

# Come Back

## Luke 17:11-19

### Dr. Pierre Cannings

## I. At A Distance vs. 11-13

### a. Ten Lepers

#### i. Stood at a Distance

1. It also places the incident on the outskirts of habitation where a group of lepers might be found
2. The account begins with Jesus' healing ten lepers at a distance (17:12, 14; cf. 7:6–10). Lepers had to live apart from society (Lev 13:38–46; Num 5:2–4), and to reenter society they had to be declared clean by a priest (Lev 14:1–32). As they proceeded to the priests, they were healed. One of the lepers upon observing his healing returned to give thanks to Jesus. It is then pointed out that this leper was a Samaritan. This one had been not only physically healed but spiritually healed as well (17:19). Whereas the other nine received God's word and believed for a time, they fell short of the ultimate healing, i.e., experiencing the divine salvation. They had "been enlightened ... [and] tasted the heavenly gift" (Heb 6:4) in their experience of divine healing, but they fell short of saving faith.
3. The lepers were conforming to the law by avoiding physical contact with other people (Lv. 13:45f.; Nu. 5:2), but staying close to habitation so that they might receive charitable gifts. It is not surprising that they knew about the reputation of Jesus

#### ii. Raised their Voices

1. Jesus - is likely to be Lukan. In Lukan idiom "lifting up the voice" has to do with needing to be heard or wanting to be emphatic, and not specifically with prayer
2. Master - as a title addressed to Jesus, nearly always by the disciples It variously means sir or mister (Lk 14:21), master (Mt 6:24), lord (Acts 25:26)
  - a. **Go, show yourselves to the priests.** Compare 5:14. "Priests" is plural because there were ten lepers. That Jesus anticipated that the Samaritan would go to a Samaritan priest is speculative. Luke was not concerned with this detail.

- b. Master- which is normally placed on the lips of disciples in Lk. accordingly assumes that they stood in some close relationship to Jesus. It is more probable that the word is used loosely without any deeper implications. but nothing should be made of this for such an imprecise expression (here it could [but should not] be taken as no more than a request for alms).
  - 3. Have Mercy on Us - *show mercy to someone, help someone (out of compassion)*
    - a. **Have pity on us!** Compare Luke 16:24; 18:38–39. The particular mercy being sought is not mentioned. The lepers might have sought alms from others, but from the address “Master” Luke suggested they sought more, i.e., healing, from Jesus.

## II. Show Yourself v. 14

- a. Saw Them
  - i. “And directly He saw”: which seems to imply that, until they cried out, He had not perceived who they were.
- b. Show Yourself
  - i. To the Priest
  - ii. Normally, a command to visit the priest would follow a cure (5:14; cf. Lv. 13:49; 14:2f.), so that the cured man might officially resume his place in society. Here the use of the plural ἱερεῖς arises from the fact that a mixed group of lepers, Jewish and Samaritan, is described, and each man would go to the appropriate priest. It is not clear whether it was necessary to go to the temple; the OT legislation assumes that this is the case, since sacrifice had to be offered, but the other aspects of the ritual could perhaps be carried out wherever a priest was to be found. The command to go to the priests is a test of faith and obedience. It also implies that the completion of the cure took place at a distance without Jesus having touched the men; cf. the cure of Naaman, 2 Ki. 5:10–14. In this way too the scene is set for the return of the Samaritan leper.
  - iii. “Show yourselves to the priests” appointed for this purpose. Each of the ten would go to the priest near his own home. In 5:14 we have τῷ ἱερεῖ, there being then only one leper. The Samaritan would go to a priest of the temple on Mount Gerizim.
- c. As They Were Going -
  - i. They were Cleansed- Cleansed - **to heal a person of a disease that makes one ceremonially unclean, *make clean*,**

- ii. before the command to show oneself to the priest, here the healing took place on the way (cf. 2 Kgs 5:10–14). The obedience to Jesus’ word reveals a certain degree of faith on the part of all ten lepers (cf. John 9:7). “Cleansed” refers to healing from leprosy, as Luke 17:15 reveals.
- iii. the notable difference here is that the lepers are sent off with their leprosy still not dealt with. The lepers were required to act as though doing what Jesus asked would make a difference, even though there was yet no tangible evidence that it would (they had at least to believe that it was worth a try; cf. the commands to act with the expectation of healing in 5:25; 6:10; 7:14; 8:54; and cf. further 7:7–10; John 4:50).

### III. Just One vs. 15-16

- a. Saw He was Healed
- b. Turned back
  - i. Glorifying God Glorifying - **to influence one’s opinion about another so as to enhance the latter’s reputation, praise, honor, extol** to speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving honor—‘to praise, to glorify, praise
  - ii. The effect on one, but only one, is to make him turn right around and head back to Jesus, full of thanks to Jesus and glory to God. Luke’s elaboration of the man’s behavior here suggests that he wants us to see that this man in his dealings with Jesus experiences an encounter with God. Of the ten only this one makes a public identification with what God is now doing in Jesus.
    - 1. With a Loud Voice
- c. Fell On His Face Fell on His Face - Falling down before Jesus is meant to emphasise a petition in Mk. 5:22 (par Lk. 8:41); Lk. 5:12, and gratitude in Lk. 17:16
  - i. At Jesus Feet
    - 1. The action is one of respect (Matthew stresses the element of worship), here accompanied by thanksgiving (εὐχαριστέω, 18:11; 22:17, 19; cf. Jn. 11:41; Acts 28:15).
  - ii. Giving Thanks
    - 1. Giving Thanks -**to express appreciation for benefits or blessings, give thanks, express thanks, render/return thanks** Greek words derived from the root *eucharist*- are used in the NT almost exclusively in the sense of thanksgiving directed to God (in the LXX the verb and substantive do not occur in the Hellenistic sense until the apocryphal writings). The only exceptions are Acts 24:3 and Rom 16:4, although cf. 2 Cor 1:10–11. On Luke 17:16 cf. v 18

2. The story does not necessarily imply that the other nine lacked faith; the point is rather that their faith was incomplete because it did not issue in gratitude.
- d. He was a Samaritan
    - i. Yet the overwhelming evidence in the Gospels is that Jesus' attitude toward the Samaritans differed radically from that of his Jewish contemporaries. When his disciples display the usual Jewish animosity in asking to have the "fire of judgment" rain down upon the inhospitable Samaritans, Jesus "rebuked them" (Lk 9:55).
    - ii. Schismatic group from the Jews. The group resided north of Judea and south of Galilee in hostile tension with its Jewish neighbors. Jesus' attitude toward this despised group radically contrasted with contemporary sentiment
    - iii. The history of relations between the Samaritans, situated in the north around Mt Gerizim (their holy mountain), Shechem, and Samaria, and Jewish populations in Judea and then later in Galilee is one of fluctuating tensions. Opposition was at first politically motivated, but became religious as well when sometime later, possibly the 4th century BC
    - iv. **Samaritan.** Mention of this has been delayed in the story to dramatize this fact. This would remind Luke's readers of the parable of the good Samaritan and that it was a Samaritan, not the priest or Levite, who proved to be a neighbor (cf. 10:30–37). It would also affirm to them the subsequent history of the church and how Samaritans received the gospel and official Judaism did not. Even though they already knew this, they would later read about this in Luke's second work

## IV. Well Then vs. 17-19

- a. Wasn't there Ten
  - i. Where are they
  - ii. No one But the Foreigner
- b. Faith has made you Well
  - i. Faith - belief and trust in the Lord's help in physical and spiritual distress; **state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, trust, confidence**
  - ii. Well - **save/free from disease**
    1. **Has made you well.** "Made you well" is literally *saved you*. See comments on 7:50. For Luke true faith, which leads to salvation, was intimately connected with glorifying God even as it is elsewhere connected with the forgiveness of sins (Luke 5:20), entering God's kingdom (18:24–25), and inheriting eternal life

(18:18–30). Compare the connection between faith and glorifying God in 18:42–43 and in Acts 11:14, 18.

2. He did well to be thankful and publicly express his thankfulness; but he had contributed something himself, without which he would not have been cured. Comp. 8:48, 18:42. Others refer to the saying to some benefit which the Samaritan received and which the nine lost, and explain it of moral and spiritual salvation. Comp. 7:50, 8:48, 50.

## Ideas

Distance. He closed the distance after being healed  
Went to the priest for societal reentrance but not to the savior  
Wanted physical but not spiritual  
Mercy tied to last week's sermon. Our response to mercy

## Word Studies

Master - as a title addressed to Jesus, nearly always by the disciples<sup>1</sup> It variously means sir or mister (Lk 14:21), master (Mt 6:24), lord (Acts 25:26),<sup>2</sup>

Mercy- . *show mercy to someone, help someone (out of compassion)* <sup>3</sup>

Going - **to be on the move**

Cleansed - **to heal a person of a disease that makes one ceremonially unclean, *make clean, heal***<sup>4</sup>

Glorifying - **to influence one's opinion about another so as to enhance the latter's reputation, *praise, honor, extol***<sup>5</sup> to speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving honor—'to praise, to glorify, praise.'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 381.

<sup>2</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "[Master](#)," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1416.

<sup>3</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 315.

<sup>4</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 488.

<sup>5</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 258.

<sup>6</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [\*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains\*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 429.

Fell on His Face - Falling down before Jesus is meant to emphasise a petition in Mk. 5:22 (par<sup>7</sup>. Lk. 8:41); Lk. 5:12, and gratitude in Lk. 17:16.<sup>8</sup>

Samaritan ***Relations Between the Samaritans and the Jews***. The history of relations between the Samaritans, situated in the north around Mt Gerizim (their holy mountain), Shechem, and Samaria, and Jewish populations in Judea and then later in Galilee is one of fluctuating tensions. The ancient tension between the northern and southern kingdoms was revived with the return of exiles to Jerusalem under the Persian ruler Cyrus' edict (c.<sup>9</sup> 538 B<sup>10</sup>C). The entire southern area was at the time being governed from Samaria in the north by Sanballat, a native ruler of Palestine under Persian authority. The return of exiles to Jerusalem, particularly with their intentions of rebuilding the Jerusalem temple, posed an obvious political threat to his leadership in the north (Ezr 4:7–24; Neh 4:1–9).

Opposition was at first politically motivated, but became religious as well when sometime later, possibly the 4th century B<sup>11</sup>C (toward the end of Persian or beginning of Greek rule), a rival temple was erected on Mt Gerizim. An example of Jewish hostility toward the Samaritans about this time comes from Ecclesiasticus 50:25, 26 (written approximately 200 B<sup>12</sup>C), where the Samaritans are placed below the Edomites and Philistines in esteem and are termed a “foolish people” (cf<sup>13</sup>. Test. Levi 7:2).<sup>14</sup>

Schismatic group from the Jews. The group resided north of Judea and south of Galilee in hostile tension with its Jewish neighbors. Jesus' attitude toward this despised group radically contrasted with contemporary sentiment<sup>15</sup>

**Relations between the Samaritans and the Jews** The history of relations between the Samaritans—situated on the north around Mt Gerizim (their holy mountain), Shechem, and Samaria—and Jewish populations in Judea and then later in Galilee is one of fluctuating tensions. The ancient tension between the northern and southern kingdoms was revived with the return of exiles to Jerusalem under the Persian ruler Cyrus's edict (c.<sup>16</sup> 538 BC). The entire

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<sup>7</sup>par. parallel.

<sup>8</sup> Wilhelm Michaelis, “Πίπτω, Πτώμα, Πτώσις, Ἐκπίπτω, Καταπίπτω, Παραπίπτω, Παράπτωμα, Περιπίπτω,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 163.

<sup>9</sup>c. about, approximately

<sup>10</sup>BC before Christ

<sup>11</sup>BC before Christ

<sup>12</sup>BC before Christ

<sup>13</sup>cf. compare

<sup>14</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Samaritans,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1887.

<sup>15</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1153.

<sup>16</sup>c circa—approximately

southern area was at the time being governed from Samaria in the north by Sanballat, a native ruler of Palestine under Persian authority. The return of exiles to Jerusalem, particularly with their intentions of rebuilding the Jerusalem temple, posed an obvious political threat to his leadership in the north (Ezr 4:7–24; Neh 4:1–9).

Opposition was at first politically motivated but became religious when sometime later, possibly in the fifth century BC, a rival temple was erected on Mt Gerizim. An example of Jewish hostility toward the Samaritans about this time comes from Ecclesiasticus 50:25–26 (written approximately 200 BC), where the Samaritans are placed below the Edomites and Philistines in esteem and are termed a “foolish people” (cf. Test. Levi 7:2).

Jewish disregard for the Samaritans was increased by the Samaritans’ lack of resistance to Antiochus Epiphanes’ campaign (<sup>17</sup>c. 167 BC) to promote Hellenistic worship in the area. While part of the Jewish community resisted the transforming of the Jerusalem temple to a temple for Zeus (1 Macc 1:62–64) and eventually followed the Maccabees in revolt (1 Macc 2:42–43), sources suggest that the Samaritans did not (see 1 Macc 6:2).

Poor relations came to a climax during the brief period of Jewish independence under the Hasmoneans, when the Jewish ruler, John Hyrcanus, marched against Shechem, conquering and destroying the Samaritan temple on Mt Gerizim (<sup>18</sup>c. 128 BC).

Under Herod the Great, Samaria’s fortunes improved, although animosity still continued between the Samaritans and Jews in Judea and Galilee. Holding the Jerusalem temple to be a false cultic center, and excluded from the inner courts by the Jerusalem authorities, a group of Samaritans desecrated the Jerusalem temple in approximately AD 6 by spreading human bones within the temple porches and sanctuary during Passover. Hostility toward Galilean Jews traveling through Samaria on the way to Jerusalem for various feasts was also not uncommon (Lk 9:51–53).

This animosity continued in Jesus’ day. Both groups excluded the other from their respective cultic centers, the Jerusalem temple and the Samaritan temple on Mt Gerizim. The Samaritans, for example, were forbidden access to the inner courts of the temple, and any offering they might give was considered as if it were from a Gentile. Thus, although probably more accurately defined as “schismatics,” it appears Samaritans were in practice treated as Gentiles. All marriage between the groups was therefore forbidden, and social relations were greatly restricted (Jn 4:9). With such proscribed separation, it is not surprising that any interaction between the two groups was strained. The mere term Samaritan was one of contempt on the lips of Jews (8:48), and among some scribes it possibly would not even be uttered (see the apparent circumlocution in Lk 10:37). The disciples’ reaction to the Samaritan refusal of lodging (9:51–55) is a good example of the animosity felt by Jews for Samaritans at the time.

Although there is less evidence for similar attitudes from the Samaritan side, we can assume they existed. It is probable to speculate, therefore, that the Samaritan shunning of hospitality in Luke 9:51–55 was not uncommon toward other Jews whose “face was set toward Jerusalem.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>c circa—approximately

<sup>18</sup>c circa—approximately

<sup>19</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1154.



**Jesus and the Samaritans** The common Jewish perspective on Samaritans as being nearly Gentile was evidently held to some extent by Jesus as well. Jesus refers to the Samaritan leper as “this foreigner” (Lk 17:18) and prohibits his disciples, during their commissioning, from taking the message of the kingdom to either the Samaritans or the Gentiles (Mt 10:5).

Yet the overwhelming evidence in the Gospels is that Jesus’ attitude toward the Samaritans differed radically from that of his Jewish contemporaries. When his disciples display the usual Jewish animosity in asking to have the “fire of judgment” rain down upon the inhospitable Samaritans, Jesus “rebuked them” (Lk 9:55). Moreover, he did not refuse to heal the Samaritan leper but honored him as the only one of the ten who remembered to give glory to God (17:11–19). So also in the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:30–37) Jesus clearly breaks through the traditional prejudices in portraying the despised Samaritan, not the respected Jewish priest or Levite, as the true neighbor to the man in need. Here as elsewhere, Jesus, in confronting his audience with God’s demand, breaks through traditional definitions of “righteous” and “outcast.”<sup>20</sup>

**Giving Thanks -to express appreciation for benefits or blessings, *give thanks, express thanks, render/return thanks***<sup>21</sup> Greek words derived from the root *eucharist-* are used in the NT almost exclusively in the sense of thanksgiving directed to God (in the LX<sup>22</sup>X the verb and substantive do not occur in the Hellenistic sense until the apocryphal writings). The only exceptions are Acts 24:3 and Rom 16:4, although cf. 2 Cor 1:10–11. On Luke 17:16 cf. v 18<sup>23</sup>

Foreigner

Faith of belief and trust in the Lord’s help in physical and spiritual distress;<sup>24</sup>  
**state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, *trust, confidence, faith***<sup>25</sup>

Well - *save/free from disease*

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<sup>20</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, [\*Tyndale Bible Dictionary\*](#), Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1154–1155.

<sup>21</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 415.

<sup>22</sup>LXX Septuagint

<sup>23</sup> Christian Wolff, [\*“Thanksgiving.”\*](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, trans. Reginald H. Fuller, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 435.

<sup>24</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 819.

<sup>25</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 818.

# Commentary Studies

## i. The Grateful Samaritan 17:11–19

The story, set apparently on the borders of Samaria, describes how Jesus met a group of ten lepers who sought healing from him. Instead of healing them on the spot, he simply commanded them to go and show themselves to the priests, something that needed to be done by lepers who had been cleansed. As they went in obedience to his word, they found that they had been cured. Thus far the story is like a typical miracle story, with the significant feature that the cure is delayed and wrought at a distance (cf. 2 Ki. 5:10–14). But, like other miracle stories in Luke's special source (13:10–17; 14:1–6; cf. Pesch, *Taten*, 129), the story takes a fresh step forward with the account of how one of the lepers gave praise to God for his cure and returned to thank Jesus. Jesus' comment is twofold: a remark on the fact that only one man—and a Samaritan at that—returned to give thanks to God, and a declaration of salvation to the man on account of his faith. Thus the story is not simply a testimony to the ability of Jesus to cure lepers (5:12–14) but is also concerned with the attitude of the person cured. Jesus' mercy is offered to all men, but they must acknowledge what God has done through him; to faith must be added thanksgiving. Moreover, this may be missing from the attitude of Jews who might be expected to appreciate the obligation better than Samaritans. The person who makes such acknowledgement experiences a salvation which goes beyond the merely physical cure. H.-D. Betz<sup>26\*</sup> goes further and claims that the story reflects the church's attempt to show that a healing miracle is not the same thing as salvation itself; the miracle is in itself ambiguous, and it is not properly experienced unless it leads to a change of inner orientation. Naturally, the reality of the miracle is not disparaged, but a way is opened up for a faith in Jesus which is independent of the occurrence of miracles.

The story is peculiar to Lk. The introduction, v. 11, is probably Lucan, but the ending is probably part of the tradition. Luke has another story of the healing of a leper in 5:12–14. It is, therefore, unlikely that he has created this particular story, since he avoids doublets in his narrative (cf. Pesch, *Taten*, 114). Nevertheless, this story could be an expanded version of the earlier story by the church (Bultmann, 33; Klostermann, 173; Creed, 216f.). Thus Bultmann regards this story as a Hellenised version of the earlier one, designed to bring out the motif of gratitude. The sending of the lepers to the priests is here unmotivated and serves the literary purpose of making it necessary for the one leper to return to Jesus (Pesch, *Taten*, 126f.). The evidence regarding the story as Hellenised is weak; Knox II, 112, speaks only of a light Hellenisation by Luke. The theory that this story is a variant of the Marcan one appears to have no stronger basis than the questionable assumption that there can originally have been only

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<sup>26\*</sup> The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

one story of the cure of a leper. The sending to the priest was a necessary epilogue to the cure of a leper.

A more refined analysis is offered by H.-D. Betz<sup>27\*</sup>. For him the oldest form of the story dealt with ten lepers, of whom only one showed gratitude. At a second stage v. 16b was added, giving more colour to the narrative and turning it into an anti-Jewish story. The story itself is based on such a miracle story as Mk. 1:40–45; the first part is a parody of this sort of story, with the nine lepers presented satirically and caricatured to provide a foil for the Samaritan leper who is the hero of the second scene. The theological interest shown in the story demands that its composition be placed fairly late, and the anti-Jewish polemic likewise suggests a date after the breach between the church and the synagogue.

Betz's description of the first part of the story is itself a caricature with no basis in the text. The Samaritan motif is found elsewhere in Luke's special source, and the point need not be a late development.

The historicity of the story is naturally denied by scholars who think that it is based on Mk. 1:40–45 (Pesch, *Taten*, 130f.). For Pesch it lacks concrete details and is designed to convey a lesson to the readers. These considerations, however, do not disprove historicity, and it is better to leave the question open.<sup>28\*</sup>

**(11)** The story begins with typical Lucan phraseology (5:1), and the theme of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (9:51; 13:22) is reintroduced. There does not appear to be any organic relationship between this theme and the story; more probably the fact that the story involves Jesus' journeying in the neighbourhood of Samaria enabled Luke to give a reminder to his readers that the whole of this major section of the Gospel leads up to Jerusalem; if so, the geographical comment in the second part of the verse may represent traditional information of which he has made use. After πορεύεσθαι (ϝ<sup>75</sup> κ<sup>29</sup> B L pc) αὐτόν is added in many MSS; T<sup>30</sup>R; *Diglot*<sup>31</sup>t. It may have been omitted because it seemed redundant before the following καὶ αὐτός, or it may have been added to provide the infinitive with a subject. The phrase διὰ μέσον (ϝ<sup>75</sup> κ<sup>32</sup> B pc) seemed difficult. Variants are διὰ μέσου (A W Θ pl; T<sup>33</sup>R); ἀνὰ μέσον (f<sup>34</sup>1 f1<sup>35</sup>3); and μέσον (D; Creed, 217); but these are no doubt simplifications. διὰ μέσου means 'through the midst of' (cf. 4:30; 11:24; Jn. 4:4; Acts 9:32; *et al.*), and could refer to a journey through both of the regions named,

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<sup>27\*</sup> The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

<sup>28\*</sup> See Pesch, *Taten*, 114–134; H.-D. Betz, 'The Cleansing of the Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11–19)', JBL 90, 1971, 314–328.

<sup>29</sup>B Baptist source

<sup>30</sup>TR *Theologische Rundschau*

<sup>31</sup>*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

<sup>32</sup>B Baptist source

<sup>33</sup>TR *Theologische Rundschau*

<sup>34</sup>f1 Family 1 (Lake)

<sup>35</sup>f13 Family 13 (Ferrari)

or more probably along the border between the two regions. διὰ μέσον could mean ‘between’, and may simply be a Hellenistic form of the more correct idiom. If so, a journey along the border between Samaria and Galilee is meant (cf. Lagrange, 457; Ellis, 209). The fact that Samaria is mentioned first is due to the important role of the Samaritan in the story, and no recondate explanation is necessary. Nevertheless, Conzelmann, 60–62, holds that Luke’s geography is erroneous, J. Blinzler (in Schmid, *Studien*, 50–52; cf. 9:51–19:10 note) emends the text by omitting μέσον Σαμαρείας καί without it being clear how these words ever got into the text if they are not original; and Pesch, *Taten*, 116–119, regards the words as Luke’s addition to the tradition. Grundmann, 336, follows the view that the geography is described from the perspective of Jerusalem, so that Samaria is named first. Yet another possibility is that the reference is to the border between Samaria and Peraea (the latter being reckoned as part of Galilee).

**(12)** The genitive absolute is illogical. The reference to the village entered by Jesus is vague (cf. 5:12; *et al.*); it serves to show that Jesus rested from his journey and therefore could easily be found by the cured leper. It also places the incident on the outskirts of habitation where a group of lepers might be found. ἀπαντάω, ‘to meet’, is rare (Mk. 14:13), and the text shows variations. For ἀπήντησαν (℣<sup>75</sup> κ<sup>c</sup> A<sup>36</sup>B W Δ 700 *pm*; T<sup>37</sup>R), we find ὑπήντησαν in κ\* L Θ f<sup>38</sup>1 f1<sup>39</sup>3 157 a; *Diglot*<sup>40</sup>t (and the erratic variations ὀποῦ ἦσαν, D e; *et ecce*, it sy<sup>s</sup>c); αὐτῶ, read by T<sup>41</sup>R; *Diglot*<sup>42</sup>t; (UB<sup>43</sup>S); is omitted by ℣<sup>75</sup> 44B L (D) *pc*. λεπρός appears as an adjective here only in the NT; on the disease see 5:12 note. For lepers grouping together cf. 2 Ki. 7:3. πόρρωθεν is ‘from a distance’ (Heb. 11:13\*<sup>45</sup>\*). The lepers were conforming to the law by avoiding physical contact with other people (Lv. 13:45f.; Nu. 5:2), but staying close to habitation so that they might receive charitable gifts. It is not surprising that they knew about the reputation of Jesus.

**(13)** αἶρω φωνήν (Acts 4:24) is here ‘to shout’; cf. ἐπαίρω φωνήν, 11:27. The vocative Ἰησοῦ is common enough (4:34; *et al.*). More difficult to account for is the title ἐπιστάτης (5:5 note) which is normally placed on the lips of disciples in Lk. Grundmann, 336f., accordingly assumes that they stood in some close relationship to Jesus. It is more probable that the word is used loosely without any deeper implications. It may be a Lucan equivalent for an earlier

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<sup>36</sup>B Baptist source

<sup>37</sup>TR *Theologische Rundschau*

<sup>38</sup>f1 Family 1 (Lake)

<sup>39</sup>f13 Family 13 (Ferrari)

<sup>40</sup>*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

<sup>41</sup>TR *Theologische Rundschau*

<sup>42</sup>*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

<sup>43</sup>UBS *The Greek New Testament* (3rd edition), United Bible Societies, London, 1976)

<sup>44</sup>B Baptist source

<sup>45</sup>\*\* All the occurrences of the word in the NT are cited.

διδάσκαλε (cf. P. Eger. 2:8; Pesch, *Taten*, 120). For ἐλέεω cf. 16:24; 18:38f. (par<sup>46</sup>. Mk. 10:47f.); Mk. 5:19; Mt. 15:22; 17:15.

**(14)** Normally, a command to visit the priest would follow a cure (5:14; cf. Lv. 13:49; 14:2f.), so that the cured man might officially resume his place in society. Here the use of the plural ἱερεῖς arises from the fact that a mixed group of lepers, Jewish and Samaritan, is described, and each man would go to the appropriate priest. It is not clear whether it was necessary to go to the temple; the OT legislation assumes that this is the case, since sacrifice had to be offered, but the other aspects of the ritual could perhaps be carried out wherever a priest was to be found. The command to go to the priests is a test of faith and obedience. It also implies that the completion of the cure took place at a distance without Jesus having touched the men; cf. the cure of Naaman, 2 Ki. 5:10–14. In this way too the scene is set for the return of the Samaritan leper.

**(15)** The use of ἰάομαι demonstrates the meaning of καθαρίζω in v. 14. The language of the verse (ὑποστρέφω, 1:56; *et al.*; δοξάζω τὸν θεόν, 2:20; *et al.*) is Lucan; it may be an expansion but is required by v. 18 as an integral part of the story (Pesch, *Taten*, 121).

**(16)** In the story in 5:12 the leper kneels before Jesus *before* his cure; cf. 8:41; Acts 5:10. The action is one of respect (Matthew stresses the element of worship), here accompanied by thanksgiving (εὐχαριστέω, 18:11; 22:17, 19; cf. Jn. 11:41; Acts 28:15). It is also found in stories of pagan wonderworkers (H.-D. Betz<sup>47\*</sup>, 318f.). Then comes the surprise for Jewish readers. The construction is that of an Aramaic circumstantial clause (Black, 83). The man is a Samaritan (and by implication the other nine are Jews). Braun, *Radikalismus* II, 60 n. 1 and H.-D. Betz<sup>48\*</sup>, 319, hold that the phrase is a secondary expansion (but pre-Lucan); this judgment, however, ignores the dramatic art of the story which holds back the detail to this point for emphasis.

**(17)** Jesus responds to the situation (and the words of thanks which are implied in v. 16) with a series of three questions. Bultmann, 33, rightly points out that the saying of Jesus could not have been transmitted on its own apart from the story (i.e. we do not have an imaginary story constructed to give a framework for the saying), from which H.-D. Betz<sup>49\*</sup>, 320, illogically concludes that the saying was composed for this story and cannot be original. This *assumes* the non-historical nature of the story without any justification. The first question begins with οὐχί

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<sup>46</sup>par. is parallel to

<sup>47\*</sup> The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

<sup>48\*</sup> The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

<sup>49\*</sup> The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

( $\kappa$  A  $\Theta$  f<sup>50</sup>1 f1<sup>51</sup>3 pl lat; T<sup>52</sup>R; UB<sup>53</sup>S; *Diglo*<sup>54</sup>t; οὐχ, <sup>55</sup>B L V pc; *Synopsi*<sup>56</sup>s; omitted by D it sy<sup>5c</sup>). The second is constructed chiasmatically; for the order of words cf. Plato, Tim. 17a. The connective ὃέ is omitted by A D pc it sy; *Diglo*<sup>57</sup>t.

**(18)** The use of εὐρίσκω with the participle is unusual; it is equivalent to the niphal of *māṣā*, ‘to be found, appear, prove, be shown (to be)’ (A<sup>58</sup>G); cf. Mt. 1:18; Rom. 7:10; Acts 5:39; *et al.* With the verb supply ΤΙΝΕΣ as subject. δοῦναι is dependent on ὑΠΟστρέψαντες. For the phrase cf. 4:6; Jn. 9:24; 17:22; Acts 12:23; 1 Sa. 6:5; Ps. 29:1; *et al.* εἰ μὴ is used exclusively. ἀλλογενής<sup>59\*</sup>, ‘foreign’, is used of non-Jews in the LXX and on the well-known ‘keep out’ signs on the inner barrier in the temple. The non-Jew with no religious privileges has shown a better understanding of the situation than the Jews.

**(19)** So it is he alone who hears the word of Jesus, bidding him rise from worship and go his way (Acts 8:26; 9:11; *et al.*). His faith has been the means of his cure—and of his salvation. Most commentators regard the verse as a schematic, redactional addition; it may well be pre-Lucan, but this does not solve the problem of whether it is secondary to the original story. It is, however, an integral part of the story, since the whole point of the second part of the story lies in the relationship of the man to Jesus, and not simply in the fact that he gives thanks. The story

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<sup>50</sup>f1 Family 1 (Lake)

<sup>51</sup>f13 Family 13 (Ferrari)

<sup>52</sup>TR *Theologische Rundschau*

<sup>53</sup>UBS *The Greek New Testament* (3rd edition), United Bible Societies, London, 1976)

<sup>54</sup>*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

<sup>55</sup>B Baptist source

<sup>56</sup>*Synopsis* K. Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, Stuttgart, 1964 (cited as giving the text of E. Nestle-K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart, 1963<sup>25</sup>)

<sup>57</sup>*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

<sup>58</sup>AG W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Cambridge, 1957

<sup>59\*\*</sup> All the occurrences of the word in the NT are cited.

does not necessarily imply that the other nine lacked faith; the point is rather that their faith was incomplete because it did not issue in gratitude).<sup>60\*61</sup>

### **Form/Structure/Setting**

The sense of the heavy demand of discipleship engendered by the previous two units (vv 1–6, 7–10) of this section (vv 1–19) is lightened somewhat by this concluding unit with its emphasis on the dynamic of gratitude. The role of faith at the end of the first unit recurs here at the end of the final unit.

Again Luke is the only Synoptist to have preserved this material. Bruners (*Reinigung*, esp. 297–306) has argued at length for a purely Lukan origin for this unit. This judgment has been accepted by Busse (*Wundergeschichten*, 319–22) and others, but has been effectively countered by Glöckner (*Wundergeschichten*, 128–31; and see earlier Pesch, *Ureigene Taten*, 216–23). Note particularly the uneven distribution of Lukan language features through the material, and the fact that free composition would have produced a more free-flowing text and more thorough integration into the context.

There has been, nonetheless, significant Lukan intervention, and opinion varies as to the nature and extent of this intervention. Has Luke introduced the Samaritan motif (as Roloff, *Kerygma*, 157)? This is shown in *Comment* below to be unlikely. Has he added v 19, as frequently claimed? Again, probably not. The scope of Luke's contribution to the present narrative, beyond individual language changes, is most likely to be v 11, v 12 as far as "village," and v 15–16 from "glorifying God" through to "at his feet." That is, he has provided the setting and he has reinforced and developed the equation of response to Jesus and response to God, but has not disturbed the basic structure or scope of the narrative.

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<sup>60\*</sup> See Dalman, 143–147; A. Sledd, 'The Interpretation of Luke xvii. 21', Exp.T 50, 1938–39, 235–237; B. Noack, *Das Gottesreich bei Lukas: eine Studie zu Luk. 17, 20–24*, Uppsala, 1948; C. H. Roberts, 'The Kingdom of Heaven (Lk. xvii. 21)', HTR 41, 1948, 1–8; H. Riesenfeld, 'Ἐμβολεύειν—Ἐντός', and A. Wikgren, 'ἘΝΤΟΣ', *Nuntius* 4, 1950, 27f. (not accessible; see Moule, 83f.); J. G. Griffiths, 'Ἐντὸς ὑμῶν (Lk. xvii. 21)', Exp.T 63, 1951–52, 30f.; Percy, 216–223; Kümmel, 32–36; A. Strobel, 'Die Passa-Erwartung als urchristliches Problem in Lk. 17:20f.', ZNW 49, 1958, 164–174; id. 'In dieser Nacht (Lk. 17:34)', ZTK 58, 1961, 16–29; id. 'Zu Lk. 17:20f.', BZ nf 7, 1963, 111–113; A. Rüstow, 'ἘΝΤΟΣ ΥΜΩΝ ΕΣΤΙΝ. Zur Deutung von Lukas 17:20–21', ZNW 51, 1960, 197–224; F. Mussner, 'Wann kommt das Reich Gottes?' BZ 6, 1962, 107–111; R. J. Sneed, ' "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Lk. 17, 21)', CBQ 24, 1962, 363–382; Perrin, 68–74; R. Schnackenburg, 'Der eschatologische Abschnitt Lk. 17, 20–37', in Descamps, 213–234 (reprinted in R. Schnackenburg, *Schriften zum Neuen Testament*, München, 1971, 220–243; Zmijewski, 361–397; Geiger, 29–52.

<sup>61</sup> I. Howard Marshall, [\*The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text\*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 648–654.

What of the earlier history of the narrative? Here we should first deal with the questions of the relationship between the present narrative and, respectively, (i) the healing of Naaman in 2 Kgs 5:9–19 and (ii) the healing of the leper in Luke 5:12–14//Mark 1:40–45. For its relationship with the healing of Naaman, Bruners (*Reinigung*, esp. 103–18) represents the maximal position. For him (118) the whole narrative is an imitative narrative of a prophetic figure who surpasses his model. The other extreme is to deny any connection (as, e.g., Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 131–39). It is probably reasonable to detect a modest amount of allusion to the Elisha narrative, without this providing in any way an adequate basis for the production of the narrative or providing any interpretive key to the narrative. For the relationship of this unit to the other healing of a leper, Bultmann (*History*, 33) represents the maximizing position, according to which Luke 17:11–19 is no more than an imaginary transposition of the earlier cleansing account. Most of the commonality is simply that required for any account one might formulate of the healing of leprosy in the context of the Jewish law. “He fell on [his] face” in 17:16 does seem, however, to be a deliberate borrowing (however by Luke, not earlier) from the one account to the other (see 5:12). Again, the one narrative has no capacity to account for the other (beyond the nine and the one, which is all that Bultmann really attends to; note in particular the role of the return and the equivalence between thanks to Jesus and glory to God).

The narrative defies standard form-critical classification (it comes closest to being a pronouncement story, but much of the detail of the miracle account is essential for the pronouncement). This should not, however, be allowed automatically to disqualify the narrative as ultimately historical. At the same time, the variety of the threads that are woven together here must reduce rather than increase the confidence with which we can trace the particular elements back to the historical Jesus.

### **Comment**

Only the one who gratefully returns to the source in Jesus makes an appropriate response to the healing mercy extended by God in the ministry of Jesus.

**11** Eight of the opening nine words are to be found in a similar configuration in 9:51. Most likely the whole verse is Lukan (Pesch, *Ureigene Taten*, 117–19 defends διὰ μέσον Γαλιλαίας, “through the midst of Galilee,” as pre-Lukan). Luke has last mentioned the fact that Jesus is traveling in 14:25, and has last spoken of the destination in Jerusalem in 13:31–35: it is time to renew the motif, particularly since Luke’s tradition here is likely to have provided a suitable linchpin in the form of a statement implying that Jesus is traveling as he meets the lepers. This is the last renewal of the motif before that of the final unit of the large journey section in 18:31–34. Though this is often done, it is best not to take these reminders as structure markers (17:11–19 links better with what precedes than with what follows).

Though no close parallel has been cited for the use of διὰ μέσον for “between,” there are instances where διὰ + ac<sup>62</sup>c is used to mean “through,” rather than the expected “because of/for the sake of.” This leads reasonably enough to the sense “between” for διὰ μέσον (see

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<sup>62</sup>acc according (to) or accusative



BD<sup>63</sup>F 222; BAG<sup>64</sup>D, 181; Fitzmyer, 1153 [“through the middle (of)” is an impossible sense with the following “Samaria and Galilee” and would not normally be the natural sense with the following pair of nouns]. There is no need, with Blinzler (“Die literarische Eigenart,” 49–52), to treat μέσον Σαμαρείας καὶ as a gloss nor, with Conzelmann (*Luke*, 68–73), to consider that Luke betrays here his confusion about the geography of Palestine. Luke has no interest in the geographical features of the journey. The location between Samaria and Galilee merely accounts for the mixed Jewish and Samaritan makeup of the group of lepers.

**12** It is likely that ἀπήνησαν, “met,” is the verb controlled by the opening ἐγένετο, “it happened,” construction of v 11 (cf. Fitzmyer, 1154; the closest parallels to the structure are in 5:1; 19:15), and thus that it is Luke who provides the syntax to this point (and probably the vocabulary up to but not including ἀπήνησαν). The distance of the lepers reflects Lev 13:46; Num 5:2–3 (contrast Mark 1:40; cf. v 41). That they are met outside the village is to be similarly explained. “Leprous men” rather than “lepers” may be a Lukan touch.

**13** The opening unstressed καὶ αὐτοί (lit<sup>65</sup>. “and they”) is likely to be Lukan. In Lukan idiom “lifting up the voice” has to do with needing to be heard or wanting to be emphatic, and not specifically with prayer (only so in Acts 4:24). A mixture of the first and second is best here. ἐπιστάτα, “master,” may be Lukan, but it is distinctive from Luke’s other uses in not being spoken by a disciple (see at 5:5). Jesus will also be addressed by a suppliant as “Jesus” (there with “Son of David”) in 18:38–39//Mark 10:47–48 (and note the presence there as well of “have mercy on me”). “Have mercy on me/us” is frequent in the Psalms (see Glöckner, *Wundergeschichten*, 139–40), but nothing should be made of this for such an imprecise expression (here it could [but should not] be taken as no more than a request for alms).

**14** The point of mentioning Jesus’ “seeing” is that this is the basis for his identification of the problem, and thus of his directive to the lepers. While the same motif of the need to meet the Mosaic requirement for being declared clean from leprosy is present as in 5:14 (see there), the notable difference here is that the lepers are sent off with their leprosy still not dealt with. The lepers were required to act as though doing what Jesus asked would make a difference, even though there was yet no tangible evidence that it would (they had at least to believe that it was worth a try; cf. the commands to act with the expectation of healing in 5:25; 6:10; 7:14; 8:54; and cf. further 7:7–10; John 4:50). This is the closest point to the Naaman incident (2 Kgs 5:10), but even here the link is not certain. ἐν τῷ ὑπάγειν is likely to mean here, as in 8:42, “as [they] set off”: they have not gone far before they are made clean from their leprosy.

**15–16** δοξάζων τὸν θεόν, “glorifying God,” is likely to be Lukan here as it was in 5:25 and will be in 18:43. μετὰ φωνῆς μεγάλης, “with a loud voice,” is less likely to be so, since Luke clearly prefers φωνῆ μεγάλη for this. ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον, “he fell on [his] face” (cf. 5:12), and παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, “at his feet,” are both Lukan.

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<sup>63</sup>BDF F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (University of Chicago/University of Cambridge, 1961)

<sup>64</sup>BAGD W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ET, ed. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; 2d ed. rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (University of Chicago, 1979)

<sup>65</sup>lit. literally

ἰδῶν, “seeing/saw,” propels the action as it did in v 14. There is no real basis for giving any profound sense of spiritual awakening to this verb in itself. Glöckner (*Wundergeschichten*, 145) has, however, pointed to the parallel role of “seeing” in 5:8 (and note the narrative there has the same double role for seeing in the forwarding of the action [see 5:2]), and this may suggest that we should see the “seeing” in each case as triggering in turn a deeper perception, to be evidenced in what ensues. ὑπέστρεψεν, “returned,” is the verb that Luke uses in connection with repentance, but that nuance is out of place here (2:20 is a better comparison).

While the importance of giving glory to God is pervasively evident in the psalms, one wonders (yet more so in v 18) why it should be necessary to *return to Jesus* to give glory to God. Why not, say, go to the temple or the synagogue? Or why not even complete first what Jesus had directed? (This last may only need to be answered in terms of the short distance from Jesus when the healing took place.) It is likely that an original that simply equated returning and giving thanks to Jesus with returning and giving glory to God (for a similar kind of equation see 8:39) has been elaborated by Luke in language that points to the theophanic nature of encounter with Jesus (cf. 5:8–9). The original equation is intelligible in terms of the role of Jesus in the manifestation of the kingdom of God and has an implied Christology that Luke is keen to exploit and develop. It is just possible, as well, that the return represents a second allusion to the cleansing of Naaman (see 2 Kgs 5:15), which may find development in the expression of thanks (cf. the offered present of 2 Kgs 5:15).

There is no adequate reason for excising the Samaritan from the original account (on Samaritans, see at 9:51–56). At a literary level the text without the Samaritan cries out for a comment on the one who is so different from the nine. The point is neither pro-Samaritan nor anti-Jewish, any more than 7:9 is anti-Jewish. It points (but only implicitly) to Jewish failure, but in a manner that is designed to challenge rather than condemn. (In a secondary way, and in the larger Luke-Acts context, the present text does, however, secure a foothold for the Samaritan mission, much as 7:9 does for the mission to the Gentiles.)

**17–18** None of the language here is notably Lukan. For δοῦναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ, “to give glory to God,” cf. Acts 12:23. The narrator’s singling out of the one in v 15 now becomes a public contrast of the one and the nine made by Jesus himself. v 18 is normally punctuated as a question, but the syntax receives better justice when translated as a statement. Jesus equates the return to give thanks to himself with a return to give glory to God (see above). The return involves a public identification with what God is now doing in Jesus. The wording attributed to Jesus here suggests that he had no greater spontaneous expectation of good from Samaritans than did his fellow Jews. ἄλλογενής, “foreigner,” is not used elsewhere in the NT. It is the term used in the temple inscription that forbade the entry of foreigners into the Jerusalem temple (cf. BAG<sup>66</sup>D, 39). More strictly, the Samaritans were viewed as half-foreign, Israelites of doubtful descent (see at 9:52).

**19** See discussion at 7:50 for the series of Lukan terminating statements similar to this verse, and for the sense of the present verse. This is the one in the set that stands the greatest chance of being a secondary development (and it is so judged by many). But even here the role of the

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<sup>66</sup>BAGD W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ET, ed. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; 2d ed. rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (University of Chicago, 1979)

return and the nature of the identification of thanksgiving to Jesus and glorification of God suggest the appropriateness of a final statement that recognizes the difference, achieved through the return, between the one and the nine. Moreover, without v 19, the returning Samaritan is discussed but, curiously, not addressed. The distinctive ἀναστᾶς, “get up,” is produced by the prostrate position Luke has introduced in v 16. Though the Samaritan is but a foreigner to the People of God, his faith has brought salvation to him (cf. Acts 15:9, 11).

### ***Explanation***

This last unit of the section (17:1–19) provides a balance to the stern picture of discipleship that has dominated the first two units. Now gratitude comes into the picture and an image of the healing mercy that God extends to those who call on Jesus for mercy.

Luke refreshes the journey motif at this point: this too must be seen in connection with the journey to suffering and glory that climaxes the ministry of Jesus. Luke offers the vague location between Samaria and Galilee to account ahead of time for the Samaritan in the group of lepers (others of the group may have been Samaritans as well, but a mixed group is required by v 18).

Because of the need for lepers to keep themselves segregated from others, the lepers meet Jesus outside a village; for the same reason they shout out to him from a distance. They know who he is, and they address him as “master,” which indicates a personal recognition of his authority. They humbly ask for his help in traditionally suppliant language.

When Jesus has sized up the situation, he asks them to go off to the priests, as required by the OT for those seeking reclassification as clean from their leprosy. The lepers are required to act as though doing what Jesus asks will make a difference, though there is yet no tangible evidence that it will. They have little to lose and all comply. It is worth a try. They are no doubt delighted to discover in a very short time that the venture has worked.

The effect on one, but only one, is to make him turn right around and head back to Jesus, full of thanks to Jesus and glory to God. Luke’s elaboration of the man’s behavior here suggests that he wants us to see that this man in his dealings with Jesus experiences an encounter with God. Of the ten only this one makes a public identification with what God is now doing in Jesus.

The kingdom of God has been at work, but only one of the ten makes the necessary response of gratitude and faith. As Jesus has elsewhere lamented the lack of faith of his generation (9:41), so here he expresses his distress that this one man has come back alone. The shame of it is intensified because this fellow is not really a Jew. Though the language is slightly exaggerated in connection with a Samaritan, to make the point, the man is spoken of by Jesus as a “foreigner.” But as much of a foreigner as he might be, this man is now sent off by Jesus as a person who has experienced the salvation that Jesus came to bring. None of the others, despite their new-found freedom from leprosy, receives this special blessing<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> John Nolland, [Luke 9:21–18:34](#), vol. 35B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 844–848.

**11–19.** Here begins the last portion of the long section (9:51–19:28), for the most part peculiar to Lk., which we have called “the Journeyings towards Jerusalem”: see on 9:51. For the third time (9:51, 52, 13:22) Lk. tells us that Jerusalem is the goal, but we have no means of knowing whether this represents the beginning of a third journey distinct from two previous journeys. Marked breaks may be made at the end of 13:35 and 17:10. But we have no data for determining what the chronology of the different divisions is; and the geography is almost as indistinct as the chronology. This last portion, however, brings us once more (10:38) to Bethany, and to the time which preceded the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

**11–19.** <sup>68</sup>§ The Healing of the Ten Lepers. The gratitude of the Samaritan leper illustrates the special theme of this Gospel. The opening of the narrative indicates an Aramaic source: but that it is placed here “to contrast man’s thanklessness to God with the sort of claim to thanks *from* God, which is asserted by spiritual pride,” is not probable.

**11. ἐν τῷ πορεύεσθαι.** “As He was on His way.” See on 3:21 and comp. 9:51, the beginning of this main portion, where the construction is similar. The αὐτόν is probably a gloss (om<sup>69</sup>. <sup>70</sup>κ <sup>71</sup>B <sup>72</sup>L), but a correct gloss. As no one else is mentioned it is arbitrary to translate “as *they* were on their way.” Latin texts all take it as singular: *dum iret, cum iret, dum vadit, dum iter faceret*. So also Sy<sup>73</sup>r-Sin<sup>74</sup>, which omits ἐγένετο.

**καὶ αὐτὸς διήρχετο.** The apodosis of ἐγένετο: see on 5:12, 14, 6:20; also on 2:15. There is no emphasis on αὐτός.

**διὰ μέσον.** This is the reading of <sup>75</sup>κ <sup>76</sup>B <sup>77</sup>D <sup>78</sup>L, accepted by Tisch<sup>79</sup>. Treg<sup>80</sup>. WH<sup>81</sup>. and RV<sup>82</sup>. It means “through what lies between,” *i.e.* along the frontier, or simply, “between.” This is the only passage in N.T. in which διὰ *c. acc.* has its original local signification. Even if διὰ μέσου

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<sup>68</sup>§ Found in Luke alone.

<sup>69</sup>om. omit.

<sup>70</sup>κ κ Cod. Sinaiticus, sæc. iv. Brought by Tischendorf from the Convent of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai; now at St. Petersburg. Contains the whole Gospel complete.

<sup>71</sup>B B. Cod. Vaticanus, sæc. 4. In the Vatican Library certainly since 1533<sup>1</sup> (Batiffol, *La Vaticane de Paul 3, etc.*, p. 86).

<sup>72</sup>L L. Cod. Regius Parisiensis, sæc. viii. National Library at Paris. Contains the whole Gospel.

<sup>73</sup>Syr Syriac.

<sup>74</sup>Sin. Sinaitic.

<sup>75</sup>κ κ Cod. Sinaiticus, sæc. iv. Brought by Tischendorf from the Convent of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai; now at St. Petersburg. Contains the whole Gospel complete.

<sup>76</sup>B B. Cod. Vaticanus, sæc. 4. In the Vatican Library certainly since 1533<sup>1</sup> (Batiffol, *La Vaticane de Paul 3, etc.*, p. 86).

<sup>77</sup>D D. Cod. Bezae, sæc. vi. Given by Beza to the University Library at Cambridge 1581. Greek and Latin. Contains the whole Gospel.

<sup>78</sup>L L. Cod. Regius Parisiensis, sæc. viii. National Library at Paris. Contains the whole Gospel.

<sup>79</sup>Tisch. Tischendorf.

<sup>80</sup>Treg. Tregelles.

<sup>81</sup>WH. Westcott and Hort.

<sup>82</sup>RV. Revised Version.

were the right reading, we ought to translate it “between” and not “through the midst of.” This use is found in Xenophon: διὰ μέσου δὲ ῥεῖ τούτων ποταμός (*Anab.* 1:4, 4), of a river flowing between two walls; and in Plato: ἢ τὸ τούτων δὴ διὰ μέσου φῶμεν (*Leg.* 7. p. 805 D), of an intermediate course. “Through the midst of Samaria and Galilee” would imply that Jesus was moving *from* Jerusalem, whereas we are expressly told that He was journeying *towards* it. Samaria, as being on the right would naturally be mentioned first if He was going eastward along the frontier between Samaria and Galilee possibly by the route which ends at Bethshean, near the Jordan. In order to avoid Samaritan territory (9:52–55), He seems to have been making for Peræa, as Jews often did in going from Galilee to Jerusalem. On the frontier He would be likely to meet with a mixed company of lepers, their dreadful malady having broken down the barrier between Jew and Samaritan. See Conder, *Handbk. of B.* p. 311; Tristram, *Bible Places*, p. 222; *Eastern Customs*, pp. 19, 21. In the leper-houses at Jerusalem Jews and Mahometans will live together at the present time.

There is no doubt that ver. 11 forms a complete sentence. To make from καὶ αὐτός to Γαλιλαίας a parenthesis, and take ἀπήνησαν as the apodosis of ἐγένετο, is quite gratuitous clumsiness.

**12. δέκα λεπτοὶ ἄνδρες.** Elsewhere we read of four (2 Kings 7:3), but so large a company as ten was perhaps at that time unusual. Now it would be common, especially in this central region. These ten may have collected on hearing that Jesus was approaching. No meaning is to be sought in the number.

**ἔστησαν πόρρωθεν.** In accordance with the law, which the leper of 5:12 possibly did *not* break: see notes there. The precise distance to be kept was not fixed by law, but by tradition, and the statements about it vary. See Lev. 13:45, 46; Num. 5:2, and the evidence collected in Wetst<sup>83</sup>. The adv. occurs Heb. 11:13 and often in LXX, esp. in Isaiah (10:3, 13:5, 33:13, 17, 39:3, etc.). On the authority of <sup>84</sup>B <sup>85</sup>F, WH<sup>86</sup>. adopt ἀνέστησαν in the text, with ἔστησαν in the margin. Lk. is very fond of this compound.

**13. καὶ αὐτοὶ ἤραν φωνήν.** They took the initiative. Here ἤραν φωνήν agrees with πόρρωθεν, just as in 16:24 φωνήσας agrees with ἀπὸ μακρόθεν. Comp. ἐπαίρειν φωνήν (11:27) and ὑποῦν φωνήν (Gen. 39:15, 18). This phrase occurs Acts 4:24; Judg. 21:2; 1 Sam. 11:4. For ἐπιστάτα see on 5:5.

**14. καὶ ἰδών.** “And directly He saw”: which seems to imply that, until they cried out, He had not perceived who they were. This previous supernatural knowledge was not necessary. But He knows, without seeing or hearing, that they all were cleansed (ver. 17). This knowledge *was* necessary.

**ἐπιδείξατε ἑαυτοὺς τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν.** “Show yourselves to the priests” appointed for this purpose. Each of the ten would go to the priest near his own home. In 5:14 we have τῷ ἱερεῖ,

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<sup>83</sup>Wetst. Wetstein.

<sup>84</sup>B B. Cod. Vaticanus, sæc. 4. In the Vatican Library certainly since 1533<sup>1</sup> (Batiffol, *La Vaticane de Paul 3, etc.*, p. 86).

<sup>85</sup>F F. Cod. Boreeli, sæc. ix. In the Public Library at Utrecht. Contains considerable portions of the Gospel.

<sup>86</sup>WH. Westcott and Hort.

there being then only one leper. The Samaritan would go to a priest of the temple on Mount Gerizim.

**ἐν τῷ ὑπάγειν.** Their faith was shown in their obedience to Christ's command, and on their way the cure took place. As they were no longer companions in misery, the Jews would rejoice that the Samaritan turned back and left them.

**15. ὑπέστρεψεν.** See on 4:14 and 7:10. Even Hahn follows Schleiermacher in referring this to the Samaritan's return from the priest. In that case he would have *inevitably* returned without the others. It was because he *saw* (ἰδών) that he was *healed* (not after he had been *declared* to be *clean*) that he came back to give thanks. The μετὰ φωνῆς μεγάλης may mean that he still "stood afar off" (see on 1:42), as having not yet recovered the right to mix with others: for παρὰ τοὺς πόδας (see on 7:38) need not imply close proximity. But if the loud voice be only an expression of great joy, a man in the jubilation of such a cure would not be punctilious about keeping the exact distance, especially when he knew that he was no longer a leper. It is most improbable that he did not see that he was cleansed till the priest told him that he was.

**16. καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν Σαμαρείτης.** Here the αὐτός has point: "and *he* was a S." The only one who exhibited gratitude was a despised schismatic. That *all* the others were Jews is not implied.

**17. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς.** See small print on 1:19, p. 16. Here first we learn that Jesus was not alone; for His "answer" is addressed to the bystanders, and is a comment on the whole incident rather than a reply to the Samaritan.

**Οὐχ οἱ δέκα.** "Were not *the* ten," etc.—all the ten who had asked Him to have mercy on them. The ποῦ with emphasis at the end, like σὺ in ver. 8. These questions imply surprise, and surprise implies limitation of knowledge (7:9; Mt. 8:10; Mk. 6:6).

**18.** This sentence also may be interrogative: so WH<sup>87</sup>. and RV<sup>88</sup>. text. The εὐρέθησαν is not a mere substitute for ἦσαν: it marks or implies the discovery or notice of the quality in question (1 Pet. 2:22; Rev. 14:5).

**ἀλλογενής.** The classical word would be ἀλλόφυλος (Alas 10:28) or ἄλλοεθνής, But ἀλλογενής is very freq. in LXX, especially of the heathen (Exod. 12:43, 29:33, 30:33; Lev. 22:10, etc).

The Samaritans were a mixed people, both as regards race and religion. They were Israelites who had been almost overwhelmed by the heathen colonists planted among them by the Assyrians. Those from Cuthah (2 Kings 17:24, 30) were probably the most numerous, for the Jews called the Samaritans Cuthites or Cutheans (Jos<sup>89</sup>. *Ant.* ix. 14. 3, 11:4, 4, 7, 2, 13:9, 1). These heathen immigrants brought their idolatry with them, but gradually mixed with it the worship of Jehovah. Both as regards race and religion it was the Jewish element which grew stronger, while the heathen element declined. Refugees from Judea settled among them from time to time; but we do not hear of fresh immigrants from Assyria. The religion at last became pure monotheism, with the Pentateuch as the law of worship and of life. But in race the foreign element no doubt predominated, although Christ's use of ἀλλογενής does not prove this. He may be speaking with a touch of irony: "this man, who is commonly regarded as little better than

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<sup>87</sup>WH. Westcott and Hort.

<sup>88</sup>RV. Revised Version.

<sup>89</sup>Jos. Josephus.

a heathen.” See Schürer, *Jewish People in T. of J. C.* 2:1, pp. 6–8; Edersh. *Hist. of Jewish Nation*, pp. 249, 486, 499, ed. 1896; Derenbourg, *Hist. de la Pal.* 1. p. 43; Jos<sup>90</sup>. *Ant.* 11:8, 6, 12:5, 5.

**19. ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε.** He did well to be thankful and publicly express his thankfulness; but he had contributed something himself, without which he would not have been cured. Comp. 8:48, 18:42. Others refer the saying to some benefit which the Samaritan received and which the nine lost, and explain it of moral and spiritual salvation. Comp. 7:50, 8:48, 50.

**20–37.** The Coming of the Kingdom of God and of the Son of Man. The introductory verses (20–22) are peculiar to Lk. For the rest comp. Mt. 24:23 ff.; Mk. 13:21 ff.

**20. Ἐπερωτηθεῖς.** There is no evidence that the question of the Pharisees was asked in contempt. Jesus had taught that the Kingdom was at hand, and they ask *when* it may be expected. Perhaps they wanted to test Him. If He fixed an early date, and at that time there were no signs of the Kingdom, they would know what to think. His reply corrects such an idea. There will be no such signs as would enable a watcher to date the arrival. A spiritual Kingdom is slow in producing conspicuous material effects; and it begins in ways that cannot be dated.

With this rather loose use of ΠΟΤΕ for ὅΠΟΤΕ in an indirect question comp. 12:36; Mk. 13:4, 33, 35; Mt. 24:3. Nowhere in N.T. is ὅΠΟΤΕ found.

**παρατηρήσεως.** Here only in bibl. Grk. and not classical, although παρατηρεῖν is not rare either in N.T. or LXX, and occurs in medical writers of watching the symptoms of a disease (Hobart, p. 153). It implies *close* rather than *sinister* watching, although the latter sense occurs. See on 14:1. The interpretation *cum multa pompa, cum regio splendore*, fits neither the word nor the context. The meaning is that no close observation will be able to note the moment of its arrival, which will not be marked by external sounds.<sup>91</sup>

## Context

The account of the grateful Samaritan, which is unique to Luke, introduces the third section of the travel account (cf. 17:11 with 9:51 and 13:22). Jesus continued toward Jerusalem, where he would die (9:22, 31, 44), for he must fulfill his passion in the holy city (13:33). The classification of this story is difficult, but its emphasis lies with the pronouncement in 17:17–19.<sup>24921</sup>

The account begins with Jesus’ healing ten lepers at a distance (17:12, 14; cf. 7:6–10). Lepers had to live apart from society (Lev 13:38–46; Num 5:2–4), and to reenter society they had to be declared clean by a priest (Lev 14:1–32). As they proceeded to the priests, they were healed.

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<sup>90</sup>Jos. Josephus.

<sup>91</sup> Alfred Plummer, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke\*](#), International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 1896), 402–406.

<sup>92241</sup> The narrative does not fit neatly into the normal form-critical categories. It possesses characteristics of a miracle story, a pronouncement story, as well as a story about Jesus. Probably it is best described as a pronouncement story.

One of the lepers upon observing his healing returned to give thanks to Jesus. It is then pointed out that this leper was a Samaritan. This one had been not only physically healed but spiritually healed as well (17:19). Whereas the other nine received God's word and believed for a time, they fell short of the ultimate healing, i.e., experiencing divine salvation. They had "been enlightened ... [and] tasted the heavenly gift" (Heb 6:4) in their experience of divine healing, but they fell short of saving faith.

## Comments

**17:11 On his way to Jerusalem.** This is the third mention of Jesus' traveling to Jerusalem (cf. 9:51; 13:22).

**Along the border between Samaria and Galilee.** The expression "along between" (*diameson*) is difficult to interpret, and as a result there are several textual variants. Since Galilee lies north of Samaria, one would think that Jesus would have been going in a north-south direction, and "along between" suggests an east-west direction. Some scholars have suggested that Luke revealed here a great ignorance of Palestinian geography.<sup>24932</sup> Luke may have meant, however, that Jesus and the disciples were traveling east-west along the Plain of Esdraelon (Valley of Jezreel). Although one might expect the reverse, Samaria is mentioned first because of the importance the Samaritan leper plays in the story. For "Samaria" see comments at 10:33.

**17:12 Ten.** "Ten" is a round number. Compare 2 Kings 7:3, where a group of lepers are found together, probably for mutual aid and encouragement.

**A village.** The name is irrelevant. *What* happened, not *where* it happened, is important. Compare 9:52, 56; 10:38.

**Leprosy.** See comments at 5:12.

**They stood at a distance.** The law required the segregation of lepers (cf. Lev 13:45–46; Num 5:2–4).

**17:13 Jesus, Master.** Elsewhere only Jesus' disciples used this term "Master" (*epistata*) to address him (see comments on 5:5), whereas non disciples used the term "teacher" (*didaskalos*).<sup>24943</sup>

**Have pity on us!** Compare Luke 16:24; 18:38–39. The particular mercy being sought is not mentioned. The lepers might have sought alms from others, but from the address "Master" Luke suggested they sought more, i.e., healing, from Jesus.

**17:14 Go, show yourselves to the priests.** Compare 5:14. "Priests" is plural because there were ten lepers. That Jesus anticipated that the Samaritan would go to a Samaritan priest is speculative. Luke was not concerned with this detail.

**As they went, they were cleansed.** In contrast to 5:12–16, where the healing took place before the command to show oneself to the priest, here the healing took place on the way (cf. 2 Kgs 5:10–14). The obedience to Jesus' word reveals a certain degree of faith on the part of all ten lepers (cf. John 9:7). "Cleansed" refers to healing from leprosy, as Luke 17:15 reveals.

**17:15 One of them.** The Samaritan in response to his healing did four things.

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<sup>93242</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 68–70.

<sup>94243</sup> Luke 7:40; 9:38; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7.



**Praising God.** Praise as the appropriate response to God's salvation is a favorite Lukan theme (see comments on 5:25).

**In a loud voice.** "A loud voice" is a favorite Lukan expression.<sup>24954</sup>

**17:16 Threw himself at Jesus' feet.** See comments on 5:12.

**And thanked him.** Only here in the NT are thanks directed to Jesus rather than God.<sup>24965</sup> Compare, however, where prayer is offered to Jesus in Acts.<sup>24976</sup> Compare 2 Kgs 5:15 for a similar reaction from Naaman the leper.

**And he.** "He" is emphatic, "And *he* ..."

**Samaritan.** Mention of this has been delayed in the story to dramatize this fact. This would remind Luke's readers of the parable of the good Samaritan and that it was a Samaritan, not the priest or Levite, who proved to be a neighbor (cf. 10:30–37). It would also affirm to them the subsequent history of the church and how Samaritans received the gospel and official Judaism did not. Even though they already knew this, they would later read about this in Luke's second work.<sup>24987</sup>

**17:17–18** Jesus asked three rhetorical questions.

**Nine.** The nine were the Jewish lepers who were healed, in contrast to the "foreigner." For Luke's Jewish readers the pathos of these questions would have been great (cf. Rom 9:2–5). Once again the last had become first and the first last (Luke 13:30).

**Give praise to God.** True faith and worship involves praising, i.e., glorifying, God. See comments on 5:25; contrast Acts 12:23.

**17:19 Your faith.** In the first situation in life, this no doubt referred to a faith in God and in Jesus as his representative. In the Lukan setting such faith would be more Christologically oriented and refer to faith in Jesus as the Lord Christ, God's Son, who rose from the dead, reigns, and will return.

**Has made you well.** "Made you well" is literally *saved you*. See comments on 7:50. For Luke true faith, which leads to salvation, was intimately connected with glorying God even as it is elsewhere connected with the forgiveness of sins (Luke 5:20), entering God's kingdom (18:24–25), and inheriting eternal life (18:18–30). Compare the connection between faith and glorying God in 18:42–43 and in Acts 11:14, 18.

## The Lukan Message

A clear Christological emphasis is present, for the account provides another example of Jesus' power. He is able to heal lepers (Luke 4:14, 18–21; 5:17). This emphasis is furthermore heightened by 17:17. Between the praise of God offered by the believing Samaritan (17:15) and the praise of God referred to by Jesus (17:18), we find that the Samaritan threw himself at Jesus' feet and "thanked him" (17:16). Only here in all the NT are such thanks directed to Jesus.

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<sup>95244</sup> Cf. Luke 4:33; 8:28; 19:37; 23:23, 46; Acts 7:57, 60; 8:7; 14:10; 16:28; 26:24.

<sup>96245</sup> Cf. Luke 18:11; 22:17, 19; Acts 27:35; 28:15, where God is thanked.

<sup>97246</sup> Acts 9:5–6/22:7–10; 9:10–16 (esp. v. 17).

<sup>98247</sup> Cf. Acts 1:8; 8:1–25; 9:31; 13:45–47; 15:3; 18:6; 28:25–28.

Elsewhere they are directed to God (18:11; 22:17, 19; Acts 27:35; 28:15). Luke made clear in Acts 10:25–26 that such homage does not belong to humans, only to God (cf. also Acts 12:21–23). Yet such homage is also to be directed to Jesus. Thus Luke demonstrated once again Jesus’ uniqueness. Earlier (Luke 5:20–21; 7:48–49) Luke portrayed Jesus as exercising the divine prerogative of forgiving sins.

A second emphasis involves a soteriological truth. Luke warned his readers that one can experience God’s work of grace and yet fall short of receiving salvation. Ten lepers were healed. All experienced the beginning of faith, for all went out in faith to show themselves to the priests. Yet, like the seed that fell upon the rock, they received Jesus’ “word with joy ... but ... only believe[d] for a while” (8:13). Only one soil retained the word and persevered in faith (8:15). Luke again warned his readers that one can experience God’s work and even his healing but fall short of salvation, and this last state may in fact be worse than the first (cf. 11:24–26). Nine lepers were able to say: “We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets. [You even healed us!].” But they will be denied (13:26–27). Luke’s readers were instructed to make certain they were identified with the leper who persevered.

Two other Lukan themes are also found here. The theme of the great reversal is once again seen. It was the outcast, the Samaritan, who truly believed. See Introduction 8 (5). His experience foreshadows the future inclusion of the Samaritans into the believing community, as well as the rejection of the gospel by mainstream Judaism.<sup>24998</sup> A final theme involves the continued validity of the OT as God’s Word. Jesus sent the lepers to the priests in order to receive certificates of cleansing, for this was what the law taught. See 2:21–40—“The Lukan Message”.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99248</sup> For Samaritan acceptance cf. Acts 1:8; 8:1, 4–25; 9:31; 15:3. For Jewish rejection cf. 13:45–47; 18:6; 28:25–28.

<sup>100</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 432–435.