

THE 'A-TRIUMPHAL' ENTRY (LUKE 19:28-48)

Historical Backgrounds, Theological Motifs and the Purpose of Luke¹

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Lukan scholars have frequently noted the pivotal nature of Jesus' entry to Jerusalem and Temple cleansing; however, no consensus has been reached as to their precise meaning. Some have viewed the entry as 'triumphal', by which they mean that it bore affinity to the celebratory greetings accorded to other important figures in antiquity. Others have regarded it as clearly messianic while still others have viewed it as little more than the normal journey to Jerusalem of a Jewish pilgrim at festival time. Furthermore, while it is generally recognised that the 'journey to Jerusalem' motif is an important one in Luke and that for Luke Jesus is portrayed not as arriving in the city as such but in the Temple, the fundamental connection between the two stories has typically not been made. This thesis addresses those issues and is intended to make a contribution to the study of 'political' and 'theological' perspectives in Luke's Gospel by an examination of the Triumphal Entry/Temple Cleansing narratives in the light of Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Markan backgrounds.

The thesis concludes that, in ways not previously noticed, in accordance with his stated purpose (Luke 1:1-14) to give Theophilus assurance about the things of which he had been informed (and here the Greek term *katecheo* has the connotation of partial or imprecise information), Luke heightens the sense in which Jesus' entry would have been viewed by his first readers as a *parousia* gone awry (and thus 'a-triumphal'); it is further argued that the Lukan account

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distances Jesus from the actions of Jewish nationalists and clarifies the possible misperception that Jesus' actions were politically motivated as in opposition to Caesar.

It might be supposed that the Graeco-Roman backgrounds of *parousia* and 'triumph', so important for understanding the Pauline texts of 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:3 (as demonstrated in Hafemann's recent monograph) and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (shown in Peterson's early essay) would have routinely been applied to the study of Luke's account of Jesus' entry, given that his audience is widely reckoned to have been both urban and located outside Palestine. Surprisingly, this is not the case. The coming or *parousia* of Roman emperors, Hellenistic kings and other distinguished figures was well-known in the 1st century and an important background against which the Lukan account of Jesus' coming would have been evaluated. In the 1st century the advent of the Roman emperor was a well-known feature of imperial ideology and had increasingly taken on a messianic character. Accordingly, the ways in which Jesus' coming might be depicted would have obvious relevance to the extent to which Jesus could be viewed as Caesar's rival. Another kind of *parousia*—the one extended to Roman governors—might also have been important to the perceptive 1st century audience of Luke, since Pilate is mentioned as being in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' trial and would have undoubtedly received an official (if, perhaps, insincere) welcome near the time of Jesus' arrival. As important as the Graeco-Roman background might have been to Luke's audience, the Jewish one (and in particular, the LXX) would have been no less significant. From a close analysis of various texts, it is argued that the nearest precedent to Jesus' coming (as told by Luke) is not that of Zion's king (Zechariah 9:9-10), as is commonly supposed, but that of Solomon (1 Kings 1). It is further recognised that the coming of the ark to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6 and elsewhere) could explain the origin of the 1 Kings and Zechariah traditions and be of some help in understanding Jesus' advent.

Luke employs Old Testament motifs to stress that Jesus was a royal figure; in this way he highlights the fact that Jesus ought to have received a properly celebrated *parousia*. Luke

indicates, in a way that Mark does not, that Jesus has the proper royal credentials, credentials which should have been recognised by Jerusalem. For Luke the culpability of the city in this episode (19:28-40) is evident not only from the fact that Jesus is challenged by the Pharisees who are present at the entry (19:39) but also, and perhaps more importantly, by the absence of the social, religious and political élite who, consistent with *parousia* conventions, ought to have been present to greet him (ironically, they are present in the Temple episode, but there they oppose Jesus). This violation of *parousia* customs enables the reader to understand in a fresh way Jesus' pronouncement of judgement on Jerusalem for its failure to welcome him on 'this day' (19:42), that is, the day of his visitation (19:44). In the light of the events of the entry and the implicit rejection of Jesus contained therein, it is not surprising that as Jesus goes to the Temple (a visit also in accordance with *parousia* customs) he displays his displeasure with those who have corrupted its cult (19:45-46). While scholars normally do recognise the Pharisees' comment as adversarial, the extent to which the entry constituted a rejection of Jesus by Jerusalem as a whole according to *parousia* customs is not normally acknowledged, nor are the acts in the Temple seen as fundamentally connected to the entry. The background of *parousia*, therefore, would have made obvious to Luke's first audience Jerusalem's rejection of Jesus and rendered more comprehensible his response to this rejection (his announcement of its destruction and his cleansing of the Temple).

While Luke intends Jesus to be seen as a royal figure and, thus, worthy of a proper *parousia*, he also takes care to ensure that Jesus not be viewed as Caesar's rival. Many commentators have recognised the presence of a 'political apologetic' in Luke; however, the Lukan treatment of the entry/Temple cleansing passages and their contexts are not normally seen to be part of that motif. As to the context of the entry, the stories of the healing of the blind man, the greeting of Zaccheus and the parable of the nobleman are not normally seen to be connected, much less governed by a political apologetic. Its presence is revealed by the dramatic fashion in

which Luke narrates the account as well as by certain editorial measures he employs. For example, although Luke substantially reproduces the Markan account of the healing of the blind man who addresses Jesus as 'son of David' (Luke 18:35-43 = Mark 10:46-52), in Luke this story takes on special importance in the light of Lukan comments about Jesus' Davidic credentials and his coming reign (1:32-33). The Lukan account, therefore, dramatically brings to the fore the issue of Jesus' intentions as he comes to Jerusalem. Does Jesus come to Jerusalem to assume the Davidic throne and establish himself as a rival to Caesar? While the Lukan blind man narrative intensifies questions about Jesus' intentions in a way that Mark's does not, the following episodes which tell of Jesus and Zaccheus (19:1-10) and of the parable of the nobleman (19:11-27, both found only in Luke) answer the question. Jesus embraces the tax-gatherer Zaccheus, something a Jewish nationalist would not have done, and, in response to the disciples' query about the soon coming of the kingdom, he tells the parable of the nobleman who goes to a far country to receive a kingdom. The context of the Lukan account clarifies the nature of Jesus' kingship and the timing of the kingdom's appearance.

Although scholars have not seen a political apologetic at work in Luke 18:35-19:27, they have, on occasion, suggested that some variations in the Markan and Lukan entry narratives are based on political considerations. This thesis confirms those results, arguing that Luke omits certain features of the Markan entry narrative such as the laying down of branches and the comments about the kingdom of David (Mark 11:8-10) because they could have been construed as seditious in orientation. In this regard, it is perhaps also of importance that Luke depicts Jesus' coming as most like that of Solomon, an acknowledged king of peace. In addition, it has often been suggested that the Lukan treatment of the Temple cleansing was governed either by political-religious developments in the post-AD 70 era (the Temple was destroyed and had thus become an irrelevance for Luke and his community) or by cultural factors (Luke's non-Palestinian audience would have found many of the Markan details puzzling). It seems more likely, however, that Luke

shortened considerably the Markan account of Jesus actions in the Temple because he wanted to distance Jesus from the actions of Jewish nationalists, which typically occurred at the Temple. This was necessitated, in part, because of the potential for misreading the Markan account of the Temple cleansing.

Given the backgrounds with which Luke and his readers would have been familiar, it can safely be stated that at no public event in Jesus' life were the possibilities for a political misunderstanding greater than at the entry and Temple cleansing. This study demonstrates the extent to which Luke endeavoured to ensure that none took place.