

The Parable of the Vineyard in Luke's Gospel (20.9-19): Text and Tradition

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Paraules clau: Receptors de la paràbola, tradició jueva, Temple, dirigents jueus, injustícia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this study of the Parable of the Vineyard (otherwise known as the Parable of the Wicked Tenants) I will be looking at its rendering in Luke's Gospel alone, without comparing it with the form given to it by Matthew and Mark. In this way, we will be better able to see what Luke sought to communicate and what he may have expected his intended audience to have understood from the parable. Comparison with the other Gospels can confuse the reading of it in Luke's Gospel, because presuppositions about Luke as an author often tend to intrude and colour our judgement of his writings when considering them alongside the synoptic parallels.

What will be important, however, will be to consider Luke's text in the context of earlier scriptural representations of the vineyard motif which would in all probability have been familiar to Jesus and to his original hearers. The most striking of the scriptural passages is Isaiah 5.1-5, known as *The Song of the Vineyard*. Studies of this passage by other contributors to the present volume consider this text in Hebrew as well as in the various versions of the Greek Septuagint and the Aramaic targum, and each of these forms will be seen to be relevant to the study of Luke. If we are to hear the words of Jesus with something at least approaching the meaning he gave them and

which his hearers would have captured, we cannot ignore the earlier traditions. These would have circulated in the first century not so much in written form as in the form of oral teachings, legends, and translations. At a time when there is much talk about the Vatican II document *Verbum Dei*, which restates the importance for the Catholic Church of both Scripture and tradition, it is pertinent to remember that for Jews in the first century the Hebrew Scriptures did not stand alone either, but were supported and complemented by traditional interpretations and reflections on them, which carried authority and which affected on-going reflection on them. The oral nature of the traditions prior to time of Jesus makes them difficult to identify and describe with precision, but this is where the writings of the New Testament can, indeed, serve as an early source for our knowledge of them.

2. THE TEXT

The Greek text according to the edition of Nestle-Aland²⁸ is set out at the end of the article, with the English translation of the Revised Standard Version (Appendix, Table 1). Significant variant readings of the Greek text, as well as details of the translation, will be commented on in due course. Luke's narrative falls into two parts, the first transmitting the parable as told by Jesus himself, and the second presenting the response of the hearers which leads to Jesus issuing a warning to them by means of scriptural citations. A final narrator's comment on the reaction of the hearers brings the scene to a close.

The story of the parable is familiar enough and the content in itself is unproblematic. It is worth noting, however, certain aspects of the narrative. Contrary to what might perhaps be expected, the initial focus of the story is not the owner of the vineyard but the vineyard itself. The owner is simply «a man», with most manuscripts not even highlighting his identity with the pronoun τις («a certain»; placed in square brackets in N-A²⁸).¹ In some important Greek manuscripts (Codex Ephremi rescriptus C04, and Codex Bezae D05), as well as the Old Latin version (it), the object of the sentence, ἀμπελῶνα, «vineyard» is accorded particular prominence by being placed as the first word before both the verb and the subject. Among the characters of the story, the spotlight is on the tenants of the vineyard and on their actions and attitudes, rather than on the landlord who, after the initial mention, is absent from the scene, being occupied in other countries for a considerable period of time.

1. While it may be thought that the inclusion of τις at the beginning of a parable is typical of Lukan style, this could be precisely the reason for the pronoun to be have been added.

It is frequently noted that the introduction to the parable in Luke's Gospel lacks three elements that are present in the parallel accounts of Mk 12.1-12 and Mt 21.33-46, features that show a clear allusion to the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah: a hedge/enclosure (Isa 5.5), a watchtower (5.2a) and a wine vat (5.2b). A common explanation is that since Luke was a Gentile addressing a Gentile audience they would not have grasped the allusion to the prophetic text and so he omitted the details.² This explanation will be seen, as we examine the Lukan passage more closely, to be founded on presuppositions about Luke's identity and purpose rather than fact.

3. THE ADDRESSEES OF THE PARABLE

An immediate question to settle is to whom Jesus is supposed to have spoken this parable according to Luke's account. In vv. 9 and 19, it is apparent that 'the people' were present, mentioned with the term *λαός*, which is used by Luke to refer to the people of Israel. In v. 1, at the beginning of this episode, it was already said that Jesus was teaching the people, and now in v. 9, he tells this parable «to the people» (*πρὸς τὸν λαόν*). At the same time, v. 19 makes mention of «the scribes and the chief priests». These leaders of the people were also already introduced at the beginning of the episode in v. 1 where, together with «the elders», they arrived on the scene while Jesus was teaching the people. Careful note should be made that in v. 19, Luke comments that the scribes and the chief priests understood that Jesus had told the parable of the vineyard «to them»: *πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἶπεν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην*. The usual translation of «against them» avoids the plain sense of the Greek, which is that he addressed the parable «to them». The bending of the translation helps to match the reflection of the leaders with Luke's earlier comment that Jesus addressed the parable «to the people». The problem was apparently felt by early copyists of Luke's text: while D05 avoids the problem by not including this detail in v. 9, it could also be thought that it was added because otherwise the reflection of the leaders in v. 19 is unnecessary. In any case, what is clear is that the people were present and heard Jesus telling this parable, and that the leaders understood that it was to them that he addressed it, which suggests that the people would have also realised that.

In order to better understand the message and intention of the parable, it will be useful to consider who exactly these leaders were. V. 19 mentions the scribes and the chief priests in particular. While there is a lack

2. See R. H. ANDERSON, «Luke and the Wicked Tenants» [online], <<http://people.duke.edu/~goodacre/synoptic-1/tenants.htm>> [last accessed 20/03/2014].

of specific information on the class of scribes, it is known that they were «lay», as opposed to «priestly» leaders, responsible for the teaching and interpretation of the Law. At times referred to as «the scribes of the Pharisees» (Mk 2.16; Acts 23.9), they represented a powerful and influential force of authority among the Jewish leaders, often mentioned alongside the chief priests and elders (see Acts 4.5; 6.12). They would most probably have been members of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body responsible for the regulation of all aspects of Jewish life. Also members of the Sanhedrin and occupying positions of prominence among the rulers of Israel were the «chief priests». In reality, there was not many but only one «high priest» (ἄρχιερεὺς) who, since 18 CE and until after the death of Jesus, was Caiaphas. The use of the title in the plural probably alludes to the continuing presence and influence of former high priests, in particular those of the family of Annas (high priest, 6-15 CE) to which Caiaphas was connected through his marriage to a daughter. The active presence of more than one high priest in the time of Jesus was due to the situation created by the Roman occupation of the country. Wishing to control and limit the power of the highest ruler of the Jews, the Romans altered the traditional pattern of passing the office of high priesthood from father to son to a system whereby the holder of the position was chosen from among certain families who could be relied on to collaborate with the Roman authorities, and he was replaced at frequent intervals according to local circumstances. Annas' eldest son, Eleazar, had followed him for two years from 16-17, before Caiaphas took over; and four more younger sons served in later years, among whom must be noted one named Theophilus who was high priest from 37-41 CE. It has been argued elsewhere³ that as the only Jew in the two centuries 1 BCE – 1 CE recorded to have had that name,⁴ this Theophilus is a highly plausible candidate for the character to whom Luke addressed his two volumes —as long as, that is, the peculiarly Jewish perspective and mentality of Luke's narrative are recognized. We will be bearing these matters in mind as we continue with the examination of the text. Meanwhile, it can be noted that Luke's mention here of the presence of the «chief priests» among the

3. Arguments advocating the identity of Theophilus as the High Priest were first presented by R. ANDERSON, «À la recherche de Théophile», in *Saint Luc, évangéliste et historien, Dossiers d'Archéologie* 279 (2002-2003) 64-71. They are developed by J. RIUS-CAMPS – J. READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Luke's Demonstration to Theophilus: The Gospel and Acts of the Apostles according to Codex Bezae* (English expanded edn), London: Bloomsbury 2013, pp. XXV-XXVII; see also by the same authors *The Message of the Bezan Text of Acts: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition*, Vol. 3: *Acts 13.1-18.23: The Ends of the Earth* (LNTS 365), London: T&T Clark 2007, pp. 3-4.

4. The data is provided by Tal ILAN, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity, Part I: Palestine 330 BCE – 200 CE*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2002.

people to whom Jesus directed the parable is particularly meaningful and its relevance especially striking if the reference includes Theophilus as the person for whom Luke eventually wrote his account.

4. THE PARABLE IN ITS GOSPEL CONTEXT

The construction of Luke's Gospel shows evidence of careful arrangement, with patterns of structure⁵ that serve to enhance the cohesion of the narrative. The placing of episodes propels the action forward and allows meaning to be derived from their position in relation to each other. The passage of Lk. 20.9-19 belongs to the wider section that begins at 20.1 and goes through to the end of chapter 21 (21.38). This section is centred on the teaching of Jesus within the Temple, and in relation to the Temple: it includes the questioning of Jesus by the leaders and the Temple authorities about his message, his identity, his authority.

The beginning of the section at 20.1 is marked by an expression that frequently marks the onset of a new section, *καὶ ἐγένετο* (N-A²⁸) or *ἐγένετο δέ* (D05). This expression typically ties the new section closely to previous incidents and action and, particularly with the conjunction *δέ*, builds on them and presents the following action as developing from them. The previous section in this case, comprising 18.35-19.48, is made up of the story of the journey from Jericho to Jerusalem as Jesus draws ever closer until he arrives in the Temple itself.⁶

In the episode with which the previous section closes, the one immediately preceding the teaching in the Temple in chapters 20-21, Luke describes the cleansing of the Temple by Jesus (19.45-46). His first action on arriving in Jerusalem is seen to be the driving out of those who were engaged in trade to do with the Temple sacrifices. Jesus accompanies his dramatic

5. See RIUS-CAMPS – READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Luke's Demonstration*, pp. XVII-XX.

6. The new section is sometimes taken as starting with a summary statement at 19.47a (see, e.g., A. PUIG I TÀRRECH, «La Paràbola dels vinyaters homicides (Lc 20,9-19) en el context de Lc-Ac», *RCatT* 16 (1991) 39-65, 40; cf. J. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV. Introduction, Translation and Notes* (The Anchor Bible 28A), New York: Doubleday & Company 1985, p. 1241. However, the word order of this sentence, which has the verb *ἦν διδάσκων* as the first constituent (after the conjunction *καὶ*) and the same subject (Jesus) as the preceding sentences, is indicative of continuity rather than rupture. There is a change of subject at 19.47b to the chief priests and the scribes, who are placed before the verb and introduced with *δέ*, which could potentially constitute the frame of reference for a new episode, but the use of *καὶ ἐγένετο* in the next sentence at 20.1 occurs so frequently in Luke's Gospel at the start of a new section that it would indicate that the narrator saw this sentence as rather than any other as the boundary between the journey to Jerusalem section and the Temple section.

action with the prophetic declaration: «My house is a house of prayer but you have made it a cave of robbers» (19.46). Who exactly was driven out is a question of some debate, but what is clear in any case is that it was the Temple authorities who were responsible for all the activity within the Temple courts. It is they who have allowed unfair trade and profiteering to exist within the Temple, and who no doubt gained from it. The attack of Jesus on the rich Temple rulers, whom he describes as no less than «robbers», brings to a head the theme of wealth that has been to the fore throughout this section (the rich tax collector, Zaccheus; the parable of the ten pounds). However, it must be noted that Jesus does not attack the Temple as such, neither as a place of worship nor as a system of sacrifice; rather, he declaims against the unjust practices that are designed make money out of it.

Luke follows Jesus' cleansing of the Temple with a comment on the Jewish rulers that brings to a close the section. By setting it out in parallel with the comment that closes the episode with the parable of the vineyard, striking similarities between them can be seen.

19.47-48	20.19
<p>⁴⁷ οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν ἀπολέσαι καὶ οἱ πρῶτοι τοῦ λαοῦ</p> <p>⁴⁸ καὶ οὐκ εὗρισκον τὸ τί ποιήσωσιν· ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἅπας ἐξεκρέματο αὐτοῦ ἀκούων.</p>	<p>¹⁹ Καὶ ἐζήτησαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ἐπιβαλεῖν ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸν λαόν· ἔγνωσαν γὰρ ὅτι πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἶπεν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην.</p>
<p>⁴⁷ The chief priests and the scribes – and the leaders of the people, too – started seeking to get rid of him,</p> <p>⁴⁸ and they could not find what they could do;</p> <p>for all the people were hanging on what they heard.</p>	<p>The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour,</p> <p>and they feared the people;</p> <p>for they perceived that he had told this parable against them.</p>

In both instances, the rulers consider killing Jesus. In the first case, a second point made (conjoined with καί) is that they do not know how to go about it; and the people's eager response to Jesus' words (γάρ) (all imperfect verbs) is noted not only to explain their failure to come up with a plan but, conceivably, even their intention of getting rid of Jesus. In the second passage, the intensity of the desire to seize Jesus steps up a level (ἐζήτησαν, aorist), and at the same time (καί), the rulers are afraid of the people because (γάρ) they realise that, in the hearing of the people, Jesus has

directed the parable to them. Translations that indicate that they were prevented from taking action by their fear of the people⁷ do not reflect Luke's meaning according to the Greek text of N-A:²⁸ their realisation that Jesus had been speaking to them, in the hearing of the people, creates their fear of the people, and arguably also the desire to seize him (as in 19.48).⁸ The comment in both 19.48 and 20.19 about the people does not offer an explanation for why the rulers did not take action but, on the contrary, explains that a reason they wanted to take action was the favourable response of the people to Jesus as they saw or heard him attack their leaders.

The purification of the Temple leads into the opening episode of the following section in which the Jewish leaders question Jesus' authority with regard to his teaching in the Temple (20.1-8). It is when they fail to take up the dialogue with him on the matter of his authority that he tells the parable of the vineyard.

An examination of Jesus' first action on arriving in the Temple and the ensuing questioning of Jesus' authority by the rulers, noting the dominant theme of unethical Temple practices and observing the close similarities of the concluding narrative comments on the Jewish rulers, reveals that Luke places the parable of the vineyard within a context that deals with the unjust and self-serving behaviour of the Jewish rulers. Their particular wrongdoing as the tenants of the vineyard is that they are wanting to keep the profits of the vineyard for themselves, to the point that they not only refuse to give anything to the servants sent by the owner to collect his dues but they even go so far as to kill the owner's son so that they inherit the vineyard in his place. The focus of the parable is on the extreme greed and injustice of the tenants in rejecting the son. By implication, Jesus' criticism of the Jewish leaders whom he is addressing is not founded on their rejection of him as a person *per se*, for ideological reasons for example, but on their desire for wealth and profit acquired by illicit means.⁹

7. E.g., NIV: «The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.»

8. Even with the conjunction $\delta\epsilon$ at 20.19b, as read by D05, the meaning is not necessarily adversative for Luke commonly uses $\delta\epsilon$ to present the development of his narrative. In other words, the rulers wanted to kill Jesus; and furthermore, they were afraid of the people, because they knew that the people had heard Jesus criticize them.

9. The focus of the responsibility of the Jewish leaders is clearly demonstrated by PUIG I TÀRRECH, «La Paràbola dels vinyaters homicides». He tends, however, to overstate the relative «innocence» of the people by appealing to the references to their «ignorance» (Acts 3.17; 13.27). According to Jewish Law, ignorance is not an excuse for wrong-doing but rather a cause of it. It does not remove the blame, since the Law has still been broken and reparation has to be made (Lev 5.17). What Peter does suggest nonetheless, is that it was in following the rulers that

5. THE PARABLE IN THE CONTEXT OF JEWISH TRADITION

As noted above (§2), Luke does not include in his report of Jesus' parable any descriptive details of the vineyard (the hedge/enclosure: φραγμός, the watch tower: πύργος, or the wine vat: ὄρυζα), which could create an obvious verbal link to the Song of the Vineyard in Isa. 5.1-5. The absence of details sets Luke's narrative apart from the accounts of Mark and Matthew, but sets it alongside that of the *Gospel of Thomas* (see Appendix, Table 2), which likewise omits the key details. The similarities between the Luke and *GThom.* could suggest that they both reflect an early form of the parable. However, answering the question of the date of Luke's account compared with the other Gospels, in fact, does not depend simply on the inclusion or omission of factual details. A second suggestion is that their absence reflects the Gentile nature of the audience addressed by Luke, who are thought not to have been able to understand or appreciate the allusion to a Jewish prophetic text.¹⁰ The reasoning is flawed on at least three counts:

1. There is a scriptural reference at end of the episode (also present in *GThom.* 66), without any explanatory information.
2. The idea that Luke addressed Gentiles is a presupposition derived from a certain reading of Luke's Gospel based, variously, on the Greek name of the author, the Greek name of the addressee, the high level of the literary Greek with which Luke writes, and the interest shown (more in the second volume than the first) in the Gentiles. While any one of these factors may have been persuasive in past scholarship, with the advancing knowledge of first century Judaism, especially Hellenistic Judaism, none carries persuasive weight any longer.¹¹
3. There is much internal evidence that the author of the third Gospel and Acts was a sophisticated and highly educated Jew, intimately familiar with Jewish ways of thinking, and of exegeting Scripture in particular; and that, given the amount of subtle and intricate allusions to oral tradition and

the people committed a crime (3.17, especially Codex Bezae supported by most of the early versions; see RIUS-CAMPS – READ-HEIMERDINGER, *The Message of the Bezan Text of Acts: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition*, Vol. 1: *Acts 1.1-5.42: Jerusalem* (JSNTSup. 257); London: T&T Clark 2004, pp. 222-23; 231-33; READ-HEIMERDINGER, «Unintentional Sins in Peter's Speech in Acts 3», *RCatT* 2 (1995) 269-76.

10. See ANDERSON, «Luke and the Wicked Tenants».

11. The question of the identity of Luke and his audience is discussed in detail by R. STRELAN, *Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2008. His conclusion is that Luke was a Jewish priest; for a survey of scholarly opinion, see especially pp. 102-106.

teachings, he must have been addressing a Jew who shared this familiarity and advanced level of training. The evidence for an author who was skilled in Jewish exegesis is especially apparent in witnesses to the text that have been dismissed for the reconstruction of the Greek New Testament generally used by exegetes today.¹² The extent of the Jewish mentality in this alternative text is so great that it is plausible to go so far as to posit that the Theophilus addressed by it could have been the High Priest of 37-41 CE, the third son of Annas who may well have been present in the scene in question and heard the parable for himself.¹³

It is time to go and look at Isaiah text more closely to consider to what extent an allusion to the prophetic passage may have been intended by Luke, or understood by the hearers of his Gospel.

5.1. *The Song of the Vineyard: Isa. 5.1-5*

The question that arises is how easily an allusion to Isa 5.1-5 could possibly have been recognized in Luke's account without the three pictorial details. When the two passages are considered together, it appears that there are indeed ample clues.

5.1.1. Verbal coherence

Several key words or phrases occur in both texts (highlighted and underlined in the Appendix, Table 3):

Lk 20.9-19	Isa 5.1-7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα, v. 9 - ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος, v. 13 - Τί ποιήσω; ...τί οὖν ποιήσει, vv. 13, 15 - τὸν ἀγαπητόν, v. 13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ἐφύτευσα ἄμπελον, v. 2 - ὁ ἀμπελὼν κυρίου, v. 7 - τί ποιήσω; ...τί ποιήσω, vv. 4, 5 - τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ, v. 1

12. These are, notably, Codex Bezae (D05), the Old Latin version (it), the Middle Egyptian version (G⁶⁷ or mae), the Syro-Palestinian version (sy^{pal} or sy^M), and the church fathers Irenaeus and Tertullian.

13. This idea was first seriously considered by R. ANDERSON, «À la recherche de Théophile».

At the very least, these are strong echoes, which would likely have caused Jesus' hearers to link his parable with Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard.

5.1.2. Verbal correspondence

In addition to similar wording, there is a number of verbal equivalences in the two passages (highlighted in the Appendix, Table 3):

Lk 20.9-19	Isa 5.1-7
– τὸν λαόν, vv. 9,19	– ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Ἰούδα καὶ οἱ ἐνοικούντες ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ, v. 3
– τοῦ καρποῦ τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος, v. 10	– οἶκος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, v. 7 – ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Ἰούδα, v. 7 – σταφυλήν, v. 2

We have already noted above (§3) that the term «the people» (ὁ λαός) in Luke's work is a technical term to denote the people of Israel. In the Isaiah passage, they play an important role, being referred to by a variety of phrases: «man of Judah» (vv. 3, 7), «those living in Jerusalem» (v. 3) and «house of Israel» (v. 7). Both passages likewise speak of the fruit of the vines, Luke using the paraphrastic expression (v. 10) while Isaiah uses the precise word for «vines» (v. 2).

5.1.3. Thematic coherence

Thematic coherence is seen not so much in the Song of the Vineyard itself but rather in the prophetic commentary that evolves from it (Isa 5.7-14):

– The vine is explained in Isa 5.7a to be the people of Israel, those under the care of the leaders whom God comes to call to account (cf. 3.14: «the Lord enters into judgement with the elders and princes of his people; it is you who have devoured the vineyard [...]»). Likewise, the Jewish leaders in Luke's account are responsible for the people, those whom they fear are paying more attention to Jesus than to them as the established authorities (cf. Lk 19.48).

– The expected fruits of Isaiah's vineyard were justice and righteousness (Isa 5.7b), but instead there was bloodshed and crying; likewise, the Tem-

ple authorities have behaved as robbers in the unjust trade that they have permitted to be carried out in the Temple (Lk 19.46).

– The leaders in Isaiah are portrayed as having large and beautiful houses (Isa 5.8-9; cf. 3.14), which tallies with the wealth and lavish lifestyle enjoyed by the aristocratic families among the leaders of the people in the time of Jesus.¹⁴ It is particularly the nobility (3.14; 5.13b, 14b) who are the target of Isaiah's prophecy.

– The tenants of the vineyard in Isaiah have refused the teaching of the Lord and despised the word of the «Holy One of Israel» (5.12b, 24b), just as the leaders in Luke's account reject Jesus' teaching and are afraid when they are criticized in the hearing of the people (Lk 20.19).

The above three aspects of similarity (verbal coherence and correspondence, and thematic coherence) between Luke's account of Jesus' parable and the prophecy of Isaiah are strongly suggestive of a deliberately intended allusion, which the Jewish leaders, instructed as they would have been in the Scriptures and in the images and teachings derived from it, could hardly have missed.¹⁵

A further point reinforces the likelihood that they would have heard Isaiah's prophecy behind Jesus' parable, coming as it does within the setting of the Temple. By the first century, visual features of the vineyard had come to be associated with the Temple cult. Traditions reflected in the Isaiah targum show that the vineyard was seen as representing the sanctuary (the tower) and altar (the vat).¹⁶ The same tradition is found in 1Enoch 89.73, where the watch-tower is presented as the Temple; and among the documents of Qumran, where 4Q500, based on Isa 5,1-7, has a reference to the Temple as a watch-tower in a vineyard.¹⁷

It is true that without the mention of the architectural elements of the vineyard, Luke's account does not draw attention to the cultic associations. However, far from signifying that he avoids the reference because his addressee is a Gentile who would not understand, it is equally, or even more, plausible that he omitted to spell out the association because he was speaking as a Jew to a Jew, both knowing full well what was the background

14. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, «Sadducees» [on line], <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12989-sadducees>>.

15. C. A. Evans concurs with this verdict, see *Luke* (NIBC), Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1990, pp. 730-31.

16. Isa Tg 5.2. See Bruce CHILTON, *The Isaiah Targum*, Wilmington: Glazier 1987, pp. 10-11.

17. In later Rabbinic writings, the idea is also taken up, as in the 3rd-4th cent. commentary on the Mishnah, the Tosefta, which speaks of the Temple as a tower in Sukkah 3.15.

of the mention of a vineyard. This is especially true if Theophilus were himself from a Jewish aristocratic family, directly connected to the high priesthood through former holders of the position (his father and brother) and the current one (his brother-in-law). But in any case, Jesus' own hearers, the ones to whom he addressed the parable, were educated Jewish leaders who could not fail to be familiar with the traditions connected with Isaiah 5 and the vineyard imagery. This implicit background explains why the Jewish leaders, who furthermore had just witnessed Jesus' attack on the corrupt commerce being carried out in the Temple precincts, would have understood the parable as being addressed to them: Jesus' words, preceded as they were by the action of driving out the unjust and greedy merchants from the Temple, would have readily registered as a complaint about the corrupt state of the religious leadership of Israel.

We have established, then, that there are clear similarities between Luke's rendering of Jesus' parable and the *Song of the Vineyard* in Isaiah 5. There are, at the same time, meaningful differences. Isaiah's vineyard fails to yield any fruit, whereas in Jesus' story there is no shortage of fruit but the tenants keep it for themselves. In Isaiah, attention is paid to those who are oppressed by the occupants of the vineyard, who suffer from their injustice and greed. In Luke's parable, in contrast, the focus is solely on the tenants, on their falsehood and usurping of the rights of ownership. Most striking is the difference in the endings of the two narratives, to which we will return (§6 below). First, though, it will be worth while to consider two more textual parallels from Jewish tradition which show, on the one hand, just how rooted in traditional teaching Jesus' telling of the parable was; and on the other, just how complex was the association of Scriptures on which he draws.

5.2. *Sifre Deuteronomy* 312

Sifre Deuteronomy is a Rabbinic commentary, in all probability dating from the middle of the 2nd cent. CE, whose purpose was to interpret and comment on the scriptural text (see Appendix, Table 4).¹⁸ The ques-

18. The most recent critical edition is published with a Spanish translation: E. CORTÉS – T. MARTÍNEZ (eds.), *Sifre Deuteronomio. Pisqa 161-357: comentario tannaitico al libro del Deuteronomio. Traducción del hebreo, con introducción y notas* (Col·lectània Sant Pacià 60), Barcelona: Herder 1997. The English translation in Table 4 is taken from R. HAMMER, *Sifre. A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Yale Judaica 24), New Haven, CONN: Yale University Press 1986.

tion arises in considering Deut 32.9 as to when and how God chose Jacob (Israel) as his people. The explanation is given in a story that, like Jesus' parable, is one that involves a vineyard whose owner lets it out to tenants; successive generations of these tenants (Abraham and his children, Isaac and his children) turn out to be robbers and evil, and so when the king has a son (Jacob) he demands the vineyard back so that he can give it to him to inherit. Thus it is that, as a consequence of the story of this parable, the vineyard belongs to Jacob who, as the founding father, bears the name of Israel.

The similarities in the elements found in the parable as related by both *Sifre Deuteronomy* and Jesus can hardly be coincidental, and are an indication that it was part of Jewish tradition long before it came to be written down by the Rabbis in the 2nd cent. Nevertheless, the point of the parable is different in each case, and the flexibility with which Jesus adapts what can be presumed to be the earlier material demonstrates the freedom with which traditions and teachings could be used and updated to suit changing circumstances and a new purpose. The fact, however, that he draws on a familiar story is evidence of the thoroughly Jewish context of his teaching as recorded in the Gospel account.

5.3. *Psalm 118*

Further evidence of Jesus drawing on earlier traditions is seen in his quotation of Psalm 118 (Ps 117 LXX; see Appendix, Table 5) following the telling of the parable and in response to the leaders' reaction to its conclusion (see §6 below). It may be wondered why Jesus chose to cite this particular psalm at this point. A key element appears to have been the central place of the «stone», the corner stone rejected by the builders. There is, on the one hand, the association of «the stone» with the Temple, dating at least from the dream of Jacob at Bethel, when the stone he put under his head as he laid down to sleep becomes the foundation stone of the Temple according to tradition (Gen 28.11,18-22). Furthermore, «stones» are an element in Isaiah's description of the construction of the vineyard according to the Hebrew text (Isa 5.2): while the Septuagint makes no reference to stones in translating this verse (lit: «he put a fence round it [the vineyard] and fortified [the vines] with stakes»), the Hebrew has, «he broke the ground (or fenced it) and cleared it of stones». In addition, the term «builders» is used by Peter in his address to the Jews after Pentecost (Acts 4.11) to refer specifically to the Jewish leaders and it may have been a traditional term applied to them. In any case, the application of the saying from the Psalm

to the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders is found several times in the New Testament.¹⁹

Coming as it does after the parable of the vineyard, it is furthermore very possible that the citation from Psalm 118 appeals to a knowing play on words. The Hebrew word for «stone», (אֶבֶן), sounds similar to the word for «son», (בֶּן). Such word play not only would go unrecognized by someone not familiar with Semitic languages, but would also be meaningless to anyone unfamiliar with this technique of exegesis. That it had been activated before Jesus would have made use of it is demonstrated by the evidence for it in the targum to Psalm 118, where v. 22 is translated as: «The boy (טליא) which the builders abandoned was among the sons of Jesse, And he is worthy to be appointed king and ruler».

Even though the Aramaic word used here for boy does not resemble that for stone, the presence of the term in the targum is apparently derived from a Hebrew precedent.²⁰

The question naturally arises as to who is meant by «the son». If Christian interpretation readily aligns him with Jesus, or less specifically with the Messiah, the Jewish contemporary understanding may have been somewhat different. Indeed, if we consider that the Rabbinic parallel cited above (§5.2) were known to Jesus' hearers, then the son rejected by them is none other than God's son Israel. At once, the implication of Jesus' criticism becomes stronger and bolder; for he is thus portraying the leaders as having abandoned the very Israel they hold so dear and believe they represent.

The citation from Psalm 118 is followed without a break or any kind of introduction by echoes from other Scriptures, most closely from Isa 8.14-15 (see Table 5). The ready conflation of the scriptural references is another indication that Jesus is drawing on traditional groupings of texts, or at least is alluding to an association of ideas that already existed before him, and that he expects his hearers to be familiar with.

6. THE ENDING OF JESUS' PARABLE IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

As has been alluded to above (§5.1), despite the clear parallels between Jesus' parable and the *Song of the Vineyard* in Isaiah, the endings are somewhat dissimilar. In the case of Isaiah, the vineyard is to be destroyed: the

19. Apart from Lk 20.16, the citation is found at Mt 21.42; Mk 12.10; Acts 4.11; 1Pet 2.7.

20. See C. A. EVANS, «On the Vineyard Parable of Isaiah 5 and Mark 12», *BZ* 28 (1984) 83-84; «God's Vineyard and its Caretakers», in *Jesus and his Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, Leiden: Brill 1995, pp. 381-406.

hedge will be removed, the wall broken down, the area will be turned into wasteland overgrown with briars and thorns with no rain to revive it. The targum goes so far as to say that the Shekinah, the presence of God, will be removed (Tg Isa 5.5). Jesus concludes his parable in a very different way. The vineyard is by no means destroyed. Certainly, the tenants will be thoroughly destroyed: the owner will kill them (Lk 20.16), and the stone that they reject will fall on them and crush them (20.19). As for the vineyard, far from being laid waste it will continue to thrive but will be given «to others» (ἄλλοις, 20.16). Questions of identity arise once again, as it has to be asked who are these «others»? The answer that they are Gentiles is the easy answer,²¹ but in the context of Luke's Gospel it is not likely to be correct. Unlike the other evangelists, Luke has not yet explicitly presented Jesus as the Messiah of the Gentiles.²² That will come in due course with the expansion of the Church as related in Luke's second volume, in the narrative of Acts. Meanwhile, right up to his death Luke presents Jesus as envisaging the continuation of Israel as the chosen people of God. What he does make clear, however, is that the leadership of Israel is to be taken over by others, namely the apostles. At the Last Supper, Jesus specifically makes a point of telling them that they will occupy positions of authority above the twelve tribes (Lk 22.18), indicating that their leadership will henceforth be that appointed by God. The apostles, too, have been chosen by Jesus through the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1.1), taught by his words and example, and commanded by him to take his teaching to the ends of the earth (1.8). While the suggestion that «the others» is a reference to the apostles is hypothetical and it is impossible to be certain whom Jesus had in mind when he told the Jewish leaders that the vineyard (Israel) would be given to others, it can at least be said that it does not make sense to say that in Luke's account Jesus means it will be given to the Gentiles.

For the Jewish leaders of Jesus' audience it would, of course, be bad enough that they should lose their status and authority as leaders because of the teaching and actions of Jesus, as they were only too well aware was happening the more he stayed teaching in the Temple. But that he should tell them they would be destroyed and the care of Israel would be entrusted to others, whoever, they might be, would have been almost beyond their

21. As given by J. T. SANDERS, *The Jews in Luke-Acts*, Philadelphia: Fortress 1987, p. 212. A more considered view is taken by D. BOCK, *Luke* (The Ivp New Testament Commentary Series), Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 1994, p. 322; EVANS, *Luke*, 303; I. H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC), Exeter: Paternoster 1978, p. 731.

22. This is especially true of the text of Luke according to Codex Bezae, where the mention of the Gentiles in Simeon's prayer of benediction at Lk 2.32 is omitted.

imagination and belief. It is they, above all, who would have reason to exclaim «God forbid!» (Μὴ γένοιτο) in response to Jesus' warning. The fact that Jesus' words about the rejection of the cornerstone that then follow are addressed to those who uttered this injunction (ἀκούσαντες δὲ εἶπαν... ὁ δὲ ἐμβλέψας αὐτοῖς εἶπεν [...]), tends to confirm that the whole dialogue of this episode is essentially between Jesus and the leaders, and that the role of the people is very much a background one.

7. CONCLUSION

This study of the Parable of the Vineyard in Luke's Gospel has sought to explore the story Jesus is reported to have told, as well as the wider episode within which the narrator sets it, in order to consider how the account may have been heard by Luke's intended hearer. While the account itself does not reveal many clues, there are indications that Luke is drawing on a wealth of earlier tradition, attested by either written Scriptures or oral traditions that were written down at a later date. The very absence of explicit reference to these serves as an indication that they would have been sufficiently familiar not just to Jesus' hearers but to Luke's, too, that they did not need to be spelled out. In particular, a number of features have been identified that testify to the Jewish nature of the account: aspects of the parable itself, and also of the citation from Psalm 118. These become more recognizable and more comprehensible if it is acknowledged that Luke, like Jesus, expected his addressee to be familiar with the Jewish context of the account and to understand the undertones and implicit meanings.

Thus, it has been seen that there was a fair degree of fluidity in the transmission of the Jewish Scriptures and teachings linked to them in the 1st century. In the same way, the differences between the accounts of the Parable of the Vineyard in the different Gospels attest to a level of flexibility and freedom with regard to the actual words and events. This can be disconcerting to Christian readers today who look for textual certainty and an accurate and exact record of Jesus' teaching. However, the fluidity is not a sign of decomposition but rather of life. It is like the vibrating string of a musical instrument: as long as the string vibrates a sound can be heard, but if we attempt to still the string to fix its length and form then the result is silence.

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Summary

The Parable of the Vineyard in Luke's Gospel has several distinct characteristics compared with its form in the other Synoptic Gospels. In order to discern what may have been Luke's intended purpose in relating the episode in which it is found, the clearest method is to look at it on its own, without comparing it with the other forms. The narrative context of the parable is important to note that the parable is placed within the setting of Jesus' criticism of the Jewish leaders, especially with respect to the use of Temple trade for their own profit. By highlighting Jewish traditional material that parallels not only the parable but also the scriptural allusions at the end of the episode, it can be observed that Jesus was presenting his teaching within a familiar context to which his hearers could relate and understand implicit meanings. This article claims that Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard is one of these parallel traditions, supported by further teachings that may have only been known in oral form at the time. It is further argued that Luke would have expected his addressee to recognize the Jewish context and likewise to grasp the undertones and overtones of Jesus' message.

Sumari

La paràbola de la vinya en l'evangeli de Lluc té algunes característiques que la distingeixen en la seva forma dels altres evangelis sinòptics. Per tal d'identificar quin era el propòsit de Lluc en transmetre l'episodi en què es troba la paràbola, el millor mètode és estudiar el seu relat, sense compararlo amb els altres. El context narratiu de la paràbola en Lluc és important: està situada al mig de la crítica que Jesús fa dels dirigents jueus, sobretot respecte a l'ús del comerç del Temple per al seu propi benefici. Tenint en compte el material jueu tradicional paral·lel no només a la paràbola sinó també a les al·lusions a les Escripures al final de l'episodi, hom es pot adonar que Jesús buscava presentar la seva ensenyança en un context que seria conegut dels seus oients, i que li permetia entendre uns sentits implícits. Aquest article pretén que el Cant de la Vinya és una d'aquestes tradicions paral·leles, recolzada per altres ensenyances conegudes a l'època potser només en forma oral. Més encara, es pot pensar en aquest cas que Lluc hauria esperat que el seu lector coneixeria el context jueu i que era capaç de captar els matisos i les connotacions del missatge de Jesús.

APPENDIX OF TEXTS

TABLE 1

Luke 20.9-19

N-A ²⁸	Revised Standard Version
<p>⁹ἤρξατο δὲ πρὸς τὸν λαὸν λέγειν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην· Ἀνθρώπος [τις] ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα, καὶ ἐξέδετο αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν χρόνους ἰκανοῦς.</p>	<p>[9] And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country for a long while.</p>
<p>¹⁰καὶ καιρῷ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς τοὺς γεωργοὺς δοῦλον, ἵνα ἀπὸ τοῦ καρποῦ τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος δώσου- σιν αὐτῷ οἱ δὲ γεωργοὶ ἐξαπέστειλαν αὐτὸν δειράν- τες κενόν.</p>	<p>[10] When the time came, he sent a serv- ant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him, and sent him away empty-handed.</p>
<p>¹¹καὶ προσέθετο ἕτερον πέμψαι δοῦλον· οἱ δὲ κάκεινον δειράντες καὶ ἀτιμάσαντες ἐξαπέστειλαν κενόν.</p>	<p>[11] And he sent another servant; him also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed.</p>
<p>¹²καὶ προσέθετο τρίτον πέμψαι· οἱ δὲ καὶ τούτον τραυματίσαντες ἐξέβαλον.</p>	<p>[12] And he sent yet a third; this one they wounded and cast out.</p>
<p>¹³εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος, τί ποιῶσω; πέμψω τὸν υἱόν μου τὸν ἀγαπητόν· ἴσως τούτον ἐντραπήσονται.</p>	<p>[13] Then the owner of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will respect him."</p>
<p>¹⁴ιδόντες δὲ αὐτὸν οἱ γεωργοὶ διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους λέγοντες, Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτόν, ἵνα ἡμῶν γένηται ἡ κληρονομία.</p>	<p>[14] But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours."</p>
<p>¹⁵καὶ ἐκβαλόντες αὐτὸν ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος ἀπέκτειναν. τί οὖν ποιήσει αὐτοῖς ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος;</p>	<p>[15] And they cast him out of the vine- yard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?</p>
<p>¹⁶ελεύσεται καὶ ἀπολέσει τοὺς γεωργοὺς τούτους, καὶ δώσει τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἄλλοις.</p>	<p>[16] He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others."</p>
<p>ἀκούσαντες δὲ εἶπαν, Μὴ γένοιτο.</p>	<p>When they heard this, they said, "God forbid!"</p>
<p>¹⁷ὁ δὲ ἐμβλέψας αὐτοῖς εἶπεν, τί οὖν ἐστὶν τὸ γεγραμμένον τούτου <i>Λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομῶντες,</i> <i>οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας;</i></p>	<p>[17] But he looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner?"</p>

¹⁸ πᾶς ὁ πεσὼν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν λίθον συν-
θλασθήσεται
ἐφ' ὃν δ' ἂν πέσῃ, λικμήσει αὐτόν.

¹⁹ Καὶ ἐζήτησαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ ἀρχιε-
ρεῖς ἐπιβαλεῖν ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας ἐν αὐτῇ
τῇ ᾠρᾷ,
καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸν λαόν·
ἔγνωσαν γὰρ ὅτι
πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἶπεν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην.

[18] Every one who falls on that stone
will be broken to pieces;
but when it falls on any one it will crush
him."

[19] The scribes and the chief priests
tried to lay hands on him
at that very hour,
but they feared the people;
for they perceived that
he had told this parable against them.

TABLE 2

Gospel of Thomas

65 He said, A [...] person owned a vineyard and rented it to some farmers, so they could work it and he could collect its crop from them. He sent his slave so the farmers would give him the vineyard's crop. They grabbed him, beat him, and almost killed him, and the slave returned and told his master. His master said, "Perhaps he didn't know them." He sent another slave, and the farmers beat that one as well. Then the master sent his son and said, "Perhaps they'll show my son some respect." Because the farmers knew that he was the heir to the vineyard, they grabbed him and killed him. Anyone here with two ears had better listen!

66 Jesus said, "Show me the stone that the builders rejected: that is the keystone."

TABLE 3

**Verbal Coherence and Correspondence
between Lk 20.9-19 and Isa 5.1-7**

Lk 20.9-16	Isa 5.1-7 LXX
<p>⁹Ἦρξατο δὲ πρὸς τὸν λαὸν λέγειν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην·</p> <p>Ἄνθρωπός [τις] ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα, καὶ ἐξέδετο αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν χρόνους ἱκανούς. ¹⁰καὶ καιρῷ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς τοὺς γεωργοὺς δοῦλον, ἵνα ἀπὸ τοῦ καρποῦ τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος δώσουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ δὲ γεωργοὶ ἐξαπέστειλαν αὐτὸν δείραντες κενόν. ¹¹καὶ προσέθετο ἕτερον πέμψαι δοῦλον· οἱ δὲ κἀκεῖνον δείραντες καὶ ἀτιμάσαντες ἐξαπέστειλαν κενόν. ¹²καὶ προσέθετο τρίτον πέμψαι· οἱ δὲ καὶ τούτον τραυματίσαντες ἐξέβαλον. ¹³εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος, <u>Τί ποιήσω;</u> πέμψω τὸν υἱόν μου <u>τὸν ἀγαπητόν</u>· ἴσως τούτον ἐντραπήσονται. ¹⁴ιδόντες δὲ αὐτὸν οἱ γεωργοὶ διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους λέγοντες, Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτόν, ἵνα ἡμῶν γένηται ἡ κληρονομία. ¹⁵καὶ ἐκβαλόντες αὐτὸν ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος ἀπέκτειναν. <u>τί οὖν ποιήσει</u> αὐτοῖς ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος; ¹⁶ἐλεύσεται καὶ ἀπολέσει τοὺς γεωργοὺς τούτους, καὶ δώσει τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἄλλοις. (...vv. 17-18...) ¹⁹Καὶ ἐζήτησαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ ἀρχιε- ρεῖς ἐπιβαλεῖν ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸν λαόν· ἐγνωσαν γὰρ ὅτι πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἶπεν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην.</p>	<p>Ἰσὼς δὴ τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ ἄσμα <u>τοῦ ἀγαπη-</u> <u>τοῦ</u> τῷ ἀμπελῶνι μου.</p> <p>ἀμπελῶν ἐγενήθη τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ ἐν κέρατι ἐν τόπῳ πῖονι. 2 καὶ φραγμὸν περιέθηκα καὶ ἐχαράκωσα καὶ <u>ἐφύτευσα ἀμπελον</u> σωρηκ καὶ ὠκοδόμησα πύργον ἐν μέσῳ αὐτοῦ καὶ προλήνιον ὠρυξα ἐν αὐτῷ· καὶ ἔμεινα τοῦ ποιῆσαι σταφυλὴν, ἐποίησεν δὲ ἀκάνθας. 3 καὶ νῦν, ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Ἰουδα καὶ οἱ ἐνοι- κοῦντες ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ, κρίνατε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἀμπελῶνός μου. 4 <u>τί ποιήσω</u> ἐτι τῷ ἀμπελῶνι μου καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησα αὐτῷ; διότι ἔμεινα τοῦ ποιῆσαι σταφυλὴν, ἐποίησεν δὲ ἀκάνθας. 5 νῦν δὲ ἀναγγελάω ὑμῖν <u>τί ποιήσω</u> τῷ ἀμπελῶνι μου· ἀφελῶ τὸν φραγμὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσται εἰς διαρπαγὴν, καὶ καθελῶ τὸν τοῖχον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσται εἰς καταπάτημα, 6 καὶ ἀνήσω τὸν ἀμπελῶνά μου καὶ οὐ μὴ τμηθῆ οὐδὲ μὴ σκαφῆ, καὶ ἀναβήσεται εἰς αὐτὸν ὡς εἰς χέρσον ἀκανθα· καὶ ταῖς νεφέλαις ἐντελοῦμαι τοῦ μὴ βρέξαι εἰς αὐτὸν ὑέτον. 7 ὁ γὰρ <u>ἀμπελῶν κυρίου</u> σαβαωθ οἴκος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ἐστίν καὶ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Ἰουδα νεόφυτον ἡγα- πημένον· ἔμεινα τοῦ ποιῆσαι κρίσιν, ἐποίησεν δὲ ἀνομίαν καὶ οὐ δικαιοσύνην ἀλλὰ κραυγὴν.</p>

TABLE 4

Sifre Deuteronomy 312

“For the Lord’s portion is his people.” [Deut 32:9]. A parable: A king had a field which he leased to tenants. When the tenants began to steal from him, he took it away from them and leased it to their children. When the children began to act worse than their fathers, he took it away from them and gave it to (the original tenants’) grandchildren. When these too became worse than their predecessors, a son was born to him. He then said to the grandchildren, “Leave my property. You may not remain therein. Give me back my portion, so that I may repossess it”. Thus also, when our father Abraham came into the world, unworthy (descendants) issued from him, Ishmael and all of Keturah’s children. When Isaac came into the world, unworthy (descendants) issued from him, Essau and all the princes of Edom, and they became worse than their predecessors. When Jacob came into the world, he did not produce unworthy (descendants), rather all his children were worthy, as it is said, “Jacob was a mild man who stayed in camp.” [Gen 25:27]. When did God repossess his portion? Beginning with Jacob, as it is said, “For the Lord’s portion is his people/Jacob His own allotment” [Deut 32:9], and, “For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself” [Ps 135:4].

TABLE 5

A Comparison of Lk 20.17-18 with Ps 117.22 LXX

Lk 20-17-18

Ps 117.22 LXX (118.22 MT)

¹⁷ Τί οὖν ἐστὶν τὸ γεγραμμένον
τοῦτο·

*Λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ
οἰκοδομοῦντες,
οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν
γωνίας;*

¹⁸ *πᾶς ὁ πεσὼν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνον
τὸν λίθον συνθλασθήσεται·
ἐφ' ὃν δ' ἂν πέσῃ, λικμήσει
αὐτόν.*

22 λίθον, ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες,
οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας

cf. Isa 8.14-15

14 καὶ ἐὰν ἐπ' αὐτῷ πεποιθῶς ᾦς, ἔσται σοι εἰς ἀγίασμα,
καὶ οὐχ ὡς λίθου προσκόμματι συναντήσεσθε αὐτῷ οὐδὲ
ὡς πέτρας πτώματι· ὁ δὲ οἶκος Ἰακωβ ἐν παγίδι, καὶ ἐν
κοιλιάσματι ἐγκαθήμενοι ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ.
15 διὰ τοῦτο ἀδυνατήσουσιν ἐν αὐτοῖς πολλοὶ καὶ
πεσοῦνται καὶ συντριβήσονται, καὶ ἐγγιούσιν καὶ
ἀλώσονται ἄνθρωποι ἐν ἀσφαλείᾳ ὄντες. 16 Τότε
φανεροὶ ἔσονται οἱ σφραγιζόμενοι τὸν νόμον τοῦ μὴ
μαθεῖν.