced it, such as Zacchaeus (19:1-10) and the sinful woman (7:36-50). Zacchaeus, the social outcast, was lifted from his humble state (1:52). His life changed and his lifestyle was never to be the same again. The sinful woman left Jesus with total peace and fully restored into the family of God. These were two lost children of Abraham that Jesus came to seek and to save. Luke wants his readers to see clearly that Jesus is the appointed Saviour of God's people. In Acts 2, we noticed that the crucified Jesus is now the exalted Lord. This means God's plan of salvation is still on course. Israel is called to leave darkness and live for Jesus. This is the only way in which people would be able to live, and to serve God, as a saved community.

Salvation is available to all people, though it is offered to the Jews first (1:69-75). This salvation is a present reality that can be experienced by people now (19:9),¹³² even though it is not present in its fullest form. It "involves sharing in hope, experiencing the kingdom, tasting forgiveness and participating in the Spirit's enabling power, especially for mission" (Bock, 2004:360). We are therefore not surprised to discover in Acts 2:42-47 that the saved community lived together, shared graciously with one another, participated in God's mission and the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Luke's work is nothing short of an invitation to everyone to come and see, as well as experience, this salvation in Christ. He shows that the fullness of salvation will be enjoyed when Jesus returns in glory to bring everything to an end (Acts 1:11). It is this hope of Christ's return that enables the saved Christian community to persevere under severe persecution and rejection (Acts 5, 7, 8). But this perseverance is not driven by fear of

¹³² According to Luke, the arrival of Jesus meant the arrival of salvation for the lost (Luke 19:10). It is for people, irrespective of their nationality and race, but it starts from the house of Abraham.

judgement as Conzelmann (1961:227) suggests. It is driven by love and hope for the ultimate salvation.

Earlier I mentioned that Luke reveals salvation in different forms and shapes to people in different circumstances, and yet at the same time he shows that salvation would have one great shape and form in the end, as all those who are saved are saved into the same Kingdom. They learn to live a different life because their lives are no longer theirs but for the King of the Kingdom. In the next chapters we will reflect on the meaning of salvation and its practical implication for the Church in South Africa in the 21st century. What does it mean to be saved today?

CHAPTER FOUR

REFLECTION ON THE MEANING OF SALVATION IN LUKE- ACTS

1. THE MEANING OF SALVATION IN LUKE-ACTS

This chapter brings us to the point where we can attempt to be more specific about the meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts. We will present the meaning and the extent of Lukan salvation from various angles.

1.1 Scholars' views of Lukan salvation

A careful reading of Luke-Acts research work reveals that several scholars have put forward their understanding of what Luke means by salvation. Bock (2004:360) argues that Lukan salvation “involves sharing in hope, experiencing the kingdom, tasting forgiveness, and participating in the Spirit’s enabling power, especially for mission.” For Doble (1996:239), Luke’s “concept of salvation may be inferred, but is nowhere defined; it is broad, ranging from personal healings through to the nature of that widening company who aligned themselves with Jesus.” It has been argued by Bosch (1991:117) that Luke understands salvation to include “the total transformation of human life, forgiveness of sin, healing from infirmities and release from any kind of bondage.” He further states that it “involves the reversal of all the evil consequences of sin, against both God and neighbour” Bosch (1991:107). While Ladd (1974:74) argues that, for Luke, “salvation means not only the redemption of the body, but also the restoration of communion between God and man that had been broken by sin.” He asserts that salvation “is concerned not only with men’s souls but with the salvation of the whole man” (Ladd, 1974:76).

As far as Green (1998:89) is concerned, Lukan salvation “entails status-inversion and the reversal of conventional values, as God accepts those who have otherwise been rejected.” He points out that “God’s activity embraces the raising up of lowly persons whom Jesus encounters in the Gospel; ... it also encompasses the bringing down of the powerful as all are invited to appropriate salvation for themselves.” For Powell (1992:6), salvation in Luke-Acts is about “participation in the reign of God” which means “living life, even now, as God intends it to be

lived.” Powell (1992:6) further points out that Lukan salvation “appears to be determined in each instance by the needs of the person or persons involved.” Another insight comes from Peterson (2009:66) who suggest that Luke, in 1:78-79, associates salvation with the shining of divine light on those “living in darkness and in the shadow of death” (2:28-32; 4:18-21) and guidance “into the path of peace” (2:14, 29).

1.2 The all-encompassing salvation

Lukan salvation is comprehensive and all encompassing as it meets people in their various desperate situations, as it has been pointed by several scholars above. The variety of opinions on the meaning of Lukan salvation, presented by scholars above, reveals that there is no simple correct answer. In Luke we see the relationship between the physical and spiritual salvation in action. As Green (1965:126) points out, Luke “wants us to understand that this is what salvation is like – new life, wholeness, forgiveness and healing.”

A careful reading of the Gospel and Acts clearly shows that Luke uses salvation terminology in more than one way. In the birth and infancy narratives salvation carries an obvious tone of political deliverance. Yet the salvation of Zacchaeus, the sinful woman and the converts of Acts 2:41, are clearly not political. For Zacchaeus, salvation comes in a form of restoration and fellowship with God’s people. He is described as lost which means he is not where he should be. Yes he was lost sociologically, in that his own people wanted nothing to do with him because he was a publican. More importantly he was a sheep without a shepherd and lived far away from God. He was found by the shepherd and returned into the flock. On the other hand the sinful woman’s salvation is equated to rescue from a life of sin and rebellion against God’s commands.

In the body of the Gospel, Luke further unpacks the meaning of salvation by way of giving examples. He reveals that salvation encompasses a total transformation of human life: sociologically, politically and spiritually. That is why its content varies in form, ranging from the coming of Jesus (1:77), his birth (2:30), blessing,¹³³ rescue (1:69), forgiveness,¹³⁴ healing,¹³⁵

¹³³ 1:42, 47; 6:20-22.

¹³⁴ 1:77; 3:6; 5:20; 7:36-50; 15:11-24; Acts 2:40; 5:31; 13:38-39.

¹³⁵ 4:40; 6:9; 7:3; 8:48; 17:19; Acts 4:9; 14:9.

raising the dead,¹³⁶ restoration,¹³⁷ deliverance from demon possessions and captivity,¹³⁸ and complete new life of all those whom Jesus sets free (Acts 2:42-47). Luke also equates salvation with eternal life (Acts 13:46-47).

Guided by my exposition of the key passages in Luke and the various views presented above, it is my suggestion that salvation in Luke's understanding means nothing less than the deliverance from the bondage of Satan, restoration, forgiveness, acceptance into God's family, and fellowship with God and his people through Jesus, the promised Messiah. It means rejecting the faith of the "corrupt generation" (Acts 2:40), accepting the promised Messiah (1-2) and receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). It will involve the scattering of the proud, bringing down earthly rulers, and sending away empty handed all those who are rich (1:52-54). It will culminate at the eschaton when Israel is finally delivered from all her enemies.

1.3 Salvation is still for sinners

One of the most striking features of Lukan salvation is his concern for sinners.¹³⁹ In this category of sinners we find the poor, the outcast and the downtrodden. Luke reveals that Jesus' ministry is about seeking out sinners as the lost sheep of God's flock (15:1-32; 19:10). Luke openly states that it is not the healthy Jesus came for, but the sick. For him Jesus has not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (5:31-32). In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells people that heaven celebrates when one sinner turns to God in faith (15:7). Therefore he sought them, enjoyed table fellowship with them and even defended them from the religious leaders.

Since Lukan salvation is for sinners, it is not surprising that it is tightly linked with faith, repentance and forgiveness. For example, in faith, the criminal on the cross (23:40-43) repented and was forgiven. The word forgiveness is not used, but it can be inferred as Jesus promised to be with him. The Kingdom is reserved for those whose sins are forgiven. The parable of the prodigal son (15:11-32), which is only in Luke, stresses the point of repentance and forgiveness. Jesus himself said repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations (24:47).

¹³⁶ 7:11-17; 8:50.

¹³⁷ 15; 19:9.

¹³⁸ 4:38-41; 8:26-39; 9:42-47; 13:10-17

¹³⁹ Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7; 16:30; 17:4; 27:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20.

However, it might be dangerous to think that faith, repentance and forgiveness are the conditions for receiving salvation. “It is better to think of them as the appropriate response of man to the grace of God” as Giles (1983:46) argues. It is God who saves. This has been in the fore front of Luke’s understanding of salvation.

2. THE REALITY OF SALVATION

In Luke’s writing, salvation is practical and concrete in that transformed lives are visible for all to see the present reality and the power of the Gospel. At the same time this salvation functions as a *sign* of the perfect salvation that is eschatological.

2.1 The current reality of salvation

According to Luke, God’s salvation is not only an eschatological gift that belongs to the final consummation; though this is the final end of Luke’s salvation, as will be shown below. Luke’s salvation is also a gift that people can experience in their lives, though not in its full glory. This is confirmed by Ladd (1993:71) when he points out that the word ‘salvation’ refers both to an eschatological and to a present blessing. He points out that the “future salvation means two things: deliverance from mortality and perfect fellowship with God” (Ladd 1993:72). Other scholars such as Morris (1988:38) and Viljoen (2003:200) highlight Luke’s emphasis that salvation has become present in Christ with a frequent use of the adverbs ‘now’ and ‘today’.¹⁴⁰ Giles (1983:15) highlights Jesus’ words in 14:15-24 where he says the Messianic Banquet is at this moment assembling: “come for all is ready.” He also highlights that Luke’s ambition was to heighten the wonder of the present as men and women can now experience the age to come in this age” (Giles, 1983:49). This notion is echoed by Bock (2004:360) who insists that “Jesus did not come to simply rescue people for heaven, but also to have them know God’s transforming presence.” People of the 21 century can know God and live for him if they accept Jesus as their exalted Lord and Saviour.

There are several texts in Luke-Acts that point to salvation as a present reality. In Luke 11:52, Jesus accuses the lawyer of preventing people from entering the Kingdom, and they themselves

¹⁴⁰ The word “today” appears eleven time in the Gospel (2:11; 4:21; 5:26; 12:28; 13:32,33; 19:5, 9; 22:34,61; 23:43) and “now” appears thirty nine times (1:20, 48; 2:25, 29; 3:23; 4:38; 5:10; 6:21*2, 25*2; 7:36, 42; 8:19, 40; 9:7, 11:19, 31, 32, 39; 12:52; 13:1, 7; 14:17; 15:1; 16:3, 25; 17:7, 11; 19:8, 42; 20:29, 33; 22:1, 36, 69; 24:13).

have not entered. The parables in Luke 15 all speak of the present salvation. There is joy, peace and fellowship as Jesus continues to eat with sinners and the downtrodden of this world. Again in Luke 16:16 Jesus says “the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.” In both texts Luke makes it clear that God’s salvation has come and people are entering, even though others are being prevented by the religious leaders. The presence of the Messiah means the presence of God’s salvation, that is why Jesus pointed to his miracle work when John’s disciples enquired if he was the Messiah (7:18-23). Jesus told them to “go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor” (7:22). For Luke, deliverance from demon possession (8:36; 9:42) and healing (4:40; 14:4; 22:51) are practical evidence of the current availability of God’s salvation. Luke ends Acts 2 by stating that three thousand were added to the steadily growing number of those who had been saved. We know that this number is still growing in the 21st century.

2.2 The eschatological reality of salvation

It is essential to point out that Lukan salvation is not only a present reality, it also has a future dimension. This can be seen in the story of Zacchaeus, the sinful woman and all people who have been rescued by Jesus from their misery. The present salvation is not in its full glory which will be experienced during the consummation. It is a “present reality but it is also a future hope. It is a guarantee of deliverance on ‘the great and terrible day of the Lord’ (Acts 2:20-21), when this ‘crooked generation’ will be judged (Acts 2:40), by ‘the one ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead’ (Acts 10:42-43)” (Giles, 1983:49). The fullness of God’s salvation will be experienced by people from east and west and north and south who will eat at Jesus’ table in the kingdom (Luke 13: 29; 22:30). This perfect fellowship can also be seen in Luke 20:36, where Jesus says “they can no longer die; for they are like the angels.” In essence Luke’s salvation is an inauguration of this feast that “calls for committed and faithful living in the context of the kingdom’s future consummation” (Bock, 1994:34; 2004:361-362). That is why Jesus commands his disciples to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

3. SALVATION AS WAS PROMISED TO ISRAEL

The above two aspects of salvation seek to ground Lukan salvation to the Jewish hope of salvation. Israel ought to see that this Jesus is the long awaited Messiah who would bring a complete salvation for God's people. In his writing, Luke has presented a compelling argument that grounds salvation in the God of Israel. He points out that God is the ultimate source of salvation as Jesus only brings about that which is the will of Father (5:17; 6:18; 11:20). Salvation is grounded on his initiative in turning to his people, and bringing to fruition the Old Testament promise of a Messiah (1-2). Luke's salvation is a precious gift from God to the lost children of Abraham and those who are far off (Acts 2:39) whom Jesus, the Promised Messiah, has come to seek and to save (19:9-10). He has done this during his earthly ministry and through his disciples (Acts 2:14-41).¹⁴¹ In his sermon Peter says it is Jesus who is the Saviour as there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). "The birth of Jesus was the birth of the Saviour of Humanity as a historical reality" and "God would accomplish redemption and salvation through this Son" (Viljoen, 2003:201). This is consistent with the Old Testament teaching where the LORD is presented as the Saviour of his people (Ezekiel 34, Hosea 1:7; 13:10-14; Psalm 106).

4. THE EFFECT OF LUKAN SALVATION

From generation to generation, Luke's message of salvation has taken on new life as it asserts its relevance in every corner of humanity. It has been accepted by many as consolation, comfort and a source of hope as it was in Luke 1-2 for the faithful Israel. They believed that God had remembered them in their hour of need. Luke has a particular interest in showing the meaning of God's salvation, by revealing the lives of those who have been saved, as we have seen above.

Lukan salvation is good news to the poor in at least two ways. The first, and the most popular one, is eschatological. The emphasis here is the hope of things to come and the blessing on those who are poor in spirit, irrespective of whether they are physically poor or not. Luke is concerned with the proclamation of the message of salvation that comes through the hearing of the Gospel. Those who hear the message would have to respond to the call of salvation. They would either believe the Gospel and be saved, or reject it and be condemned. Most of the struggle between

¹⁴¹ See Marshall (1970:188-192).

Jesus and the religious people is usually based on faith and unbelief. Having heard the Gospel some become followers of Jesus (18:43) and others begin to plot against him (19:47). The point here is to put your faith in Jesus for future glory. This aspect of salvation is very important in Luke.

The second one is the hope of salvation from various unfavourable socio-conditions. We know from the previous chapter that according to Luke, Jesus' salvation work did not involve the socio-political and economical structures, as a means of salvation for the poor; how then are they saved? It has been argued by scholars, such as Kim (2008:146) and Wright (1996:294-297), that it is the conversion of the rich that will change the lives of the poor as they would be more willing to cancel debt (7:41-43), to share with the poor (19:1-10) and to sell possession for the good of the Kingdom family (Acts 4:32-37). Kim (2008:146) argues that the fellowship of goods among believers is a "concrete sign of the 'good news' that Jesus' messianic ministry brought to the poor." It is the submission of one's will to the Lord's that brings about deliverance to the poor and downtrodden. This view is also supported by Wright (1996:295), who suggests that Jesus "expected his followers to live by the Jubilee principle among themselves."

This means that reconciliation with God means reconciliation with fellow family members which would, most likely, lead to the reduction, or even cancellation of debt, as well as sharing in the Lord's blessings. The Jerusalem church is a practical example of this act of community, although it had its own challenges.¹⁴² Luke seems to suggest that "the church must work towards the ideal, even though it is not completely attainable, because only in this way can the poor or 'needy' be properly taken care of" (Kim, 2008:145).¹⁴³ The sharing with the poor would be in obedience to Jesus who taught his disciples to seek first the kingdom of God (12:31).

Being saved according to Luke means a total transformation of the heart, mind and actions. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37) Jesus stresses that if people are to inherit the Kingdom, they should love the Lord with all their heart, soul, strength and mind, and love

¹⁴² Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-47.

¹⁴³ Acts 2:45; 4:34-35.

neighbour as self.¹⁴⁴ The love of God and the love of neighbour are central in Luke's meaning of salvation, as they touch both the socio-condition and spiritual life of those who come into contact with the Gospel. This is the message Luke seeks to convey when he says those with two tunics must share with him who has none, and those with food should do the same. Tax collectors are told not to collect any more than is required. Soldiers are asked not to extort money and not to accuse people falsely and to be content with their pay (3:10-14). It is this kind of life style that would inevitably bring relief to those who have been the object of abuse. The power of Luke's salvation becomes more visible as believers' lives are transformed, and their social life patterns take a new shape, as they become more like Christ. This is still strong evidence of the power of God's salvation and its relevance to modern society.

5. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAVED COMMUNITY

Acts 2:42-47 paints a helpful picture of the result of God's salvation in Luke-Acts. He records that all those who have turned to Jesus devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, sharing, and praying. Luke describes this community as a praising and united community that looks after one another. A community that is "one in heart and mind" (Acts 4:32). It is believers who enjoy God's favour and transformed lives are added daily to their growing number. A new praising, praying and worshipping community has been formed; as saved people, this means we are also part of it. This community would continue to be a living example of Luke's understanding of salvation that blends spiritual and physical aspects of all those who are being saved.

6. CONCLUSION

One can safely conclude that Luke's salvation still means deliverance from the bondage of Satan, restoration, forgiveness, acceptance into God's family, fellowship with God and his people through Jesus, the promised Saviour. This salvation will still culminate at the eschaton, when all those who call upon the name of Jesus Christ will finally be delivered from the power of sin. It is clear that Lukan salvation is not limited to a certain time in history as it has touched, and still touches, people from all walks of life. It is as relevant for the 21st century community as it was then, because people who are being saved are saved by the same Jesus into the same Kingdom.

¹⁴⁴ Deut. 6:5; 27 Lev. 19:18

Lukan salvation knows no boundaries, as people from different races, cultures, languages, and countries are brought together by the Gospel. God is still bringing into the Kingdom those who are being saved.

Therefore people of different centuries are united in Christ, because all those who are saved are saved into the same Christian family, and the same Kingdom, irrespective of time and place. That is why Luke's salvation is so relevant for our generation and all generations to come. People in the 21st century still need to "save themselves from the wicked generation" by turning to Jesus for salvation. Even today, Lukan salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Those who are being saved are restored and transformed by Jesus. The Holy Spirit enables them to live for Jesus, in a fallen and hostile world.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter brings the whole project to full circle. It is hard to miss Luke's emphasis that God is the author of salvation. He has stepped into human history to raise and establish Jesus as an unshakable and ultimate horn of salvation. All those who look up to Him for salvation would never be disappointed, irrespective of where they are in their journey of life. Luke wants all his readers to know that *all* mankind must see the salvation of God (3:6), people from every nation under heaven are all invited (Acts 2:5-12, 17), Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, religious and outcast, the strong and the weak and those from the east and west are welcome. Luke deliberately refuses to accept any boundaries created by sinful man that would divide the restored people of God.¹⁴⁵ In fact His salvation brings down all walls of hostility, classism, racism, sexism "as all are invited to appropriate salvation for themselves and to serve God's salvific aim" (Green, 1998:89). All those who "wish to participate in the reign of God and desire to live as God intends receive this salvation when, through God's grace, they respond to the proclaimed word about Jesus with faith" (Powell, 1992:10).

Luke also works hard to show that God's salvation is eschatological. Everything points to his final victory and deliverance of all those who put their trust in Jesus, the promised Saviour. At the same time it is worth noting that Lukan salvation is not exclusively concerned with the future. God's unmistakable salvation is experienced by those who are saved, though it is not present in its fullest form, as that will be experienced at the eschaton.

The meaning of salvation in Luke-Acts is truly a blessing to all those who come to hear it. It then goes without saying, that a tremendous task awaits the Church in the area of proclaiming this message, and applying it in real life situations. The Church is the saving community, by virtue of being saved, as it becomes a living testimony of God's salvation (Acts 2:42-47). Part of its responsibility is that of calling everyone to 'come and see', as well as experience, this

¹⁴⁵ See Green (1998:90).

salvation in Christ.¹⁴⁶ Yet the same Church finds itself in a fairly different and difficult situation, in that it has to share this message of salvation with people whose lives are far less influenced by Scripture.

This requires that the Church re-aligns its understanding and teaching of salvation to that of Luke, as this would enable the Gospel to make a meaningful impact in the spiritual and societal lives of people. Lukan meaning of salvation challenges the Church to reclaim the Gospel that focuses on the total person, because “in Luke’s understanding, the salvation provided by God in Jesus His Son is total” (Abogunrin, 1998:30). It “knows no distinction between the physical, spiritual, and social” (Green, 1998:89).

God, in his tender mercy, stretches his hand to those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guides them into the path of peace (1:78-79). This again shows that there is no aspect of life that remains untouched by God’s salvation when an individual is saved. This salvation is good news to those who are in distress, and has a *purpose* of bringing deliverance. The tender shoot, which Isaiah (Isaiah 11) spoke about, has become an indestructible tree whose branches extend all the way to the ends of the world. God has done this to ensure that all men may come in and take refuge.

Therefore it seems inevitable and logical to conclude that Luke’s salvation should emerge as wonderful news to those who are lost, irrespective of their societal status, to those who are outcast, marginalized, poor and downtrodden. This is so because Luke tightly links his salvation with deliverance to these unfavourable conditions. This takes us back to chapters two and three, where we learn that God’s salvation would change people’s lives. It would take different forms and shapes for people in different circumstances. Yet all those who are saved are saved into the same Kingdom, where Jesus rules as the King of God’s Kingdom to the glory of God.

¹⁴⁶ In the same way as Philip called his friend Nathanael - “come and see”, the one Moses and the prophets spoke about is here (John 1:43-51).

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