Protestantse Theologische Universiteit (PThU)

Do You Thank the Slave?

The Meaning of the Metaphor of Slavery in Jesus' Parables for the Relationship between God and Humans in the Gospel of Luke

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Abstract: The metaphor of slavery is frequently used in Jesus' parables in the synoptic Gospels. In recent years, many studies have been carried out on slavery and the Bible, often focussing on the historical context. Recent research addresses the theological implications of the metaphor. This research contributes to this development by analysing four parables in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19, using narrative and rhetoric methods, and evaluating how they relate to Luke's view on the divine-human relationship. Luke largely upholds contemporary slavery practices in the parables, as the metaphor of slavery serves his theological understanding of the relationship between God and humans.

Keywords: Parables, (Gospel of) Luke, slavery, divine-human relationship, metaphor, narrativity, rhetoric, biblical theology

Ik ben de HEER, uw God, die u uit Egypte, uit de slavernij, heeft bevrijd.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

— Exodus 20:2

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1. Introduction

In recent years, numerous studies have been carried out on a variety of subjects relating to slavery. This is for an important part due to the wish of coming to grips with the history of slavery in colonial times and its effects into our days. Biblical research is no exception in this regard. Much work has been done studying how the Bible portrays slaves and how this relates to the portrayal in the *Umwelt*.[1] Other studies focus on the themes of slavery that can be found all over the Old Testament.[2] Paul's thoughts on slavery have been the topic of extensive research as well.[3] In these studies the attention often turns to either the comparison between the Bible and the surrounding culture or the reception of biblical texts in later times. A brief review of literature shows that many scholars tend to focus on 'the slave'.[4] In my research I take a different approach and look into the relationship between master and slave. This can be seen in light of a renewed attention to the theological meaning of the slavery as a metaphor.[5]

To modern ears it can be somewhat awkward to hear Jesus use slavery imagery in a seemingly uncritical way. Churches are finding their way in dealing with their involvement in slavery in colonial times. For example, Dutch churches have offered their apologies for their role in the transatlantic slave trade and started looking into their own history.[6] The Bible seems, at times at least, less critical of slavery as it was practised in its time, than we would expect or like to see. By reading texts such as these parables in Luke from a modern-day, postcolonial point-of-view, theologians and churches are at risk of overlooking what message

[1] See, for example, Christy Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power in Luke-Acts and Other Ancient Narratives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05689-6.

[2] For one of the recent examples, see Beate Kowalski, and Susan Docherty (eds.), *The Reception of Exodus Motifs in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/9789004471122.

[3] Thomas R. Blanton IV, and Raymond Pickett (eds.), *Paul and Economics: A Handbook* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017).

[4] See 'State of the Research'.

[5] Recent examples are e.g. Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, Cambridge Elements. Elements in Religion and Monotheism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024); Eric Ottenheim, Marcel Poorthuis, and Annette Merz (eds.), *Power of Parables: Narrative and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 39 (Leiden: Brill, 2024); Martijn Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest of the Slaves"?: Slavery Parables in Early Rabbinic and Early Christian Literature," (Diss., Tilburg University, 2021).

[6] Rose Mary Allen, Annette Merz, George Harinck, and Martijn Stoutjesdijk, "Kerk en Slavernij in het Nederlandse Koloniale Rijk," *Handelingen: Tijdschrift voor Praktische Theologie en Religiewetenschap* 50, no. 1 (28 March 2023): 33-42, https://doi.org/10.54195/h.13900, see the rest of the issue for more on the topic of the relationship between slavery and the Dutch churches. Bente de Leede, and Martijn Stoutjesdijk (eds.), *Kerk, Kolonialisme en Slavernij: Verhalen van een Vervlochten Geschiedenis*, Jaarboek voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlands Protestantisme na 1800, 31 (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2023); "Verantwoording slavernij," Raad van Kerken in Nederland, published on June 15, 2013, https://www.raadvankerken.nl/nieuws/2013/06/verantwoording-slavernij/.

they aim to convey. It is valuable to keep asking what the authors of these texts want to tell us about God and ourselves. Not asking these questions may lead to serious misunderstandings of the text.

Beyond the academy and the church, the questions raised in this thesis may be relevant for the broader debates in society. They may help readers overcome the cultural gap between our world and that of the biblical text. My thesis will contribute to the understanding of how the metaphor of slavery may have been used differently in the first century compared to our own time. One of my aims is to avoid an easy dismissal of 'uncomfortable' texts.

In short, this thesis aims to fill a gap in the current state of research and at the same time contribute to ongoing discussions in church and society. It wants to do so by a close examination of three pericopes in Luke and relating them to the larger theological scheme of Luke.

1.1 Problem Definition and Research Questions

The problem this thesis addresses may be sketched as a low attention to the implications of the slavery metaphor for biblical theology and its reception by modern-day readers in parable research.[7] The theological meaning of Jesus' use of the image of slavery to describe the relationship between God and humans has been somewhat neglected in years past. Recent research responded by returning to these theological questions. My thesis contributes to this development. As any researcher has to set limits for him- or herself, I have chosen to focus on the Gospel of Luke to be able to answer the question: *What does Jesus' use of the image of slavery in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19 mean for the interpretation of the relationship between God and humans in the Gospel of Luke?*[8] Under this question lies the assumption that the metaphor of slavery is applicable or is applied to God and humans. This may not necessarily be the case, it will need to be questioned in this research. The first task, however, is to establish how Luke has Jesus present the relationship between master and slave in the parables. An answer to the first sub-question—*How does Jesus describe the relationship between master and slave(s) in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19?*—enables me to make a comparison between the relationship master-slave and God-human. To avoid a naive equation of God-master and human-slave, I ask: *Is God identified with 'the master' and are believers*

[7] As mentioned before, much effort has been put into researching the place of slaves in the biblical text and how it fits within the broader cultural context of the Bible. For examples of this research, see 'State of the Research'.

[8] For the selection of the pericopes of Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19, see 'Methodology'.

identified with 'slaves' in these parables, and if so, in what way? Whether or not the identification is made has implications for Luke's theology. Luke is the evangelist known for his social concerns, that exactly he—though not only he—has Jesus use the metaphor of slavery adds another dimension to the question. How these and other theological ideas go together is the topic of the final sub-question: *How do these parables fit in Luke's vision of the relationship between God and humans?* Bringing the answers to the sub-questions together, it is possible to outline the place of the metaphor of slavery in the parables in Luke's theology. Doing so, my thesis joins recent developments in the field by examining this specific Gospel and these specific pericopes.

1.2 Selection of Pericopes

A master thesis is far too limited in scope to analyse all parables that use the metaphor of slavery. I have limited myself to three pericopes in Luke, containing four parables. By limiting myself to one Gospel, it becomes possible to relate the exegetical findings to the larger theological scheme of the author in a meaningful way. One of the reasons to go with Luke is the uniquely Lukan parable in 17:7-10. Here, Jesus appears to present His hearers with a situation closely resembling everyday practice. It struck me as somewhat odd, that Jesus would use this image of a not particularly kind master (in my eyes) to teach His hearers about their relationship to God. If the image of slavery sounds uncomfortable to modern-day audiences, it certainly does so in this parable. The other reason to select parables from Luke is his attention to what we might call 'social injustices'. The Gospel of Luke is well known to be aware of those living in oppression, among those we would likely include slaves.

In order to get a better grasp of what Luke means to say about the divine-human relationship with these parables, we look beyond the specific pericope of 17:7-10. From the eight parables in Luke that feature the word δοῦλος,[9] I have selected four, found in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19.[10] The relationship between master and slave in these parables differs between these parables, which is why I think they give a representative overview of

[9] Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 260; Hendrik Goede, "Constructing Ancient Slavery As Socio-Historic Context of the New Testament: Original Research," *HTS Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 1-7, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1297; Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick Mckenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, New Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 447. In this thesis I use the definition of δοῦλος provided in these lexica and this article and translate δοῦλος with 'slave'. The eight parables are found in Luke 12:35-38, 42-48; 13:6-9; 14:15-24; 15:11-32; 16:1-8; 19:12-27; 20:9-19.

[10] To make references to the parables I make use of the following titles and divisions: 12:35-40 – The Watchful Slaves; 12:41-48 – The Just and the Unjust Manager; 17:7-10 – A Master and a Slave; 20:9-19 – The Wicked Tenants.

what is going on in the Gospel of Luke with regard to my subject. In 12:35-40 the roles of master and slave are reversed, in 12:42-48 the master punishes his unfaithful slaves in varying degrees. 17:7-10 pretends to give an account of regular behaviour from a master towards a slave. The servants in 20:9-19 are being sent on a dangerous mission, which leaves them all abused.

1.3 Outline of the Study

The chapters of this thesis do not correspond with the sub-questions. I start out with a state of the research, which deals with historical slavery research, parable research, research into the metaphoric use of slavery in the parables, studies on the specific pericopes I deal with, and research into Lukan theology. The third chapter sets out the methodology I employ in the exegesis of the texts, the identification of the characters of masters and slaves, and the analysis of Luke's theology. Three chapters follow, each dealing with one of the pericopes. For all three I first answer the exegetical first sub-question, and then the second question of identification. A short overview follows which brings the findings of these chapters together. This overview allows for a more convenient discussion of the final sub-question in the next chapter, in which I discuss several authors' answers to my question and relate them to theological topics important for Luke. This chapter is closed off by my own answer to the sub-question. Finally, a conclusion and discussion form the end of my thesis.

1.4 Note to the Reader

Abbreviations for journals, series, other sources, and biblical books in this thesis are all in accordance with the *SBL Handbook of Style*, Second Edition.[11] The sole exception is the New Cambridge Bible Commentary, which is not listed in the handbook. I abbreviate it as 'NCBC'. Biblical quotations in Greek are taken form the Nestle-Aland 28th Edition (NA28), English quotations from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the Dutch epigraph is quoted from the Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling '21 (NBV21).

[11] Billie Jean Collins, Bob Buller, and John F. Kutsko (eds.), *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, Second Edition (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014).

2. State of the Research

Parable research is a rapidly developing field within theology, which is even more true for parable research related to the metaphor of slavery. The multitude of publications cannot possibly be adequately presented in full in this state of the research. Instead, I choose to group the most relevant studies together under four headings: historical dimensions, parable studies, the metaphor of slavery, and Luke's theology. The second heading, 'Parable studies', is significantly longer, because it entails the work of Ruben Zimmermann and Gerd Theissen. Their approaches are fundamental in my discussion of the pericopes, I therefore treat them more extensively in this state of the research.

2.1 Historical Dimensions

The standard work in New Testament slavery studies is *Slavery in Early Christianity* by Jennifer A. Glancy.[12] In it, Glancy's studies the institution of slavery in the first centuries of Christianity and how early Christians dealt with it. She has special attention for the bodies of slaves, which were often abused. At the same time bodily language was used in slavery metaphors by early Christian authors. The Gospel of Luke is no exception in this regard and it does not deviate far from contemporary authors.

Since the publication of Glancy's book, many studies have asked questions about the person of the slave. Who is he or she? Why is he or she present in the text? Does the New Testament treat slaves differently from standard Greco-Roman practices? The motivation behind asking these questions often seems to be a desire to liberate the slave from repressing textual structures, giving voice to the voiceless, as it were. Raymond Charles has argued that slaves are used by early Jewish and Christian authors as a means to present their own views to their readers, effectively rendering the slaves mute.[13] Christy Cobb has looked specifically at female slaves in Luke-Acts and other ancient narratives.[14] She formulates her intentions for her study in the preface: "[A]s this book is published, I can only hope that I have done my best to represent the voices of enslaved female characters from biblical and ancient texts in the hopes that their voices are not erased from the textual history."[15] She pursues her goal by

[12] Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/0195136098.001.0001.

[13] Ronald Charles, *The Silencing of Slaves in Early Jewish and Christian Texts*, Routledge Studies in the Early Christian World (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020).

[14] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*.

[15] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, ix.

"utilizing the literary theory of Mikhael Bakhtin, narratology, and feminist hermeneutics."[16] Cobb thus relates these women to other contemporary voices. Another example of this type of study has been carried out by James Harrill, who has promoted a psychological approach to the slave parables of the New Testament.[17] He does so in reaction to what he calls a structuralist approach, put forward by John Dominic Crossan.[18] The structuralist approach stays within the world of the text and analyses the structures that are present within this world. Harrill goes beyond the world of the text and brings the parables into conversation with other historical realities. The psychological approach enables him to better understand what it meant to be a slave in antiquity.[19] Jonathan Hatter, on the other hand, has taken a reversed approach.[20] He starts with recent developments in historical research and applies these to the biblical texts. Hatter concludes that slavery in the Bible is less humane than sometimes perceived.

The above studies are concerned primarily with the relationship between the Gospels (or other biblical texts) and the practice of slavery in its cultural context. This is valuable work of which I will gratefully make use. However, the theological meaning of the metaphor has not been studied with the same fervour. Recent parable research shows renewed attention to this aspect, as will become clear from the overview below. My research joins this enterprise by focussing on the Gospel of Luke and its theological use of slavery metaphors.

2.2 Parable Studies

For the overview of classical parable studies published up until the work of Crossan in the 1970's, I make use of the overviews in the recent studies by Martijn Stoutjesdijk and Justin David Strong.[21] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse these older works without the help of tertiary literature.

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[16] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, 2.

[17] James Albert Harrill, "The Psychology of Slaves in the Gospel Parables: A Case Study in Social History," *BZ* 55, no. 1 (2011): 63-74, https://doi.org/10.1163/25890468-055-01-90000004.

[18] Harrill, "Psychology of Slaves," 63-4. For more on Crossan, see 'Historical Jesus continued – rehabilitation of allegory'; Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?," 69-71; Strong, *The Fables of Jesus*, 10-1.

[19] Harrill, "Psychology of Slaves," 64-6.

[20] Jonathan J. Hatter, "Currents in Biblical Research Slavery and the Enslaved in the Roman World, the Jewish World, and the Synoptic Gospels," *CurBR* 20, no. 1 (2021): 97-127, https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X211050142.

[21] Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?"; Justin David Strong, *The Fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: A New Foundation for the Study of Parables* (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2021).

Jülicher and his influence

One of the most influential studies on the parables comes from the hand of Adolf Jülicher.[22] His work is part of the quest for the historical Jesus. Jülicher radically stepped away from the allegorical reading that up until his day was the predominant strategy for reading Jesus' parables.[23] Instead he argued that the parables of Jesus are meant to stress one specific moral lesson.[24] This idea found great agreement in subsequent scholarship. Charles Harold Dodd expanded on Jülicher's theory by pointing out the connection between the parables and Jesus' preaching on the Kingdom, thus revealing an eschatological dimension to the parables.[25] Because the parables could no longer be read allegorically, Dodd made a start with reading them metaphorically.[26] Joachim Jeremias built on Dodd's work and was also interested in the historical Jesus.[27] Through form-criticism he tried to uncover the *ipsissima vox* or even the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus in the parables. He argued the early Church had heavily edited Jesus' original sayings, but form criticism might be a way around this, back to Jesus' own words.[28] John Dominic Crossan stands in line with Jülicher, Dodd, and Jeremias, but before I present his study *In Parables*, we look at an important development in parable studies.[29] Between publications of Jeremias and Crossan, the slavery parables were for the first time recognised as a separate category of parables. I will return to Crossan, but first give attention to the recognition of slavery parables as such.

[22] Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*. 2. neu bearb. Aufl. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1910). For the publication history of Jülicher's work see Ulrich Mell, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu 1899-1999: Beiträge zum Dialog mit Adolf Jülicher*, BZNW 103. (Berlin; Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 1999), 1-3.

[23] Strong, *The Fables of Jesus*, 8-9.

[24] Strong, *The Fables of Jesus*, 9.

[25] Charles Harold Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (New York, NY: Scribner's Sons, 1936); Strong, *The Fables of Jesus*, 9.

[26] Strong, *The Fables of Jesus*, 9. Allegories feature multiple comparisons and identifications between textual and extra-textual elements. Metaphors form a single comparison. For parable research, this distinction means a metaphorical approach looks for the relevant point of comparison.

[27] Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, ATANT 11 (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1947); Strong, *The Fables of Jesus*, 9.

[28] Strong, *The Fables of Jesus*, 9-10.

[29] John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973).

Slavery parables as a category

The first recognition of a general theme in the slavery parables of the Gospels came from Ehrhard Kamlah.[30] He defined this theme as the judgement of a master on his slave(s).[31] Kamlah also started the later common practice of subdividing the slavery parables.[32] Alfons Weiser continued along the path Kamlah set out. Weiser's study of slavery parables was the first extensive study in the corpus as such.[33] He divided them in different categories.[34] Weiser is convinced that this usage of slavery language does not mean that Jesus endorses the practice of slavery. He thinks that Jesus wanted to express, through the metaphor of slavery, the relationship between God and humans.[35] Jesus characterises this as a personal relationship in which humans are completely dependent on God.[36]

Historical Jesus continued – rehabilitation of allegory

Shortly after Weiser's book, John Dominic Crossan published *In Parables*.[37] Crossan discusses Jesus' parables in general and *servant parables* as a separate category.[38] He has gained significant attention in following research on the parables. Crossan's subtitle *The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* shows his interest in the quest for the historical Jesus. Though he stands on the work of Jülicher and Jeremias, he makes a different decision in two respects. Contrary to Jeremias, Crossan explicitly excludes the possibility of finding *ipsissima*

[30] Ehrhard Kamlah, "Die Parabel vom ungerechten Verwalter (Luk. 16, I ff.) im Rahmen der Knechtsgleichnisse," in *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel*, Festschrift für Otto Michel zum 60. Geburtstag, ed. Otto Betz, Martin Hengel, and Peter Schmidt (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 276-294. Kamlah did not speak of slavery parables, but of *Knechtsgleichnisse*. Stoutjesdijk, "“Not like the Rest”?," 67-8.

[31] Stoutjesdijk, "“Not like the Rest”?," 67.

[32] Stoutjesdijk, "“Not like the Rest”?," 67. Kamlah divided them in three categories: 1. slaves being in a superior position to other slaves, 2. slaves waiting for their master, 3. slaves being guilty of misconduct or in debt.

[33] Stoutjesdijk, "“Not like the Rest”?," 68-9; Alfons Weiser, *Die Knechtsgleichnisse der synoptischen Evangelien*, SANT 29 (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1971).

[34] Stoutjesdijk, "“Not like the Rest”?," 68. Weiser proposed a threefold categorisation: 1. The actual slavery parables have at their heart the relationship between a master and a slave or slaves. This category is further divided in two groups. 1a. The eschatological slavery parables deal with the extended leave of the master and his return with judgement. 1b. The other group is made up out of what he call Matthew 18:23-25 and Luke 17:7-10. 2. The second category are those parables where slaves are mentioned only in passing. Weiser thus distinguishes between a metaphorical or non-metaphorical use of slavery.

[35] Stoutjesdijk, "“Not like the Rest”?," 68-9.

[36] Stoutjesdijk, "“Not like the Rest”?," 69.

[37] Crossan, *In Parables*; Stoutjesdijk, "“Not like the Rest”?," 69-71; Strong, *The Fables of Jesus*, 10-1. Stoutjesdijk refers to a later publication by Crossan: John Dominic Crossan, "The Servant Parables of Jesus," Semeia 1 (1974): 17-62. This is a partial publication of *In Parables*, presenting only the section on the slavery parables.

[38] Crossan uses the term servant parables, I refer to them as slavery parables both for clarity and to avoid the euphemistic translation of δοῦλος.

verba in the parables.[39] The second decision is relevant for the discussion of Luke 20:9-19. Where Jülicher argues that allegory is not used by Jesus, Crossan opens up more space for it.[40] In Mark 4:3-8 (The Sower) He does use allegory, as becomes clear in the explanation in 4:14-20.[41] The same can be said for the parable of The Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1-12, Matt. 21:33-46, and Luke 20:9-19).[42] This will be important when analysing this pericope.

Recent scholarship: the reader, openness, and a cognitive approach

More recent scholarship has heavily criticised the work of Jülicher and those who have followed in his footsteps. Ruben Zimmermann is one of the more critical voices in recent years.[43] He has argued that Jülicher's approach of the parables as one-pointed moral lessons is insufficient to grasp the diverse possibilities of interpretation even individual parables offer.[44] Zimmermann also moved away from the historical Jesus quest, so dominant in previous research, and from the strict categorising of the parables.[45] Through renewed attention to Jewish parable traditions and developments in genre criticism, Zimmermann comes to define one overarching genre of 'parable'.[46] He wants to avoid a division in smaller subgenres because: "Parables are puzzles. They are not clear and explicit. They do not follow the laws of philosophical or mathematical logic; just as they are not mere platitude."[47] Parables are ambiguous because they are meant to encourage the reader to engage with them and relate them to his or her own life.[48] Instead of discussing the distinct, classical types of similitude, parable, and example story, Zimmermann gives the following definition of 'parable': [49]

> A parable is a short narrative (1) fictional (2) text that is related in the narrated world to known reality (3) but, by way of implicit or explicit transfer signals, makes it understood that the meaning of the narration must be differentiated from the literal

[39] Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?," 69.
[40] Crossan, *In Parables*, 8-10, 86-96.
[41] Crossan, *In Parables*, 8.
[42] Crossan, *In Parables*, 86.
[43] Ruben Zimmermann, "How to Understand the Parables of Jesus: A Paradigm Shift in Parable Exegesis," *AcT* 29, no. 1 (2009): 157-82, https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v29i1.44175; Ruben Zimmermann, *Kompendium Der Gleichnisse Jesu* (Gütersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus, 2007). For other critical notions, especially on Crossan, see, for example, Mary Ann Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8)," *JBL* 111, no. 1 (1992): 37-54, https://doi.org/10.2307/3267508; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*.
[44] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 161.
[45] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 158-64.
[46] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 164-73.
[47] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 173.
[48] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 173-6. Note that Zimmermann does not speak of hearers.
[49] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 160-1, 167-73.

> words of the text (4). In its appeal structure (5) it challenges the reader to carry out a metaphoric transfer of meaning that is steered by co-text and context information (6).[50]

For him the most important characteristics of a parable are its *narrativity* (1) and its *metaphoricity* (4) and (6).[51] In (5) and (6) a new move in parable research is visible. It is the reader who explicitly becomes part of the meaning-making process. This is Zimmermann's most important conclusion: the readers are to make a transfer of the metaphor of the parable to their own lives.[52] Parables make an appeal to their readers through their metaphorical structure. A metaphor calls for interpretation, because its meaning is not immediately clear in itself.[53] This requires the audience to make their own judgement. The metaphor, being not directly clear in itself, leaves open space for multiple interpretations.[54] This does not mean that anything goes. Zimmermann coined the term *binding openness* to describe Jesus' parables.[55] Parables make an appeal on their audience, wanting them to come up with their own interpretation. Linguistic or semantic borders are in place to prevent arbitrary readings, but diversity in parable interpretation is certainly possible. Zimmermann thinks these diverse interpretations are precisely what draws us to the parables.[56]

Gerd Theissen has criticised what he calls the *type syncretism* of Zimmermann.[57] Whereas Zimmermann said farewell to the structuralist approaches of the twentieth century, Theissen seeks to reevaluate these, but transforms them in the process. He sees the traditional types of example story, similitude, and parable not as characterisations of entire parables, but rather of elements within Jesus' parables.[58] To arrive at this conclusion, Theissen makes use of a cognitive approach (presuming the existence of more or less universal forms of thoughts)[59] focussing on two central ideas.[60] The first idea is *memorability*. Jesus' parables have been so influential in Christian thinking because they are so memorable.[61] The reason they are so memorable is because they combine both familiar and counterintuitive imagery. This combination causes the parables to continually cross *everyday ontology*, a classical division of

[50] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 170.
[51] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 170.
[52] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 173-5.
[53] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 173.
[54] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 173.
[55] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 175-6.
[56] Zimmermann, "Understand the Parables," 175-6.
[57] Gerd Theissen, "Genres of Parables: A Cognitive Approach," in *The Power of Parables: essays on the Comparative Study of Jewish and Christian Parables*, Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 39, ed. Eric Ottenheim, Marcel Poorthuis, and Annette Merz (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 27-42.
[58] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 35-41.
[59] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 28.
[60] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 29-31.
[61] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 29-30, 33-4, 40.

the world around us in five or six domains: (1) things, (2) artefacts, (3) plants, (4) animals, (5) humans, and (arguably) (6) divine beings. The counterintuitive elements in the parables cross these divisions and make them interesting to hearers and readers. It is described by the *blending theory*, different realms of being are blended together in a concept or story.[62] The second idea Theissen relies on is the distinction between episodic and semantic memory.[63] Repetitive rites or actions are eventually stored in the semantic memory, but remarkable breaks from these repetitions are stored in the episodic memory.[64] This distinction helps to discuss the types of example story, similitude, and parable, which are seen by Theissen as increasingly more transgressive of the ontological domains.[65] In a way this second idea explains the first, why do we remember the remarkable?

How Theissen applies these two ideas to the parables, is best explained in the quotation below:

> The two basic ideas of the cognitive approach outlined above are sufficient to justify the classic typology of *parabolai*. We make distinctions in this typology according to two criteria. Firstly, according to the criterion of an increasing pictorial distance, by which I mean the distance between the picture and that to which the picture points. Secondly, according to the criterion of increasing image deviation, by which I mean a deviation already within the picture from familiar pictures.[66]

An increase in pictorial distance, when the picture and that to which it points differ greatly, is more memorable, Theissen argues. This occurs when a picture crosses through multiple ontological divisions. A large pictorial distance is constitutive of *parabolai*. The same goes for the increasing image deviation, meaning that the image itself can be strange compared to how the audience would be familiar with the image.[67]

Combined with the fact that metaphorical language used in the parables is open to multiple interpretations (as Zimmermann said too), the cognitive approach invites reflection on what the parables mean to say about humans and God.[68] This makes the cognitive approach relevant for our discussion of who is who in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19. In his conclusion Theissen reflects again on the typology of earlier research and the recent

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[62] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 36.
[63] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 30-1.
[64] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 31.
[65] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 32-3.
[66] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 32.
[67] An example Theissen gives, is the parable of The Worker in the Vineyard. The image of day labourers receiving their pay is familiar, but a new and strange element is the equal pay for men who worked different hours.
[68] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 31, 33.

type syncretism. He summarises his contribution to the discussion in a way that helps see the relevance for my research:

> Those who seek knowledge only in clearly differentiated structures will be disappointed when they try to differentiate the literary genres of the parabolai of Jesus. But those who discover human creativity in breaking through order and in the mixing of structures will appreciate such a disorder as an access to the actual intention of an author: the parabolai of Jesus have a great punchline; they open our eyes to the miracle in everyday life and to the normal when it is broken through. God becomes visible in the everyday; the everyday becomes transparent to him.[69]

Zimmermann and Theissen take a different approach but come together in some important ways. They both place great emphasis on the audience of the parable, it is up to them to make meaning of the story they are told. Secondly, the open-endedness of interpretation is very much present with both authors.

Research on Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19

Articles on the pericopes that will be examined in this thesis are at least a few years old. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow's article on 12:35-48 is from 2010.[70] She has reflected on what these parables tell us about the position of slavery within families and households in the first century, about slavery and gender, and ultimately about ancient and contemporary discourse on slavery. Older articles by Du Plessis and Schnell discuss the pericope as part of the Lukan travel narrative and from a tradition-historical approach, respectively.[71]

The latest article on 17:7-10 is from 2003, by M.P. Knowles.[72] He argues that Luke's gentile audience, in their patron-client relationships, would have been surprised by this parable, as it shows God being a different type of master compared to the patron they were familiar with. He comes to this conclusion by studying elements of the text in older and contemporary extra-biblical Greek texts.

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[69] Theissen, "Genres of Parables," 40.

[70] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Striking Family Hierarchies: Luke 12:35-48, Gender and Slavery," *Acta Patristica Et Byzantina* 21, no. 2 (2010): 95-108.

[71] I.J. du Plessis, "Reading Luke 12:35-48 As Part of the Travel Narrative," *Neot* 22, no. 2 (1988): 217-34; C. Schnell, "Historical Context in Parable Interpretation: A Criticism of Current Tradition-Historical Interpretations of Luke 12:35-48," *Neot* 22, no. 2 (1988): 269-82.

[72] M.P. Knowles, "Reciprocity and 'Favour' in the Parable of the Undeserving Servant (Luke 17.7-10)," *NTS* 49, no. 2 (2003): 256-60, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688503000134.

Robert Doran has written on 20:9-19 in comparison with Thomas 65.[73] He is mainly concerned with the difference in ending and only touches upon the issue of slavery and the relationship between master and slave.

Besides these articles I will make use of a selection of important commentaries. I consult the issues on Luke in the following series: AB, Hermeneia, HNT, ICC, NCBC, NICNT, NIGTC.[74] A commentary on Luke that is not part of a series is *Reading Luke* by Charles Talbert.[75] Another type of commentary that deals with these parables is the commentary on all of Jesus' parables or selection thereof. Examples of these are Richard Lischer's *Reading the Parables*, Luise Schottroff's *The Parables of Jesus*, and *Hear Then the Parable* by Bernard Brendan Scott.[76]

2.3 The Metaphor of Slavery

Some scholars have investigated the relationship between slaves and masters in the parables. J. Gertrud Tönsing has done a redaction-critical study on the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 19:11-27).[77] Her methods differ from mine, but she raises important questions about the identification of the master with God. She argues that examples of bad masters may be included in the Gospels to serve as a negative example, making clear once again how good a master God is.[78] Tönsing takes a redaction-critical approach and makes a synoptic

[73] Robert Doran, "Ending a Performance: The Tenants in Luke 20:9-19 and Gospel of Thomas 65," in *Worship, Women and War: Essays in Honor of Susan Niditch*. Brown Judaic Studies 357, ed. John J. Collins, T. M. Lemos, and Saul M. Olyan (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2015), 37-48, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1803z68.

[74] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, AB 28A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985); François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27*, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013); François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28-24:53*, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012); Michael Wolter, *Das lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke*, ICC (London: T&T Clark International, 1896); Amy-Jill Levine and Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997); Ian Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Carlisle: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1978).

[75] Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1982).

[76] Richard Lischer, *Reading the Parables* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014); Luise Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006); Bernard Brendan Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989). These parable commentaries are characterised by different approaches. Schottroff employs a social-historical approach combined with feminist perspectives. Scott too makes a social analysis but combines it with literary analysis. Lischer's work can be characterised as reader-oriented. He prefers the term *reading* over *interpreting*; reading for him captures the idea that the parables should first of all be applied, rather than studied.

[77] J. Gertrud Tönsing, "Scolding the 'Wicked, Lazy' Servant; Is the Master God?: A Redaction-Critical Study of Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27," *Neot* 53, no. 1 (2019): 123-47.

[78] Tönsing, "Scolding the 'Wicked, Lazy' Servant," 138-9.

comparison. I cannot do the same for all pericopes because Luke 17:7-10 has no available parallels in the synoptics. Given the limited scope of this thesis, no comparison between the synoptic gospels will be made. Instead, I will turn my full attention to Luke. Given this focus on Luke, I will take a narrative and rhetorical approach, as further explained in the methodology section.

Edmund Neufeld reflects to some extent on the master-slave relationship.[79] He describes the relationships between masters and slaves in the parables using narrative analysis. He does not, however, reflect on the identification of the master and slave; he assumes the master resembles God or Jesus in His Parousia and the slaves resemble the righteous and unrighteous.[80] The latter resemblance is more closely worked out, but the overall result is insufficient to make claims on the nature of the relationship between God and humans in Matthew. This is no problem for Neufeld, as he sets out to place slavery in the parables in the broader context of the entire Gospel narrative. I want to look more closely at what is happening within these parables than Neufeld does; nevertheless, his methods of narrative analysis remain useful in this regard.

Martijn Stoutjesdijk's dissertation on slavery in parables is one of the recent works, which more explicitly addresses the theological implications of the slavery metaphor.[81] He researches how metaphoric slavery is used as a metaphor to speak of God and humans in both early Christian and early rabbinic parables. Authors of these parables recognise in the metaphor of slavery elements that allow them to highlight theological ideas about the human-divine relationship. Stoutjesdijk has done something similar in a shorter article, comparing the metaphor of slavery with that of sonship.[82] This article will be relevant for my research on Luke 20:9-19.

Marianne Bjelland Kartzow has written *The Slave Metaphor and Gendered Enslavement in Early Christian Discourse* in which she applied the *conceptual blending theory*.[83] Stoutjesdijk has incorporated this theory in his own research, too. The basic notion

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[79] Edmund Neufeld, "Vulnerable Bodies and Volunteer Slaves: Slave Parable Violence in the Rest of Matthew," *BBR* 30, no. 1 (2020): 41-63, https://doi.org/10.5325/bullbiblrese.30.1.0041.

[80] Neufeld, "Vulnerable Bodies," 42-3.

[81] Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?"; on his methodology see further Martijn Stoutjesdijk, "From Debtor to Slave: An Explorative Bildfeld Analysis of Debt and Slavery in Early Rabbinic and New Testament Parables," in *Parables in Changing Contexts: Essays on the Study of Parables in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism*, ed. Eric Ottenheim and Marcel Poorthuis (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 280-300.

[82] Martijn Stoutjesdijk, "God as Father and Master: Sons and Slaves in Sifre Numbers 115 and in the New Testament," *NTT Journal for Theology and the Study of Religion* 72, no. 2 (2018): 121-35, https://doi.org/10.5117/NTT2018.2.003.STOU.

[83] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *The Slave Metaphor and Gendered Enslavement in Early Christian Discourse: Double Trouble Embodied* (London: Routledge, 2020).

of her theory is that actual and metaphorical slavery are intertwined in an inseparable way. Both influence the interpretation of the other. My focus is not so much on actual slavery, although it cannot and will not be overlooked. I, therefore, choose to rely more on Gerd Theissen's blending theory, further explained in the methodology section.

Catherine Hezser has formulated four theological notions that underlie the use of the slavery metaphor in both ancient Judaism and Christianity.[84] Her findings will be presented in chapter 10 and compared to my findings in Luke.

2.4 Luke's Theology

The final field of research that needs mentioning is that of biblical theological research on Luke or Luke-Acts. The central question of my thesis requires me to study Luke's ideas about the relationship between God and humans, although this can only be done very briefly. François Bovon's *Luke the Theologian* is an older, but very extensive overview of the field.[85] Luuk van de Weghe has analysed Luke's Christology.[86] This is useful for the present purpose, because it is not always clear whether the master in the parables is meant to reflect God the Father or Jesus Himself. Larger works on the theology of Luke are written by Darrell L. Bock, Ian Howard Marshall, and Robert C. Tannehill.[87] A study by Brittany E. Wilson on masculinity in Luke-Acts helps grasp Luke's understanding of God's sovereignty, relevant for determining how the slavery metaphor may or may not be applied to the divine-human relationship.[88]

We end this section, by returning to *In Parables* by Crossan.[89] In this book Crossan attempts to use exegetical and literary analysis to shed light on 'the theology of Jesus'. That strategy is not unlike the one I intend to employ to Luke's theology. By doing so I hope to pave the way for questions of the third type, as Crossan has formulated:

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[84] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*.

[85] François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950-2005)*, Second Revised Edition (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006).

[86] Luuk van de Weghe, "Early Divine Christology: Scripture, Narrativity and Confession in Luke-Acts," in *Scripture and Theology: Historical and Systematic Perspectives*, ed. Tomas Bokedal, Ludger Jansen, and Michael Borowski (Berlin; Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2023), 89-117, https://doi-org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1515/9783110768411.

[87] Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012); Ian Howard Marshall, "Chapter V – God My Saviour," *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976[5]); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 1: The Gospel according to Luke (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986).

[88] Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), see especially the conclusion 243-63.

[89] Crossan, *In Parables*.

> What if the audience, having heard the Good Samaritan parable, unanimously chose to debate its historicity. “I think,” said one, "it is history, for I was on that road only yesterday.” “I think,” said another, “that it is parable: did you really think his Sower story was about agriculture?” “I think,” said a third, “that whether it is parable or history, the point is the same: what if the alien is kinder to us than we are to each other?”[90]

Questions of the first and second type ask for the historical reality and literary constructions of the parabolic metaphors. Regarding slavery, the state of the research above shows that much work has been done concerning these types of questions. They are important and I will address them in my thesis too. However, the third type of question seems to me to be closest to what the parables are meant for: interpretation and application. This leads me to present my question: What do the parables in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19 intend to tell us about our relationship to God?

[90] John Dominic Crossan, “The Parables of Jesus,” *Int* 56, no. 3 (2002): 247-259, here 259, https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430005600302.

3. Methodology

The primary method employed in this thesis is literary analysis. My main research question focuses on three passages from the Gospel of Luke. Analysing these will be the foundation on which subsequent research can build. While the thesis as a whole will depend largely on literary analysis, each sub-question will need a finetuned approach.

3.1 Sub-question One

The first sub-question asks for a close reading of Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19. Exegetical research can reveal how Jesus depicts slaves and their masters in these parables. My aim is to find out how their relationships are portrayed. In order to do so, I will use both rhetorical and narrative analysis. Jesus' parables are clear examples of how narrative and rhetoric meet in biblical texts. Parables themselves are relatively short narratives. They create a sort of world of its own. It is a story with characters that act and react and move a plot forward. The narrative structure is what makes a parable a parable. Therefore, the narrative method will be the primary one employed in this section. It helps identify what is going within the parables. A secondary, but nevertheless indispensable method is the rhetorical one. Jesus is addressing people when telling parables to teach them something. Parables in Luke are rhetorical compositions, especially when Jesus' remarks on the side are taken into account. For example, in Luke 12 Jesus tells a parable, a question arises, and Jesus answers it by telling a second parable. Another example is found in 20:17-18 when Jesus addresses His audience and adds an explanation to His parable.

Redaction-critical exegesis or textual criticism are less relevant for answering this first question. My concern lies primarily within the realm of the text of the Gospel of Luke as we know it. The research is not aimed at discovering how these texts came to be, or what they tell us about the situation out of which they emerged. Especially the latter is not to be ignored altogether, of course, no exegesis can overlook historical and redactional criticism altogether. Parallel passages may provide useful insights into our pericopes, too, but this is not part of the core of my methods.

For the narrative and rhetorical analysis, I share the approaches of Resseguie and Phelan. James L. Resseguie has presented his methods on narrative criticism in *Narrative*

Criticism of the New Testament.[91] In his book Resseguie focuses on five aspects of narrative texts and uses them as a scope to analyse the text of the New Testament: (1) Rhetoric, (2) setting, (3) character, (4) point of view, and (5) plot. By paying attention to these varied aspects, he aims to analyse the texts as a unity, "a complete tapestry, an organic whole".[92] I will apply Resseguie's strategy to Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19 in order to understand what is going on in these texts. The five aspects will be briefly defined below. One aspect needs special mentioning here: rhetoric. Resseguie sees rhetoric as an integral part of any narrative structure, something authors use to convey their ideology to their audiences. They achieve this through employment of rhetorical devices, such as repetition and framing narratives.[93] While I agree with Resseguie that rhetorical devices are important constituents of narrative texts, I think his definition of rhetoric is too narrow for our present purposes. Resseguie's definition does not leave space to think of narrative as a rhetoric device in itself. By this, I mean that narratives can function as a means of expressing the author's thoughts and conveying them to his or her intended audience. To open up more space for rhetoric in our study of the parables I will employ James Phelan's rhetorical approach to narrative in addition to Resseguie's narrative criticism.[94] Phelan's approach consists of six principles: (1) Narrative as rhetorical action, (2) recursive relationship author-text-reader, (3) audience, (4) readerly response, (5) interpretive judgements, and (6) narrative progression. A brief definition of these six principles will be given as well. The rhetorical approach to narrative thinks of narrative as a way of communicating purposefully some intention or another. This approach can help shed light on how Luke uses narrative to communicate ideas or convictions.

3.1.1 Narrative Criticism – James L. Resseguie

1. *Rhetoric* is the means by which the author persuades his audience.[95] Rhetorical devices and techniques are tools used to convey ideas, beliefs, norms, or convictions. Larger categories of such devices and techniques are: repetition, framing narratives, rhetorical figures, figures of thought.

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[91] James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

[92] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 18-9.

[93] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 41-2.

[94] James Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, Cambridge Companions to Literature, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 203-16.

[95] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 41-86.

2. *Setting* describes the situation in which a narrative takes place.[96] Situation is a broad term encompassing a variety of domains. One can think of topography, social context, time, buildings, background characters etc. The setting creates the backdrop for a narrative, but usually does more than that as well. It may provide structure, develop characters, or drive the plot forward.

3. *Characters* are the persons present in a story.[97] They may be round or flat, static, or dynamic. A story can give insight into its characters by describing what they are like or can show what they are like, by having the characters act and react.

4. *Point of view* can mean two things.[98] The point of view of a narrative can be the perspective from which it is told. What type of narrator is telling the story? Or it can be the worldview of the author relaying the narrative. According to Resseguie, the second type is more important when it comes to biblical texts.

5. *Plot* is what a makes a narrative, a narrative. It is the sequence of events of which a story is built up.[99] Such events may be (un)intentional actions by characters or their feelings and thoughts. Besides events, happenings can be included in the plot as well. These are things that *happen* to characters. Resseguie describes elements of a plot, types of plots, and order of narration.

3.1.2 Rhetorical Approach to Narrative – James Phelan[100]

1. The main principle of the rhetorical approach is the idea of narrative as a rhetorical action. In telling a narrative someone tries to accomplish something in someone else.

2. In narrative the relationship between author-text-reader—the rhetorical triangle—is recursive, meaning all three directly influence one another. This means that rhetorical critique may start at any of three points of the triangle. It will inevitably lead to discussion of the other two.

3. Phelan distinguishes five types of audience:[101]

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[96] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 87-120.
[97] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 121-65.
[98] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 167-96.
[99] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 197-240.
[100] Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 209-13.
[101] Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 210. This precise distinguishing of the types of audience may seem unnecessarily complicated, but it will allow for a more exact establishment of identification patterns in the texts.

- *The flesh and blood* or *actual reader*, the present-day audience.
- *The authorial audience: the author's ideal reader*, actual readers try and become like this reader to step into the world of the narrative to which the author invites his or her ideal reader.
- *The narrative audience* is the place or role the actual reader takes in or on within the narrative world. This allows the actual reader to engage with characters or events in the narrative.
- *The narratee* is that audience which is addressed by the narrator. (Narrator and author do not necessarily coincide.)
- *The ideal narrative audience* is linked to the narratee. It is the ideal narratee that perfectly understands all text and subtext that the author provides her or him with.

4. Interests and responses of readers make up the fourth principle. Phelan recognises three types of response, each relating to its component of narrative:[102] "mimetic, thematic, and synthetic." Mimetic responses and interests deal with readers engagement with the characters. They are connecting to them on an emotional level. The thematic component invites identification of characters with social classes or other groups of people in the real world, or response to the "cultural, ideological, philosophical, or ethical"[103] issues raised by the narrative. Synthetic interests and responses concern the meta-level of characters and narrative, a conscious reflection on the narrative and its components as a product, a fruit of labour. Different types of narrative invoke different interests and responses in a its readers.

5. The rhetorical approach looks for three type of narrative judgments readers make: interpretive, ethical, and aesthetical. Interpretive judgements fill in information about the actions that make up the narrative. Ethical judgements are made about the morals and values of the characters, narrator, and author. Aesthetics judgements describe the artistic quality of the narrative.

6. The importance of narrative progression is the last principle of Phelan's approach. Narrative is driven by "introduction, complication, and resolution…of unstable situations."[104] *Instabilities* are such situations, where the instability is found in the relationship between characters, or between characters and the situation they find themselves in. *Tensions* are

[102] Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 210.
[103] Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 211.
[104] Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 212.

unstable situations on the level of author, readers, and narrator. Unreliable narration is an example of tension.

3.2 Sub-question Two

To distinguish the identification of slave and master in the parables, I will employ the approaches by Zimmermann and Theissen—discussed in the state of the research. While the more recent work by Zimmermann and Theissen will be leading in discussing the question, there is value still in the preceding scholarship. Jülicher's *Die Gleichnisrede Jesu* has become a classical study for a reason. Especially in discussing Luke 17:7-10, his theory of one specific moral lesson will prove useful. For 20:9-19 Crossan's rehabilitation of allegory is indispensable. At the same time, I think the structuralist approach or sharp categorisation is rightfully abandoned nowadays. Zimmermann keeps a closer eye on the diversity in Jesus' parables. In a different manner Theissen does something alike, but he continues to use the classical types in a transformed construction. Theissen's version of the blending theory is used to see the difference between the character of the slave and the master. Zimmermann's even more explicit reader-oriented approach helps keep in mind how Luke's readers would identify the characters.

3.3 Sub-question Three

Plenty of biblical theological research into the theology of Luke-Acts has been carried out. This was most commonly done by means of narrative analysis.[105] A review of available literature can help answer the final sub-question. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to try and formulate Luke's view on the relationship between God and humans myself. This would require far too much time and has been done before by far more experienced scholars. By making use of their valuable work, I can evaluate my exegetical findings and place them within the broader context of the Gospel of Luke. Analysing a specific pericope in light of the biblical book as a whole is always a reciprocal movement. The broader theological lines from Luke's Gospel shed light on the parables, too. I have to limit myself and will be brief in this movement back from Gospel to pericope. Before reviewing secondary and tertiary literature on Luke's theology. I will present an overview of the different answers to this sub-question from parables research. Scholars such as Mary Beavis, Luise Schottroff, Martijn Stoutjesdijk,

[105] See 'Luke's theology' in 'State of the Research'.

Elizabeth Dowling, and Catherine Hezser have formulated their own opinions on what Luke wants to convey with his use of the metaphor of slavery.

4. 'The Watchful Servants' and 'The Just and Unjust Manager' – Luke 12:35-48

[35]"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; [36]be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. [37]Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. [38]If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. [39]"But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. [40]You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

[41]Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?" [42]And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? [43]Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. [44]Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. [45]But if that slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and if he begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, [46]the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and put him with the unfaithful. [47]That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. [48]But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.

Luke 12:35-48

4.1 Exegesis

4.1.1 Narrative Analysis

Rhetoric

This pericope contains two related parables. They are linked to one another through a question by Peter in v. 41. Jesus tells the second parable as an answer to a question raised by the first. Arguably, v. 39 is a parable of its own, in which case we would have three parables.[106] For now, I will discuss them as two, located in two sections: vv. 35-40 (excluding v. 39) and 42-48. Peter's question is not the only link between the parables. Several themes connect the two. Waiting on an absent master, an unexpected return, being watchful, and the metaphor of slavery are important elements in both parables. Stylistically, a big similarity is the inversion of character roles. In v. 37 the master becomes the slave, in v. 45 a slave acts as if he is himself a master. Both examples show characters acting in a manner inappropriate to their role. As we will see, this inversion is also found in Luke 17:7-10. There and in vv. 46-47 the inversion is corrected, but Jesus does not correct the serving master from v. 37.

The first parable suggests multiple types of slaves. "Be like those…" and "blessed are those…" implies that an alternative type of slave exists, but Jesus does not tell what that slave looks like. The second parable contains a few explicit antitheses: a wise manager-an unfaithful slave, a slave who knows-a slave who does not know, one who has much-one who has little. By making the alternative explicit, the second parable is able to show what happens when a slave does not do what his master expects him to.

Setting

The first master returns from a wedding banquet.[107] He can return at any time of day, but his servants seem to have no clue when he will be back. That same uncertainty is found with the slaves of the second master. The slaves of the second master receive corporal punishment.[108] Jesus talks about a manager, someone who works as a substitute for his master.[109] This manager, in a way, is the bridge between the master and the slaves. Nevertheless, he remains a

[106] Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, AB 28A, 986. Fitzmyer considers the possibility that vv. 39-40 are dependent on Q, whereas vv. 35-38 may stem form L. I choose to include v. 40 in the discussion because of the thematic link and combined presentation of vv. 35-40 in the present text. For the thematic unity of vv. 35-40, see Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 497-500.

[107] Cf. Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 352.

[108] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 505-6; Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 176.

[109] Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 540-1.

slave, in v. 43 this manager is called δοῦλος.[110] We find six words for slave/servant in this pericope: ἄνθρωπος (v. 36), δοῦλος (vv. 37, 43, 45-47), οἰκονόμος (v. 42), θεραπεία (v. 42), παῖς (v. 45), and παιδίσκη (v. 45). In Greco-Roman times all these terms referred to chattel slavery.[111] The different titles reflect the different positions slaves could hold, Luke seems to go to great lengths here to reflect the everyday situation of slaves in ancient times.

Characters

Both parables feature a similar-looking master, at least at the start of the parable. He has left his house and expects his slaves to wait for his return. When he comes back they should be ready to serve him. Both reward their slaves when they do as expected, but they do this in a different way. The first master begins serving the watchful slaves. The second promotes his slave, gives him greater responsibility. The master remains in his superior position. The inversion of character roles from the first parable, is absent in the second. The first master does not punish his slaves in the parable, the second one does. In v. 46 we read of a harsh punishment on a grave crime.[112] From vv. 47-48 it becomes clear that the master is no brute, in his punishment he weighs the knowledge his slaves would have had of his will.

I will refrain from analysing the owner of the house and the thief at this point, as they do not directly relate to the relationship between slave and master. Instead, we need to look at the slaves in these parables. In the first one, we see a slave who does exactly what his master wants him to do. He is watchfully waiting for his return and is ready to serve him. We see a more literary developed slave character in vv. 42-46. An inner monologue is presented and the slave has his own considerations. He is not to be admired, however, for he decides to act against his master's will. This particular slave is also assigned a specific role, namely that of οἰκονόμος.[113] He is presented in two story lines. In the first he acts the way he is supposed to and is rewarded. In the second he is punished for his misbehaviour. The reason for this misconduct lies with the slave's doubt of a quick return of the master. His fellow slaves are the last characters featured in this pericope. They are completely flat and static, serving only as victims to the unfaithful manager.

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[110] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 496-7; Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?," 62. Bovon does not think the manager himself is a slave. I disagree with him because of Luke's shift in language from v. 43 on, where he begins using δοῦλος while staying within the narrative unity of the parable and application.

[111] Goede, "Ancient Slavery As Socio-Historic Context," 1-7; Kartzow, "Striking Family Hierarchies," 95-108. In chattel slavery a slave, including her or his body, is the legal possession of his master.

[112] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 239-40; Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 504; Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 543.

[113] See notes 110 and 111.

Point of view

Verse 35 starts with an address, the hearers should be like the slaves Jesus is about to tell them about. The ideological point of view is explicit from the start, hearers are to behave like these obedient slaves. This point of view is emphasised by opposing right behaviour to wrong behaviour in the second parable. Jesus offers a glimpse into the reasons behind the wrong behaviour of the unfaithful manager in v. 45. The internal monologue shows the slave to be unsure about his master's return.[114] For him, this results in debauchery and abuse of fellow slaves. Verses 47-48 shed light on the ethical point of view on what an appropriate response to such behaviour looks like. If you knowingly go against your master's will, it is a more serious offense, requiring greater punishment, than doing so without knowing your master's will.

Plot

Luke 12:42-48 provides the reader with two scenarios. The situation is the same, but the story develops differently because of the slave's reflection and actions. He is given great responsibility, and in the first scenario he acts faithfully in the absence of his master. For this he is rewarded with even greater responsibility. The moment of tension in the plot is the absence of the master. How will the slave respond to this situation, just after he has received new tasks and authority? He fails to act responsibly in the second scenario. Upon the master's return things end badly for the slave.

The basic plot of the first parable is roughly the same, albeit simpler. We see slaves waiting for the return of their master, which occurs at an unexpected time. His slaves have been faithfully expecting him. The real turning point lies somewhere else in the narrative, than in the second parable. In the second parable it is the reflection of v. 45 that turns the plot. The unexpected turning point in the first is the master's reaction. He takes over the work of his slaves.

4.1.2 Rhetorical Approach to Narrative

Peter's question in v. 41 is a way of finding out what Jesus wants to achieve by telling the first parable. Under Peter's question lies the assumption that the narrative is meant for someone, someone has to respond to it. He thinks at least the disciples themselves should be included among the addressees.[115] Peter and the other disciples have so far only heard the first parable,

[114] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 238-9; Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, 465.

[115] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 238-9; Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 503; Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 539-40. When thinking this through from a historical point-of-view, it is not unlikely Peter envisaged a distinction between the

which only gives the correct example. Apparently, this causes enough confusion to ask for a clarification. Jesus does not answer directly but tells another parable. Here we see a second option: one could be unfaithful and as a result receive punishment. By presenting the two ways Jesus effectively returns the question to Peter and the other hearers. Who do you think the parable is meant for? Are you a faithful or unfaithful slave? What do you do in the absence of your master?

A certain shock-effect may be caused by the harsh words of v. 46, which could then elicit a mimetic response, feeling compassion for the slave. The main purpose of the narrative seems to be the thematic response. Hearers are encouraged to position themselves within the story. What type of slave am I? Jesus is asking His narratee to relate to the narrative audience. In both parables this narrative audience is the slaves. If the narratee wants to find their place in the narrative, he or she has to choose what kind of slave they are like. This last movement is the thematic response Jesus aims for.[116] Luke does the same by having Peter (narratee) ask his question in v. 41. This allows the flesh and blood reader to give a thematic response and become authorial audience. The flesh and blood reader then ideally knows he or she is to treat fellow slaves well, look after the possessions of the master and obediently wait for him.

The ethical judgements are clearly outlined in this pericope. Desirable behaviour is greatly rewarded, unrighteous behaviour is firmly punished. Some interpretive judgements remain to be made by the hearer or reader. When the manager says his master is not coming back, we do not know exactly how this reaction is to be weighed. He could be desperate and anxious, or doubtful his master will ever come back, or indifferent, or experience a sense of freedom. How we evaluate the punishment of the manager depends to some extent on how we interpret the manager's attitude when uttering: "My master is delayed in coming." (v. 45)

Narrative progression is largely warranted by instabilities between master and slaves (as in Luke 17:7-10) and between slaves themselves. The delay of the master's return puts stress on the slaves who take care of his possessions. How the slaves react to this conduct of their master is the central instability that is resolved in a positive way in both parables, and also in a negative way in the second. Tension is explicitly addressed in vv. 35-36 and 40 by exhortations and in v. 42 by means of a question. Here Jesus raises the tension between the hearers and the narrative, inviting response by His hearers.

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twelve and Jesus' other followers. This might be part of the reason for asking his question. Bovon and Marshall think so, at least. Jesus responds by continuing to speak to the crowds, according to Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 354.

[116] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 240-1; Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 354-5.

Master and slave-relationship

The master and slave-relationship in Luke 12:35-48 is multifaced. On the one hand, we meet masters who reward good behaviour in a generous manner (vv. 37, 44). On the other hand, Jesus speaks of a master who punishes misconduct very sternly (v. 46). The reaction of the slaves is diverse as well. Some wait patiently or take good care of their fellow slaves. Others feast and drink and abuse their subordinates. The οἰκονόμος falls between master and slave in a sense, he functions as a substitute for his master and mediator between slave and master, while still being a slave. The reversal of roles is something we will see in Luke 17:7-10 but is more exaggerated in 12:35-38.

4.2 Who is who?

The slaves

We have seen in this pericope how Peter's question in v. 41 is fuelled by the idea that Jesus' parable is meant to convey a message to His audience. We noted how Jesus' response with a second parable faces them with the question: where do we stand in this story? Peter's question suggests he recognises himself in Jesus' parable and keeps open the option that others might too.[117] I think in Luke's mind Peter identifies with the slaves in the story. The imperatives of vv. 35-36 and the application in v. 40 certainly point him and the rest of the audience in that direction. Of the three pericopes, Luke 12:35-48 features the greatest diversity of slaves. We find ἄνθρωπος and δοῦλος in vv. 35-38, from v. 42 the image further diversifies. Jesus' audience could have identified with the slaves of vv. 35-38, the manager that Jesus speaks of in v. 42 would then be someone guarding over and caring for them.[118] Israel's leaders or the leadership of the Church are often taken to be addressed by this οἰκονόμος.[119] Luke's shift from οἰκονόμος to δοῦλος places leadership firmly within the same social category.[120] Being a manager is a task, a job, it does not necessarily imply that he is a free man; on the contrary, the manager is still a slave.[121] Luke wants us to see we are all slaves in vv. 35-38, there are however slaves with a special assignment, he shows in vv. 42-46.

[117] Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, AB 28A, 986; Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, 463.

[118] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 230, 237; Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 354-5.

[119] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 236-7; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 143-4.

[120] Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, 464.

[121] The manager is responsible for both male *and* female slaves. It is the only time we encounter female slaves in these pericopes. Could it imply that the manager, the leaders (of Israel and/or the Church) should take care of the entire community? Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to adequately address the role of gender in the metaphor of slavery, I will briefly touch upon the topic again in the final chapter. See also Kartzow, "Striking Family Hierarchies." Kartzow gives a somewhat more extensive reflection on the gender of the slaves in this parable.

Who then are the knowing and unknowing slaves of vv. 47-48? If this is taken to refer to the entire pericope, the knowing slaves represent the entirety of Jesus' audience.[122] If it is taken to refer to only the last parable this representation should be evaluated differently. Especially v. 48b suggests that leaders will be judged stricter than 'ordinary' believers.[123] The former would then be identified with the knowing, the latter with the unknowing slaves. I think both identifications hold up. All of Jesus' audience is entrusted with much knowledge on the Kingdom, but the shift in thinking is clear between vv. 35-40 and 42-48. This is expressed both in contents and literary structure.

The master

The common reading of The watchful servants and The just and unjust manager is that they are concerned with the Parousia.[124] For the image of the returning master, this means that it signifies the Son of Man, Jesus Himself. For Luke, the remark "My master is delayed in coming" can serve as an explanation on Jesus' delayed return. Other readings take the parables to describe Jesus' resurrection; this significantly changes the meaning of the texts, but the identification remains the same.[125] Ultimately, the first interpretation is more convincing. The parables speak of themes usually related to the Parousia or eschatology in general: being watchful, behaving responsibly and ethically, Jesus executing judgement.

Modern-day readers may more easily apply the image of the first master (vv. 35-38) to Jesus, than that of the second master (vv. 42-48).[126] We see a master reversing the roles of master and slaves, effectively ridiculing himself.[127] If we ourselves are slaves, this is a very powerful message of hope.[128] The second master punishes his unjust manager very harshly, by cutting him up. Nuance to this is added by vv. 47-48, where we hear this master judges righteously.

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[122] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 240-1.

[123] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 241; Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 355.

[124] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 241-2; Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, AB 28A, 986-7; Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 177-8; Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 209, 212; Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, 459, 463.

[125] Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 210-2.

[126] At least this modern-day reader does. It is more comfortable to see Jesus' behaviour be in line with our norms. It is easier to recognise critical implications for slavery in the first parable, which comes closer to our standards.

[127] Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 207.

[128] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 499.

5. ‘A Master and a Slave’ – Luke 17:7-10

[7]“Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’? [8]Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink’? [9]Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? [10]So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”

Luke 17:7-10

5.1 Exegesis

5.1.1 Narrative Analysis

Rhetoric

In this short parable, the narrative of which only covers vv. 7-9, Jesus paints before His hearers a typical situation of the relationship between master and slave. In order to do so, He mainly makes use of two rhetorical devices: the rhetorical question and antithesis. Rhetorical questions actually make up the entire parable, each line in vv. 7, 8, and 9 is a rhetorical question Jesus asks His audience. The first question is introduced by “Τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν” (v. 7), immediately inviting the hearers to relate themselves to the story. The expected answer on the question that follows is “no one”, no master would first let his slave eat and only then have the slave serve him. The effect of the first rhetorical question is amplified by the antithetical second question. The first one sketches a ridiculous, ‘unnatural’ relationship between slave and master, but the second corrects this image by returning to the everyday practice the audience would have been familiar with. Who would not agree with Jesus on this suggestion? His last question forces His audience to agree with the master in this story. “No, you do not thank your slave. He has merely done his job.” (v. 10)

Setting

Not much background is provided in Luke 17:7-10. As with many parables, this one is not linked to any specific geographic location or point in time. It does relate itself to social relationships. It plays with the ideas of normal and abnormal ways of dealing with your slave.

The slave is clearly lower in rank: he eats last, he is ordered around by the master, and he wears an apron. Verse 7 gives additional information about what the life of the slave looks like. He has been working all day ploughing or shepherding, only to return to his master to find new work waiting for him. This would indicate that his master is not exceptionally rich. At least not rich enough to have slaves dedicated to fieldwork and others dedicated to domestic work.[129]

Characters

Two main characters are presented here: the master and the slave. Both characters are quite flat. Neither has an inner monologue or speaks, except for Jesus filling in their words through rhetorical questions (vv. 7-9) or a confession of guilt (v. 10). Even when Jesus does, He means these to be the words of His audience, indicated by "Τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν" (v.7) and "λέγετε ὅτι" (v. 10). Slave and master are less characters, and more stereotypes. Their relationship is an instrument in conveying the moral of the story to Jesus' audience. Master and slave may be hollow characters, there still is some character development. The master and slave act strange in Jesus' first sketch of the situation, but quickly return to normal patterns in v. 8. From here on, both slave and master act in a way that may be expected of them. One exception could be the exclamation in v. 10: "δοῦλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν, ὃ ὠφείλομεν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν". It is difficult to imagine the slave not desiring any kind of recognition for all his hard work.[130]

Point of view

In vv. 7-9 the narrative is told from the point of view of the master. His thoughts and actions move the story forward, hearers are expected to identify with this master and follow his train of thought. There is a major shift in v. 10. Hearers are no longer supposed to identify with the master, but with the slave. They are even encouraged to call themselves slaves. This shift leads hearers to believe that the first part of the parable, the identification with the master, was merely a necessary step in coming to the conclusion of v. 10. The slave is the one with whom they really have to identify themselves.

Jesus, the narrator of this parable, uses this parable to express His moral views. He does not seem to want to talk about actual slavery, slavery is a metaphor for what He really

[129] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 614.

[130] Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 647; Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 173-5. Marshall warns for this type of modern-day sensitivity when interpreting the parable. Schottroff shows that such sensitivity was not completely absent among Roman slave owners, but served as an admonition to treat slaves in a way that do not encourage them to think ill of their masters.

addresses here.[131] By showing that a slave—even when he has done all that is asked of him—is not to be thanked for his work, Jesus shows that humans are not to expect to be thanked by God, as if they would have done something extraordinary in His service.[132]

Plot

The plot of this narrative is quite straightforward. We hear of a slave returning from his work on the land, who is then ordered by his master to serve his supper. Afterwards the slave is allowed to eat and drink himself. It is more a scene, than a plot. The tension in the plot arises from the introductory question painting an uncustomary way of dealing with a slave. The tension is relieved in v. 8, when the situation returns to normal. But for the audience in Luke 17 the tension returns in v. 10, when the answer to the question in v. 9 is all of a sudden applied to Jesus' audience. His hearers lose the comfortable position of master and find themselves to be slaves. A U-plot or tragic plot is the best description of what happens here.[133] The audience is presented with an awkward situation of a master accommodating a slave, this tension is then relieved (the most comfortable point in the narrative for its hearers), but afterwards returns and is even amplified. "We are worthless slaves." (v. 10)

5.1.2 Rhetorical Approach to Narrative

The conclusion of v. 10 makes it clear that Jesus sets out to use His story to move and convince His audience. He invokes reactions of the audience by confronting them with a story they can follow up until v. 9, and then puts words in their mouths that are uncomfortable and are meant to inspire reflection, introspection. We will turn to audience responses, but first establish what the audience looks like.

As mentioned, Jesus' hearers will probably have been relatively well-of residents of first-century Judea, or at least been familiar with the setting.[134] This allows the initial identification with the master. But this is only what Phelan calls the narratee. Jesus wants them to become narrative audience, pushing them to identify themselves with both characters

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[131] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 496-7; Knowles, "Reciprocity and 'Favour'," 256-60; Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 645-8. Bovon considers this somewhat atypical of Luke, who more often emphasises human cooperation in God's work. According to Knowles, the phrase μὴ ἔχει χάριν τῷ δούλῳ, entails more than saying thanks. It implies reciprocity and would place master and slave in a patron-client relationship characterised by quid pro quo. By denying it, the master denies the slave and he share such a relationship.

[132] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 496-7; Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, 569-70.

[133] Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 467-9; Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 179. A U-plot or tragic plot starts with a negative situation, which then develops in a positive way, to ultimately have the situation take a turn for the worse again.

[134] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 614.

in the story. The ideal narrative audience understands the shift between vv. 9 and 10. Luke does not supply us with the information on whether or not the audience is able to do so. We modern-day readers of the narrative are the flesh and blood readers. Luke, the author, wants flesh and blood readers to take the same step as the narratee: become narrative audience. Through Jesus' words we are expected to relate ourselves to the parable and be able to agree with v. 10.

The type of response Luke 17:7-10 solicits is mainly mimetic and thematic. Mimetic response is provoked by Jesus' questions asking both the narratee and flesh and blood readers to identify with the characters. If they succeed in doing so, the audience can respond thematically. Hearers or readers can begin asking themselves questions like: "How do I look at myself in relationship to God?" This thematic response seems to be the main goal of the narrative. As it does not go to great length to establish an emotional connection to the characters. They largely remain flat and static, with little 'inner life'. In v. 10, however, the mimetic is supportive of the thematic one. A provocative statement helps begin the process of reflection on relationships and issues in real life.

Besides the mimetic and thematic response, the audience is stimulated to make ethical judgements on this narrative. The rhetorical questions through which the story is told, ask for continuous judgement of the situation. With these rhetorical questions, the answers are clear.[135] The application in v. 10 brings the ethical judgements to the audience itself, which is suddenly confronted by the conclusion of its own approval of the train of thought that led them here.

Luke 17:7 begins with an instability between the characters of slave and master. How they are to behave towards one another is the driving force of the story. Their relationship is clearly an unequal one, as the audience would expect. The shift in v. 10 transforms this instability into—what Phelan would call—a tension between the narrator and the narratee and flesh and blood audience. By transforming an instability into a tension, the narrative gains in rhetorical strength.

Master and slave-relationship

Both slave and master are portrayed as archetypes with little depth of character in Luke 17:7-10. Through rhetorical questions Jesus uses their clearly unequal relationship to make a point about His audience. The audience is first asked to identify with a master, but in the concluding

[135] Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 646-7; Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, 568-9.

application Jesus identifies them with slaves. He does not state who would then be their master. The idea of the relationship between slave and master in the parable is presented as customary for Jesus' hearers. A master gives instructions, a slave follows them unquestioningly. When a slave has carried out his work, it is normal not to praise him. He has merely done his job.

5.2 Who is Who?

Of all four parables I discuss, this may be the one with the most ambiguous metaphorical language. Zimmermann's idea of binding openness can certainly be used to describe the variety of interpretations applied to this parable. To some extent this is reflected on the identification of the characters of the slave and master.

The master

Jesus invites His hearers, Luke his audience, to imagine themselves the owner of a slave.[136] This is the first identification. The structure of the parable makes of the audience a not too well-off farmer in first-century Galilee, owning one slave.[137] The audience is then asked how they would treat their slave, thus continuing their position is power. It is not until the shift in v. 10 before they lose their position and are themselves called slaves. You were asked to identify with the master, but it turns out that you yourself are placed under a master. Who this master is, remains implicit. In reception history it is most commonly understood as God being a master to His believers.[138] Some alternatives have been suggested, for example believers being the master of their slave called faith.[139] Using faith as means to an end, not an end in itself that you would thank for something it has achieved.

If we continue the thought that the master represents God, then we find here what Theissen has called conceptual blending. An image from the ontological dimension of humans is used to refer to the dimension of divine beings. While I think this train of thought is justified, it does not answer the question how the master refers to God. Is this how God deals with His slaves? Or are we faced with a negative example?[140] I lean towards the first option

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[136] Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 179.

[137] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 614.

[138] Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, 498.

[139] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 225. In the commentaries listed in the state of the research, I have not come across this interpretation.

[140] Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 173-175. Schottroff here mentions Jennifer Glancy, who argues Luke 12:36-38 and 17:7-10 should be read together. We will return to this in the final chapter.

because, unlike in the parable of The Unjust Judge (18:1-8) or Jesus' teachings on prayer (11:11-13), no explicit suggestion towards such an explanation is made. Seeing this master as a negative example may well be fuelled by awkwardness with the position of the slave in this parable. It cannot be ruled out however, because the negative example is not explicitly ruled out either. Luke 17:7-10 makes little reference outside the parable narrative. Identification occurs mainly between the audience and the different characters, both the master and the slave.

The slave

"We are worthless slaves," is the conclusion given by Jesus. A somewhat strange remark after all the hard work this slave has carried out, but relatable for Jesus' audience.[141] Mentioned above is the suggestion that we are to identify this slave with faith. This seems hard to maintain when Jesus puts the words "we are slaves" in the mouths of His audience. It may be ambiguous who the master exactly refers to, for the slave this is far clearer.[142] What this means for Jesus' and thus Luke's audience is: hard work, being obedient and not expecting to receive appreciation.[143]

[141] Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 467-9; Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 215.
[142] Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, AB 28A, 1144-5; Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 172.
[143] Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 214-5.

6. ‘The Wicked Tenants’ – Luke 20:9-19

[9]He began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time. [10]When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. [11]Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. [12]And he sent still a third; this one also they wounded and threw out. [13]Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’ [14]But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, ‘This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.’ [15]So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? [16]He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Heaven forbid!” [17]But he looked at them and said, “What then does this text mean:

‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’?

[18]Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.” [19]When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people.

Luke 20:9-19

6.1 Exegesis

6.1.1 Narrative Analysis

Rhetoric

Jesus tells of a man leaving his vineyard and leasing it to tenants. By starting with the vineyard and the tenants Jesus lets His hearers know this story is not primarily about the travels of this man, but rather about what will happen with the vineyard in his absence. A repetitive structure is used to relay what happens with the tenants. Four times the owner

checks on the tenants by sending someone. The first three times it is one of his slaves, who are all abused and wounded. After reflection on the part of the owner, his son is sent. Now the repetition amplifies the climax of the story. Three slaves have been treated terrible by the tenants, but surely, they will not treat the son in the same way. The disappointing conclusion of the parable is that the son is treated even worse than the slaves. He is murdered by the tenants. After the murder of the son, the owner returns and destroys the tenants. This narrative is framed by the leaving and returning of the owner. The repetition in the centre of the narrative builds up to the dramatic climax, which is further indicated by the use of verbs with growing intensity in the reaction to slaves, son and tenants. [144] For the abuse of the slaves words like δέρω (vv. 10, 11), ἀτιμάζω (v. 11) and τραυματίζω (v. 12) are used, ἀποκτείνω (vv. 14, 15) is used for the son, and what the owner does to the tenants is described with ἀπόλλυμι (v. 16). The slaves in this parable function as a rhetoric buildup to the murder of the son and the destruction of the tenants. Jesus' rhetoric question in v. 15 invites the audience to denounce the killing of the son and agree that destroying the tenants is the only right course of action. Luke mentions the reaction of the scribes and chief priests in v. 19, when they find out the parable is meant to reproach them. Jesus employs rhetoric to get them to agree with Him, but when the actual application of the parable becomes clear, they understandably (and ironically) become angry and want to murder Him.

Setting

Israel was commonly referred to as a vineyard.[145] Hearing a parable about vineyard would have led the audience to make the connection to the people of Israel. It was not uncommon for owners of vineyards to be absent for some time and rent out their lands.[146] Sending slaves to collect the harvest was common practice as well.[147] The attitude of the tenants is a strange element in this story, they would typically be humbler, here they seem to think they are actually in power.[148] They act as if the vineyard is theirs. An important temporal setting is the time of harvest (v. 10). The tenants have had their time to produce fruit and now the owner wants to collect his share.

[144] Doran, "Ending a Performance," 39-40; Plummer, *St. Luke*, ICC, 459. Such a buildup is not found in Mark and Matthew, where some of the slaves are killed before the son is sent.
[145] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 703-707; Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 726.
[146] Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia, 38-9.
[147] Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia, 38-9.
[148] Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia, 39.

Characters

We find five different types of characters in this narrative: owner, tenants, slaves, son, and other tenants. The owner and tenants are the most developed characters. We get a glimpse in their thought process in vv. 13 and 14 respectively and we see them acting and reacting to each other throughout the parable. The relationships between the owner and the slaves is much less fleshed out here than in Luke 17:7-10 or 12:35-48. The three slaves in this pericope have no dialogue and are only mentioned in the accusative. They are only being sent by their master and abused by the tenants. Even more than in 17:7-10 these slaves are instruments to tell a story. No one is asked to identify with them, they are here to underline the severity of what happens to the son. The son himself is literarily treated in the same way, a static character only being sent and abused. His relationship to the owner is what sets him apart from the slaves. His relationship to the owner is that of father and son, an intimate one, as indicated by ἀγαπητόν (v. 13). The tenants recognise this difference when they slay the son to receive the inheritance.[149] The other tenants are only mentioned very briefly, as a way expressing punishment for the first tenants.

Point of view

A third person narrator is presenting the story, but the narrator is mainly telling it from the perspective of the owner. His problems form the basic outline of the story. Verses 14-15a briefly deviate from this perspective by presenting a conversation among the tenants. This conversation shows how evil and self-centred the tenants are, and so re-enforces the conduct and position of the owner. Jesus wants His audience to agree with the owner. The abuse of the three slaves and the murder of the son are gross injustices.

The application in vv. 17-18 shifts the point of view. The audience, and more specifically the scribes and chief priests, are not themselves owners of the vineyard; they are wicked tenants. At first they could comfortably judge the tenants, but now they find themselves being judged for having beaten slaves and slaying the son. The people express their repulsion to this judgment in v. 16, the scribes and chief priests in v. 19.

Plot

A narrative framework is provided by the owner leaving and returning. First, he entrusts his vineyard to tenants, when he returns he executes judgement. The core of the plot, with its

[149] Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, 647.

dramatic buildup, is a tragedy. The maltreatment of the people being sent by the owner increases constantly. A turning point is the owner's reflection in v. 13. He thinks all may go uphill from here, but by sending his son things take a turn for the worse. The reaction to the murder of son is very different from the reaction to the abuse of the slaves. The death of the son leads to revenge, the beating of the slaves is a problem that needs to be solved—perhaps by sending more slaves. From a certain perspective the plot ends well: the order in the vineyard is restored and the tenants are rightly judged in v. 16. This does come at a very high cost; three slaves are harmed and the son is killed. For the tenants the resolution of the plot is a harsh one. They are removed from the position they had assumed for themselves and pay for their sins with their lives.

6.1.2 Rhetorical Approach to Narrative

Phelan's rhetorical approach to this pericope renders some similar results, as it did with Luke 17:7-10. The relationship between master and slave plays a different role, however. The rhetorical approach makes this clear as well.

On of the most striking resemblances is the multi-layered audience. Jesus' narratee is the people of v. 10; but in v. 19 Luke states Jesus' intention as addressing the scribes and chief priests. Both groups are listening and both respond. The crowd says μὴ γένοιτο in v. 16, indicating they are scared to lose their position in the vineyard and the teachers and leaders standing over them.[150] The scribes and pharisees see themselves threatened in their power and want to eliminate Jesus, we read in v. 19. By giving this information outside of the narrative of the parable, Luke addresses his flesh and blood readers. What are they to think of all this? They should not react the way the scribes and chief priests did, but rather stay with Jesus.[151]

The authorial audience would be moved by Jesus' story and respond on mimetic level to the situation of the owner of the vineyard. Here the first differences with 17:7-10 are becoming visible. A thematic response is not the most important one, supported by the mimetic. The audience is supposed to be moved by the parable and act on it by obeying Jesus.[152] Emotive language supports this notion. Think, for example, of "beloved son" in v. 13 or the greedy brutality of the tenants in v. 14. An ascent in the cruelty that befalls the three slaves is noticeable, but the mimetic response is not as strong as with the son. His death is the

[150] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 708-9; Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 731-2. Both Green and Marshall emphasise that the implications for the Jewish leadership are the main reason for the audience's shock.
[151] Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 539-40.
[152] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 709.

climax of the evil deeds of the tenants, and the authorial audience is to understand and feel this.

Another difference is the development of the plot and the role of the slaves and master in it. In 17:7-10 this relationship forms the heart of the story, the entire narrative is made up out of it. In 20:9-19 slaves are part of the narrative, but in a more instrumental manner. Flesh and blood readers are not expected to feel for the slaves, but for their master. His pain and plight are sketched by having his slaves beaten. It is the loss of control and disrespect of the tenants towards the owner, that is the issue here, the wounds of the slaves are not. As a modern reader one may think: how can you send three slaves to be beaten up?[153] The parable wants readers to ask a different ethical question: how can you beat up three slaves?[154]

One more similarity in the narratives of 17:7-10 and 20:9-19 is the play with instabilities and tensions. This story is built around the instability between the owner and the talents. They respond to each other continually. The rhetorical question in 20:15 and the application and response in 20:17-18 turn this instability in the parable into a tension between the narrative on the one hand, and the narratee and flesh and blood reader on the other hand.

Master and slave-relationship

Three slaves are sent by their master to do work commonly assigned to slaves. They are supposed to collect their master's share of the harvest from the tenants, but they are abused. The master does not seem afflicted by their situation but keeps trying to find a way to look after his vineyard. Even when this means sending his son. The relationship between master and slave is not really fleshed out in Luke 20:9-19. Jesus uses it to underline both the wickedness of the tenants and the strange act of the owner sending his own son. Listening to this parable His audience is supposed to first look through the eyes of the owner of the vineyard. At no point is any identification with the slaves encouraged. Luke implicitly lets his readers know the scribes and chief priests recognise Jesus' parable as way of criticising them.

6.2 Who is Who?

This parable is one of the clearest examples of Jesus' use of allegory in the Gospels, allegory being defined as an extended metaphor with a structural reference system between intra-

[153] Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 729.
[154] Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia, 38-44.

textual and extra-textual elements.[155] Allegories are less open to multiple interpretations than Zimmermann has argued parables generally are. Traditionally, the allegorical reading of this parable has been dominant and after a harsh break with this method since Jülicher, it has been reappreciated in later years.[156] Crossan, relatively early on, noted the allegorical character of The Wicked Tenants had been overlooked.[157] We have seen how multiple characters are fleshed out in this story and how the background too, refers to an extra-textual entity (the vineyard representing Israel). Another indication of the allegorical character is the response of the scribes and chief priests in v. 19, they feel threatened because they identify themselves with the tenants of the vineyard. To them it is clear that they are the ones supposed to watch over the vineyard, but who have failed to do so in a manner pleasing to the owner. If we are to read Luke 20:9-19 allegorically, each significant element in the narrative refers to an extra-textual reality. Five such elements are present in Luke's version: the vineyard, the owner, the tenants, three slaves, and the son. Luke wants his audience to identify the vineyard and the tenants with Israel and its leaders. The other three are discussed below. The identification of the son will be given together with that of the owner.

The master

Most commonly, the owner is recognised as referring to God and the son as referring to Jesus Himself.[158] For many interpreters this so self-evident, they do not give it special attention. The reasons for this identification are perspicuous. If Luke's placement of the telling of the parable in the temple, shortly before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion were not clear enough, the reaction of the scribes and pharisees is. The son who dies at the hands of the tenants, is Jesus Christ.[159] It is a short step then to identify the owner with God, an idea that is supported by the phrase τὸν υἱόν μου τὸν ἀγαπητόν (v. 13) reminiscent of Jesus' baptism in 3:22.[160] Two alternative suggestions for identification do not hold up. The first interpretation is the owner representing Jesus.[161] This would problematise further explanation of the allegory, as it is unclear who the

[155] *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Fourth Edition, comp. Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), s.v. "allegory," accessed April 19, 2024, http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=2033522.

[156] Zoltan L. Erdey, "Interpreting Parables: One Point or Many?," *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 10, no. 1 (2010): 5-24, here 6-12; cf. Arthur A. Just, *Luke*, vol. III of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 304-8.

[157] Crossan, *In Parables*, 8-10, 86.

[158] Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia 39, 44-6; Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, 643.

[159] Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 537, 539-40.

[160] Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 704.

[161] Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 534-5; Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 243.

son in the story would represent. The second suggestion is that in the *Vorlage* of the parable, the landowner actually represented just that, a landowner.[162] The message would of the parable would then be a social-critical one, addressing inequity in the agricultural system of first-century Galilee. Both alternatives are not compatible with the allegorical reading Luke implies.[163] It is safe to say the owner of the vineyard refers to God, the son to Jesus, the Son of God.

While the identification of God with the owner may be clear, it is not unproblematic. Readers and hearers are to cross an ontological border in their interpretation. If this land and slave owner represents God, what part of the image is meant to be reflected back on God? The owner is absent, he is seemingly unequipped to take care of his property, he sends his slaves and son to be abused. If this is what God looks like according to Luke, one might wonder who would ever entrust him- or herself to Him. Focussing on his treatment of the slaves, we get the idea of a master who does not particularly care for the safety and wellbeing of his slaves. All his attention goes out to the harvest and the vineyard. This seems to be the main point the parable wants to make about God. He cares deeply for His people (the vineyard), so deeply that He will do and give anything to care for them.[164]

The slaves

Continuing the allegorical reading, the slaves in Luke 20:9-19 must be taken to refer to the prophets that have come before Jesus.[165] Unlike the tenants, at no point in Jesus' parable is His audience encouraged to identify themselves with the prophets. The slaves represent the prophets God has sent to Israel in days past. Time and again these prophets have been rejected and mistreated. Jesus has rebuked the Israelite leaders for this earlier in the Gospel (11:47-51, 20:4-7).[166] It is true that Luke downplays the connection between slaves and prophets in comparison with Mark and Matthew for literary purposes (the son's death as the climax of the narrative), but it still stands.[167] The slaves see an increase in their maltreatment by the tenants, building up to the murder of the son. The relationship between master and slaves does not stand at the core of this narrative, it serves the purposes of underlining the evilness of the

162 Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 20-1.

163 Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 705.

164 Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia 39, 41, 46; Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 537.

165 Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, AB 28A, 1281; Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 706. Fitzmyer is more reluctant to make this identification but does point to the important text of Luke 11:49. There the connection between God's sending of the prophets and the people's abuse of them is made explicit.

166 Green, *Luke*, NICNT, 706. In the immediately preceding vv. 4-7 in this chapter, Jesus discusses the dismissal of John the Baptist.

167 Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC, 729-730.

tenants. What the image of slavery tells about the relationship between God and His prophets, can be characterised as the prophets having to serve God's will, in a way that is as absolute as a slave obeying his master.

An important dimension of the relationship between slave and master for this parable is representation. In the owner's absence, the slave may represent him and his interests. Dishonouring the slave, means dishonouring the master.[168] The opinions on whether the treatment of the slaves may be seen as standard practice in Jesus' time vary. The practice of sending slaves to collect the harvest is generally accepted as everyday practice.[169] It is also clear that it is strange to keep sending slaves if they keep being rejected.[170] The reaction of the tenants is where opinions divert: some consider beating slaves fairly common, others think first century hearers would consider the tenant's behaviour inherently wrong.[171] For this research the tenant's actions are less relevant, but the slaves being sent by their master on a dangerous mission is very much relevant. This is apparently how God deals with His prophets.

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[168] Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 536.

[169] Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia 39, 39; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 189.

[170] Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 536.

[171] Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia 39, 39; Levine and Witherington III, *The Gospel of Luke*, NCBC, 535-536; Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 16-7. All agree the violence toward the slaves is excessive. Bovon considers such violence as this highly improbable. Levine and Witherington think the beating as such is not too extraordinary, but the sending of more slaves is. Schottroff recognises in the parable the dire situation of first-century Galilean farmers that drove them to hopeless actions like these. She seems to think this was not all that uncommon.

7. Overview – Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19

This overview summarises the findings of the three previous chapters, each dealing with a separate pericope. By means of this overview I present the answers to the two sub-questions that were addressed in each chapter.

1. *How does Jesus describe the relationship between master and slave(s) in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19?*
2. *Is God identified with 'the master' and are believers identified with 'slaves' in these parables, and if so, in what way?*

7.1 Jesus' Portrayal of Master and Slave-Relationship

Examining Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19 we have seen and heard Jesus tell parables about slaves and their masters. The relationship between the slaves and masters is differently presented. In 12:35-38 and 17:7 the stereotypical roles are reversed, masters begin serving their slaves. This is seen as a reward in 12:37 and viewed in positive light ("Blessed are the slaves…"), but Jesus problematises the reversal of roles in 17:8. It is inappropriate for a master to behave in such a way. The master in 12:42-48 is found beating his slaves; though opposed to the serving master in 12:37, his punishment is not criticised. He acts fairly. So does a master who does not thank his slave for doing his work (17:9). The image of a master and slave-relationship is not consistent throughout our three pericopes, as the differences mentioned here show. There are, however, similarities found among all four parables.

Jesus always speaks of slaves and masters in a clearly hierarchical relationship, with the slave being much lower in rank the master. The master expects his slave to do his bidding in all three pericopes. Should he not obey, he will be punished. Even when the hierarchical relationship is overturned—as it is in 12:37 and 17:7—this is seen as exceptional. When the manager of 12:42-48 begins to act as a master, he is severely punished. The reversal implies a shifting of roles, not an abandonment of the idea of slavery or an equalisation of master and slave. In a way the different responses to 12:37 and 12:45 underline the hierarchy of the relationship. If the master initiates this reversal, this is seen as extraordinary, but graceful behaviour. If the slave does this, he is in offense. The hierarchy is so powerful that even physical abuse of slaves is permissible in 20:9-19. The slave's comfort is certainly no topic of concern in 17:7-10 and 12:46-48, either.

In different stages of the parables Jesus asks His audience to identify with either slave or master. Luke 12:35-48 begins with addressing the audience as if they were slaves, it ends in the same way. 17:7-10 has the audience start out from the perspective of the master, and end with that of the slave. 20:9-19 is largely told from the perspective of the master, although the scribes and chief priests recognise themselves in the tenants. The slaves function more as tools or background in this parable, not so much as characters. The process of identification is key for understanding what Jesus wants to let His hearers know. Luke's presentation of the parables is his way of conveying his own message about Jesus. The next chapter will be devoted to further exploration of how Jesus description of the relationship between master and slave allows His audience to identify these characters and relate them to their own world.

7.2 Who is Who?

The review of the three pericopes has made several things clear about the identification of the characters of slaves and masters. The first point to be made is the varying degrees of flexibility in the imagery. For the allegorical narrative of Luke 20, the relationship between image and referent is fixed. Taking one such element out of its relationship disturbs the entire story. The imagery in chapters 12 and 17 is more fluid. In all parables together a variety of referents is brought up: God, Jesus, believers, disciples, pharisees, and chief priests are all identified (at least for some time) with a slave owner. Slaves themselves refer to: disciples, chief priests, scribes, believers, the prophets, and possibly more.

In this variety one thing stands out. The second point to be made relates to Theissen's conceptual blending. In the image of the slave few ontological boundaries are crossed. It is a human image used to refer to other humans. At no point in these parables is God or Jesus identified with a slave.[172] The character of the master can be identified with humans, often addressed as one of the different types of audiences. This audience is at times invited to think of themselves in such a way. When this is the case, the image of the master is comparable to that of the slave when it comes to conceptual blending. When the master is identified with Jesus or especially with God an ontological boundary is being crossed. The image of the master—in the Gospel of Luke—has the potential to refer to a divine realm of being, something the image of the slave seems to be lacking. In other words: the pictorial distance of 'master' can be greater, than that of 'slave'.

[172] The son in Luke 20:9-19 is treated worse than the slaves, but Jesus is to be identified with the son, not with the slaves.

Thirdly, the memorability Theissen has mentioned may play a role in the process of identification. Parables featuring slavery can be somewhat awkward to read nowadays, but precisely the uneasiness in listening to or reading of parables is what makes them so memorable, Theissen argues. This uneasiness calls for interpretation and so for re-appreciation of the parables. The metaphoric language (here the metaphor of slavery) does the same, Zimmermann has put forward. Combined, these two points appear to have their effect on the growing corpus of interpretations and the variety of points of identification.

A strong presupposition underlies the sub-question: *Is God identified with 'the master' and are believers identified with 'slaves' in these parables, and if so, in what way?* Asking this question means assuming that master-God and slave-believer are the standard combinations of image and identification. We have seen in analysing the texts, that this presupposition is not untrue. God or Jesus are never referred to as slaves in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19. If God is mentioned, it is as a master, a slave owner. Believers are most often identified with the slaves, but not in all instances. A vineyard may be used as well.[173] The images of slave and master are not set in stone. They are more fluid than the question assumed.

Keeping the main research question in mind—*What does Jesus' use of the image of slavery in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19 mean for the interpretation of the relationship between God and humans in the Gospel of Luke?*—the following chapter centres around the identification of God-master and human/believer-slave. This focus will help answer the main research question by turning attention to an implication of the image of slavery uncomfortable to modern-day ears and relevant to Luke's theology.

[173] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into further detail, but this would also be an example of conceptual blending, plants referring to humans.

8. Parabolic Slavery and Lukan Theology

Having established how Jesus speaks of the relationship between masters and slaves in the Lukan parables, and what masters and slaves refer to, I ask the question: *How do these parables fit in Luke's vision of the relationship between God and humans?* I aim to place the interpretation of the parables within the framework of Lukan theology. Generally speaking, there would be two approaches to do this for the slavery parables. The first would be to look at the application of the parable as a whole, to study its *pointe*. The second would be to highlight the image of slavery from the parables and analyse its implications for Luke's theology. The latter is the one I employ, but I will give one example of the former approach to make clear where the challenges lie in answering this final sub-question. Before formulating my own answer to the question, I will sketch three theological lines important to our understanding of Luke' theology: attention to the oppressed, God's sovereignty, and Christology.

8.1 Examinations of Slavery Parables in Relation to the Gospel of Luke

The parables as a whole – Douglas S. McComiskey

Douglas S. McComiskey has written an extensive study by the name of *Lukan Theology in the Light of the Gospel's Literary Structure*.[174] In his book he proposes a new literary structure of the Gospel in which he draws parallels between all pericopes based on their themes.[175] This structure leads him, for example, to discuss 20:9-19 in relation to 8:1-21, 11:27-36, and 14:15-35. It leads McComiskey to valid and informative conclusions, but as a result of his approach he does not theologically address the slavery component as such. Others have done this by paying specific attention to the imagery.

Patron-client relationships

Some earlier research has interpreted the image of slavery through the lens of the patron-client relationships so ubiquitous in the Roman Empire. Among those who have looked through this lens are Mary Ann Beavis, John Dominic Crossan, and Bernard Brendan Scott.[176] They have argued the close relationship between patron and client is similar to that of master

[174] Douglas S. McComiskey, *Lukan Theology in the Light of the Gospel's Literary Structure* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004).

[175] For an overview of this structure, see McComiskey, *Lukan Theology*, 206.

[176] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 123-8. As Glancy shows, Beavis, Crossan, and Scott certainly did not stand alone in this respect.

and slave and as such both can be understood in terms of the system of patronage. God would then be a benevolent patron to His clients, who may be called either ‘clients’ or ‘slaves’ without significant shift in meaning. Jennifer A. Glancy has rightfully criticised this view, pointing out that patronage lacks certain crucial elements that go with slavery. Glancy’s own attention goes out the abuse of the bodies of the slaves in the parables. “What seems inevitable, in many of Jesus’ parables, is that the body of the slave will be battered.”[177] We have seen this happen in two of our parables.[178] Such abuse is only possible because slaves are the property of their master, including their bodies. The relationship between slave and master is tighter and even more unequal than that between patron and client. Overlooking this distinction does not do justice to the image of slavery in the parables.

A firm no – Luise Schottroff

Luise Schottroff takes the concept and reality of slavery in the first century very seriously. She treats it as a distinct metaphor and does not overlook the harsh reality of a life in slavery. In her commentary on Jesus’ parables, Schottroff gives a very outspoken answer to our question: “I consider it absolutely impossible that the Gospel of Luke tells these stories to God’s slaves in order to say something to them allegorically about their relationship to God as God’s slaves.”[179] Schottroff mentions Luke’s attention to the poor and oppressed as one of the main reasons for her conviction.[180] According to her, slaves are included within these groups Luke proclaims salvation and liberation to. She sees in the slave parables a reversal of the status quo of slavery in the Roman Empire.[181] I am sympathetic to her answer because she addresses the metaphor of slavery as a topic of theology—many commentators do not—but several flaws undermine her argument. The main issue I see is the identification of God with the masters in these parables. Schottroff does not agree the master in Luke 12:35-48 and 17:7-10 refers to God.[182] The above analysis has shown this identification—although it is not the only possible one—can certainly be made. Furthermore, the reversal of the master-slave

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[177] Jennifer A. Glancy, “Slavery and the Rise of Christianity,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, ed. Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 456-81, here 458, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521840668.023.

[178] Physical abuse occurs in Luke 12:42-48 and 20:10-12. One might argue the treatment of the slave in 17:7-9 constitutes abuse as well. He is not beaten, but he is forced to work long days and his food is withheld, at least for a time.

[179] Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 176.

[180] Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 176-7.

[181] Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 176-7.

[182] Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 175-81. Schottroff does not discuss Luke 20:9-19, but when dealing with the parallel in Mark 12:1-12 she comes to the same conclusion. Cf. Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 15-28, especially 20-1.

relationship Schottroff claims is present, is certainly not present in all parables. It clearly is in 12:35-38, but even here the terminology remains in place. In 17:7-10 the hearers undergo a transformation from master to slave, but no liberation of slaves is mentioned. 20:9-19 only sees the slaves abused.

Schottroff's argumentation is somewhat ambiguous when it comes to the identification of slaves and masters. Usually, she does not agree that God is a slave owner and believers His slaves. Later, she does, claiming the slavery theme serves as a negative example. God is unlike the slave owners, being God's slave is diametrically opposed to being slave to another human.[183] God not only treats His slaves better than any earthly master could, He also liberates all earthly slaves by placing them under His control, thus essentially undermining the institution of slavery. Again, I am sympathetic to Schottroff's point-of-view. Such a reversal is present in the parables, but not in the quantity and quality Schottroff would have us believe. Too often we find the parables quite uncritically make use of the everyday practice of slavery to convey their message. For Luke, God is like a slaveowner and believers are like slaves. This is not the only identification Luke makes. The imagery is relatively flexible, but this is certainly one identification Luke intends his readers to make.

Possibly radical – Mary Ann Beavis and Ruben Zimmermann

Mary Ann Beavis has compared slavery parables from Jesus with Greco-Roman examples of slavery 'tales' or 'fables' and the reality of the institution of slavery in the Greco-Roman world.[184] This leads her to a conclusion, which she makes only after cautionary remarks on the preliminary nature of this conclusion:

> The slave parables, then, do not directly attack the institution of slavery, but their tendency to dignify the role of the slave and to suggest that the slave owner identify with his/her human property might have been perceived as radical social teaching by ancient audiences. [185]

Two findings support this assertion. First, Jewish audiences would have viewed the reversal of roles as in Luke 12:35-38 as very odd, possibly even aggravating. Second, while the institution of slavery is not under attack, slaves in Jesus' parables display greater agency than those in other contemporary sources.

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[183] Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 177.
[184] Beavis, "Interpretive Context".
[185] Beavis, "Interpretive Context," 54.

Ruben Zimmermann has noted similar observations.[186] He characterises Luke's theological emphasis as socially critical and sees the slavery parables as an example of his emphasis. The reversal in 12:35-38 is what Luke is after. Besides this parable, another important text for Zimmermann is Luke 4:18-19, Jesus' programmatic sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth. Zimmermann reads this quotation form Isaiah as Luke expressing the meaning of the Gospel to the oppressed. "The parables reveal the same sensitivity to outsiders and the socially marginalized, whether it be slaves (e.g., Luke 12:35-38), women (Luke 15:8-10; 13:20-21; 18:1-7), or children (Luke 7:31-35; 11:11-13)."[187] Interestingly, Schottroff refers to this passage to make her point that Luke does not want his readers to identify the master in the parables with God.[188] Zimmermann and Schottroff then agree in including slaves in the list of people mentioned in 4:18-19, but come to different conclusions. Beavis and Zimmermann—though the former is more reluctant in her claims—view the slavery parables in Luke as (possible) tools to relieve the plight of actual slaves. This would mean that God or Jesus may be depicted as a slave owner, but that He is unlike human slave owners. Schottroff, Beavis, and Zimmermann all read the parables as critical of slavery, or at the very least as undermining slavery. As mentioned above, when discussing Schottroff, this reading depends largely on the single example of 12:35-38.[189] In the other parables we have examined, a more conservative image of slavery is presented. The second argument is the inclusion of slaves in the programmatic statement in Luke 4:18-19. Zimmermann and Schottroff have not explained why they should be included. I, therefore, remain unconvinced by this reading.

Maybe not that good news – Elizabeth V. Dowling

In her article "Luke-Acts: Good News for Slaves?" Elizabeth V. Dowling analyses Luke's message of liberation and salvation to slaves.[190] Dowling sets out to answer the question that is the title of her article. For her it is clear that Luke does not employ the metaphor of slavery to express God's desire to free slaves or improve their living conditions.

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[186] Ruben Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus: Methods and Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 293-7.

[187] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables*, 296.

[188] Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 177.

[189] Cf. Lischer, *Reading the Parables*, 149-55. Lischer acknowledges the stark contrast between Luke 12:35-38 and 17:7-10, but still concludes that the image of slavery used with a transformative or subversive aim. This makes his argumentation more refined, but nevertheless ultimately unconvincing.

[190] Elizabeth V. Dowling, "Luke-Acts: Good News for Slaves?," *Pacifica* 24, no. 2 (2011): 123-40, https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X1102400201.

> The Gospel of Luke gives a mixed presentation on slaves. While a few elements challenge the master-slave dynamic, many other aspects reinforce the power of the master over a slave and the lack of status of slaves. (…) Any snippets of good news which a slave might receive upon hearing Luke-Acts seem to be overshadowed by the predominant reinforcement of slavery, both implicit and explicit. The good news for the poor which is at the heart of the Gospel of Luke extends to the free poor, but not so clearly to slaves. Ultimately, it would seem that Luke accepts the reality of Christians owning slaves and the slaves' non-status without any great challenge.[191]

Dowling does not think slaves are to be included in Luke 4:18-19.[192] She deals with the text more extensively, also including the Old Testament context. She thinks something can be said for including slaves in the quotation, but in the end this is not what Luke is after. The Gospel is not out after the liberation of slaves, instead the normalcy of slavery is largely upheld. Dowling's study gives more equal voice to the different slavery parables, which leads her to acknowledge the violence that befalls slaves in the Lukan parables.[193] In Luke Dowling recognises no rejection of the institution of slavery. Rejecting slavery is simply no issue for Luke. This allows him to use the image largely uncritically to speak of the relationship between God and humans.

Too complex for one image – Martijn Stoutjesdijk

The relationship between God and humans is much too complex to be captured in one metaphoric image, so it seems when overlooking the array of early rabbinic and Christian parables. Martijn Stoutjesdijk has compared the slavery metaphor to that of sonship.[194] In the texts he has studied, several different metaphors may be present. Slavery metaphors are used to express different theological notions than sonship metaphors. Slavery metaphors emphasise obedience, sonship is used to speak of God's love for His people.[195] Stoutjesdijk discussed another dimension of the slavery metaphor in rabbinic parables, where sometimes a transfer from one master to the other occurs.[196] He shows that freedom from a master was difficult to obtain in ancient times. Even manumission did not completely lift a slave from all obligations toward her or his master. Transfer to a new master did mean total freedom from the previous one, as it placed a slave under complete control of the new one. Being a slave of God would

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[191] Dowling, "Good News for Slaves?," 139-40.
[192] Dowling, "Good News for Slaves?," 127-36.
[193] She mentions for example the slaves in Luke 20:9-19.
[194] Stoutjesdijk, "Father and Master"; Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?," 281. Stoutjesdijk very briefly summarises his findings here, the theme itself is present throughout his thesis.
[195] Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?," 281.
[196] Stoutjesdijk, "Father and Master," 123-33.

then evidently be preferable to having an earthly master. This idea might explain why first- or second-century readers would not necessarily object the image of God as a slave owner. It does leave open the question how God treats His slaves. So far, this treatment does not appear to be especially kind.

Theological purposes – Catherine Hezser

One of the most recent contributions to the field has been published by Catherine Hezser.[197] Like Stoutjesdijk, she has studied both Christian and rabbinic parables, but looks at further usage of the metaphor too (e.g. in the Old Testament, Pauline letters, Church fathers). Whereas Schottroff answered with a firm "no" on the question whether or not Luke intended to tell something about God to his readers through the metaphor of slavery, Hezser states:[198] "Ancient Israelites and Jews, as well as Christians and Muslims, considered slavery the—or at least one of the—most useful *Bildfeld* (field of images) to depict their relationship to God." The image of a master and a slave has the ability to confer theological notions that other images lack.[199] Even those who are not slaves themselves, nor own slaves, have been able to understand and employ and/or understand the metaphor of slavery.[200] According to Hezser this is due to at least four theological notions that underlie the use of the image.

> The most obvious notions are (1) the great hierarchical difference between God and humans; (2) God as the issuer of commandments and rules that humans must follow; (3) humans being punished by God physically, even unto death; and (4) the notion of God's ownership and control of humans.[201]

1. *Hierarchical difference.* [202] The perceived hierarchical distance between God and ancient Israelites was so great, that only the metaphor of master and slave seemed appropriate to express this difference. It is interesting that early on, the image of God's people as slaves was used more often than that of God as a master over His people. One aspect would imply the other, but the focus is different. Being a slave of God has more to say about who you yourself are. God being a master, says more about who He is. Over time the hierarchical distance grew even further in rabbinic parables, with the slave master becoming increasingly more often

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[197] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*.

[198] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 37.

[199] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 44-7. Hezser points toward the difference between a son and a slave, as Stoutjesdijk has done too.

[200] Large parts (the majority?) of Jesus' audience (the narratee) in the parables I have discussed would have fallen into this category: not slaves themselves and certainly no slave owners.

[201] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 37.

[202] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 38-42.

called a king. Luke does something not unlike this in his version of the Parable of the Talents (19:11-27). Matthew simply speaks of a man, in Luke he is a royal contender.

2. *Commandments and rules*.[203] Israel stands in a special relation to God, they have received His commandments. Essential to the master-slave relationship is the handing out of orders or commandments. This aspect plays a role in choosing for the metaphor, according to Hezser. I recognise this in Luke too, most explicitly in 12:42, 47-48 and 17:8, 10. Here the master's commandments are discussed as such. The consequence on the human side, Hezser notes, is unquestioned obedience. Or else there would be consequences.

3. *Punishment*.[204] Consequences for disobedience by slaves or otherwise uncalled for behaviour could be dire. A master is free to punish his slave when and how he desires. Even if a slave does not transgress an explicit commandment, he may still be punished for doing something which her or his master did not wish for. Rabbinic parables are not reluctant to show God acting in such a way.[205] However, parables often show the other side of the medal as well. They regularly feature a master who graciously rewards his slaves. We can see this in e.g. Luke 12:35-48, 19:11-27. Hezser goes further and shows how the metaphoric language may sometimes shift when punishment becomes reward. "If they obey him, they are treated like children, but if they disobey, they are treated like slaves."[206] Metaphorical slaves can sometimes become metaphorical sons. This does not occur in the Gospel of Luke, but the two possibilities of punishment and reward and the different behaviour by the master that goes with it, are very much present.

4. *Ownership and control*.[207] The slave's body and mind belong to his or her master. There are no limits to this ownership, which led many female slaves to be sexually abused. The theological notion is that God has complete control over His 'slaves' and is the One Who gives and takes life. Generally speaking, being under the control of God is seen as a privilege. Not just anyone can become a slave of God, choosing slaves also lies within the control of God. For that reason it is a privilege to be the slave of God, and because God is a benevolent

[203] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 42-3.
[204] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 43-7.
[205] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 43. Hezser gives an example from the Midrash on Leviticus 10.
[206] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 44.
[207] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 47-9.

master. He is unlike human masters, who often treat their slaves harsh, unfair, or right-out wrong.

Besides these four theological notions, Hezser discusses two other relevant ideas for our study into the Gospel of Luke.[208] Luke calls Mary a slave in 1:38. This leads Hezser to ask the uncomfortable question whether Mary's body was used in a way many slave owners used the bodies of their female slaves. Hezser herself does not take up a specific position in this debate but carries on the line of thought. If Mary would have been a slave in the Roman Empire, her Child would be too. Jesus would have been a slave.

This leads us to the second idea: while Mary is called a slave, in the Gospel of Luke Jesus never is. Matthew does use slave terminology for Jesus in Matt 12:18, but Luke never does. Apparently, for him, this is not a possible way of thinking about Jesus. Hezser thinks this might be because of Luke's Hellenistic context or his wish to portray Jesus as distinct from other biblical leadership figures. To summarise, Hezser sees theological reasons for the authors of the Bible (including Luke) to use the metaphor of master and slave. Luke is no exception, if anything, he emphasises the distinction God-human/master-slave slightly more than the other New Testament authors.

8.2 Luke's Theology

The oppressed

Robert C. Tannehill has devoted a chapter to Jesus' attention to the oppressed in the Gospel of Luke.[209] The authors above mentioned Luke 4:18-19, Tannehill takes this text as his starting point. He sees it as a proclamation of, at least, Jesus' release of the poor, of those possessed by demons, and of sins. Human behaviour often uphold injustice, but in Luke God disturbs this to bring justice to the oppressed. The parables are one of the places where this occurs. Tannehill singles out some groups: the poor, women, tax collectors. Slaves are absent in the entire chapter. For Luke, Jesus is the Saviour of the excluded and oppressed. Slaves are not as such included among them.

[208] Hezser, *Jewish Monotheism and Slavery*, 49-51.

[209] Robert C. Tannehill, "Chapter Four – Jesus' Ministry to the Oppressed and Excluded," in *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, Vol. 1: The Gospel according to Luke (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 101-39.

Darrell L. Bock has written a similar chapter on the issue.[210] Admittedly, Bock sets out to discuss only the groups he mentions at the start of the chapter: women, the poor, the lame, and the blind. Bock does not suggest that he provides an overview of all social dimensions in the Gospel. He makes an important remark in his conclusion:

> The social dimensions of Luke show no effort at revolution or political overthrow. What the texts do evidence is an outreach to those on the edge of society. Appreciation for God's way leads into values that care about such people in contrast to the way the world has cast them aside.[211]

Luke is not out after revolution, I would say this extends to the institution of slavery. It is individual people or groups who need to change, not the political reality.

God's sovereignty

God's sovereignty is an important idea for the theology of Luke. It touches upon the theological notions Hezser presented. Brittany E. Wilson writes on the topic in her book *Unmanly Men*.[212] To some extent Luke takes over androcentric norms, common in the first century AD; power is often attributed to *men*. On the other, Luke's link between power and *masculinity* is not as strong as with many contemporary authors. When describing God's power Luke uses masculine terms such as Father and Lord, but ultimately he sets God apart from 'human men'. God's masculinity is not like that of people but is more paradoxical by nature. God Himself is presented as all powerful but suffers Himself too. This is especially evident through Luke's identification of God and Jesus. Wilson sees the use of violence as an expression of a certain type of masculinity. God uses violence in the Gospel of Luke, but this is to emphasise His sovereignty. This violence is paradoxical too, because in the end salvation is brought by God subjecting Himself to violence. While power for Luke is primarily located with God, not with humans, this power undergoes a significant transformation resulting in an image of God being powerful and powerless at the same time.

Ian Howard Marshall discusses God's sovereignty in the context of His will in salvation history.[213] Marshall uses the image of a master and slave to describe God's sovereignty.[214] This sovereignty is distinguishable in the unfolding of (salvation) history,

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[210] Darrell L. Bock, "Chapter 17 – Women, the Poor, and Social Dimensions in Luke-Acts," in *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 343-58.

[211] Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 358.

[212] Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, see especially the conclusion 243-63.

[213] Ian Howard Marshall, "God My Saviour".

[214] Marshall, *Luke*, 104.

which is guided by God's free will according to Luke. People participate in the unfolding of history by obeying God.

Christology

How Jesus Christ is related to this sovereign God helps understand how Jesus speaks of Himself as a master in the Gospel of Luke. Luuk van de Weghe considers Luke to have a complex, but rather high Christology.[215] Two developing lines of, what Van de Wehge calls, a *lower-level* and *higher-level* Christology culminate in the assertion that Jesus is both κύριος and χριστός.[216] Jesus receives the confirmation that He is indeed God, this happens through His servanthood and suffering. This recalls the paradoxical nature of God's sovereignty that Wilson had described.

Bock recognises the developmental nature of Luke's Christology through the Gospel.[217] The most important designation of Jesus for Luke is Lord, which relates Him very closely to God and designates Jesus' crucial role in human salvation. Bock also writes on Jesus being called παῖς, which he translates as 'servant'. This highlights Jesus' humility in His suffering and His prophetic mission. Luke does not use this title often, and interestingly never calls Jesus δοῦλος, as I mentioned above. Bock's work nuances the assertion made by Hezser that Jesus is not called slave in the Gospel of Luke. At the same time this further emphasis Luke's reluctance to speak of Jesus in such a way.

8.3 My Answer

How do these parables fit in Luke's vision of the relationship between God and humans?

Before formulating my answer to this question, I want to underline that categorising these parables as slavery parables is a step I and other scholars have taken, they are not so categorised in the Gospel. McComiskey—and, of course, countless others—have produced theological analyses of the same pericopes without addressing slavery metaphors as a separate category. Luke's intent was never to give an overview of slavery parables to make a point about actual slavery or about slavery as a way of describing the divine-human relationship. Rather, the parables serve to make points of their own. Luke 20:9-19 has a message identifiably different from 12:42-48, for example. The sub-question does group some of the

[215] Van de Weghe, "Early Divine Christology," 89-117.

[216] Van de Weghe includes Acts in his review, he often refers to Peter's words in Acts 2:36.

[217] Darrell L. Bock, "Chapter 8 – Messiah, Servant, Prophet, Savior, Son of Man, and Lord: A Synthesis on the Person and Work of Jesus," in *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 177-209.

slavery parables together to discover how the use of the image of slavery fits within Luke's theological understanding of the relationship between God and humans.

Stoutjesdijk and Hezser both make the point that slave and master is just one way of speaking about God and humans. The metaphor of father and son is found in a plethora of other rabbinic and Christian parables.[218] We encountered it in Luke 20 to speak of God and Jesus, but the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) (arguably the best-known of Jesus' parables) uses it to speak of God and humans. Luke employs many more images to describe this relationship: a man and his guests (14:16-24), farmer and lands (8:4-15), shepherd and sheep (15:3-7). On the other hand, the image of master and slave is not reserved exclusively for God and believers, as we have seen in the previous chapters. The slaves in 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19 are to be identified with, at the very least, believers and the Old Testament prophets. The master is often to be taken to refer to God or Jesus, but this does not mean readers of Luke are not encouraged to think from the position of the master. Having said that, the most common identification is that of master-God and slave-human.[219]

Hezser has shown convincingly that Luke is hesitant to speak of Jesus as a slave, let alone God the Father. Taking into account Luke's Christology as sketched by Van de Weghe and Bock helps make sense of the ideas underlying this hesitance. Because Luke sees God and Jesus so closely related and distinct form humans, it is difficult to use the image of a lowly slave. It is interesting that Luke seems to want to take a step in that direction by using παῖς, but δοῦλος is a bridge too far. The parable of The Watchful Slaves allows Luke to have Jesus serve like slave, without having Him be one. In doing so, he upholds Jesus' Lordship while combining it with His servanthood.

I find Hezser's theological examination of the slavery metaphor helpful in understanding why Luke uses it in the way that he does. All four theological notions are recognisable themes in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19. (1) The hierarchical difference

[218] Stoutjesdijk, "God as Father and Master." For a further discussion of the sonship metaphor see also: Annette Merz and Albertina Oegema, "Honouring Human Agency and Autonomy: Children as Agents in New Testament and Early Rabbinic Parables," in *Power of Parables: Narrative and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 39, ed. Eric Ottenheim, Marcel Poorthuis, and Annette Merz (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 223-48. Merz and Oegema note how differently fathers may be portrayed in parables. The same goes for masters in the Gospel of Luke. The extreme presentations could perhaps increase the memorability Zimmermann deems essential to a successful parable.

[219] Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?," 207-10. This distribution of roles was standard in early rabbinic and early Christian parables. Stoutjesdijk mentions an exception, where God is identified with a slave. Because this specific parable is relatively old, he argues that the standard role patterns became fixed in a later stadium. The Gospel of Luke would predate the rabbinic parable Stoutjesdijk discusses. I agree with Stoutjesdijk's argument, as with Luke the pattern is not yet fixed. Luke, however, seems to have already felt uneasy with identifying Jesus and God with a slave. Such unease would bring later rabbi's to readjust earlier parables, Stoutjesdijk writes.

is instrumental in all interaction between slaves and masters. The master is elevated above his slaves and acts as such. Even rhetorically this is noticeable: the character of the master is the one whose inner life is most visible, most worked-out. (2) Commandments are handed out in 12:35-36, 42; 17:7-8; and 20:10-12. That the correct response on the slave's part is unconditional obedience is explicitly worded in 12:47-48. (3) Punishment and reward are found in three parables in Luke 12 and 17.[220] It even relates directly to Jesus' applications of these parables. (4) Ownership and control, like the hierarchical order, are a given in these Lukan parables. The sending of slaves to the vineyard in the hand of violent abusers is exemplary.

All four theological notions fit within an understanding of God as being sovereign. Sovereignty is very easily combined with a large hierarchical divide, from which then can follow other consequences: giving commandments, requiring obedience, punishment and reward. Wilson and Marshall both in their own way show Luke to subvert traditional opinions on sovereignty and power. In a paradoxical way God becomes powerless. We see this happening in The Watchful Slaves and The Wicked Tenants. The master becomes a powerless figure, who never actually loses power. I would like to reluctantly suggest this is rather rare in Luke's use of the slavery image. Such a subversion is not found in A Master and a Slave or The Just and Unjust Manager. The everyday reality of slavery is taken for granted in most parables.[221]

Luke is able to use the metaphor of slavery because, ultimately, his theological understanding of the human-divine relationship is not much different from other Jewish or early Christian authors. Hezser's theological scheme fits Luke's Gospel. Schottroff, Beavis, and Zimmermann present Luke more critical of the everyday practice of slavery, than these parables showcase. The social-critical voice, for which the Gospel is known, does not—at least not explicitly—extend to the institution of slavery. Dowling is closer to the truth in her remark that the practice of slavery is largely upheld in the Gospel of Luke. The biblical theological work by Bock and Tannehill support this reading. Luke is very much interested in social issues, but slavery simply is not one of the issues he addresses. So, he is not hindered in using slavery as a metaphor.

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[220] The Parable of the Wicked Tenants sees the slaves abused, but this is no punishment or reward on the part of their master. It is a consequence of their work; the tenants are at fault in their violence toward the slaves.

[221] I think here of some parables I have not included in this research, but would point in this direction at first glance: e.g. The Great Dinner (14:15-24), The Minas (19:11-27).

The theological notions Hezser has formulated require us to regard the metaphor of slavery for what it is, metaphorical use of actual slavery. Downplaying this fact, for example by heading these parables under a larger patron-client discourse, obscures certain dimensions. Especially corporal punishment and ownership escape sight. It is these theological notions that make Luke describe God and humans as master and slaves. At times, some tension rises between this use and other theological ideas, but this is resolved by other means, leaving in the end no significant objections for Luke to use the image.

9. Conclusion and Discussion

9.1 Conclusion

Modern-day discomfort with slavery is one of the reasons for writing this thesis, as was mentioned in the introduction. We have not encountered such unease or reluctance to use slavery as a metaphor in the parables in Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19. In these parables the metaphor of slavery features in diverse ways. In The Watchful Slaves the roles of master and slaves are reversed when the master begins serving his slaves. In The Just and Unjust Manager, A Master and a Slave, and The Wicked Tenants metaphoric slavery more closely resembles actual slavery practices. The identification of master and slave is diverse too. We have seen slaves being identified with Old Testament prophets, the crowds, the twelve disciples, faith, or extra-textual: Luke's readers. His audience and Jesus' audience are encouraged to think from the point-of-view of the master in 17:7-9 and 20:9-16. The slavery metaphor is not set in stone for Luke. It serves as an image he can adapt to serve his literary and theological purposes. The most prevalent identification, however, is that of God/Jesus-master and believer-slave. Gerd Theissen's blending theory highlighted the fact that the image of master is able to cross the ontological border from the human into the divine ontological realm, which the image of slave is not. To think of God as a slave is no option for Luke. He comes closer to this identification for Jesus but does not make it. The Son of Man begins serving His slaves in 12:37 but does not become a slave. Luke calls Jesus παῖς, but never δοῦλος.

The dominant identification of God/Jesus-master and believer-slave is regarded by some as problematic to Luke's theology. His attention to social dimensions were part of the reason to examine his Gospel. To us, this emphasis on dimensions of social injustice and the implications Jesus' message has for them, may seem irreconcilable with the maintaining of slavery language in the parables. Examination of Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19 has shown that Luke does not make an attempt to overturn the system of slavery. He makes use of the everyday reality of slavery to make his own theological points. The metaphor of slavery is frequently used because the imagery represents—at least partly—his conception of the divine-human relationship. This relationship is characterised by hierarchical difference, commandments and rules, the handing out of reward and punishment, and ownership and control. The slavery metaphor captures these theological convictions and relates them to a high Christology and emphasis on God's sovereignty, which are important to Luke.

An important note to be made is that Luke's vision on the divine-human relationship is not exclusively discussed in terms of slavery. The metaphor of sonship is one example of the variety of expressions for this relationship. The above characterisations are certainly part of Luke's vision, but it cannot be argued that a complete overview has been given in this thesis.

If any of the Gospels would be critical of slavery, we might expect it to be Luke. It can be a strange reading experience to encounter slaves humiliated, mistreated, beaten, abused, without a narrator criticising all of this. In all reality, Luke does not deviate far from contemporary authors in the reasons for applying this metaphor. He sees good reason to present these slaves and their masters to his readers, as they—for him—represent something of the God he wants to tell the world about and about the people that (should) follow Him.

9.2 Discussion

The selection of pericopes has proven interesting and fruitful. They have provided us with an image of slavery in the Gospel of Luke that is diverse, while they are comprehensible for a study of this length at the same time. Had its length and the time available been greater, it would have been possible to study all parables that feature slavery in Luke. This would make it possible to come to even more conclusive judgements. The same limits have prevented me from making a synoptic comparison, which would be very much worthwhile. It would enable us to compare Luke's theology with those of Mark and Matthew. Especially regarding the social implications of the Gospel, for which Luke is so well-known, this would be very interesting.

In my thesis I have made use of Stoutjesdijk's work on the parables, especially his thesis "Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?. He is one of the scholars who work along the newly developed lines of research sketched in the introduction and state of the research. My thesis resembles Stoutjesdijk's studies in the examination of slavery parables and their theological implications. To some extent our conclusions overlap. He, too, recognises the ability of the slavery metaphor to speak of the relationship between God and humans.[222] Where I differ from Stoutjesdijk is in the scope of the study. Stoutjesdijk takes into account both Jewish and Christian parables and selects Christian parables from both canonical and extra-canonical texts. My thesis is focussed on the Gospel of Luke. This limits my view, but on the other hand allows for a closer examination of the specific theological context of the parables. Whereas Stoutjesdijk is able to present an overview of the diversity of parabolic slavery, this thesis

[222] Stoutjesdijk, ""Not like the Rest"?," 280-1.

shows how concentrating on a single author can highlight specific usage of the metaphor within a single work. Theissen's blending theory provided new insights into how for Luke the ability the metaphor has this ability to speak of God and humans.

Under the main research question and the following sub-questions lies the presupposition that Jesus' parables featuring slavery deal with the relationship between God and humans. This may not be an unwarranted presupposition, many of the scholars cited share this conviction, it is a presupposition, nevertheless. The exegetical method of a combined narrative and rhetorical analysis have been successful in the present study in postponing the moment of identification of the master and the slave. It has allowed me to study the interaction, the relationship between slaves and masters more isolated from the question of identification. This has prevented me from reviewing the relationship between master and slave through the lens of the interpretation of the parable as a whole. When I came to this second task, the identification was more diverse than the initial presupposition had suggested. This presupposition was confirmed in the sense that God/Jesus-master and human/believer-slave is the most common identification. The exegetical method has led to this confirmation, elevating it above a simple gut-feeling.

9.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The exegetical work takes up the majority of the work of this research. Further biblical theological study may shed light on aspects that are not given full weight in this present work. Both more in-depth study in the theological dimensions addressed now (Christology, social implications, God's sovereignty) and reviewing new dimensions (e.g. Luke's soteriology and its relation to manumission or reward) are worthwhile directions for this further study.

As mentioned above, a synoptic comparison is needed to evaluate whether Luke treats the metaphor of slavery differently from Mark and Matthew. It is not inconceivable that he makes redactional choices that result in a different treatment of slaves. The institution of slavery remains in place within Luke, but perhaps his slaves are treated with more compassion, for example.

Zimmermann's approach has been helpful in keeping my eyes open and has challenged me to look beyond my own expectations, Theissen has been instrumental in distinguishing the boundaries of identification. However, a different approach would have been possible, too. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow's use of the theory of conceptual blending produced valuable results in her own work. Undoubtedly, the conceptual blending theory would have meant the same for Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19. When shifting the

weight in research from exegetical to biblical theological analysis, conceptual blending theory should definitely be taken into account. It would shed light on how the conceptual pairs God/Jesus-master and human/believer-slave exert influence on the interpretations of each’s counterparts.

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11. Declaration Sheet

Declaration Sheet Master's Thesis

Name student: Gerrit Benjamin Mazier

Title master's thesis: Do You Thank the Slave?

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the aforementioned master's thesis consists of original work. The thesis is the result of my own research and is written only by myself, unless stated otherwise. Where information and ideas have been taken from other sources, this is stated explicitly, completely and appropriately in the text or in the notes. A bibliography has been included.

Place, date: Harderwijk 20 June 2024

Signature: G.B. Mazier

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I hereby agree that the aforementioned master's thesis will be made available for inclusion in the library collection after its approval and that the metadata will be made available to external organizations and/or published by the PThU.
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Signature: G.B. Mazier

12. Data Management Plan

1. General information

Name of student: Gerrit Benjamin Mazier

Names of thesis supervisor(s): Dr. J.L.H. Krans-Plaisier

Date: 20 June 2024

Version: final version

2. General information about research and subject of the thesis

(Provisional) title of the research / thesis:
Do You Thank the Slave?: The Meaning of the Metaphor of Slavery in Jesus' Parables for the Relationship between God and Humans in the Gospel of Luke

Short description of the research project and method(s):
The research consists of a narrative and rhetorical exegesis of Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10, and 20:9-19. Secondary literature such as commentaries, journal articles and monographs are used to further analyse the texts.

Type of research data to be collected:
Academic literature

Period in which the data will be collected:
February-June 2024

3. Technical aspects of the data storage

Hardware and software:
Personal laptop, printed form

File formats:
PDF, EPUB

Size of the data (estimate in MB/GB/TB):
Not applicable

Storage of data while conducting research:
Personal laptop, printed form

Storage of data after completion of research:
Not applicable

4. Responsibilities

Management of data while conducting research:
Not applicable

Management of data after completion of research:
Not applicable

5. Legal and ethical aspects

Owner of data:
Respective authors

Are data privacy sensitive? ~~YES~~ / <u>NO</u>

If YES: How will you arrange safe storage and consent of the persons and organisations involved in your research?

6. Other aspects

Not applicable

==

(*The following has to be filled in by the thesis supervisor:*)

☒ Approved

☐ Not approved, because: ____

____

____

Name Dr. J.L.H. Krans-Plaisier

Signature: ____

Date: 21 June 2024

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Protestant Theological University

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