

THE ELIJAH/ELISHA MOTIF IN LUKE 7--10 AS  
RELATED TO THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF LUKE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR THE STUDY

#### The Presence of Similarities

The Gospels present a considerable number of references to the Old Testament prophets. Most of the familiar references are quotations which demonstrate a fulfillment of what the prophet spoke. In some instances there is a definite allusion that a New Testament character is being compared to an Old Testament prophet. One of the most notable of these is John the Baptist, who is compared to the prophet Elijah in a fulfillment of Malachi 4:6.<sup>1</sup>

In that example the basic parallels made between Elijah and John the Baptist were for the purpose of demonstrating that the prophecy in Malachi (3:1, 4:5) had been fulfilled, thus providing the avenue for the Messiah to come. It was fulfilled potentially, for Elijah, in the form of John the Baptist, had come and called the people to repentance, but they had refused.<sup>2</sup>

The Book of Luke directly names the prophet Elijah eight times. Only one of these is in comparison to John the Baptist. The remaining seven are used to compare him in some manner to Jesus Christ. Five declare that Christ's ministry would be to the Gentiles as Elijah's was (4:25, 26), the question of whether Christ actually was Elijah

(9:8, 19), and to demonstrate that Christ's ministry was superior to Elijah's (9:54). The other two are at the Mount of Transfiguration when Elijah actually appeared. This appearance demonstrated the superiority of Christ to Elijah.<sup>3</sup>

Other than direct parallels, the context contains several obvious parallels to Elijah/Elisha, though his name is not mentioned. The question of whether Christ was Elijah was asked by Herod (9:8) and repeated by Peter (9:19). In between those two statements Christ performed the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand.<sup>4</sup> The miracle in parenthesis paralleled Elisha's feeding of one hundred men in 2 Kings 4:42-45.

Elijah then appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration in a direct comparison. In 9:51-55, the ministry of Christ is compared directly with that of Elijah. Here the disciples desired to imitate Elijah's ministry by calling down fire from heaven as Elijah did with the prophets of Baal.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus was then confronted by a man in 9:61 who desired to say good-bye to those at home before following Christ. This brings to mind Elisha as he requested to kiss his father and mother before following Elijah (1 Kings 19:20). Christ's reply brings the parallel closer as He pointed out that "No one after putting his hand to the plow . . ." Avoiding the picture of Elisha plowing the field is all but impossible.

Other parallels between Christ and Elijah appear at varying degrees.<sup>6</sup> For the most part these include similarities in miracles, even though Elijah's name is not mentioned. The comparison between the Widow of Nain (7:11-17) and the Widow of Zarepath (1 Kings 17) is an example of this.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Use of Comparisons

Students of the Word are not alone in bringing up this question. Historically, Luke pointed out that the people observing Christ's ministry were puzzled as to whether He might be Elijah reappearing.<sup>8</sup> Each of the three gospels report the people of that day asking this question.<sup>9</sup> It leads to the conclusion that there was an actual observable similarity between Christ's actions and those expected of Elijah who was to come.

These particular comparisons appear to be very concentrated in chapters 7--10. Direct comparisons appear five times in chapter 9, and only three times in the rest of the Book. (See Table 4.) There are very few comparisons prior to chapter 7<sup>10</sup> and almost none after chapter 10. But these four chapters virtually abound in them. Such a major emphasis deserves study, as to why it occurs, and why it is necessary in developing the contextual argument of the Book of Luke.

### The Purpose of the Book of Luke

For this study the purpose of the Book of Luke will be as follows:

Luke, through historical events, presents Jesus as the Messiah, who had come to save those who were lost, thus explaining a new era, membership in which was not based upon personal position, but upon the basis of accepting the mercy of His message.

Luke's stated purpose for the writing of the Book of Luke is found in 1:4; "so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught." One of the great truths put forth is, "Who is this man?"<sup>11</sup> The answer is clearly given throughout the book. He is the Son of God, the Christ.<sup>12</sup> Luke explained why the Messiah must die, recapping that theme by concluding the Book with the narrative on the road to Emmaus.

He explained how the kingdom, which had centered on the privileged Jews, was now moving to those of low esteem, particularly the Gentiles. In the introduction of the book, Mary's song told that God has remembered the humble, Zacharias' prophesy saw Him shining on those in darkness, Simeon's saying related how He would be a light to the Gentiles and Christ's own quotation of Isaiah 61:1 explained how He was sent to the poor, the captives, the blind and the downtrodden. These demonstrate that a major emphasis in Luke is that the Messiah would take away the religious privilege from the Jewish system as He took the gospel to the underprivileged, the poor, the religious outcasts, the Gentiles, the sick, all those who needed deliverance.

In the book of Acts the spread of the gospel continues with the Apostles taking the message of the gospel to the Jews. The message spreads by means of the church as its messenger. Acts concludes with the gospel of mercy in the process of going to the uttermost part of the earth.

#### The Purpose of Chapters 7-10

In Luke 7--10, the purpose of the recorded events and the teachings was to present Jesus as the Messiah (9:20), and the Son of God (9:35), who had come to save, and to train disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

A progression runs from chapters 7--10. First Jesus "went" in chapter 7:1. "The twelve were with Him" in 8:1. "He sent them out" in 9:2. And "He appointed seventy others and sent them" in 10:1.

In chapter 7 the focus is on Jesus alone and "Who is this man . . . ?" Was He a prophet? The centurion recognized Christ as a prophet in 7:7,8.<sup>13</sup> The people recognized Christ as a prophet following the raising of the widow of Nain's son in 7:16. Then John the Baptist questioned if Christ might only be a prophet in 7:20.<sup>14</sup> The Pharisee questioned whether He was even a prophet in 7:39.<sup>15</sup> Yet those observing this acknowledged that He must be more than a prophet, for no prophet ever forgave sins. The chapter thus closes with a question, "Who is this man?"

In chapter 8, Jesus took the disciples with Him. This chapter develops that disciples were those who heard the word and demonstrated it.

First, the women "hear and do" as they support Jesus out of their private means (7:1-3). Then in the parable of the sower the seed in the good ground was defined as the one who heard the word and bore fruit (7:4-15). Jesus' true mother and brothers were those who "hear the word of God and do it" (7:21). The disciples "hear the word" but did not "do it" as they feared the wind and the waves even though Christ was with them (7:22-25). The man who was possessed with a demon did demonstrate it by "begging Him that he might accompany Him" and proclaiming throughout the city what Christ had done for Him (7:26-39). The chapter is concluded by the story of Jairus, with the woman with a hemorrhage in parenthesis. The contrast shows the woman (8:48) with faith (hearing the word and doing it) coming to Jesus, and the people with Jairus, without faith, laughing (8:53).<sup>16</sup> Thus in chapter 8, the qualifications of discipleship were given; hearing the word of God and doing it.

In chapter 9, Jesus empowered the disciples and sent them out. They understood that the leader of their mission was the Messiah (9:7-20), who required giving up all to follow Him (9:21-26), and was the Son of God (9:28-36). The disciples failed to understand the power of the mission

(9:37-49), the nature of the mission (9:52-56), and the requirements of the mission (9:57-62).

In chapter 10, the progression continues, for the Lord sent seventy others. This chapter deals with the superior responsibility and privilege of the mission. This was identification with Christ (10:17-20) and the privilege of being a part of the greatest mission of all time (10:21-42).<sup>17</sup>

The Elijah/Elisha comparisons are used primarily in chapter 7, when Christ was considered to be different than Elijah, for Christ's mission was merciful. He was superior in that He forgave sins (7:49). In chapter 9, He was revealed as greater than Elijah in that He was the Messiah (9:20). He was greater than Moses and Elijah in that He was the Son of God (9:35). His mission was greater than Elijah's in that it was one of mercy (9:54-55). His discipleship was more demanding than Elijah's (9:61-62).

#### The Approach to the Study

Basically, the study of the motif in these chapters covers three basic areas. Chapter II examines the miracles in this segment, determining the general pattern or polemic against some historical evil, as in the case of Elijah/Elisha's God versus Baal. It determines what contribution the polemic contributes to the purpose of the Book of Luke.

Chapter III examines the nature of the ministry of Christ as compared to the ministry of Elijah in this segment. It determines how the nature of that ministry compares to Elijah's ministry, and how that contributes to the purpose of the book.

Chapter IV covers the actual events of Christ as compared to Elijah, determining how these comparisons contribute to the Biblical purpose.

In each of these sections, a conclusion is made which examines all of these areas with respect to the context, and the actual intent of the author as determined by the words of Scripture. These three areas are studied and examined in the context of the purpose of the Book of Luke to determine the authorial use of this Elijah/Elisha motif.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John the Baptist is referred to as Elijah in three of the gospels: Matt. 11:14, 17:11, Mark 9:13, and in the area of study contained by this thesis in Luke 7:27.

<sup>2</sup> See Mark 9:13. Christ pointed out that John the Baptist had fulfilled the provision of Elijah coming first. But they had mistreated him and not responded to the call to repent. In like manner, as the forerunner had been rejected, the Messiah would also suffer many things. This has an interesting parallel to Luke 7:18-35, since they both demonstrate that the function of John the Baptist was the same as that of Elijah, to call the nation to repentance. It was a message of repentance in the face of impending judgment as demonstrated by Luke 3:17. The total fulfillment of the prophecy of Mal. 4:6, will have to wait to another time. The people did not respond to the message of the second Elijah.

<sup>3</sup> Peter's comment in 9:33 demonstrated the comparison. Luke narrated Peter's error in 9:33b. The comparison was complete with the words of God in 9:35; Christ was His Son. Moses and Elijah were not.

<sup>4</sup> This is known as insertion or parenthesis. The writer begins with a main thought, then switches to another thought and then continues again with the main thought. This forces the reader to compare the two. Here the question comes up in 9:8 and 9:17 as to whether Christ is Elijah. In between those two questions is the story of the feeding of the five thousand; a miracle similar, though superior, to Elijah's. This results in Peter's confession in 9:20; "(Thou art) The Christ of God."

<sup>5</sup> This involves a majority text reading.

<sup>6</sup> A number of commentators, including Fitzmyer, Marshall and Lenski, have noticed these parallels, but have not contextually developed their appearance. For further parallels, see Chapter IV.

<sup>7</sup> Zarepath and Nain are about a mile apart. Furthermore Elijah was the only prophet (as far as is known) that went into that area. Thus the people of this area would have remembered Elijah, and when Christ performed a similar miracle it would have forced them into a comparison.

<sup>8</sup> Luke recorded in 9:7,8 that some had reported that Jesus was either John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. The disciples responded later in 9:19 that the multitudes were saying that He was either John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 16:14, Mark 6:15, 8:28.

<sup>10</sup> The other major reference to Elijah would be in Luke 4:24-27, which points out the direction of Christ's ministry to the Gentiles.

<sup>11</sup> Luke used this major question throughout his book for the purpose of bringing attention to the reader. "Who is this man?" or variations are repeated in 4:22, 5:21, 7:20, 7:49, 8:25, 9:9,18,19.

<sup>12</sup> Christ was affirmed as the Son of God at His conception (1:35), at His baptism (3:22) and His transfiguration (9:35). These words recall the coronation of the Son in Psalm 2:7. The demons admitted it (4:41). The demon-possessed man confessed it (4:28). Jesus identified Himself with the Father as His Son (10:22). Finally, they plainly asked Him if He was the Son of God and He said "I am" in 22:70. The concept of Messiah was introduced regularly also through the book, as in 4:34, 9:20, 22:67, and 23:35.

<sup>13</sup> The centurion recognized that Jesus was similar to himself, one under authority. And as one under authority, He had the right to command with the authority of the One He represented. Thus the centurion recognized Christ as a representative of God, a prophet.

<sup>14</sup> This will be dealt with in Chapter III.

<sup>15</sup> The Pharisee questioned what kind of prophet Jesus was in allowing the sinner woman to touch Him, since He would be defiled (7:39). But no prophet had ever forgiven sins (7:49).

<sup>16</sup> This contrast demonstrates the testimony of the woman who was outcast from Jewish society, as compared to the friends of the synagogue official who laughed at Jesus. Thus the faith of the privileged official's friends was lacking while the outcast woman's was strong and was followed by testimony of it.

<sup>17</sup> They are given instructions and identified with the Messiah. Finally, Christ pointed out the value of being one of the disciples in that day (10:23-25). The Good Samaritan was an explanation of 10:21 to a wise lawyer who did not see. And Mary and Martha was an illustration of one who did not realize the value of His statement of 10:24.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MIRACLE POLEMIC OF ELIJAH AS COMPARED TO THAT OF CHRIST

#### Elijah/Elisha's Miracles as a Polemic

Leah Bronner has demonstrated in her book The Stories of Elijah and Elisha that every miracle done by Elijah is a deliberate polemic against the Canaanite mythology. Canaanites held that Baal dispensed fire, rain, oil and corn, child-giving, healing, resurrection, ascent, river and others.<sup>1</sup>

Thus when Elijah performed his miracles, they were not simply supernatural "tricks" to demonstrate that he had the power of God, but demonstrated that Elijah's God controlled the elements assumed to be under the power of Baal.<sup>2</sup>

This was exemplified when YHWH and Baal were in direct competition on the Mount of Carmel (1 Kings 18). Baal was known as the god of fire, yet YHWH impressively provided the fire for the sacrifice when Baal could not. Elijah pointed directly to the crux of the problem when he stated to the Baal worshippers (1 Kings 18:27),

"Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened."

The Canaanites attributed human frailties to their god's such as traveling, sleeping and hunting.<sup>3</sup> With a view to their myths, Elijah was seen to be humiliating their god's performance.

Elisha dealt with fire in the Mt. Carmel episode. He refuted Baal's control over rain in the draught pronounced to Ahab. Both Elijah and Elisha provided oil to the widow of Zarepath in Sidon and the Shunammite woman respectively. Elisha mediated the provision of a child to the Shunammite woman. He healed Naaman the leper. Both Elijah and Elisha resurrected sons. Elijah ascended to heaven. All these are powers attributed to Baal by the Canaanite mythology.

Elijah was not the only one who performed miracle polemics. There were three great ages of miracles in Biblical times; the period of Moses/Joshua, the period of Elijah/Elisha, and the period of Christ/Apostles.<sup>4</sup> So it is no coincidence that these three are together in the scene at the transfiguration in 9:28-36. These are the major deliverers of the nation Israel. There are considerable parallels between them, which will not be discussed here, except to state that in God's initiating of actions with Israel, Moses is the great deliverer out of Egypt. Elijah, the second Moses, is the figure that keeps hope alive in attempting to bring Israel back to God. And Christ, the

third Moses, the prophet greater than Moses, is the One who brought the provision for the final great deliverance to Israel.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that Moses' ministry is parallel to Elijah's is recognized by many.<sup>6</sup> Moses led Israel out of slavery in Egypt in their great Exodus, so that they might be saved from Egypt, baptized in the Red Sea, and serve the nations (Ex. 19:6). However, Moses is the picture of a man who did not fulfill his goal, as the nation refused to enter the promised land, and Moses, himself, died before entering. Elijah came on the scene in one of Israel's bleakest periods (1 Kings 19:4) to call the nation back. Yet the nation did not respond.

The miracles of the first Moses and the second Moses (Elijah) appear to include a definite polemic against a particular god, or religious system. In Moses' case "God utilizes each miraculous plague to smite a specific realm of Egyptian worship and to uncover the falseness of a particular local Egyptian deity."<sup>7</sup> Thus the fact that Christ is being compared to Elijah and Moses, both of whom utilized miracles involving polemics, would advance the expectation that Christ's miracles may also include a polemic.

### Categories of Christ's Miracles

In reviewing chapters 7--10 and the miracles contained there (See Table 1), there is no consistency of nature miracles, nor miracles in a polemic against any particular god. For the God of both the Pharisees and Christ was YHWH. The inconsistency between the two was the false worship of the Pharisees and the true worship of Christ.

However, there is a consistent theme running through the miracles of this section. This section details miracles involving a centurion's slave (unclean), a widow (no husband or son, her only claim to status in Israel), an immoral woman (unclean, outside of the sacrificial system), two demoniacs (unclean), and a woman with a hemorrhage (unclean for 12 years) contrasted with a synagogue official (clean). Every one of these miracles stressed the giving of mercy to someone who has been dealt with harshly by the Jewish legalistic system. They all welcomed the healing Jesus.

Only two miracles in this section are not dealing with outcasts from the Judaistic system. These are the storm miracle and the feeding of 5000 men. These miracles are specifically aimed at the disciples to demonstrate some principle about their ministry or their faith, and so a polemic would not be involved.

TABLE 1  
MIRACLES AS A POLEMIC IN LUKE 7--10

| Name                        | Script.  | Problem            | Cure              | Comment  |
|-----------------------------|----------|--------------------|-------------------|--|
| Centurion<br>Slave          | 7:1-10   | Slave nr.<br>death | Healed            | gentile<br>unclean   |
| Widow of<br>Nain            | 7:11-17  | Son dead           | Resur.            | Widow (dead husband)<br>Dead son, no status<br>in Israel<br>Touched (unclean bier) |
| Sinner                      | 7:36-50  | Immoral<br>Woman   | Sins<br>Forgiven  | inner-outside covenant<br>practices of Israel<br>Unclean (touches Christ)          |
| Storm                       | 8:22-25  | Wind/Waves         | Calm              | emonstration to Disciples  |
| Demoniac                    | 8:26-39  | Dem.Poss.          | Exorcism          | Unclean<br>Outcast   |
| Jairus                      | 8:40-56  | Daughter<br>Dead   | Resur-<br>rected  | Clean<br>Leader of Synagogue<br>contrast with Woman<br>with hemorrhage)            |
| Woman<br>with<br>Hemorrhage | 8:43-48  | Hemorr.            | Healed            | Unclean<br>outcast from the<br>covenant practices                                  |
| Feeding<br>of 5000          | 9:10-17  | 5000<br>Hungry     | Excess<br>Provis. | emonstration to Disciples  |
| Demon<br>Possessed<br>Son   | 9:37-43a | Son<br>Dem.Poss.   | Exorcised         | Unclean<br>outcast from the covenant<br>practices                                  |

Probably the best examples of this polemic are the closing narratives of chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 closes with the immoral woman of 7:36-50. She was outside the sacrificial system of Israel. The Pharisee, representing religious Judaism, had no desire to deal with her for she was unclean. But Christ not only allowed her to touch Him, He forgave her sins, making her righteous. This was a seriously distasteful miracle in the sight of the Pharisee, since it was his false worship system that claimed to make one righteous. Christ's polemic miracle did what the false religious system could not do.

Chapter 8 closes with the narrative of 8:40 - 56, which is heightened by the literary method of inclusion.<sup>8</sup> Here Christ healed the leader of the synagogue's daughter. The crowd had so little faith in Him that they laughed at the suggestion that Christ could restore her to life. By contrast He healed a woman with great faith, who because of her hemorrhage, had not been accepted in the leader's synagogue for twelve years. The religious worship of Judaism could not deal with this woman in its present state, yet Christ not only healed her, He established her great faith.

### Contextual Evidence

When Christ began His ministry in Nazareth (chapter 4), He pointed out to them that His ministry would go to the Gentiles. They immediately were filled with rage and sought to kill Him. The trend of the religious Judaism was that Gentiles were outcasts, that they had no position in God's plan. Even though Christ had just quoted them an Old Testament passage (4:18) which stated that He would go to the outcasts, the reality was more than legalistic Judaism could deal with.

Following the return of Judah from captivity the Law had become even more primary than it had been at earlier periods. It had been taken to a illegitimate extreme by the Pharisees. In that sense it had become false worship. It was not the alternative gods of the Canaanites or the Egyptians, it was the god of righteous works of the Law. This self-righteousness brought position and status to one in Phariseical Judaism. The result was, rather than the nation becoming the priests to the world of Exodus 19:6, it exalted itself and lowered the others.

Thus when Christ quoted Isaiah 61 He demonstrated that He would fulfill what the worship of the day had lacked. He was going to be the new Israel and save the outcast, for the privileged had failed. His miracles would be performed to benefit those that the religious system failed to benefit as it should have.

### Conclusion

There were three great miracle periods of history. The first was Moses; the second, Elijah; and the third, Christ. The first two, Moses and Elijah, used miracles, not only to authenticate themselves and their message, but also to be a polemic against the false worship of the day. The miracles showed the mythological deity for what it was, false.

The fact that Christ is compared to Moses and Elijah in performing miracles indicates the possibility of a polemic motif in His miracles. The miracles in this section, before the nation on the whole, deal with those who are outcasts from the Judaistic system of the day. These miracles expose the fact that this religious system is not able to accomplish what it was designed to achieve, and that these who are outside the system have greater faith in God than those within the system.

The context of Luke demonstrates from its outset that the Messiah would establish this type of ministry. And from the beginning the religious system opposed it. Thus a polemic against the religious system of the day is indicated by the contextual theme of Luke.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Leah Bronner, The Stories of Elijah and Elisha, p. 140-141.

<sup>2</sup> Another motif that is provided by the story of Elijah and Elisha is that their miracles were provisions for the remnant. There were few that had not bent the knee to Baal. Yet Elijah and Elisha continually provided to them through the miracles.

<sup>3</sup> Bronner, p. 136. Bronner states that this is from a legend where Anat is looking for Baal and is told he had gone out hunting.

<sup>4</sup> John Louis Booth, The Purpose of Miracles. p. 26. Although Booth declares that there are four great periods of miracles (he makes Christ and the apostles separate eras), it can be seen in this study of the Book of Luke that the Apostles were essentially closely related to Christ in the same form as Elijah was to Elisha as a disciple, and indeed went in His power. (cf. study on Luke 9:61, 62).

<sup>5</sup> Luke used the word "Exodus" in 9:31 to bring to the reader's attention the common ground between Moses and Christ. It is likely that Christ's exodus was not His departure from earth. But as Moses' exodus was the freedom of Israel from Egypt, so Christ's great exodus would be freedom of all men from sin forever.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Barclay Allen, "Elijah, The Broken Prophet", JETS 22 (September 1979):201. Specific parallels to Moses are made in the use of the word "exodus" in 7:31 and the quotation of Deut. 18:15, ". . . listen to Him."

<sup>7</sup> Booth, p.82.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Chapter I, Note 4.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PURPOSE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST AS COMPARED TO THAT OF ELIJAH/ELISHA

#### The Purpose of the Ministry of Elijah/Elisha

The purpose of the ministry of Elijah and Elisha was to demonstrate the futility of the non-entity, Baal, and to win the people back from the adoption of idols.<sup>1</sup> There was, however, a contrast between the miracles of Elijah and those of Elisha. Elijah's miracles were national and judgmental, while Elisha's were individual and largely gracious.

Elijah in his national, judgmental type of ministry was a parallel to an earlier prophet, Moses. Moses was to deliver Israel from Egypt, while Elijah was to deliver the nation from idolatry. Because of their deliverance efforts these two prophets became the greatest prophets in the nation's history.

However, the emphasis of Elijah in some ways was different from that of Moses. Moses had been instrumental in the nation's salvation from Egypt, while Elijah was to bring the nation to repentance, to return to the Lord. The nation needed then, and will need in the future, an Elijah to call it to repentance. Thus in Malachi 3:1 and 4:6, the messenger who precedes the great and terrible day of the Lord will be Elijah, who "will restore the hearts of the

fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers . . ." This was the emphasis of the ministry of Elijah in his return preceding the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He came to turn the hearts of the nation back to the Lord. He came in the person of John the Baptist preceding the Lord's first appearance, and will come, many feel, in the person of one of the two witnesses prior to the Second Coming.<sup>2</sup>

John the Baptist then was an antitype of Elijah. He was the one who preached repentance, and called the nation to return to the Lord in the same type of ministry as Elijah. Had they repented he would have fulfilled the prophecy of Elijah, but they did not.<sup>3</sup> An Elijah must yet return in a complete fulfillment of Malachi, possibly as one of the two witnesses of Revelation (11:3ff).<sup>4</sup> In Luke 7 Christ's purpose was clearly to point out that John the Baptist was a parallel to Elijah in calling the nation to repentance.

In Elijah's flight from Jezebel (1 Kings 19), he is seen by some as not being accepting of God's desire to show mercy. Elijah repeatedly complained to God about the fact that he alone was left, and commended himself before God.<sup>5</sup> God passed by and demonstrated his power to Elijah in the wind, the earthquake and the fire.<sup>6</sup> Yet the message to Elijah was that although He might operate in many ways, YHWH remained gracious.<sup>7</sup> Elijah was not willing to accept

God's grace, since he was convinced of the need for God's judgment (1 Kings 19:13b, 14). God was withholding judgment for the sake of the 7000 who had not bowed to Baal. Elijah was unwilling to accept the mercy of God toward the people and forfeited his opportunity to be a minister of grace. Elisha took his place.

Elisha became the minister of grace. While Elijah was a recluse of sorts, Elisha was a man of the city, a man who enjoyed people. His miracles were individual in nature and largely merciful as opposed to Elijah's national, judgmental miracles. The first eight chapters of 2 Kings demonstrate Elisha's ministry of grace.

The Ministry of John the Baptist as Compared to  
that of Elijah

The parallel of the ministry of John the Baptist to Elijah occurs in Luke 7:18-50. First, John the Baptist misunderstood the purpose of Christ's ministry (7:18-23). Second, Christ explained that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Elijah as referred to by Malachi (7:24-27). And third, Christ related reactions to His own and John's ministry (7:28-35).

John's perspective of the ministry of Christ is found in Luke 7:19.<sup>8</sup> John questioned Christ in the light of His continual ministry of mercy to individuals, particularly the healing and resurrection miracles of the context. John had clearly expected judgment to fall if the

nation failed to repent. His message was "repentance for the forgiveness of sins," but he surely saw judgment following closely in his wake.<sup>9</sup>

As Elijah looked in the wind, the earthquake and the fire, yet stumbled over the mercy of God, so John the Baptist misunderstood the nature of the ministry of the Christ in "setting free those who are downtrodden" (Luke 4:18). Christ justified His ministry with a quotation from the Old Testament (7:22) to demonstrate the Messiah's message of hope to the outcast. He continued in 7:23 that one must avoid the mistake of Elijah. For God, as in Elijah's day, was desirous of showing mercy to individuals who might be saved from under the national judgment.

Christ clearly pointed out that John the Baptist's function was to fulfill the Elijah prophecy as His forerunner (7:24-27). Malachi 3:1 and 4:6 speaks of a repentance, a refining which would occur due to the ministry of this prophet prior to the day of the Lord.<sup>10</sup> John the Baptist was this one (7:27), yet they did not hear him (7:33), nor the One whom he proclaimed (7:34).

Thirdly, Christ pointed out the contrast between John the Baptist and Himself with regard to the acceptance of their ministries (7:28-35). In doing so, He illustrated the similarities between Elijah and the Baptist. (See Table 2) The nation would not hear them. By inference, Christ likened Himself to Elisha. John was a recluse, strict and

judgmental, while Christ was relaxed and gracious with the sinner.

John the Baptist clearly thought that Jesus' ministry was to be similar to his own. John was to introduce the repentance theme, and Christ was to judge. The parallel to Elijah and Elisha is unmistakable. Elijah was national and judgmental. Elisha the minister of mercy to the individual who would be saved out of the rebellious nation. Christ's miracles in Chapter 7 paralleled those of Elisha, not Elijah (see Chapter IV), and thus demonstrate their parallel merciful nature.

TABLE 2

## COMPARISONS BETWEEN JOHN THE BAPTIST AND ELIJAH IN LUKE 7

| John the Baptist                    | Elijah                                      |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Lived in the wilderness             | Lived in the wilderness                     |
| Dressed in rough clothing           | Hairy man with leather girdle (2 Kings 1:8) |
| Prophet                             | Prophet                                     |
| Ascetic practices in food and drink | Simple diet                                 |

The Ministry of Christ as compared to that of  
Elijah/Elisha

In Chapter 7 the ministry of Christ had been one of mercy. While the centurion was an unclean Gentile, and the widow had no hope, yet Christ restored their beloved to each.

Both events paralleled the ministry of Elisha. The Centurion was a parallel to Naaman. The widow paralleled the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4. The major similarity between the centurion and the Naaman narrative was that they were both Gentile army leaders who desired a healing miracle. The major similarity between the Widow of Nain and the Shunammite woman was that they both had only sons resurrected. In addition the miracles occurred within a mile of each other.<sup>11</sup> (See Table 3, Chapter IV for further comparisons).

John the Baptist was a parallel to Elijah and Christ to Elisha. The purpose of this comparison was to establish clearly Christ's ministry of mercy to individuals. Christ, as Elisha, came to provide mercy for those who might be saved before judgment. Elisha was the minister of mercy for the 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal.<sup>12</sup> These were to be saved in spite of the nation's refusal to repent.

Christ clarified His ministry of mercy in the final narrative of Chapter 7 with the sinner woman who threw herself at the feet of the Lord. The comparison here between Christ and Elisha was in the attitude of the women. In 2 Kings 4:27 the Shunamite woman caught hold of Elisha's feet to beg him to come and resurrect her son. In 7:38 the immoral woman used similar action. Grabbing at the feet implied a request of mercy from one who was able to grant it. Both realized that they were helpless to change their plight. Yet the one whose feet they had laid hold on was capable, if he so willed it.

The narrative is an illustration of the lesson which Christ has just given them. Simon, the Pharisee, represented the attitude of the Pharisees and lawyers (7:30). The sinner woman represented the attitude of the tax-gatherers and sinners (7:29, 34). Simon, the Pharisee, thought himself righteous, not having a need for mercy. The sinner woman recognized her need of mercy and had her sins forgiven over the objection of Simon.

The Pharisees objected to the ministries of both John the Baptist (v. 30) and Christ. As a nation they would not repent and submit to the Kingdom, and as individuals they would not accept the mercy of the King. In Elisha's case, his servant Gehazi also objected as he tried to keep the Shunammite from begging at Elisha's feet (2 Kings 4:27).

Thus the parallel in ministry between Christ and Elisha demonstrated the nature of Christ's ministry, that of individual mercy, in the midst of a blind, rebellious nation.

The Ministry of the Disciples as compared to  
that of Elijah

Other than in Chapter 7, the purpose of the ministry of Elijah was compared directly to that of Christ in Luke 9:51-56. The disciples, having just seen Elijah on the Mount, desired to call fire down from heaven in judgment against the Samaritans, as the Old Testament prophet had.<sup>13</sup> Christ's reply to them was an explanation of His ministry, and consequently their ministry also. He simply explained to them that they had misunderstood their mission.<sup>14</sup> Christ's ministry was one of mercy and not of judgment as Elijah's was.

This comparison comes in a chapter which emphasizes the nature of the ministry of the disciples. They had failed to understand that they were an outgrowth of the ministry of the Messiah. He had demonstrated in Chapter 7 that His ministry was not the same as that of Elijah, and now His followers had to understand that theirs also was not the same as Elijah's.

### Conclusion

Jesus began in Chapter 7 by performing two miracles of mercy which paralleled two miracles of mercy performed by Elisha. Hearing of these miracles, John the Baptist questioned the exercise of mercy to individuals instead of the expected judgment on the nation. Christ pointed out that John the Baptist was a parallel to Elijah. His ministry of calling the nation to repentance, and his ascetic lifestyle were parallel to Elijah's. Christ inferred that He was a parallel to Elisha and his ministry of mercifulness as exemplified in his miracles.

The chapter concludes with a demonstration of Christ's ministry in the forgiveness of the sinner woman. While Simon the Pharisee objected, as Gehazi did, Christ forgave her sin.

The allusions throughout the chapter to Elisha indicate contextually a parallel between the ministries of John the Baptist and Christ to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, respectively.

When Christ sends the disciples out in Chapter 9 it becomes apparent that they made the same mistake that John did in Chapter 7. Following an appearance by Elijah, they thought that the ministry which they were being empowered to bring forth was one of judgment. However, the parallel to Elijah illustrated their mission of mercy was the same as their empowerer.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Elliott E. Johnson, "Old Testament History II" (unpublished class notes in Bible 303, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 11:14 points out the conditional nature of John the Baptist as a fulfillment of Elijah who is to come. The multitudes to whom he was speaking had an opportunity to listen to the offer. If they would have accepted it as a nation, he would have been that fulfillment. Mark 9:11 explains also the tie between refusing to accept John as Elijah and refusing to accept Jesus as Christ.

<sup>4</sup> J.D. Pentecost, "Pauline Epistles and Revelation" (unpublished class notes in Bible 308, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 1984).

Pentecost notes the similarity of miracles and type of ministry of the two witnesses of Revelation 11 and Moses and Elijah. He notes that although the ministry is in the same spirit as Moses and Elijah, it will be performed by two specially chosen men and not resurrected men.

<sup>5</sup> Elijah's statement occurs in 19:10, 14 defining "inclusio."

<sup>6</sup> See F. Kiel, The Book of the Kings, K & D, for a treatment of the parallel between Elijah's revelation of God in the earthquake, the wind and the fire and Moses' revelation of God's glory in the cleft of the rock.

<sup>7</sup> C.H. McKintosh, Miscellaneous Writings, 6 vols., 5:99.

<sup>8</sup> Fitzmeyer (The Gospel According to Luke, I-IX, p. 666) explains "The One who is Coming" as Elijah who is to come. There seems to be no basis for this. In a review of that phrase throughout the gospel writers, it consistently refers to Christ when the verb is in the form of a substantival participle. The best example is "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord" (Luke 19:38). The phrase which refers to Elijah utilizes the infinitive form of the verb as in the oft repeated, "Elijah, who is to come."

<sup>9</sup> Compare Luke 3:7-17. It appeared John thought the King would deal soon with all the unrepentant.

<sup>10</sup> The passages in Malachi refer to Elijah as introducing men to repentance. Following him would come "the great and terrible day of the Lord." Thus a day of judgment follows the prophet. Mercy was not what was expected by John the Baptist, who knew he was Elijah (cf. Luke 1:76, 3:4-6).

<sup>11</sup> See Note 7, Chapter I. Nain and Shunem are only about one mile apart.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Kings 19:18.

<sup>13</sup> Peter, James and John had just come from the Mount of Transfiguration. They had just viewed Elijah. The question must have been in their minds as to what Elijah was doing there. It may have been that the prophecy in Malachi came to mind (cf. Mark 9:1-14). Then they must have thought that the day of judgment, "the great and terrible day of the Lord," had arrived. Thus their mission was one of introducing judgment. It may also have been that they equated Jesus to Elijah (9:33) and also His mission.

<sup>14</sup> There is a textual problem in 9:54-55. Essentially the Alexandrian favors the omission while the Byzantine favors the addition. For the purpose of this thesis it will not be debated, as the context determines that there is an issue of the comparison to Elijah. Thus whether the addition is inspired or not, this thesis feels that it agrees with the essential nature of the message.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONTEXTUAL PURPOSE OF THE PARALLEL EVENTS OF CHRIST AND ELIJAH/ELISHA

#### The Specific Parallels

The Elijah-like miracles of Chapter 7 establish the nature of Christ's ministry (cf. Chapter III). Chapter 8, by contrast, contains no allusions to the two ancient prophets. The similarities return in Chapter 9 in the instructions to the disciples (9:3), the feeding of the 5000 (9:10-17), the appearance of Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:28-36), the reference to the ascension (9:51), the reference to Elijah by the disciples concerning judgment (9:54) and finally, the allusion to Elisha's call (9:61-62). In Chapter 10, as in Chapter 8, there seems to be an absence of identifiable parallels to Elijah or Elisha.<sup>1</sup> (Refer to Table 3 and 4 for the specific parallels found in these chapters.)

#### The Parallels in Context

##### The Centurion (Luke 7:1-10)

A leader in a Gentile army had a beloved servant who was sick unto death. He sent intermediaries, of the Jewish religious elite, to request healing by Jesus. Yet when the Jewish leaders came to Jesus they pled, not for mercy, but on the basis of his good works.<sup>2</sup> They also bore no

hesitancy in asking the Savior to go to the house of an unclean Gentile, something they would not do themselves.

In contrast to these Jews, the Gentile centurion acknowledged that Jesus had authority from God, something that the Jewish leaders had failed to recognize throughout Luke (cf. 4:28, 29, 11:15).<sup>3</sup> The centurion not only understood his own position but also Christ's.

This story is a statement about mercy. The Gentile, not the Jews, understood it. While the Gentile desired to show mercy to his lowly slave, the Jews had argued on the basis of his status. He had performed good works for the Jewish nation without obligation. The Jews showed no compunction about requesting Jesus to go to a Gentile's house, while it was the Gentile who felt unworthy. Christ, then, mercifully restored the child to the undeserving Gentile.<sup>4</sup>

The contrast to Elisha in the story of Naaman is unmistakable. The centurion, like Naaman, was a Gentile. However, while the Lukan narrative demonstrates the faith of a Gentile contrasted with the lack of faith by privileged Jews, the Old Testament narrative demonstrates the faith of a Jewish servant girl contrasted with a faithless Gentile. Naaman needed to understand his helpless position by being required to wash in the Jordan. Even following the event Naaman desired to pay for the miracle. The New Testament centurion, by contrast, knew of his unworthiness, Christ's authority, and mercy.

Contextually, the comparison to Elisha emphasizes the state to which Jewish religion had come. The Jews failed to recognize Jesus as the Anointed One from God. The unprivileged Gentile recognizes that Christ's power to heal came from God. In the Old Testament comparison it was as it should have been, a Jew showing the way for the Gentile.

The Widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17)

The Widow of Nain had no hope. She had lost her son and her husband. A woman had no status in Israel except through men. She was without a husband and a son. Yet in contrast to her status before recognized Judaism, Christ felt compassion. Fulfilling His mission to show mercy to the helpless, He restored her son.

Dead bodies and coffins were unclean.<sup>5</sup> But the Lord touched the coffin. As in the narrative of the centurion (Jesus willingly proceeded to an unclean Gentile's house), the Lord showed no compunction about touching unclean things.<sup>6</sup> According to Numbers 19:16, the casket was unclean, yet the Lord touched it. What is unclean became clean; the boy was resurrected. The Lord did not show the reluctance of the Jewish religious system in making themselves available to the outcast, the unclean. The message is that the Lord gave mercy to those who are without hope.

This miracle has similarities to both Elijah and the Widow of Zarepath, and Elisha and the Shunammite. Both had their only son die, and both were raised from the dead by the healer making contact with the body.

In the case of Elisha and the Shunammite, the geographical location of Nain was about one mile from Shunem. The story of Elijah and the Widow of Zarepath is similar to the story of Christ and the Widow of Nain, in that they both met the woman at the city gate, both women were widows, both narratives demonstrated the healer as sent from God. Although Elijah's miracles were greatly national in scope, this was one of the miracles which he performed which was merciful.

The basis of this comparison to Elijah/Elisha is not the person, as was the narrative of the centurion. For here there is virtually nothing said about the widow herself. The emphasis of the comparison is on Christ's type of miracle as related to the personal miracles of Elijah and Elisha.

The first aspect is the way in which mercy was demonstrated. Elisha was compassionate for the woman's loss as was Christ. Both Elijah and Elisha showed considerable effort at raising the boys. Christ, on the other hand, spoke the word and the boy was resurrected. This demonstrates, not only that one greater than Elijah was present, but that a greater mission of mercy was occurring.

While Elisha was the foreshadowing of mercifulness, Christ was the fulfillment, One who could truly offer the ultimate in mercy.

The question of John the Baptist (Luke 7:18-35)

John the Baptist's question concerning the ministry of Christ is dealt with at length in Chapter III and will not be dealt with here.

John had questioned Christ's ministry of mercy. Christ pointed out that while John was in the nature of Elijah, national and judgmental, He was in the nature of Elisha, merciful and personal.

The sinner woman (Luke 7:36-50)

The story is an example of Christ's discourse on the merciful nature of His ministry (7:22-35). Simon thought himself righteous, needing no mercy. In contrast, the sinner woman had nothing to offer, and desired mercy.

Contextually, the Pharisee displayed the attitude demonstrated in 7:30. The Pharisees had rejected John's call for national repentance. The sinner woman, by contrast, displayed the attitude of the sinners and tax-gatherers of 7:34 in personal acceptance of the mercy of the Messiah. Thus the attitude of national rejection, represented by the Pharisees, is contrasted with an attitude of a personal acceptance represented by the sinner woman.

First, the woman is referred to as a "sinner."<sup>7</sup> Noticing Simon's reaction at her uncleanness, she likely was a prostitute. Understanding her own lack of righteousness, she threw herself at Christ's feet in a gesture of unworthiness.

Simon questioned whether Christ could be a prophet, for a prophet would not let himself be defiled by someone unclean (7:39). Here, as in the cases of the centurion and the Widow of Nain, Christ had availed Himself, without hesitation, to the unclean. Yet again, the clean (Christ) purifies the unclean, instead of the reverse, for He took her sin away.

The parable that the Lord told (7:40-43) illustrated that the self-righteousness of the Pharisee did not allow him to feel he had anything for which he needed forgiveness. Yet the woman with a knowledge of her hopelessness was appreciative of the mercy shown her by the Savior.

There is only one allusion to Elisha in this narrative. The woman throwing herself at Christ's feet is similar to the Shunammite throwing herself at Elisha's feet and begging for the resurrection of her son. However, Christ went far beyond anything Elisha could do. He showed mercy not in a physical resurrection, but in forgiving her sins, something no one had ever done before. This merciful mission was without parallel.

## Chapter 8

Basically Chapter 7 demonstrates the nature of Christ ministry. Chapter 8 covers the requirements of a disciple of that ministry; that his faith be demonstrated. While there are no identifiable comparisons to Elijah/Elisha in Chapter 8, a short discussion of the context is necessary to continue the message of these chapters.

The transition to Chapter 8 comes in the last verse of Chapter 7. Christ pointed out that it is the woman's active faith that had saved her.

In 8:1-3, Luke recalled the women who demonstrated their faith by the financial support of Christ's ministry. In the parable of the sower, the disciples were instructed that the one who bore fruit was the true disciple (8:4-15). Christ then stated that those who were truly related to Him were not physical relatives but spiritual relatives, defined as those who heard the word of God and did it (8:16-21). The story of the wind and the waves presents the disciples as those who had faith but did not utilize it (8:22-25). The demoniac was healed and spread the word of Jesus Christ, demonstrating his active faith in proclaiming the word.<sup>8</sup>

In the last part of the Chapter (8:40-56) Jairus, the synagogue leader, came to Christ asking for the life of his daughter. Within the narrative is a case of *inclusio*,<sup>9</sup> involving the woman with a hemorrhage. The contrast between this outcast woman<sup>10</sup> and a leader of the synagogue

is apparent. She, being unclean, was not allowed even in the synagogue, she was separate from the religious center of Judaism.

Christ, as before in the case of the centurion and the Widow of Nain, ignored the Judaistic reluctance concerning uncleanness, and allowed the woman to touch Him. Yet, once more it is the unclean that became clean, not vice-versa.

Here, the illustration of active faith continues, for the woman's faith saved her (8:48). By contrast Jesus asked those who heard of the death of Jairus' daughter to believe. Yet those who were weeping at Jairus' house only laughed (8:53).

In Chapter 8 those who would be disciples, who would involve themselves in the ministry of Christ, must be those who demonstrate their faith.

## Chapter 9

Chapter 9 deals with the disciples and their empowering to be sent out to further the ministry of mercy. The emphasis of 9:3-50 is the training of the disciples to understand the nature of the One who is empowering them and to rely on Him.

The sending out of the twelve (Luke 9:1-6)

Christ launched the twelve to carry on His ministry, by giving them His authority. He began by instructing them not to take specific objects on their mission. It was necessary that these disciples understood that they were to receive all their enabling and power from Jesus. Christ was teaching them that their mission was of such importance that nothing should get in their way. They would be provided all that they needed by the One who had given them the authority.

There appear to be certain parallels in this passage to Elijah/Elisha. A reference in verse 3 brings to mind a man of the old order who used these items for failure. The "money" (lit., "silver") and "two tunics apiece" appear to be references to Elisha's servant Gehazi, as he pursued Naaman (2 Kings 5:20-27). In his greed he requested "a talent of silver and two changes of clothes." These things may represent weaknesses in the ministry.<sup>11</sup> The disciples are to lean only on the power that Jesus had given them. Deviating could result in failure.

The feeding of five thousand (Luke 9:7-26)

In 9:7-9 Herod questioned who Jesus was. He named three; John the Baptist, Elijah and a prophet of old. In 9:18-20 the same question occurred again, this time quoted by Christ to the disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" They reply in exactly the same order as Herod's question; John the Baptist, Elijah, or a prophet of old.

Here, as in the last event of chapter 8, there is literary inclusion. The meaning of the text in between the identical statements contributes to solving the question of whether Christ is John the Baptist, Elijah or a prophet of old. Herod, in verse 9, removed the first, John the Baptist, from consideration. This leaves the "feeding of the five thousand" as the solution to whether Christ was Elijah or a prophet of old.

The parallel to Elisha is apparent. Elisha performed a provision miracle in 2 Kings 4:42-44, when he fed 100 men. Here Christ feeds 5000.<sup>12</sup> Elisha had 20 loaves and some ears of grain. Christ had five loaves and two fish. They both fed all present until they were satisfied. There were others that fed their people. Moses fed the people in the wilderness, and both Elijah and Elisha were providers to a widow of an unceasing supply of oil.

Peter's reaction shows the effect of the miracle parallel. This was not Elijah or any other prophet resurrected. This was the Christ, the ultimate provider

under the New Covenant. As Moses had provided for his followers, and Elisha had provided for the Sons of the Prophets, so Jesus would provide all the needs of His disciples. Since Christ had given them His authority, He had expected them to perform the feeding (9:13a).

In verses 21-26 Christ explained to them the necessity of relying on the Son of Man instead of self-concerns. For as the Son of Man had given Himself, so must the disciples.

#### The Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36)

Now that Peter had identified Jesus as the ultimate prophet, the Messiah of God, the disciples' provider, he was immediately tested. In 9:28, Moses and Elijah, the very ones with whom Christ has been compared, appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Christ's face changed and His clothes gleamed. Moses must have recognized the parallel, as his own face gleamed after he had come in contact with the Shekinah Glory (Ex. 34:29-35). Here Christ was seen glorified. Moses was seeing the One of whom he was only a foreshadow.

A second reference to Moses is found in their topic of discussion. They were speaking of Christ's "exodus." The word is used to bring to mind the events of Moses.<sup>13</sup> Christ was going to bring about the "exodus" of all mankind from sin in His death on the cross. Again the point of

comparison to Moses is that this Christ is leading an exodus of which Moses' exodus was only a foreshadowing.

Peter did not realize, even with his statement of 9:20, exactly who this Jesus was. He equated Him with Moses and Elijah. However, the question was soon answered as to who this was by another reference to Moses. The statement of God, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; \_listen to Him\_" emphasized the point of the context. This One was not equal to Moses and Elijah, but was superior. He was the Son of God.

The statement was a comparison to Moses' statement of Deuteronomy 18:15, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you . . ., \_listen to him\_." This Jesus was not only the Son of God, but was the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy, the greater prophet.

The transfiguration aligned Moses and Elijah with the old order. Moses had established and delivered this nation, and Elijah was the major prophet in the attempt to call them to repentance. This was the Messiah of the new order, superior in all ways to the prophets of the old order.

The parallels to Elijah/Elisha demonstrated to the disciples that Christ was the ultimate provider, the Christ of God. For while Elisha provided for 100, Christ provided

for 5000. Elijah appeared on the Mount of Olives for the purpose of a comparison to Christ. He was an old order type of Christ, he was a prophet, imperfect in fulfilling his mission. The One whose authority the disciples had, was none other than the Son of God.

The casting out of the demon (Luke 9:37-50)

The context following the transfiguration (9:37-50) closes out the section devoted to establishing the disciples' ministry as a furtherance of the ministry of Christ.

The disciples could not cast out a demon (9:40), even though that was what they had been empowered to do (9:1). There may be an indirect parallel here to Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who, some feel, failed in raising the Shunammite's son after being given the staff of Elisha (2 Kings 4:29-31).<sup>14</sup> Christ attributed their failure to lack of faith (9:41), and then taught them about serving. In following His example, they needed to serve Him, who was about to serve by dying for all mankind.

They immediately demonstrated their lack of understanding by voicing jealousy over one who was casting out demons in His name. Here was one who was serving Christ, yet the disciples had a problem with the fact that the exorcist was not following with them.

The road to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-62)

As Jesus turned to Jerusalem, the intensity of His ministry sharpened. He narrowed the focus of the ministry of disciples, by defining their ministry of mercy (9:51-56) and defining the extreme requirements of discipleship (9:57-62).

On Christ's way to Jerusalem, there were three references to Elijah. First, there was the reference to His "taking up" (9:51). Secondly, there was the disciples' reference to Elijah's calling fire down from heaven (9:54). And thirdly there was the reference to the calling of Elisha by Elijah in 9:61-62.

It is important to note that the theme, Christ superior to the old order prophets, Moses and Elijah, is still present. The term "taking up" is in reference to Christ's ascension to come. Both Moses and Elijah had mysterious removals from this life. Moses was buried by God, and Elijah was also "taken up." Here the reference is clearly to Elijah, as the same word is used in the Septuagint translation of 2 Kings 2:11. The final reference to being "taken up" is found in Luke 24:50-51, when Christ's ascension takes place. Christ's ascension is anticipated as representing His completed work. Elijah ascended after being frustrated in his ministry. Christ ascended back to God in completion of His ministry.

The second reference to Elijah on the road concerned the disciples' desire to call down fire from heaven. This was dealt with extensively in Chapter III and will not be repeated here, except to say that it emphasized that the ministry in which the Lord's disciples were involved was not that of judgment on men as Elijah's, but one of mercy.

The third mention of Elijah or Elisha on the road is in 9:61-62. Christ pointed out that He, as the leader, had given up all (v. 58). This continues the thought begun in 9:3 when Christ instructed them to restrict themselves from all concerns that might interfere with their ministry.

Immediately, He is confronted by one who is willing to follow Him but does not seem to have understood that sacrifice of material things is an essential part of following Christ.

A second man approaches whose first concern is taking care of his dead father. Here Christ points out to him that he, as a disciple, is in a position of superior responsibility, not dealing in a message of death, but in proclaiming a message of life.<sup>15</sup>

The statement of the next one, ". . . first permit me to say good-bye to those at home," is reminiscent of the call of Elisha by Elijah, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you" (1 Kings 19:20). Elisha had requested time to say good-bye before pursuing the ministry. The Lord pressed the point of the superiority of the ministry of the new order.

Christ emphasizes the Old Testament reference with an illustration from Elisha's call, when he was engaged in plowing. Anyone called to be a disciple in this superior cause must never think that anything is of higher priority.

#### Chapter 10

The progression continues in Chapter 10 with the Lord sending out seventy others. The parallel is clearly to Moses in Numbers 11:16-17, when he was instructed by God to gather seventy men who would aid him. God sent the Spirit which was upon Moses and gave it to them. This chapter is the final step in the progression that began in Chapter 7. The responsibilities and privileges of the minister of the new order, compared to that of the old order continues. The references to the old order prophets are still in evidence.

#### The seventy sent out (10:1-20)

The first section (10:1-9) details the superior nature of the good news to that of the old order. In addition Christ presented the requirement that the ministers of this gospel be single-minded in that ministry. The instruction to "greet no one on the way" recalls Gehazi, who, when sent with the staff of Elisha (2 Kings 4:29), was told not to salute anyone even if he was saluted first. It was an important mission of the greatest urgency. Singleness of purpose was most important.

Christ stated in 10:11-15 the superior nature of the ministry of the seventy. Those who reject their preaching will be judged more severely than those of the old order. In rejecting any portion of the message of the seventy, they will be rejecting Christ.

#### The privilege of the ministry (10:21-24)

Verses 21-24 become a summary of the theme of Chapters 7--10. Christ affirmed His appreciation that the Word of the Gospel (which He identified in Chapter 7) had been given to the common man, and not to him who is wise in his own estimation. Those of the old order, kings and prophets, longed to take part in the very thing that these were taking part in; the ministry of the Messiah.

#### The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

The two illustrations that follow exemplify these two points. First, the lawyer (a wise man, cf. v.21) sought to understand the good news of mercy but could not. Christ told him the story of the Good Samaritan. The degree of love required is that of mercy (v.37), the nature of the good news which was being spread by the seventy.

The second illustration is that of Mary and Martha. This narrative reflects the meaning of 10:23-24. For Martha had not appreciated the very Messiah that was present, while Mary "has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Chapter 10 then concludes the progression of the expansion of the gospel of mercy. The chapter reveals the superiority of the responsibility of this ministry, not only to the bearers of the word, but to the hearers. The privilege of those who bear this good news was superior to anything that had been given to those in the old order, as they were present with the Messiah as the message of mercy was unfolded.

#### The Parallels in the Purpose of Luke

The parallels of Chapter 7 clarify the merciful nature of the mission of Christ. John the Baptist had a ministry which called a nation to repentance, similar to that of Elijah. Christ's mission was similar to that of Elisha; to offer mercy to those who sought to escape the national judgment.

Thus in Luke's emphasis on the gospel of the new order, Chapter 7 clarifies the nature of that gospel, as begun by Christ and taken up by the disciples in Chapter 9, and the seventy in Chapter 10.

The parallels of Chapter 9 illustrate the superior nature of the ministry of the new order, both in its responsibility to the disciple, but in its superior authority, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In Luke's purpose, he described the expansion of the gospel from the Lord to His disciples, to the seventy, and to the church in Acts,

who began to spread it to the uttermost parts of the earth. The mission was the superior calling in the authority of Christ as compared to the old order based in Moses and Elijah.

#### Conclusion

Contextually, the use of Elijah comparisons demonstrates the nature of Christ's ministry compared to the nature of the ministry of Elijah in Chapter 7. While Elijah expected judgment on an unrepentant nation, Christ offered mercy to individuals. (cf. Chapter III).

In Chapter 8 "the twelve were with Him." There were no Elijah/Elisha references in this chapter. It was a message for prospective disciples; that of a faith that worked, a faith which proceeded to proclaim the gospel of mercy.

In Chapter 9 "He gave them power and authority . . . and He sent them out." The allusions to Elijah/Elisha return, as the disciples learned about their ministry. It was one which was superior to the old order which was led by Moses and Elijah. Not only was the message of mercy superior, but the leader was superior, and the requirements for service superior. The references to Elijah form a comparison which demonstrated the superiority of the new message of mercy.

In Chapter 10 "the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them . . ." Again the chapter is almost void of Elijah/Elisha references, yet does have allusions to the old order of prophets. The chapter illustrates the superior responsibility of the ministry of mercy, the superior judgment of those who hear it, and finally the superior privilege of being a minister of this gospel. The chapter is summarized in verse 23 and 24 in the statement that kings and prophets of the old order desired to have the privilege of being the spreaders of the gospel of mercy.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> When viewing the parallels between the events of Christ and events of Elijah or Elisha, the parallels are not exact in every point. The emphasis of these parallels is not to detail that Christ did the same miracles as Elijah or Elisha, but to only allude to it, so as to force the reader to compare. The geographical proximity of Nain to Shunem, and the similarity of the resurrection miracle would have forced the remembrance of Elisha. The exclamation that "a great prophet has arisen" would have been natural.

The parallels are quite clear when they are intended. A study of other events usually will demonstrate the total lack of any similarity. For instance, the story of the healing of the demoniac or the woman with a hemorrhage and Jairus demonstrate no similarities between these miracles and the events of the two prophets.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note in the narrative of the Centurion, that the Jewish elders pleaded his case on the basis of his works and good deeds (7:4). They claimed he was worthy. Yet the Centurion himself pled the opposite, that he was "not fit for You to come under my roof" (7:6).

<sup>3</sup> In the comparison in 7:8, the centurion had paralleled himself to Christ. This clearly points out that he understood that Jesus had authority from God, and having such could perform miracles at His word.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase "do not trouble yourself" occurs in 7:6 and again in 8:49. It is an interesting contrast that in the first case it was a plea of unworthiness, while in the second it was a case of unbelief.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to Numbers 19:16 for the requirement with respect to the touching of dead bodies.

<sup>6</sup> There is a definite theme concerning the use of the word "touch" in these chapters. The Saviour did not avoid touching the outcast in order to help him. Compare 7:14; 7:39; and 8:44,46,47.

<sup>7</sup> A "sinner" denoted that she was either immoral herself, or made her living in an immoral manner, although she may have simply been married to one who earns immoral wages. Regardless, the woman would be separated from religious Judaism.

<sup>8</sup> There is interchange in 8:39. Christ orders the demoniac to go to his house and describe what things God has done. The demoniac however expands on the instruction by going to the whole city, and proclaiming what Jesus had done. By paralleling the two statements, the command and the fulfillment, Luke has demonstrated the demoniac's belief that Jesus was God.

<sup>9</sup> See to Note 4, Chapter I.

<sup>10</sup> See Leviticus 15:19,27 for the regulations regarding a woman with a discharge.

<sup>11</sup> The items do not seem to represent provisions as in 10:4. The context refers to understanding the nature of the ministry. Gehazi never seems to grasp the nature of the ministry of Elisha. (Refer to 2 Kings 4:27 when Gehazi tried to pull the Shunammite away from Elisha.)

The word for "money" is actually better translated "silver". The Greek words for "silver and two tunics" are the same words used in the Septuagint account of Gehazi.

<sup>12</sup> Christ has them sit in groups of 50, (making 100 groups) this may emphasize that He fed 50 times as many. The only other allusion to groups of 50 occurs in 2 Kings 1 when the King of Samaria sent groups of 50 men to inquire of Elijah. Elijah called fire down from heaven to destroy them. The comparison may be to that and thus emphasize Christ's mercy in comparison to Elijah's judgment.

<sup>13</sup> The word here is taken by the translators and most commentators to mean the departure of Christ from the earth, i.e., His death. However the context quite clearly is to show the superiority of Christ to Moses. How would Christ's death compare to the exodus which Moses had? The word means "going out." Clearly Moses' "going out" was not his own, but the one he led, the redemption of Israel from the Egyptians. Thus Christ's "going out" is not speaking of his own redemption, but of the redemption which He will lead, the redemption of those who will form a new nation, the nation of redeemed under the gospel. The former nation of Israel had not performed its function after its redemption through Moses and had not responded to the preaching of Elijah and Elisha. Now Christ was to accomplish that feat through the gospel. Thus "exodus" here is not His own but the redemption of all mankind.

<sup>14</sup> It may be that Gehazi had been sent by Elisha, with his staff, simply to hold the body until Elisha could get there. Others feel that the reaction in 2 Kings 4:31 seems to indicate a failure of Gehazi's action on behalf of Elisha. This study makes no conclusion on this item, since the contextual evidence for the parallel is weak. It is included here in order to present all possible parallels.

<sup>15</sup> The statement of the second man on the road (Luke 9:59) seems to be a reference to the restrictions made to the priest and the Nazarite of the old order not even to bury their father and mother (Leviticus 21:11, Numbers 6:6-8). They had assumed a responsibility to God that, because of its superior nature, required that they avoid certain human responsibilities, which interfered with their mission.

TABLE 3

## POINTS OF COMPARISON BETWEEN ELIJAH/ELISHA AND CHRIST

Healing of the Centurion's Slave and Naaman the Syrian

| CHRIST (Luke 7:2-10)                               | ELISHA (2 Kings 5:1-27)                                       |
|--|---|
| Centurion  | Naaman  |
| Gentile  | Gentile   |
| Slave sick   | Naaman sick   |
| Centurion requested help for slave                 | slave requested help for Naaman                               |
| Gentile loved his slave                            | Israelite loved master  |
| Sent Jewish elders as emissaries                   | Asked Israelite King to act as emissary                       |
| Under authority                                    | Under Syrian King   |
| Centurion  | Captain of Army   |
| Centurion expected Word to heal him                | Naaman expected a Word to heal him.                           |
| Centurion not worthy for Lord to come to his house | Naaman was upset because Elisha did not come out of his house |

Resurrection of the Widow of Nain's Son

| CHRIST (Luke 7:11-16)              | ELIJAH (1 Kings 17:8-24)<br>ELISHA (2 Kings 4:8-37) |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Nain - a mile from Shunem          | Shunem - a mile from Nain (Elijah)                  |
| Christ met widow at city gate      | Elijah met widow at city gate                       |
| Widow                              | Widow (Elijah)                                      |
| Only son dead                      | Only son dead                                       |
| Sizeable crowd with her            | Shunamite a prominent woman                         |
| Touched the coffin                 | Laid self on boy                                    |
| Gave him back to his mother        | Gave him back to his mother                         |
| Recognizes He is from God by mult. | Recognizes he is from God by woman                  |

Forgiveness of the Sinner Woman

| CHRIST (Luke 7:36-50)       | ELISHA (2 Kings 4:8:37)                    |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Kissed His feet             | Caught hold of his feet                    |
| Simon the Pharisee objected | Gehazi the servant sought to push her away |

Sending out of the Disciples

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| CHRIST (Luke 9:1-6)                  | ELISHA (2 Kings 5:20-27)  |
| To go without...silver or two tunics | Gehazi took silver and two changes of raiment after Elisha had refused them |

Feeding of Five Thousand

|                          |                                       |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| CHRIST (Luke 9:10-17)    | ELISHA (2 Kings 4:42-44)              |
| Fed 5000                 | Fed 100                               |
| Five loaves and two fish | 20 loaves of barley and ears of grain |
| Disciples                | Sons of Prophets                      |
| 100 groups of 50 men     | 100 men                               |
| ate and were satisfied"  | "ate and had some left over"          |
| 12 baskets left over     | some left over                        |

Demon Possessed Son

|   |  |
|---|--|
| CHRIST (Luke 9:37-43)   | ELISHA (2 Kings 4:8-37)  |
| Disciples could not cast it out after being given the power (9:1) | Gehazi could not resurrect the son after being given the staff |
| Gave him back to his father                                       | Gave him back to his mother                                    |

Journey toward Jerusalem

|   |   |
|---|---|
| CHRIST (Luke 9:51-56)                             | ELIJAH (1 Kings 18:20-40, 2 Kings 1:9-16)             |
| Disciples requested fire from heaven for judgment | Elijah called fire down on two occasions for judgment |
| Christ came to save lives                         | Elijah destroyed men's lives                          |

Demands of Discipleship

|  |  |
|--|--|
| CHRIST (Luke 9:61-62)  | ELIJAH/ELISHA (1 Kings 19:19-21)   |
| A would-be follower requested to kiss his father and mother good-bye first | Elisha requested to kiss father and mother good-bye before following Elijah            |
| "No one, after putting his hand to the plow"                               | Elisha plowing when called, asked to return to father and mother, returned to his plow |

Singleness of Purpose

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| THE SEVENTY (Luke 10:4)              | ELISHA (2 KINGS 4:29-31)                   |
| They are told to greet no one on way | Elisha told Gehazi to salute no one on way |

TABLE 4

## ORDER OF REFERENCES TO ELIJAH/ELISHA IN LUKE 7--10

Direct References (Elijah named in Text)

| <u>Scripture</u> | <u>Named</u>                       | <u>Type</u>                            |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 7:27             | Messenger<br>(Elijah)<br>(Mal.3:1) | John the Baptist paralleled            |
| 9:8              | Elijah                             | Herod questioned Jesus' identity       |
| 9:19             | Elijah                             | Multitudes questioned Jesus' identity  |
| 9:30             | Elijah                             | Mount of Transfiguration appearance    |
| 9:33             | Elijah                             | Peter referred to His appearance       |
| 9:54             | Elijah                             | Disciples referred to Elijah's miracle |

Indirect References (Not named but parallel events)

| Luke Ref. | N.T. Subject                              | O.T. Subject   | O.T. Ref.                              |
|-----------|---|--|--|
| 7:2-10    | Centurion healed                          | Naaman healed  | 2 Kings 5:1-27                         |
| 7:11-17   | Widow of Nain<br>(son revived)            | Widow of Sidon<br>Shunammite<br>Woman & (son<br>revived) | 2 Kings 4:8-37<br>1 Kings 7:38         |
| 17:17-24  | Sinner Woman (at<br>Christ's feet)        | Shunammite (at<br>Elijah's feet)                         | 2 Kings 4:27                           |
| 9:3       | The Twelve<br>(Instructions)              | Gehazi   | 2 Kings 4:29-31<br>2 Kings 5:22-<br>23 |
| 9:12-17   | Jesus fed 5000                            | Elisha fed 100   | 2 Kings 4:42-44                        |
| 9:40      | Disciples<br>(failure)                    | Gehazi<br>(failure)                                      | 2 Kings 4:29-31                        |
| 9:51      | Christ<br>(taken up)                      | Elijah<br>(taken up)                                     | 2 Kings 2:1-11                         |
| 9:61      | Disciples<br>(response to call)           | Elisha<br>(response to<br>call)                          | 1 Kings 19:19-21                       |
| 9:62      | Disciples<br>(importance of<br>ministry)  | Elisha's plow  | 1 Kings 19:19-21                       |
| 10:4      | The Seventy<br>(singleness of<br>purpose) | Gehazi<br>(singleness of<br>purpose)                     | 2 Kings 4:29                           |

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### Review of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine if there was purposeful allusion to Elijah/Elisha in Chapters 7--10. And following that, the purpose was to determine what that purpose was, as related to the purpose of the book. The overview of the Book of Luke was described in Chapter I. The purpose of the Book of Luke was: Luke, through historical events, presents Jesus as the Messiah, who had come to proclaim the gospel to those who were lost, thus explaining a new order, membership in which was not based upon personal position, but upon accepting the mercy of the message.

Chapters 7--10 fit into that by demonstrating a progression; in Chapter 7 Christ went out (defined His ministry of mercy), in Chapter 8 He took His disciples along (defined the requirements of a disciple), in Chapter 9 He sent them out (defined the superior nature of their ministry), and in Chapter 10 He sent seventy others (defined the superior responsibility and privilege of their ministry).

Chapter II determined if a miracle motif was present. The miracles of Elijah were categorized by Leah Bronner as culturally selected to contradict Baal's claims

of power. Miracles of rain, oil, resurrection, fire, etc. were all claimed to be under the power of Baal. Elijah performed miracles on behalf of the Jewish God, YHWH, which fit these categories and thus directly contradicted the claims of Baal worshippers.

The miracles of Christ did not conform to a parallel motif such as rain, fire, etc. They did, however, fit into a category which opposed the popular religion of that day, the law of the Pharisees. This law of the religious rulers had increasingly become a righteousness of the rich, the self-righteous and the privileged. Those who found themselves outside of these categories had little hope in Israel. In Chapters 7--10 there were a considerable number of miracles which demonstrated mercy addressed to those particular people. Miracles of healings, resurrection, forgiveness of sins and exorcisms affected those which the reigning Jewish system had excluded.

The study in Chapter III compared the purpose of ministry of Christ to that of Elijah and Elisha. This was brought out contextually in Chapter 7. Here Christ performed miracles similar, not to the judgment miracles of Elijah, but to the merciful miracles of Elisha. John the Baptist questioned this in light of his expectation of judgment on the unrepentant nation. Christ explained that John the Baptist's ministry was parallel to Elijah. His was more similar to that of Elisha, one of mercy to the outcast and unloved. This was illustrated by the outcast

and despised sinner woman who threw herself at Christ's feet and was forgiven of her sins. The purpose of Christ's ministry was not parallel to Elijah's, but Elisha's. As such He desired to save individuals who sought mercy in the midst of a national self-righteousness.

A contextual survey of the four chapters was made in Chapter IV determining the contextual purpose of the Elijah/Elisha comparisons in each passage.

In Chapter 7, Christ's ministry paralleled Elisha, not Elijah in His ministry of mercy. In Chapter 8 there were no allusions to Elijah or Elisha. The chapter developed the requirements for discipleship to that ministry of proclamation. Chapter 9 revealed the superiority of the mission of the twelve disciples. The chapter made allusions to Elijah and Moses as being the messengers of the old order, while Christ was the superior leader of the new order. Thus their ministry was one requiring more reliance on Him, continuing the ministry of mercy, and understanding the priority of serving in this ministry. There were no allusions to Elijah/Elisha in Chapter 10, but there were allusions to the prophets of the old order. As the ministry was expanded to the seventy, they were taught the superior responsibility over the old order to them as ministers and to those who would hear. Finally, Christ pointed out that they, as ministers of this mercy, were more privileged than any prophet or king who has ever lived.

The Elijah/Elisha motif as related to the  
Purpose of Luke

The purpose of Luke was stated to be: Luke, through historical events, presents Jesus as the Messiah, who had come to proclaim the gospel to those who were lost, thus explaining a new order, in which membership was not based upon personal position, but upon accepting the mercy of the message.

The miracle motif discussed in Chapter III demonstrated that Christ performed miracles which showed the prominent, accepted religious elite for what it was, inept in providing mercy and compassion to those who were in need. In the purpose of Luke, this motif emphasized the nature of the gospel in the new order. It was a gospel of mercy, which focused on the lost, the unrighteous, the opposite of the elite, self-righteous structure of Judaism.

The parallels in ministry between Elijah/Elisha and Christ discussed in Chapter IV, demonstrated that Christ's ministry was one of mercy. This ministry was to be carried on by the seventy and ultimately by the church as demonstrated in the Book of Acts. In the purpose of Luke this specified the nature of the gospel mission.

The parallels were studied in Chapter IV. Chapters 7--10 illustrate the movement of the ministry of mercy from Christ to the disciples to the seventy. The gospel was being expanded and proclaimed to go out to those who had no hope. The Elijah/Elisha comparisons demonstrate the ministry of mercy which the Messiah was bringing to these people. Elijah was the prophet who gave the ultimatum to the nation, repent or else. John the Baptist repeated that theme, and expected the Lord to bring in the judgment. But Christ pointed out His similarity to Elisha, in that mercy was proclaimed to those who might get out from a nation that had rejected the call to repent. Thus the Elijah/Elisha comparisons in Chapter 7 define the mercy of the gospel which was the nature of ministry of the Messiah.

The Elijah/Elisha comparisons in Chapter 9 illustrate the superiority of the ministry of the new order to that of the old order. The new order was one which had a leader, superior to Elijah and Moses. Their ministry was one of mercy, and of exacting requirements. Thus in the unfolding of the explanation of the spread of the gospel in Luke, the Elijah/Elisha comparisons of Chapter 9 point out the superiority of the new ministry and its leader to that of the old order and its leaders.

### Application

The Elijah/Elisha comparisons in Chapter 7 force the reader to understand the purpose of the ministry of Christ, which He has passed on to us. This is a ministry of mercy and the believing reader needs to proclaim exactly this. It is a ministry to the unlovely, the unaccepted, the hopeless and the sinner. It is not a proclamation of judgment but a proclamation of good news. God offers mercy to those who desire it. Mercy is the essence of the gospel message; the sinner deserves judgment, but God proclaims mercy. The evangelical must base his gospel message on this theme.

The Elijah/Elisha comparisons in Chapter 9 illustrate to the reader the fortunate position of the New Testament believer. While prophets and kings were limited in the old order under the Law, the Christian has a superior leader who provides all he needs, the Son of God Himself. It is a superior order, one that requires priority in all things.

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."

Luke 10:23-24

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