



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Luke 7:1-17

•After Jesus had finished teaching all this to the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 A centurion there had a slave who was highly regarded, but who was sick and at the point of death. 3 When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus, they urged him earnestly, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, 5 because he loves our nation, and even built our synagogue.” 6 So Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof! 7 That is why I did not presume to come to you. Instead, say the word, and my servant must be healed. 8 For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” 9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him. He turned and said to the crowd that followed him, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith!” 10 So when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well. (7:1-10 NET)

•11 Soon afterward Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother (who was a widow), and a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, “Do not weep.” 14 Then he came up and touched the bier, and those who carried it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 15 So the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. 16 Fear seized them all, and they began to glorify God, saying, “A great prophet has appeared among us!” and “God has come to help his people!” 17 This report about Jesus circulated throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.” (Luke 7:11-17 NET)

SUMMARY:

Luke 7:1–17 is not a mundane report of miracles—it's a bold revelation of who Jesus is and what His kingdom does. What He proclaimed in the 'Sermon on the Plain,' Jesus now enacts before our eyes. Death is interrupted. A son is raised. Grief turns to joy. An outsider is honored. A widow's despair is reversed; a Gentile's faith is met with mercy and authority. Like Elijah and Elisha, Jesus reaches the vulnerable—but He goes further, showing that the living God has come near in His own flesh. This is the kingdom breaking into the world. And Jesus does not stop with demonstration—He calls for our imitation. This city is full of the poor, displaced, grieving, and forgotten. Our congregation includes refugees, immigrants, widows, and single parents. If we are truly 'children of the Most High God,' we must embody His compassion. Let the kingdom be seen in Toronto, now, in 2026.

I. "What Would Elijah or Elisha Do?"

A. References & Allusions to Elijah-Elisha in Luke's Gospel

- "Luke suggests...readers...approach Jesus' ministry by asking the...question, 'What would Elijah or Elisha do?'" —Jonathan Huddleston
- "The importance of...the Elijah-Elisha stories in...the story of Jesus has been repeatedly emphasized in Luke research. Especially in the healing miracles of Jesus there are [Elijah-Elisha] allusions... but also in...the 'ascension'." [Martin Bauspeiss, "Israel's Scriptures in Luke," in M. Henze (ed.) *Israel's Scriptures...*, p. 29]
- "Of all the OT characters mentioned in Luke-Acts, Elijah...play[s] an important role. Seven times his name is mentioned in...Luke." [Nico Riemersma, "Elijah...a Lukan Perspective," in *Themes & Texts in Luke-Acts*, p. 46]
- "Luke saw Jesus as fulfilling the role of a prophet—in particular, the role of Elijah." —Morna D. Hooker
- "Luke does not merely allude to Elijah-Elisha, but re-narrates Jesus as a prophetic figure who both resembles & surpasses them [i.e., Elijah-Elisha]." —François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: 52 Exegetical Essays*, p.]
- "Luke...pattern[s]...several episodes in the Gospel on the...stories of the prophets Elijah & Elisha. This is a distinctive element of Luke...not significantly paralleled in the other Gospels." —Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, p. 237]
- "Readers' histories of interacting with the Elijah-Elisha stories will influence their reading of Luke... because Luke has set up a pervasive...connection between the two." [Jonathan Huddleston, "What would Elijah & Elisha do?" *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 5 #2 (2011) p. 279]
- Luke "likens Jesus to Elijah...to a greater degree than his Synoptic counterparts [Matt., Mark]" —Britany Wilson
- "Luke, more...than the other [Gospels], uses imagery from the stories of Elijah & Elisha to characterize Jesus as being like these great prophets of old." [K. Litwak, "Elijah & Elisha," JB. Green (ed.) *Dictionary of Jesus*, p. 293]
- "Luke draws a line of continuity between the ministry of Jesus & [Elijah & Elisha's ministries]" —Susan Wendal
- "Luke saw Jesus as a prophet...Jesus is characterized through echoes of Elijah & Elisha...seen at several points, including the Nazareth speech in Lk. 4, the Transfiguration in Lk. 9 & the ascension scene in Lk. 24, Acts 1 ...Clearly, Luke portrayed Jesus as a prophet." [Kenneth D. Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts*, p. 132]

B. Jesus Referenced Elijah & Elisha in his Nazareth Proclamation (Lk. 4:25-27)

- In his Nazareth announcement of the 'Jubilee' (Is. 61:1-5) "Jesus refers to two miracles in connection with Elijah & Elisha in Lk. 4:25-27, & then reenacts them in Lk. 7:1-17 [by healing the centurion's slave & raising the widow of Nain's son]." [Jeremy D. Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, p. 100]
- "Luke's strategic placement of the Nazareth episode (Lk. 4:25-27), establishes Elijah as the

paradigm for Jesus' ministry... Building off of Jesus' inaugural sermon, the next two instances of the Elijah-Jesus connection show Jesus reenacting the very two miracles [of Elijah & Elisha] to which he has just appealed...the healing of Naaman (Lk. 7:1-11) & the raising of the widow of Zarephath's son (7:11-17)." [Jeremy D. Otten, I Alone Am Left, p. 107]

C.Allusions to Elijah & Elisha in Luke 7:1-17

•The two stories in Luke 7 correspond to the two stories that Jesus mentions in Luke 4:25-27: Elisha healing Naaman (2 Kings 5) in 7:1-10 (healing the centurion's slave) & Elijah healing the widow's son (1 Kgs. 17:10) in 7:11-17 (Jesus healing the widow's son at Nain). Following these two miracles... Jesus gives a summary of the miracles that have occurred [7:22] ... [Luke portrays] Jesus as a prophet on the model of Elijah-Elisha...because he's a great miracle-working prophet & [his] ministry to outsiders (cf. 4:25-27)." [Nikolas A. Fox, Op. cit., p.]

•"In reverse order [in Lk. 7], we see Jesus perform a healing similar to that done by Elisha, & a resuscitation even more strikingly reminiscent to that performed by Elijah..." [Luke T. Johnson, Luke, p. 120]

•"Throughout that whole chapter [7 of Luke], the Jesus story & the stories of Elijah & Elisha run side-by-side like trains travelling for a time on parallel tracks." –N. Martin

•"Jesus reenacts the stories of Naaman & the widow [of Zarephath] –the two stories he has just appealed to as characterizing his ministry—through the healing of the centurion's servant (7:1-10) & the widow of Nain's son (7:11-17), respectively." [Jeremy Otten, Bad Samaritans: Elijah Motif in Luke 9:51 -56," JSNT, V. 42(3) p. 379]

D.What Did Elijah & Elisha Do? (1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 9)

•In the midst of [Israel's] history of king after king leading people away from God we find two prophets who demonstrate God's grace & faithfulness despite the peoples' sin...Elijah arrives on the scene at a decisive juncture in Israel's history, As [King] Ahab & Jezabel are leading the people away from God & toward the false god Baal (1 Kgs. 16:29-17:1), & Elisha's ministry effectively ends when Ahab's dynasty does (2 Kgs. 9). The two prophets' miracles, ministry, & presence serve to call the people back to the one, true God & his covenant. Elijah & Elisha remind people who God really is... compared to the false gods the people are choosing to worship, & what it means to live before this God." [Gary L. Shultz Jr., "Spirit in Elisha's Life," Themelios, Vol. 47, #1 (2022) p. 37]

E.What Would Elijah & Elisha Do?

•"Luke suggests that his readers...approach Jesus' ministry by asking the perennial question, What would Elijah or Elisha do?" [Jonathan Huddleston, Op. cit., p. 272]

•"What would Elijah or Elisha do? Here I will sketch out three answers...[They] would perform miraculous signs ...[They] would confront rulers...[They] would anoint successors." [Jonathan Huddleston, Op. cit., pp. 272-76]

•"Jesus' performing of miraculous signs, anointing of successors, & confrontation of rulers all echo... the Elijah-Elisha story." [Jonathan Huddleston, Op. cit., p. pp. 279-80]

1.Elijah & Elisha Would Perform Miraculous Signs

•"The Elijah-Elisha cycle is first & foremost as set of miracle stories, narratives about wonder-working prophets. When Jesus performs miracles, readers naturally remember Elijah & Elisha & compare his miracles to theirs." [Jonathan Huddleston, Op. cit., p. 272]

2.Elijah & Elisha Would Confront Rulers

•"Readers...view Jesus against the most memorable parts of the Elijah-Elisha story – even if those parts do not receive specific textual allusion... The most...memorable drama of the Elijah-Elisha story is Elijah's... confrontation with [King] Ahab...in 1 Kgs. 18...A reader asking 'What would Elijah-Elisha do?' will expect a prophetic confrontation with the unfaithful king... [Jesus'] most prominent ongoing antagonism in Luke is with Herod... in the light of the 'great refrain of Israel's history: prophet vs.

king'." [Huddleston, Op. cit., pp. 274-5]

3. Elijah & Elisha Would Anoint Successors

•“God’s answer to Israel’s unfaithfulness ultimately...involves a program of prophetic anointing (1 Kgs 19:16–17) & the simultaneous preservation of a faithful remnant (1 Kgs 19:18). This divine strategy [is] the 3rd link between Elijah-Elisha & Jesus... [Elijah] provide[s] the only e.g. in the OT of a prophet anointing his own successor... Elisha...is said to have ‘the spirit of Elijah’...Similarly, Jesus’ disciples receive his Spirit & invoke his name to do miracles...Luke’s distinctive story of Jesus’ ascension... surely evokes...the memorable ascension of Elijah...In both stories...a prophet passes his spirit to his successors.” [Jonathan Huddleston, p. 277]

II. Jesus’ Miracles Illustrate the Application of the ‘Sermon on the Plain’ (Lk. 7:1-17)

•“Immediately after Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain [in Luke 7], Luke presents...[examples] offering proof in deed [action] of the word just spoken [in Luke 6:20-49] ...They illustrate in embodied form the content of the proclaimed word [Sermon].” [Rachel L. Coleman, Lukan Lens on Wealth..., p. 93]

•“Many scholars...recognized that [this] story follows the sermon exceedingly well...It serves to illustrate the proper attitude toward Jesus’ word, a topic... at the end of the sermon...The theme of the authority of Jesus’ word [also] ties the two together...The sermon concluded with Jesus’ exhortation not only to hear his words but to do them (Lk. 6:46) ...This story constitutes an appropriate sequel to the ‘Sermon [on the Plain]’...[The author] did not include this story primarily [as a] polemic against Israel, or [a] reference to a Gentile mission, but rather to integrate the words & deeds of Jesus.” [Stephen Hultgren, Mighty in Word & Deed, Bk. 1, pp. 226-7, 229, 231]

•“A new [section] begins [in] Luke 7:1 which illustrates in concrete the application of the teaching just delivered [in the ‘Sermon on the Plain’].” [Piotr Blajer, “Centurion’s ‘Slave’ or ‘Servant’,” Liber Annuus, V 72, #1 (2022) p.]

•Two miracles (Lk. 7:1-17) are “given to support the authority of Jesus’ words in the [‘Sermon...’], namely two miracles [centurion’s servant healed; widow’s son raised]. The miracles lead the people to say..., ‘A great prophet has arisen among us’ (Lk. 7:16).’ ...The final...fram[ing] section...Lk. 7:1–17 consists of two linked miracles of healing [emphasizing] the covenant duty to care for the foreigner... the widows and orphans [which] is reaffirmed by the healing of the centurion’s servant & the raising to life of the widow’s son...[Luke] shows...by example, how Jesus enacts the blessings...” [JA. Draper, “Jesus’ ‘Covenantal Discourse’ on the Plain,” R. Horsley (ed.) Oral Performance, p. 85]

•Jesus’ “covenant renewal is ratified now not by blood [like Moses’ OT] ...but by miraculous healing. But the healing of the centurion’s slave introduces a...new element: this is a Gentile who shows faith greater than Israel &...receives the healing! Then the one who receives the 2nd healing is a widow whose son is restored to life. [This shows] the covenant [requirements] to love the stranger & the widow...are activated.” [JA. Draper, Op. cit., 94]

•“In chapter [6 ‘Sermon on the Plain’] ...Jesus has made this pronouncement: “Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh” (6:21b). He will demonstrate this [reversal], to the widow from Nain, and to the crowds with Him and with her.” [J. Radke, Exegetical Essay, New Testament-I: The Gospels, Luke 7:11-17, p.]

III. Jesus’ Healing the Centurion’s Servant (7:1-10)

•After Jesus had finished teaching all this to the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 A centurion there had a slave who was highly regarded, but who was sick and at the point of death. 3 When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus, they urged him earnestly, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, 5 because he loves our nation, and even built our synagogue.” 6 So Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof! 7 That is why I did not presume to come to you. Instead, say the word, and my servant must be healed. 8 For I too am a man set under

authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." 9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him. He turned and said to the crowd that followed him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith!" 10 So when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well. (7:1-10 NET)

•Notes on the Text

1. "They [the Jewish town-elders] urged [Jesus] earnestly, 'He is worthy...'" (7:4) Greek: "Worthy is he to have you do this"; the term 'worthy' comes first in the direct discourse and is emphatic. [NET]
2. Note the humility (7:6) in the centurion's statement 'I'm not worthy' in light of what others think (7:4) [NET]
3. Jesus "was amazed at him." (7:9) Or "pleased with him & amazed." The expanded translation brings out both Jesus' sense of wonder at the deep insight of the soldier & the pleasure [at his] ... example of faith. [NET]

A. The Gentile Centurion is the Main Character (Not Jesus!)

- "This is the first gentile whom Jesus encounters, & the only other gentiles Jesus will interact with in Luke's Gospel before his trial are the demon-possessed man ['Legion'] & other people of the Gerasenes (8:26-39)... Jesus encountering a gentile centurion in the village of Capernaum is unexpected. The sudden introduction of this rather out-of-place character in this rather unlikely location grabs the audience's attention." [Bart B. Bruehler, "Expecting the Unexpected in Luke 7:1-10," Tyndale Bulletin, V. 73 (2022) pp. 77-78]
- Note: In this episode, the centurion speaks 79 words (Eng. trans.) while Jesus speaks only 12 words; Ratio: 15:1.
- "This is one of only a few stories in Luke... in which some character other than Jesus is the protagonist. The centurion initiates the action by reaching out to Jesus through the Jewish elders as emissaries. This causes Jesus to come to him. The centurion initiates again by sending a 2nd delegation. The centurion is given the longest quote... (7:6b-8), & the closing word is about the amazing faith of the centurion & not about Jesus or the kingdom (7:9) ... Thus, 7:1-10... is much more focused on... the centurion – his actions, his words, & his character. This is quite unusual for Luke... making... the centurion stand out... for the audience." [Bart B. Bruehler, Op. cit., p. 83]

B. The Gentile Centurion –Not Economically 'Poor,' but an 'Outsider'

- "The centurion was in no way economically poor... but despite his own power & wealth, he trusted God instead." –Mark Bredin, Ecology of the NT, p. 53]
- Jesus' "mission to the poor did not preclude his responsiveness to the powerful outside this social category ... The centurion's presence in... Capernaum wouldn't have surprised 1st-century readers... his appearance on the heels of Jesus' momentous announcement in 6:20-49 ['Blessed are the poor for yours is the kingdom...'] would have been." [Nicholas Perrin, Luke, p. 129]
- "Although references to Gentiles are not numerous, they are important... because Gentiles are just one evidence of Jesus' boundary-breaching mission in Luke. Luke demonstrates the inclusiveness of God's saving plan by spotlighting Jesus' compassion on... people... [at] the margins of society: the poor, & the oppressed, the sick & lepers, 'sinners' & tax-collectors, women & children, Samaritans & Gentiles... Just who are the 'poor' from Luke's perspective?... It's important not to define the 'poor' along economic lines... [The 'Poor' embraces all those] outside [in terms of] status & acceptability... the dispossessed, the excluded... those who also acknowledge their utter dependence of God." [Dean Fleming, Contextualization in the NT, p. 17]
- "The Poor' are "those marginalized economically, socially, culturally, or religiously from full participation in the life of the community [God's people, e.g.,] the centurion; the grieving widow [Lk. 7]." [Coleman, Op. cit., p. 111]
- "The centurion, a Roman military officer, represents the believing Gentile living within Jewish territory... The officer might have been a proselyte-at-the-gate, a Gentile who believed in &

worshipped Israel's God but who had not submitted to the rites whereby a Gentile became a Jew" [Fred Craddock, Preaching thro' the Year, p 290]

C. Jesus & the Centurion—the First Encounter?

1. Jesus' First Interaction with a Gentile (Non-Jew)

- The "first explicit encounter...if it can be called such, between the centurion & Jesus in Luke 7 marks a new & significant development...It is a very unusual 'encounter,' for at the defining moment the chief characters of the story do not physically meet...[they] do not actually converse or even meet... Why does Luke...ensure that Jesus the Jew & the gentile centurion do not directly encounter one another? ...It doesn't happen...Jesus & the Gentile encounter each other only through intermediaries. Truly this is a first encounter that is not." [Matthew B. Wilson, Place of the 'Religious Outsider' in the Kingdom of God, Charles Sturt Univ., Australia (2012) pp. 23-24]

2. Remote; Not 'In-Person': This is 'remote,' not an 'in-person,' encounter

- "Luke stresses that this Roman army officer is the kind of Gentile who deserves attention from God's Messiah. Still, Luke's Jesus kept his distance [from the centurion]. He heals the slave yet never meets the centurion face-to-face. He associates only with Israelites." [Jocelyn McWorter, Rejected Prophets, p. 50]

D. Not the Start of the Gentile Mission

- In "the general schema in Luke[']s Gospel] ...Jesus, in his historical life, does not deal with the Gentile world but [he] models patterns of outreach later played out [in Acts]." [Brendan Byrne, Hospitality of God, p. 82]

- The author "did not include this story primarily [as a] polemic against Israel, or [a] reference to a Gentile mission, but rather to integrate the words & deeds of Jesus." [S. Hultgren, Mighty in Word & Deed, Bk 1, p. 231]

- In contrast Matthew's version (Mt. 8:11-12) has "Jesus made a pronouncement that the Gentiles would be heirs of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 8:11), excluding the Jews may miss out (Mt. 8:12)." [John Apiah, "Jesus' Association with Jews & Gentiles in Matthew," ERATS, V. 6, #2 (2020) p. 98] (The centurion is a harbinger)

- "The centurion episode in Lk. 7:1-10 did not constitute the start of the Gentile mission—whether Jesus met the centurion or not! It was simply an important precedent for the Gentile mission." [Robert AJ. Gagnon, "Luke's Motives for...the Double Delegation in Luke 7:1-10," Novum Testamentum, V. 36, #2 (1994) p. 139]

- "Especially in Luke...the healing of the centurion's servant is strongly reminiscent of Elisha's healing of Naaman (2 Kgs. 5:1-16). Parallels...include [1.] a respected Gentile military officer...the central figure who seeks healing; [2.] commendation on his behalf by Jews & those of high rank [Syrian king]; [3.] a 2nd delegation that prevents a direct meeting with the prophet... A similar version...exists in Matt., [but,] Luke's version increases the parallels ...by its placement next to another Elijah[-Elisha] allusion, but also in the addition of 2 delegations. This creates a parallel structure [of Lk. 7] with 2 Kings 5 & draws attention to...humility." [JD. Otten, Op. cit., pp. 108-9]

- "Jesus is not Elisha redivivus [revived], nor does Luke claim that 2 Kings 5...is some sort of prediction fulfilled by Jesus—nothing so overt and mechanical." [Richrd B. Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, pp. 242-3]

E. The Centurion's Servant (Slave) was Dying (7:2)

1. Was he a "Servant" or a "Slave"?

- The "centurion...had a slave who was highly regarded, but who was sick & at the point of death." (7:2 NET)

2. Was this Servant "very dear" to his master, or "highly respected/valued"?

- "A Roman officer...had a servant who was very dear to him; the man was sick & about to die." (7:2 GNT)

- “Army officer...had a servant who was very sick...near death. The officer loved the servant very much.” (7:2 ERV)
- “I believe this passage details Jesus’ encounter with someone who today would be regarded as a gay man.” [Jack Clark Robinson, “Jesus, the Centurion, & his Lover,” *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, V. 14, #6 (2007) p.]
- Note: Jack C. Robinson is a US Franciscan friar. He’s not a trained theologian, but has a Ph.D. in US history.
- “...had a...servant who was held in honor & highly valued by him, who was sick & at the point of death” (7:2 AMP)
- Christopher Zeichmann argues “Rather than connoting an emotional importance, the [Greek] term ἔντιμος designates the respect (i.e., honor) for the slave within the centurion’s household...” [Christopher B. Zeichmann, “Slave Who Was ἔντιμος: Translation & Characterization in Luke 7:2,” *Bible Translator*, V. 74(1) (2023) p. 66]
- “...don’t sit in the place of honor, because a more distinguished [ἔντιμος, entimos] person [may come]” (14:8)
- “Speculation...the centurion’s servant must be his slave also in a sexual sense...is most improbable.” –W. Loader

IV.The Centurion’s Double Delegations

- “The centurion...sent some Jewish elders to [Jesus] asking him to come and heal his slave.” (Lk. 7:3)
- He “sent friends to say, “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I’m not worthy to have you come under my roof!” (7:6)
- “Matthew’s & Luke’s accounts of the centurion at Capernaum (Mt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:1-10) agree almost [word-for-word] ...in the core dialogue...The major divergence is that in Luke (but not...Mt.) the centurion never personally meets Jesus. Rather, [he] sends out 2 delegations (the 1st ‘elders of the Jews,’ the 2nd of ‘friends’) ... to intercede before Jesus...” [Robert A.J. Gagnon, “Statistical Analysis &...Double Delegation,” *CBQ*, V. 55, #4 (1993) p. 709]
- “Luke recounts...two different delegations – a surprisingly positive first delegation of Jewish elders who argue for the centurion’s worthiness & a second delegation of friends through whom the centurion startlingly asserts his lack of worth.” [Bart B. Bruehler, *Op. cit.*, p. 85]
- “In Luke 7, the centurion sent two sets of representatives to Jesus: [1.] First, Jewish elders (7:3) & later [2.] his friends (7:6), a ‘double delegation’ that...was not found in Matthew’s version. Why is this? Gagnon commented that Luke wrote in a time when the Jews might create trouble for the emerging Christian sect, so he highlighted this friendship between the elders & a Gentile believer in Christ.” [Dan Liu, *Jesus’ Leadership*, IDK Bible, p.]

F.The First Delegation –The Local “Elders of the Jews” (7:3-6a)

1.Jewish Elders vs. Scribes & Pharisees

- Thus far in Jesus’ Galilean mission, “the crowd generally accepted Jesus (except those in Nazareth), the scribes & the Pharisees were skeptical & even ‘enraged’ (6:11). They were discussing what they might do to Jesus (6:11). ...[But,] Luke... portrays the leaders of the Jews in a different light. They have good contact with the centurion, they accept being his messengers, & they ask Jesus to heal his slave...Surprisingly, they do not question either Jesus’ authority or his power...The elders... serve as a character witness...They testify on behalf of the centurion as to his positive character traits & his good reputation within their community...[They “urged Jesus earnestly” (7:4)] the imperfect form [continual urging] suggests that the elders of the Jews were making an effort...trying their best in asking Jesus [to intervene].” [Piotr Blajer, *Op. cit.*, pp. 292-3]
- “The Jewish elders come to Jesus stressing that this man is ‘worthy’ of Jesus’s miraculous intervention. Jesus heeds their appeal & proceeds on his way to the centurion’s home (7:6a). This is...quite surprising, given the largely negative portrayal of Jewish leaders in Luke-Acts & Jesus’

tense interactions with them.” [Bart B. Bruehler, Op. cit., p. 84]

2. Positive, Friendly Relations between Jews & Gentiles

- Luke’s portrait of the centurion has “unexpected elements: a centurion in small Capernaum, a gentile in a Jewish village, and the centurion’s positive interactions with the Jewish leaders.” [Bart B. Bruehler, Op. cit., p. 75]

- This is “one of only a few instances in Luke-Acts where non-Christian Jewish characters have such a positive relationship with gentiles. Most Jew-gentile interactions in Luke-Acts are utilitarian &/or negative... Ethnic divisions & even hostility between Jews & gentiles are often assumed in Luke[-Acts] (Lk. 21:24; Acts [etc.]) ... In contrast, the centurion is portrayed as winning over the local Jewish community because of his benefaction, donating funds to have the synagogue built... The Jewish leaders... say his generous gifts were out of ‘love’ for the Jewish people (7:4; & not ‘love of honor’ as is common with benefaction) ... A group of Jewish elders on such friendly terms with a gentile centurion benefactor that they’d come & plead with Jesus to heal his servant would have been relatively surprising for the informed [reader]... The portrayal of this gentile centurion in Capernaum ... ‘runs upstream’ against social & cultural dynamics, contributing to the unexpected features of this story.” [Bart B. Bruehler, Op. cit., p. 79]

3. Model of Mutual Respect between Jews & Gentiles

- In Luke’s “Gospel it is clear that a faithful response to Jesus meant relations of mutual respect & love between Jew & Gentile. In the remarkable story of Jesus’ healing... the centurion’s servant (7:1-10), the centurion provided a paradigm for Gentiles, not despising but loving the Jews, & the Jewish leaders provided a model for Jews, not condemning this Gentile, but interceding on his behalf.” [Allen Verhey, “Ethics in Scripture,” in JB Green, Dictionary of Scripture & Ethics, p.]

- “The centurion at Capernaum... represents the ideal type of Gentile... who is not out to menace the Jewish community but... provides proof that he ‘loves our nation’ [Israel (Lk. 7:5)].” [Robert AG Gagnon, “Double Delegation in Luke 7:1-10,” *Novum Testamentum*, V. 36, #2 (1994) p. 136]

- “The approval of the Jewish elders & the commendation of the centurion’s love for the Jews functions as an apologetic rebuttal [of generalized opposition by Jews to Jesus & his believers].” [R. Gagnon, Op. cit., pp. 136-7]

G. The 2nd Delegation Contradicts the First

- “When Jesus is ‘not far from the house’ (7:6), a second & completely unexpected delegation appears. Now, through his ‘friends’, the centurion directly contradicts what the Jewish elders have said: he is, in fact, not ‘worthy’ of Jesus coming to his house (7:6). The initial argument (that the centurion was worthy) and the initial direction of the story (toward the centurion’s house) have been totally upended by the 2nd delegation. The 2nd delegation... redirect[s]... the story. The 2nd delegation also reports the centurion’s reasoning, drawing an analogy between his authority & Jesus’s authority (7:7-8). It is this unexpected twist in the plot that leads to Jesus’s amazement and his startling proclamation of this centurion’s unique faith (7:9).” [Bart B. Bruehler, “Expecting the Unexpected in Luke 7:1-10,” *Tyndale Bulletin*, V. 73 (2022) p. 84]

- “Here [the narrative] threatens to undo itself. The 2 delegations cancel each other out. The Jews’ [elders] invite [Jesus] to come, but when he comes, the Gentile’s... [friends’ delegation] ask him not to enter... Both are messages from the centurion himself. He invites and disinvites... [This reflects] the Gentile centurion’s own ... paradoxical position... he is both invited and excluded [from Judaism] ... Yet the solution Jesus brings ... overcomes the difficulties... Jesus’ authority can make up the difference.” [Robert R. Beck, *Light to the Centurions*, p.]

- “Jesus’ willingness to heal the centurion’s servant shows... while Jesus’ mission was first & foremost to the Jews, he did minister to Gentiles on their initiative.” [AJ. Kostenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of... Earth*, p. 111]

- Robert “Gagnon argues that, in agreeing to the Jewish elders’ summons, and heading towards the centurion’s home, Jesus has already implicitly agreed to encounter the Gentile and to enter his home; and that, more significantly, the Jewish delegation have also implicitly agreed to this course of action.”

[M. Wilson, pp. 36-37]

•“It is the friends’ [delegation] (in Luke’s account) who, although they convey the centurion’s statement of unworthiness, nevertheless relay the statements of faith & understanding of authority which, in the end, bring the desired outcome.” [Matthew B. Wilson, Op. cit., p. 37]

•Why Two Delegations?

•“Luke...show[s] that Jesus...was perfectly willing to enter the house of a Gentile...Once Jesus consents to this [i.e., going] ...then... [the 2nd delegation’s arrival] dismisses the need for [Jesus’] personal visit... [& preserves] the centurion’s faith for a [remote] distance healing.” [Robert AG Gagnon, Op. cit., p. 140 & #41]

•“The second delegation [of ‘friends’ in Luke’s account] both gives Jesus time to demonstrate his willingness to visit the house of a Gentile & underscores the centurion’s great humility.” [Robert AG Gagnon, Op. cit., p. 144]

•“Luke...wish[es] to defer a Jesus–Gentile encounter to a later point in his narrative [i.e. Acts] ... Luke’s...double delegation both protects the uniqueness of the centurion’s faith which would not be the case if the Jewish elders were responsible for the combined message & keeps Jesus from any suspicion of associating with or visiting anyone of another nation [i.e., the centurion]. This allows the mission to the Gentiles to be a development in the Acts narrative.” [Matthew B. Wilson, Op. cit., p. 36]

H. Jesus’ Remote Healing at a Distance (Lk. 7:6-7)

•This is “a healing that lacks any [‘in-person’] body-to-body contact...& any authoritative word from Jesus. This healing at a distance is almost unparalleled in Luke-Acts.” [Bart B. Bruehler, Op. cit., p. 80]

•“In the Synoptic Gospels, the only two instances of Jesus healing at a distance involve Gentiles: the healing of a centurion’s servant (Lk. 7:1-10) ...& the healing of the Canaanite/Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30).” [Teresa Okure, Global Bible Commentary, p. 389]

•“We have here an example of a healing from a distance, one of only a few such stories in the Gospels...The form lent itself... [to] Gentiles, since Jesus could heal without entering a Gentile home.” [Stephen Hultgren, Mighty in Word & Deed, Book 1, pp. 208-9]

•“With the centurion, as with the Syri-Phoenician woman, Jesus healed someone from a distance. It is only in these 2 cases of Gentiles that the Gospels record such ‘remote’ healings.” [Gerald O’Collins, Rethinking..., p. 272]

I. Jesus is Amazed at the Centurion’s Faith (Lk. 7:9)

•“Jesus...was amazed at [the centurion] ...he said, “I tell you, I’ve not found so great a faith even in Israel.” (7:9)

•“This is the only instance recorded on Scripture that Jesus marveled at the particular faith of a man, & he is a Gentile, no less.” –Morgan Snyder

•“Luke 7:9 is the only occurrence where [‘to be amazed,’ Greek: θαυμάζω] is used to describe the admiration of Jesus...Jesus admires the faith of the centurion...Who could imagine that those words came from the mouth of a Gentile! No wonder that such a surprise causes Jesus to turn to the unnamed crowd...& utter an unheard-of statement: [‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith!'] (7:9) ...It’s the only time in the whole episode that Jesus speaks...a clear sign...that the story reaches its...climax,” [Piotr Blajer, Op. cit., pp. 297-8]

•“The crux of the story...lies...with the faith displayed by the centurion in Jesus, a faith that was prepared to allow ...such a healing to be performed not only at a distance, but by request through intermediaries.” [Wilson, p. 27]

•Jesus “is ‘amazed’ at the faith of the centurion (7:9) – a reaction that he has nowhere else in the Gospel of Luke. This surprising reaction may refocus attention on the faith of the centurion as the real miracle of the story.” [Bart B. Bruehler, Op. cit., p. 81]

J.The Centurion Recognizes Authority –"I also am a man set under authority" (7:8)

•"This centurion, of all people...appear[s] to be the first to recognize Jesus' authority for what it is. He has profound insight into the identity of Jesus...He may not have appreciated all that's implied in Jesus' divinity & messiahship, nor did he address him as the 'Son of David', but he recognized that Jesus had authority from God. He also knew that Jesus could heal his servant from a distance... Jesus was amazed at a centurion whom he had not even met...[had] such great faith...This is the only statement Jesus makes in [this episode]" [Stephen Voowinde, Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels, pp. 124-5]

•"For Luke, the faith of the centurion is not simply in Jesus' ability to perform miracles, but in God's plan and purpose that will be fulfilled through Jesus. The central address of the narrative, the centurion...states "for I also am a man set under authority". The implication...is that, just as the centurion is subject to authority, so is Jesus. Just as the centurion gives orders to those under him in order to fulfil the orders he himself has been given, so Jesus will heal to fulfil the plan and purpose of God. Jesus, like the centurion, not only is a figure of authority, but is subject to the higher authority & purpose of God...It is faith in the universal purpose and plan of God that brings healing, rather than simply faith in the authority of Jesus." [Matthew B. Wilson, Op. cit., pp. 39, 41]

K.Who Is Worthy of Divine Blessings?

•"This is the one time in the NT that the term 'worthy' (Gk.: axios) is used to describe a person [an individual] positively, rather than a group." [Darrell L. Bock, Luke, p. 133]

1.Reversal: From 'Unworthy'...

a.'Unworthy' –in traditional Judaism

•"The healing of the wealthy, foreign commander's servant, highlights how Jesus upends the traditional Jewish...definition of who is 'worthy' to receive divine [blessing]. On his own, as a Gentile, he would have been 'unworthy,' outside the boundaries of ...divine grace. This sets the centurion, despite his material resources...within... 'the poor'." [Rachel L. Coleman, Op. cit., pp. 94-95]

b.'Unworthy' –in his own self-evaluation

•"Through the second set of envoys, the centurion...describes himself twice as 'unworthy' of a face-to-face encounter with Jesus (7:6-7)...[Yet, his] recognition of Jesus' authority...[& his] keen insight that Jesus, like the centurion, acts under a higher authority ...[i.e.] God's ...At this juncture of [Luke's] Gospel, that is... [what] Jesus characterizes as 'faith'." [Rachel L. Coleman, Op. cit., p. 95]

2...to 'Worthy' of Divine Grace (Blessing)

a.'Worthy' – in Jewish Elders' Estimation

•The Jewish elders "characterize...the commander...[as] 'worthy' of Jesus' intervention...because of his [generosity] toward the Jewish people. In their estimation, he has acquired worthiness...[due] to his positive [attitude and actions] toward the Jewish people (7:5)." [Rachel L. Coleman, Op. cit., p. 94]

b.'Worthy' –in Jesus' Eyes

•"Jesus' estimation...the final...word on [the centurion's] 'worthiness' ...is an astonished recognition of...his faith...Who is 'worthy' to receive divine favor [grace? The centurion,] a wealthy man who is yet 'poor' because of his foreignness, a man of authority who nevertheless humbles himself before Jesus' authority, a man whose faith excites astonishment in Jesus –this is the 'worthy one' in Luke's story." [RL. Coleman, Op. cit., p. 95]

L.Similarities & Contrasts: Jesus/Centurion vs. Elish/Naaman (2 Kgs. 5)

•"As is typical in intertextuality, so in this instance the interplay between the Elijah-account & the present [episode] registers both similarities & variation." [Joel B. Green, Luke, p. 868]

•Q: "Is the story of the healing of the centurion's servant modelled upon the story of the healing of Naaman?" — [John B. Shelton, "Naaman & the Centurion (2 Kings 5 & Luke 7)" University of Limerick, Ireland (2013) p. 68]

•In 7:1-10 "Luke is paralleling the account of Elisha healing Naaman in 2 Kings 5 with Jesus' healing of the centurion's slave. Components that signify similarities...include 'genre, theme, style, plot,

motifs, structure, order, and wording.'" [John B. Shelton, Naaman & the Centurion, p. 140]

•"Just as Naaman the Syrian commander was cleansed of his leprosy at a distance by Elisha (2 Kgs 5:1-14), so in Capernaum the Gentile centurion's servant is healed at a distance by Jesus. The reference to the Elijah story in Lk. 4:27 finds its fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus in 7:1-10, where the parallel emphasis is on healing being granted to a Gentile from a distance and on the acceptability of the Gentile's faith." [Jeffrey Siker, "First to the Gentiles': a Literary Analysis of Luke 4:16-30." JBL, V. 111, # 1 (1992): p. 88]

•"When Jesus cites Elijah & Elisha's miracles for Gentiles (Luke 4:24-7), Luke's readers know that these prophets' ministry was mainly for Israel...Within its own narrative world, Elijah's trip outside Israel 'is a chance for the prophet to stay alive so that he can later restore the covenant between God & Israel.' Instructive is the story of Naaman (2 Kgs 5); although Elisha heals a foreigner, that foreigner must dip in Israel's river, recognize Israel's God, & cart away bundles of Israel's soil. Jesus...performs only one miracle for a Gentile in Luke (7:1-10); this [centurion's servant] story, clearly patterned on Naaman's, seems structured to highlight (by comparison with Mt. 8:5-13) the centurion's Jewish approval Luke suggests that Gentile salvation, like Naaman's healing, is 'bound up with' the salvation of Israel." [Jonathan Huddleston, Op. cit., pp. 277-8]

•"When Luke...recount[s] the healing of the servant of a non-Jewish centurion in Lk. 7:1-10...he casts Jesus in the role of Elisha & likens this event to the intervention of Elisha on behalf of Naaman, a non-Jew." [Susan Wendal, Scriptural Interpretation..., p. 242]

•"These two Gentile figures [the Zarephath widow & Naaman the Syrian] might be thought of as the 'ancestors' of latter-day Gentiles who...[have] faith. In Luke, these two are echoed in adjacent stories: the healing of the centurion's servant (7:1-10) & the raising of a widow's son (7:11-17). Although the widow of Nain is a Galilean." [Andrew Benko, Abraham, Ancestry, & Ethnicity in Luke, p. 191]

V. Jesus' Raising the Widow's Dead Son (7:11-17)

•11 Soon afterward Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother (who was a widow), and a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 Then he came up and touched the bier, and those who carried it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" 15 So the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. 16 Fear seized them all, and they began to glorify God, saying, "A great prophet has appeared among us!" and "God has come to help his people!" 17 This report about Jesus circulated throughout Judea and all the surrounding country." (Luke 7:11-17 NET)

•Notes on the Text

1. "Town" (7:11) The term πόλις (polis) can refer to a small town, which is what Nain was. It was about 6 miles (9 km.) southeast of Nazareth. [NET]

2. "Widow" (7:12) The description of the woman as a widow would mean that she was now socially alone & without protection in 1st century Jewish culture. [NET]

3. "The Lord saw her..." (7:13) "For the 1st time Luke refers to Jesus as the 'Lord' who shows compassion."

4. "He had compassion" (7:13) It is unusual for Luke to note such emotion by Jesus. [NET]

5. He "touched the bier" (7:14) The act of having touched the bier would have rendered Jesus ceremonially unclean, but it did not matter to him, since he was expressing his personal concern. The bier was actually a stretcher or wooden plank on which the corpse was transported to the place of burial. [NET]

6. "Fear" (7:16) Or "Awe." Greek: "fear," but the context and the following remark show that it is mixed with wonder. This is a reaction to God's work. [NET]

•"Luke's Jesus ministers to the poor & oppressed...[His] miraculous power especially benefits [them; for e.g.] the widow of Nain, who having lost her only son, is without relatives in a society that considers that state a curse." [Leonard Doohan, Luke, p. 137]

A. Setting the Scene (Lk. 7:11-12)

- “Soon afterward Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother (who was a widow), and a large crowd from the town was with her.” (Lk. 7:11-12)
- Two Processions... of Life, & of Death
- The story depicts a meeting of 2 processions: one represents life (Jesus, his disciples, & a 'large crowd' who have just witnessed & celebrated a miraculous healing [of the centurion's servant]) & the other is a procession of death (the widow, her dead son, and the mourning crowd). Compassion arises when life meets death, when hope and suffering come together.” [Michal B. Dinkler, “Commentary on Lk. 7:1-17,” Working Preacher (Feb. 5, 2017) p]
- “Jesus, accompanied by his disciples & a large crowd, traveled to the village of Nain, a...small & insignificant town located about 25 miles [36 km.] southwest of Capernaum. The distance... significant. Jesus' journey was not accidental; it reflects purpose. After[ward], He returns to Capernaum (Lk. 7:18), which raises...[the] question: Why travel so far for one act of compassion?” [Bernard JR. Babierra, “... Compassion of Jesus in Luke 7:11-17, PASR Journal, Vol 5, #1 (2025) p.]
- “In Luke 7:11-12 two groups of persons, going on opposite directions, encounter each other at the gate of Nain. Each of these two distinct crowds has a central figure: for those entering the city, Jesus is the important character and for those exiting, the widow occupies a central position. The event narrated by Lk. in 7:11-17 is actually an encounter between these two protagonists: Jesus & the widow...Lk. 7:11-17...portray[s] Jesus as a compassionate miracle-worker who was moved by the desperate condition of one of the less privileged of his contemporary society, a widow.” [Mary J. Obiorah, “Do Not Weep' (Lk. 7:13): In the Footstep of the Compassionate Jesus,” Open Journal of Philosophy, V. 4, (2014) p. 208]

B. The Capernaum Centurion & the Widow of Nain

1. A Man-Woman Pair in Luke's Gospel

- “Some healing stories...appear to form pairs, with a woman & a man as recipients of Jesus' help...In 7:1-17 the raising of the widow's son follows the healing of a centurion's servant. In the case of the widow...Jesus is acting for her sake, since we are told that 'the Lord had compassion on her' (7:13).” [Robert C. Tannehill, Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts, p. 135]
- “Immediately after Jesus heals the Centurion's servant in Lk. 7:2-10, Luke tells us that Jesus brings back to life the only son of a widow in 7:11-15. The reader is meant to conclude that Jesus' healing ministry is available to men & women alike.” [Jeffrey E. Miller, Jesus Among the Marginalized, Duke U. Divinity School, (2017) p. 138]

2. Compare & Contrast

- “Both passages focus on the plight not of the person who will get healed [the servant & son] but of the person who most relies on the one in need of healing [the Centurion & Widow]. The two are also a gender pair. Gender pairs are a regular phenomenon in [Luke] ([Lk.] 7:29–30; 11:31–32; 13:18, 21; 15:4–9; 17:34–35 [etc.]). The two passages... also... contrast one another: The centurion was wealthy & had influence & power... [The woman] is a poor & powerless widow... [with] no one to fend for her & no hope for her future. And finally, the two show that Jesus can heal either a person 'at the point of death' [the servant] (7:2) or a person who had [already] died [the son] (7:12).” [David B. Sloan, “Widow at Nain...& Extent of Q,” E. Great Lakes Biblical Society (2021) p. 4]

C. The Worst Possible Tragedy

- “A man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother (who was a widow) ...” (Lk. 7:12)
- Here “Jesus...remedie[s] the worst possible tragedy, for with the death of her only son the widow has been left alone & the family line has come to an end.” [Craig A. Evans, Luke, p. xlvi]
- “Luke underscores the despondency of the occasion by expressing the phrase ['only begotten son']

(only son) & (& she was a widow). The gravity of this real-life situation highlights that a widow who has lost her only son may now have no one to care for her" [A. Inyaregh, "Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain," *Diligentia*, V. 7, #3, p. 173]

D. Jesus' Unconditional Compassion

- "Only here is Luke's Jesus explicitly said to 'have compassion' for anyone, i.e., to be moved with pity or sympathy." –F. Scott Spencer
- "Unlike in the preceding [episode (the centurion)], the spontaneity of Jesus' compassion for the widow requires no expression of faith from her or from the sympathizers. In Luke 7:1-10, the episode before the raising of the widow's son, Jesus praised the faith of the Centurion in these words: 'I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith' (7:9). The raising of the widow's son is unconditional." [Mary J. Obiorah, *Op. cit.*, p. 212]
- Jesus "like YAHWEH in the OT...is unconditionally compassionate. Jesus pitied [the widow] for what she was & not for what she could do. Her faith was not a prerequisite for divine action." [Bernard JR. Babierra, *Op. cit.*, p]

E. Jesus took the initiative

- "It is instructive...that the initiative to do this came from Jesus; he did not wait for the poor childless widow to beg him before he performed this soothing miracle. Following the footstep of Jesus today, many of us may not be endowed with the supernatural gifts of raising a person from dead; however, we can, in various ways, like Jesus bring joy to the lives of many helpless persons. There are many who, like the widow of Nain, are desperately waiting for others to alleviate their sufferings." [Mary J. Obiorah, *Op. cit.*, p. 213]

F. Luke 7:15 Quotes 1 Kings 17 –Exact Correspondence

- "It is this last act that most loudly echoes...1 Kings. There, after raising the boy...Elijah took him down from the upper chamber into the main part of the house 'and gave him to his mother' (1 Kgs. 17:23. Luke's narration of the scene at Nain repeats precisely the same phrase: '...[Jesus] gave him to his mother' (Lk. 7:15). Luke winks at the knowledgeable reader, virtually demanding that the two stories be read together." [RB. Hayes, *Op. cit.*, p. 238]
- "Straightforward verbal borrowing...stands out as the exception; e.g., Luke 7:15... ['gave him to his mother'] corresponds exactly to the LXX of 1 Kgs 17:23, but the two stories (1 Kgs 17:17–24 / Luke 7:11–17) scarcely share another word. [Yet,] The events of the two stories parallel one another throughout." [Jonathan Huddleston, "What would Elijah & Elisha do?" *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 5 #2 (2011) p. 269]
- "The identification of Jesus with Elijah in...is the greatest here [in this episode (7:15)], because Luke says exactly the same about Jesus as was said earlier in 1 Kgs. 17 about Elijah: 'and he gave him to his mother' (7:15 cf. 9:42). It is remarkable that Luke repeats the story from Kings here, but does not mention the name Elijah." [Nico Riemersma, "Elijah, John & Jesus in a Lukan Perspective," in *Themes & Texts in Luke-Acts*, p. 52]
- L. Crockett...says, Luke "7:1-10 is modelled on Elisha-Naaman." [Larrimore Crockett, "Luke 4:25-27 & Gentile-Jewish Relations in Luke-Acts," *JBL* (July 1969) pp. 182-3]
- "Luke has shaped the sequence of stories in Lk. 7:1-17 to resemble the respective healing stories of Elisha & Elijah (2 Kgs.5; 1 Kgs. 17)." [Luke T. Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, p. 13]
- "In Luke's narrative, 7:1-10 and 7:11-15 work together to lead the people to identify Jesus as 'a great prophet' and the manifestation of God's visitation of the people (7:16)." [Bart B. Bruehler, *Op. cit.*, p. 85]

VI. Jesus the Prophetic Messiah, Like Elijah

A. People glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us" Great Prophet => Elijah

- "Luke 7:1–[17] makes known the identity of Jesus as the Messiah, a great prophet, the one through

whom God is visiting his people (7:16). In the Sermon on the Plain (6:17-39), Jesus 'announced good news to the poor' in fulfillment of his prophetic declaration in Lk. 4:18. Following the Sermon, Luke demonstrates the prophetic character of the Messiah by showing Jesus perform wonders similar to... the OT prophets (7:1-17). The first prophetic wonder appears in the healing of the centurion's slave (7:1-10). Like the healing of Naaman the Syrian performed by Elisha in 2 Kgs 5:1-14, Luke has Jesus perform a healing in response to a Gentile's request. In the 2nd prophetic wonder, Jesus' raising of the widow's son (7:11-17) bears strong resemblance to the resuscitations performed by Elijah & Elisha (1 Kgs 17; 2 Kgs 4). In both cases, Luke's overt parallels to the well-known stories of Elijah & Elisha are no coincidence. These accounts...make a definitive point... 'A great prophet has risen among us!' (7:16)." [Joshua L. Allen, *Jesus, Friend of Sinners* (Lk. 7:36-50), Lipscomb University (2015) p. 6]

•"Those who witnessed the miracle wrought by Jesus at the entrance to Nain recalled [–Elijah–] the great prophet of old. Jesus is the 'Great Prophet' of their time: "A great prophet has risen among us", they exclaimed.

The [Zarephath] widow in 1 Kgs. 17:17-24 made similar confession...: "Now I know that you are a man of God, & that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth" (17:24). The crowd, who witnessed what Jesus did, understood it as a sign of divine favour: "God has looked favorably on his people!" (7:16)." [Mary J. Obiorah, *Op. cit.*, p. 213]

•At "the end of the story... 'Jesus gave him to his mother' (7:15). Luke has lifted the clause from 1 Kgs. 17:23. The people of Nain respond accordingly: 'a great prophet has risen among us' (7:16). Their declaration is followed...by 5 episodes that underscore the similarity between Jesus & Elijah... [including] the fact that Jesus, a prophet like Elijah...rais[es] another dead child [Jairus' daughter] ... Jesus is not Elijah, but –as Luke sees it –he is very much like Elijah." [Jocelyn McWirtter, *Rejected Prophets*, pp. 52-53]

•"Note how the wonders of Elijah & Elisha in Lk. 4:25-27 (raising...the widow of Zarephath's son & healing...the Gentile soldier Naaman) are echoed by Jesus' own miracles of healing the servant of a Gentile soldier & raising the widow of Nain's son (7:1-16), a connection recognized by the crowd that cries, 'A great prophet has risen among us,' & 'God has visited his people' (7:16)." [Luke T. Johnson, *Contested Issues...Christian Origins*, p. 155]

•"In a story that parallels Elijah's act...Jesus raises a widow's dead son (Lk. 7:11-17). That the scene is meant to evoke Elijah's miracle is reinforced by the crowd's response: 'A great prophet has risen among us' (7:16). Given that Luke has already had Jesus implicitly compare himself to Elijah, the reference to Jesus being a 'great prophet' in raising the dead makes an Elijah allusion irresistible." [Michael P. Barber, *Bible & Anointing*, p. 39]

B. Jesus identified as 'Elijah' implicitly, not explicitly

•"Jesus is nowhere in the NT explicitly identified as Elijah or said to fulfill Elijah's messianic role. [Yet,] analogies exist between Jesus' ministry & that of...Elijah (e.g. Lk. 4:25-26; 7:11-17) ... Elijah...turns out by implication to be Jesus." [J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, p.]

•"Luke...shows Jesus himself fulfilling Elijah's role. Several stories about Jesus that occur only in Luke directly recall stories about Elijah...Only in Luke Gospel does Jesus...directly compare himself to Elijah & Elisha...He specifically recalls the raising of the widow's son at Zarephath... Luke identifies Jesus as Elijah's fulfillment." [Jeffrey John, *Meaning of the Miracles*, pp. 216-7]

C. Jesus Recognized as a "Great Prophet," not yet as Messiah

1. "Not a failure to recognize Jesus' divinity" — Bernard Labiera

•"When the crowd...recognizes Jesus as a great prophet, they are not wrong; their view of Jesus [at this point] is merely incomplete." [Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, p. 136]

•"The crowd cried out, 'A great prophet has arisen in our midst.' This declaration connects Jesus to... Israel's mighty prophets, such as Elijah & Elisha, who had also performed miracles, including raising the dead. These villagers, grounded in their Jewish tradition, interpreted the event through their only

lens— the prophetic ... This was not a failure to recognize Jesus' divinity but a respectful acknowledgment of his identity within the framework they understood. Jesus had not yet fully revealed himself as the Son of God..." [Babierra, Op. cit., p]

2. Jesus later revealed as Messiah (Lk. 9:20)

Jesus asked his disciples "them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered, 'The Christ of God.'" (Lk. 9:20)

•Lk 9 "includes the first recognition, outside the infancy narrative, of Jesus' messianic role (9:20), the first passion prediction of the Son of Man (9:22) as well as the first mention of the future Son of Man (9:26)." –D. Ravens

•"Besides the infancy narratives, [Luke 9] is the first time that Jesus' Messianic role is revealed (9:20), & it is the first prediction of the suffering & future coming of the Son of Man (9:22, 26) & the status of God's chosen ones (9:35)." [Ivan S-C Kwong, Word Order of...Luke, p. 133]

3. Jesus' Transfiguration has not yet occurred (Lk. 9:35)

•Transfiguration: "A voice came from the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him!'" (9:35)

•"The revelation of God (Lk. 9:35) ... may imply the disciples have wrongly equalized Jesus, Moses & Elijah... God's declaration is a correction... & a clarification... about Jesus' identity." [Ivan S-C Kwong, Op. cit., pp. 118-9]

D. Jesus' Miracle at Nain vs. Elijah's Miracle at Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17)

•"In many ways, Luke's account [of Jesus' raising the widow's son] proceeds differently from the Elijah story... [But,] at the end of the story however, Luke's Jesus makes a gesture... 'Jesus gave him to his mother' (Lk. 7:15). Luke has lifted the clause from 1 Kings 17:23." [Jocelyn McWhirter, Rejected Prophets, pp. 51-52]

•"One of the most striking... correspondences [is] Jesus' raising the dead son of a widow (Lk. 7:11-17) ... found only in Luke's gospel. This story... closely resembles ... Elijah's raising the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17:17-24) ... [referenced] in Luke 4:26." [Richard B. Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, p. 237]

•Luke T. Johnson labels the connection [of the widow of Nain (Lk. 7) with the widow of Zarephath] as 'the most obvious' noting 'both a structural similarity, & a number of deliberate echoes.' [Luke T. Johnson, Luke, p. 120]

•"This episode, depicting Jesus' raising the widow's dead son (7:11-17) is even more closely linked to Elijah's similar action (1 Kgs. 17:8-24) ... Luke's account has numerous points of connection: [1.] meeting a widow at the gates of the town; [2.] the death of the widow's only son; [3.] raising the dead son & returning him to his mother; [4] the ensuing recognition of 'a great prophet' of the Lord. [5] The phrase 'gave him to his mother' [Lk. 7:15 CSB] is an exact quotation of [Greek] LXX 1 Kings 17:23 [CSB]." [Jeremy D. Otten, I Alone Am Left, pp. 109-110]

E. Luke's Allusions to Elijah's Reviving the Zarephath-Widow's Son

•"Luke 7 account shows a person [–the widow of Nain–] apparently ignorant of Jesus, come to an initial recognition of him through the miracle [Jesus' raising her son]." [Jeremy Otten, Op. cit., p. 472]

•"Everyone recognizes that... the raising of the widow's son in 7:11-15, echoes the scriptural account of Elijah's raising ... the widow of Zarephath's son in 1 Kgs. 17, an echo made explicit by Luke's using the precise phrasing of the LXX in 7:15, 'he gave him to his mother'." [Luke T. Johnson, Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church, p. 30]

•"Luke's Gospel appeals to the OT account of Elijah & the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8–24) as early as Jesus' inaugural [Nazareth] sermon... (Lk. 4:25–26). Subsequent echoes & allusions to the same narrative span the rest of Luke-Acts, from the account of the widow of Nain (7:11–17), to the raising of Tabitha (Acts 9:36–42) & Eutychus's unlucky fall from the window (Acts 20:7–12)." [Jeremy D. Otten, "From Widows to Windows: Luke's Use of... Echoes of 1 Kings 17:8–24," Bulletin for Biblical Research, V. 31, #4 (2021) pp. 463-4]

- “The 2nd major allusion to [Elijah] 1 Kgs 17 occurs in Luke 7:11–17, with the account of Jesus & the widow of Nain. Coming on the heels of Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain (6:12–49), the focus in this narrative block is on Jesus’ compassionate ministry to the poor (cf. esp. 7:21–22). Specifically, this [episode] & those around it...sketch... who are who inherit the kingdom of God. This uniquely Lukan episode...has numerous points of connection with 1 Kgs 17.” [Jeremy D. Otten, Op. cit., p. 469]
- “The raising of the young man in Nain (Lk. 7:11-17) is the first story of the resurrection of a dead person that Luke tells... The raising of a dead person [was] also performed in the Elijah-Elisha tradition... Luke’s ...advance ...over the raising of the dead narrative of Elijah is unmistakable... Elisha’s...gesture of resurrection...is missing in Luke 7:11-17, as is a prayer of Jesus...for the resurrection of the boy. Rather, in Lk. 7:13 Jesus himself ...[is] the Lord. He himself ‘has mercy,’ on the boy & awakens him by his word.” [M. Bauspeiss, Op. cit., p. 30]
- “The emphasis of the episode [is] entirely on the woman & her pitiable state, which the narrator... reveals in successive waves: the son “had died,” he was “the only son of his mother,” “and she was a widow” (7:12). With the extent of her bereavement clearly established, the narrator then tells us that Jesus “had compassion for her” (7:13)—the turning point of the narrative...located...at the center of the episode. With no social or economic support left to lean on, the woman of Nain is the embodiment of the ‘poor’ to whom good news has come & to whom the kingdom of God belongs (cf. 4:18; 6:20). The concluding exclamation of the onlookers, “God has visited his people” (7:16) recalls familiar imagery of God’s saving acts for Israel throughout the OT (Ex. 4:31; Ps 106:4 [LXX 105:4]; cf. Luke 1:68, 78), so that this woman in her poverty typifies God’s true people. Likewise, Jesus’ healing compassion on her serves to represent God’s salvation...Luke 7 shows...those few who will receive divine mercy as ‘his people’—poor & humble, with nothing to cling to but God alone.” [J. Otten, Op. cit., p. 470]
- “After healing a widow’s son, Jesus tells John’s disciples that the dead are raised, & that the poor are having good news preached to them. [Craig] Evans sees this as a direct allusion to Jesus’s proclamation at Nazareth, thereby emphasizing the ‘poor’ characteristic of the woman he just helped.” [Craig Evans, “Luke’s Use of the Elijah/Elisha Narratives,” J. of Biblical Lit., V. 106, #1 (1987) p. 80]
- “Jesus’ compassion for & teaching regarding the poor, the defenseless (...widows & orphans), or the ostracized (such as tax collectors, ‘sinners,’ & Samaritans) are characteristic... In [Lk. 7:11-17] it is the only son of a widow who is raised up by Jesus. It is an example of the poor, or defenseless, receiving God’s blessing. That the passage may be understood this way receives added support when it’s noted that in the subsequent pericope (7:18-23) Jesus tells the Baptist’s messengers: ‘...the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.’” [Craig A. Evans, “Luke’s Use of the Elijah/Elisha Narratives,” J. of Biblical Lit., V. 106, #1 (1987) pp 79-80].
- “In...Luke’s peculiar narration of the raising of the widow’s son in Nain ...(7:11–17). The focus is not so much on the raising itself as on the widow’s grief in losing her son. It is emphatically mentioned that ‘he was his mother’s only son.’ Jesus’ compassion towards her elicits the miracle...in 7:13: ‘When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her & said to her, “Do not weep.” After raising the son, it’s...explicitly mentioned that ‘Jesus gave him to his mother’. Jesus’ psychological engagement with the mourning mother is clear.” [Eben Scheffler, “Empathy for the psychological underdog,” HTS, Vol. 70(1), Art. #2742, p. 3]
- With “Jesus’ compassion toward the widow of Nain (Lk. 7:11–17) ...the focus fall[s] on her state of destitution rather than her ethnicity, she models...the proper stance toward God & his kingdom: not one of presumption but one of the poor, hungry, & mourning [as taught in Jesus’ ‘Sermon’] (cf. Lk. 6:20–21).” [J. Otten, Op. cit., p. 476]

F.Differences:

- “When the two stories are juxtaposed, one salient difference looms. Jesus’ mighty act requires no stretching himself out on the body, no anguished cries & prayers to God; instead, he speaks a direct word commanding the dead man to rise... Thus, while Jesus’ act is reminiscent of Elijah’s...the typological link...suggest[s] both likeness & unlikeness. Jesus...fulfills the pattern...in the Elijah story

but does so in a way that surpasses the 'type' ...[showing] this prophetic figure [Jesus]...possess[es] even greater authority than the greatest of Israel's miracle-working prophets [Elijah]." [Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, pp. 238-9]

G.Comparison: Luke 7 vs. 2 Kings 5

- Joel Green's Comparison of Luke 7 & 2 Kings 5 (Joel Green, *Luke*, p. 284.)

- Luke 7

- The centurion: a well-respected Gentile officer (7:2, 4-5).

- Intercession of Jewish elders in the healing (7:3-5).

- The centurion does not meet Jesus (7:6-9).

- The healing takes place at a distance (7:10).

2 Kings 5

Naaman: a well-respected Gentile officer (5:1).

Intercession of a Jewish girl in the healing (5:2-3).

Naaman does not meet Elisha (5:5-10)

The healing takes place at a distance (5:14).

- L. Crockett concludes "that 2 Kings 5:1-19 & Luke 7:1-10...meet the requirements...for literary dependence...Luke uses 2 Kgs. 5:1-19 [Naaman's healing] to help fashion and shape the plot of Lk. 7:1-10 [the Centurian's servant healed] & builds upon the former; ...2 Kgs 5:1-19 is constitutive of Luke 7:1-10... Naaman is...a significant source of Lk. 7." [Larrimore Crockett, "Luke 4:25-27 & Gentile-Jewish Relations in Luke-Acts," *JBL* (July 1969) p. 141]

- "While John [the Baptist] is identified as the [end-time] Elijah, Luke also shows Jesus to be Elijah with the two... miracle stories [7:1-17] recalling the ministries of Elijah & Elisha... Jesus performs miracles like Elijah & has a universal ministry." [Brian Dennet, *John the Baptist & the Jewish Setting...*, pp. 54-55]

- Luke makes the "theological claim that Jesus was the prophet par excellence, the culmination of the work of all the great prophets of Israel. In...7:1-17 Luke narrated the...healing of the centurion's servant, which echoes Elisha's healing of Naaman in 2 Kings. 5:1-15, & the raising of the widow of Nain's son, which, in turn, echoes Elijah's miracle in 1 Kings 17:17-24." [Allan J McNicol, *Resourcing NT Studies*, pp. 61-62]

- There's a "connection between Luke's portrayal of Jesus & the Elijah-Elisha stories from Israel's Scriptures... Luke invites readers to connect Jesus' story with everything they know about Elijah & Elisha... This... prompts readers to read Jesus' story with the expectation that he will resemble Elijah & Elisha, an expectation that Jesus' story sometimes confirms & sometimes confounds." [Jonathan Huddleston, *Op. cit.*, p. 265]

- There are "important similarities between Jesus' actions & those of Elijah (& Elisha) ... In Luke these actions include praying on a mountain before choosing disciples (Lk. 5:12-13/1 Kgs 19), healing a foreign military man [centurion's slave/Naaman] (Lk. 7:1-10/2 Kgs 5), raising a widow's son [Nain/Zarephath] (Lk. 7:11-17 / 1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:8-37), healing lepers (Lk. 5:12-16; 17:11-19 / 1 Kgs 19), & miraculously multiplying food (Lk. 9:12-17 / 2 Kgs 4:42-4) ... Jesus' performing of miraculous signs, anointing of successors, & confrontation of rulers all echo... the Elijah-Elisha story. In each case, the associations brought to the story by audiences may not be reducible to a structural plan on the part of the author." [Jonathan Huddleston, *Op. cit.*, pp. 268, 279-80]