

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 15, The Good Samaritan, Part I. Luke 10:25-37

1. The scholar Derret, saw this p as a highly scientific piece of instruction clothed in popular style. This is verified, when it's identified as part of a theological discussion. In Luke 7:36-50, we observed a p as part of a wider theological dialogue. In Luke 18:18-30, the camel and the needle are the center of a much wider theological discussion. Here the p is part of the theological dialogue. Most scholars see this as the basic unit/authenticity.
2. The setting makes considerable difference in the interpretation of this particular p. In Luke 7:36-50 and Luke 18:18-30, the shortness of the p and length of the dialogue lead naturally to the consideration of part of the p as dialogued. This p is long and the theological dialogue is short. There is a tendency to read only the p and ignore the dialogue. When we do this, the p is only an ethical exhortation to reach out to those in need. Most Christians across the centuries saw this p exclusively that way. In this study we will discern the structure and content of the dialogue and see the p as part of that.
3. The dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer is made up of 8 speeches that fall into two precise rounds of debate. In each round there are two questions and two answers. The formal structure is identical, shortened to main themes the dialogue is as follows; (from Bailey).

Round one: The Lawyer stood up to put him to the test and said.

- (1) Lawyer: (Q 1) “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”
- (2) Jesus: (Q 2) “What about the law?”
- (3) Lawyer: (answer to (2) “Love God and your neighbor.”
- (4) Jesus: (answer to (1) “Do this and you shall live.”

Round two: He (the lawyer) desiring to justify himself said,

- (5) Lawyer: (Q 3) Who is my neighbor?
- (6) Jesus: (Q 4) “A certain man went down from Jerusalem...”
“which one of these three became a neighbor?”
- (7) Lawyer: (Answer (4) “The one who showed mercy on him?”
- (8) Jesus: (Answer to (3) “Go and continue to do likewise.”

4. A number of important features tie the two together. In each case there are 2 questions and 2 answers. In each the lawyer asks the first question, but rather to answer his question, Jesus poses a 2nd question. In each round the lawyer asks the 2nd question. Each round closes with Jesus' answer to the initial question. The first round focuses on the on the question of doing something to inherit eternal life. (Crossan). On examination so does the 2nd. Desiring to 'justify' himself, to inherit eternal life, he a definition of his neighbor. Clearly, he is still asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. Each round is introduced with an analyses of the motives of the lawyer. In the first we are told that he wants to test Jesus. In the second we find that he wants to justify himself. Each round ends with instructions on what to do. Thus a long series of interlocking themes make clear that that the two rounds of dialogue are parallel halves of the same discussion. This interrelatedness of themes will become clearer as we examine the text in detail.
5. ROUND ONE: The dialogue utilizes the inversion principal; the first and last speeches are on the subject of do and live, the inner two on the topic of the law. The conversation thus ends where it started. The full text with the inversion is as follows;
 - (1) Lawyer: (Q1), "Teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life."
 - (2) Jesus: (Q2), He said to him, "What is written in the law? Have you read?"
 - (3) Lawyer: (Answer 2) And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God ..and love your neighbor as yourself."
 - (4) Jesus: (Answer to 1) And He said to him, "You have answered right; do this and you will live."
6. Speech 1: And behold a lawyer stood up to put him to the test saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Ibraihim Sai'd astutely observes that there is a basic contradiction in the actions of the lawyer. "The text said he stood up," this is a social courtesy and a greeting of respect. Then we read, 'to test him.' This is an inner deception coming from a corrupt heart.

7. Sai'd's judgment is a bit harsh, but valid. In the ME the student always stood to address the teacher out of courtesy. Here the lawyer only stands to address Jesus, but also gives him the title of "Teacher," which is Luke's word for rabbis. (Dalman) The use of this title is an affirmation that Jesus is at least an equal. (Linnemann) After these acts of deference the lawyer tries to "test him." The subject for the test is that of inheriting eternal life.
8. On the surface that question is pointless. What can anyone do to inherit anything? Only legal heirs inherit. Yet the word has some precedent. In the OT the idea of inheritance was primarily applied to Israel's privilege of inhering the land of promise. This inheritance is understood as a gift of God. Israel does not either deserve or earn it. (Foerster), describes the word inheritance in The OT, "Israel did not conquer the land by its own achievements...but ...God's free disposition gave Israel the land as it's share." In the same discussion (Foerster) writes Israel possesses its land by divine ordination.
9. After the OT period the phrase "inherit the land/earth" is applied to the salvation which God extends to His people. (Dalman). "To possess the land," as of Isaiah 60:21. It is interpreted by rabbis to mean participation in the salvation of the age to come (Sanhedrin). The inheritance becomes eternal life, and the way to keep it was to keep the law. No less the famous Rabbi Hillel, and older contemporary of Jesus said, "who has gained himself the words of the Torah has gained for himself the life of the world to come." (Mishna) An anonymous rabbinical reading says, "Great is the Torah for it gives to them that practice in this life and the life of the world to come." (Mishna) In the book. Some scholars see The Psalms of Solomon give more details. Such as Ps. 14:1-2, "To them that walk in the righteousness of His commandments, in the law which he commanded us that we might live. The pious of the Lord shall live by it forever." This Ps also reads, "There for the sinner's inheritance is Sheol and darkness and destruction, but the pious of the Lord shall inherit life in gladness.
10. According to this, sinners inherit Sheol, while the righteous, by keeping the law inherit eternal life. Another early non canonical book, called The Slavonic Enoch, treats the topic of eternal life as an inheritance. In summary, Edon is a place where the righteous who assist the poor, much like Matthew 25, has for them "a prepared place for enteral inheritance." (Emphasis is mine, (Charles II).

11. Quite likely the audience and lawyer expected Jesus to share some kind of lists above as a requirement of the law. It then would be possible to debate the fine points of what should and should not have been on the list. Jesus thus has two obvious alternatives. He can take the OT approach and insist that the “inheritance of Israel,” is a gift and that no one can do anything to inherit it. Such a stance would have started a sterile debate, or Jesus can share the Rabbinic tradition and concentrate on the law, Jesus chose the latter.
12. Regarding the law, Ibn al-Tayyib suggests another possible aspect for the background to the text. He affirms that the lawyers are uneasy with Jesus’ attitude toward the law. Some leading rabbis as we just noticed affirmed that the eternal life was received by keeping the law. But they were hearing some disturbing noises from this young rabbi. Did he or did he not believe that the inheritance of Israel was available through a keeping of the law? Ibn al-Tayyib proposes that the “Test” was to discover an answer to this question. If Ibn al-Tayyib’s suggestion is at all correct there is all the more reason for Jesus to reply by turning to the law. But rather than offer his own views, he skillfully solicits the questioner’s opinion,
13. SPEECH 2, He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” The phrase, “How do you read it? can mean, ‘May I hear your authorities with exposition?’ (Derrett). If this correct the lawyer offers exposition by selection and order, but w/o authorities. Jeremias argues that it means, “How do you recite in worship?” (Jeremias) This would explain why the lawyer returns to the creed. Elements of each explanation may be involved.