

The Change in Covenant

The Call of the Disciples and Jesus' Healing in Galilee

Luke 5:1 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret,
2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."

6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.

7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,

10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

13 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.

¹⁴ And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

¹⁵ But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities.

¹⁶ But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

¹⁷ On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

¹⁸ And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus,

¹⁹ but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus.

²⁰ And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

²² When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts?

²³ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?

²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- he said to the man who was paralyzed-- "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."

²⁵ And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God.

²⁶ And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."

²⁷ After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me."

²⁸ And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

²⁹ And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.

³⁰ And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

³¹ And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

³³ And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink."

³⁴ And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?

³⁵ The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days."

³⁶ He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed.

³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.

³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

(Luke 5:1-39)

The Whole Picture

I'll give you a few words. It is your job to make a picture. *Crescent moon*. What comes to your mind? A drawing?

A photograph? A scene from a movie? The logo of DreamWorks? Any of a dozen Muslim nation flags? The actual moon in the sky?

Tall church spire. Now what do you think of? An out of context part of some unidentifiable religious roof? A whole medieval European church? An entire medieval town? Perhaps some small church in 1800s midwestern America that looks about as opposite of Notre Dame Cathedral as you can get?

Cypress tree. What comes to mind? An old tree someone planted on the corner of your old house? A stock picture on Google Images? Some sapling over at the Tree Farm?

Spiraling lines in the sky. Do you think of laying on your back as a kid looking up at the clouds? Perhaps chem trails on a windy day come to some of your minds?

Blue, green, yellow, and white. How about Brazil's flag? The feathers of a peacock or some species of parrot? A rare combination of eye colors?

By themselves, each of these things give almost endless possibilities for what they could refer to. But what if we put them all together? What if I told you these were features of one of the most famous paintings in the world? Van Gogh's *Starry Night*.



When trying to understand something like a famous painting, it is **not wrong to look at the individual elements**. In fact, this can be very helpful. Van Gogh painted *Starry Night* in 1889 near the end of his life whilst a patient in the Saint-Paul-de-Mausole insane asylum. He next year, he would commit suicide at age 37. Because of this, many speculate that the blues and greens and browns color his own **internal shift in darkness**. The moon and stars are prominent in a spiraling night sky that is now legendary. The cypress jets into the sky, as does the spire of the cathedral, begging for interpretation. But is only when looking at them together that the whole comes into view. Here's how someone has described the work to give you some perspective:

Notice the brush strokes. For the sky they swirl, each dab of color rolling with the clouds around the stars and moon. On the cypress tree they bend with the curve of the branches. The whole effect is ethereal and dreamlike. The hills easily roll down into the little village below. In contrast, the town is straight up and down, done with rigid lines that interrupt the flow of the brush strokes. Tiny little trees soften the inflexibility of the town. Bringing nature into the unnaturalness of buildings...

The contrast in styles plays on the natural versus the unnatural, dreams versus reality. Nature could even be attributed to the divine in this work. In [Genesis 37:9](#), Joseph states, “And he *dreamed* yet another *dream*, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and behold the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.” - predicting that one day his family would bow to him as an authority. Some people associate this quote to the painting. Perhaps it is a reference to Van Gogh’s family, who doubted the success of his career (with the notable exception of his brother). It could be that Van Gogh simply wanted to breathe in the higher power into his art, as he grew up in a religious household. Divide the painting into three parts. The sky is the divine. It is by far the most dreamlike, unreal part of the painting, beyond human comprehension and just out of reach. Go down one level to the cypress, the hills, and the

other trees on the ground. They bend and swirl, still soft angles that match the soft swirls of the sky. The last part is the village. The straight lines and sharp angles divide it from the rest of the painting, seemingly separating it from the “heavens” of the sky. However, note the dots of trees rolled through the village, how the spire of the church stretches up to the sky. Van Gogh brings God to the village.¹

While paintings are always subjective, and Van Gogh didn’t say much about this one, it does seem that the overall meaning probably has to do with his own internal darkness, yearning for God to come and touch him so that he might escape the asylum and be free. Even though the darkness abounds, there are still flickers of light that illumine and lead onward. But one could only ever see this if they were looking at the painting as a whole. The parts alone cannot convey such meaning. It is impossible.

Luke 5: Context and Structure

As with the large chunk of text we looked at last time, we are faced with a similar dilemma in Luke 5. Should we

¹ “Vincent Van Gogh: Starry Night,” *The Van Gogh Gallery*, <https://www.vangoghgallery.com/painting/starry-night.html>.

look at the parts or the whole? In your Bible, you probably have several different headings such as the ESV's:

1. Jesus Calls the First Disciples (5:1-11)
2. Jesus Cleanses a Leper (12-16)
3. Jesus Heals a Paralytic (17-26)
4. Jesus Calls Levi (27-32)
5. A Question About Fasting (33-39)

Taken as individual stories, which they usually are, each passage has many things to teach us. But since several of them are **very well known**, I wanted to ask a question. What if we were to look at them all together, the way we just looked at *Starry Night*? Might we see a different picture if we did this?

Before attempting such a thing, we should first ask if we might have **reason to even try**. Unless you do, it could be an exercise in making stuff up that isn't there. But I believe we do. I'll explain this on two levels. First, that of the Luke-Acts parallel and second that of Luke 5 as a whole. Of the **Luke-Acts parallels**, it is important to remember that these two books were written by Luke to tell the parallel stories of Jesus and his church. Together. As a whole. What happens to Jesus is going to happen to his church. Luke does this in such a way that both books begin with the same themes, move along with parallel themes, and end, again, the same

way. Both books begin with a preface, a time of preparation, prayer, and waiting. Both end with a centurion giving a favorable opinion of the Gospel which is for “all the nations.” In between, there are a ton of matching storylines.

But part of Luke’s brilliance is that he weaves these parallels not only on a macro-scale, but on **smaller and smaller scaling levels within each book**. He does this both forwards and backwards. He does it with totality of the books as well as in (at least) the first halves of both books. Into this, we learn that Luke begins with **Jesus** being promised to receive the **throne** of his father David even as the earthly King Herod seeks to kill Jesus. The first half ends with Satan falling like lightning while Herod the Tetrarch kills John. Similarly, Acts begins with **Jesus** ascending to the **throne** of God and speaking about the heavenly kingdom and the Holy Spirit, while the first half of Acts ends with Herod killing James and then an angel striking Herod dead because he pretended to be a god. **The structural centers of the books are** Acts 7, where Stephen says, “**You have betrayed and murdered the Righteous One**”—but nevertheless sees Jesus seated at the right hand of God, and our passage—**Luke 5**, represented by, “**No one puts new wine in old wine skins.**” Roy Atwood has summarized these centers this way, “**The**

chiastic centers of the first halves of the two books highlight *the transition from Old Covenant to New.*²

When you then turn your attention to this “center” that Atwood sees rather astonishingly at first as **the entirety of Luke 5** (see below), something begins to pre-

Gospel of Luke		Acts of the Apostles	
Preface: "... to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus"	Luke 1:1-4	Preface	Acts 1:1-3
King Herod, Angel, Zech, John, Eliz, ANNUNCIATION, Mary, Magnificat, Caesar's decree sent (from Rome)	Luke 1:1-2:5	A	Acts 1:5-26
He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (compare Matt 2:16-20; Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that had been ascertained from the wise men ... But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.")	Luke 2:6-20	B	Acts 2
Angels, shepherds, Jesus born in Bethlehem ("House of Bread") (1:35) The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. (Lk. 1:35 ESV)	Luke 2:25-35	C	Acts 3
Simeon preaches. Light to the Gentiles, glory to your people Israel! (2:30-32) [Simeon] For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. (1:72-73) [Zechariah] to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham.	Luke 2:22-50	D	Acts 4:1-35
Jesus at Temple, returns to Nazareth, Holy Spirit on Simeon	Luke 3	E	Temple leaders persecute Peter & John; Peter filled w/ HS, all share in common
John prepares way, who has two tunics, share, don't extort money, be content	Luke 3:21-38	F	Barnabas brings money to the apostles, lays it at their feet
John baptizes Jesus; Holy Spirit descends like dove, genealogy of Jesus	Luke 4:1-13	G	Satan fills Ananias & Sapphira, cheat God, lie; high priest confronts Peter (// structure)
Satan tempts Jesus full of HS, pinnacle of Temple, offers kingdoms, not to test God	Luke 4:14-30	H	Preaching at the Temple, Solomon's portico, charged not to preach in Jesus' name
Jesus begins ministry in Galilee, "Sp of Lord upon me," rejected in Nazareth	Luke 5	I	Apostles lay hands on first Deacons full of the HS, Stephen introduced
Jesus calls first disciples (leave all), leper, fasting, old wineskins (5:37) And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. (13:34-35) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (23:33-34) BEHOLD, your house is forsaken! They crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."	Luke 6	H'	Stephen's sermon-martyrdom before High Priest/Council, Jesus calls Stephen
Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, chooses 12 to be apostles, judging, fruit	Luke 7	G'	(7:51-60) You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced before the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivery by angels and did not keep it ..." Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him ... And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
Jesus heals Centurion's servant, message from John (7:24-26) "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? ... A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. (11:29-30) When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.	Luke 8	F'	HS by laying on hands on Samaritan disciples, Simon-magic, Saul attacks Church
Women with Jesus, parables, calms storm, heals "legion"	Luke 9:1-6	E'	Ananias and Saul, Saul converted; Jesus, "Why persecuting me?" (Samaritan parallel), plot to kill him.
Jesus sends out 12 with power authority to proclaim kingdom	Luke 9:7-26	D'	Barnabas brings Saul to the apostles
Herod kills John; Feeds the 5,000 loaves & fish; who? Elijah/prophet; foretells death Transfiguration, voice from heaven, tents for Moses & Elijah, J foretells death (9:29-36) And he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And beheld, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and said to him, "This is my beloved Son, with whom he was about to accomplish ... a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!' And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.	Luke 9:27-50	C'	Hellenists seek to kill Saul, Peter heals the Christian poor, men and women
Sets face to Jerusalem, 70 (7:27) sent; woes, kingdom has come near (9:53-55) But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them.	Luke 9:51-10:16	B'	Peter and Cornelius, Peter sees heaven open, vision and voice from heaven, unclean foods, Gentiles receive Spirit (10:13-15) And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common."
70 return; "Satan fall like lightning." Jesus gives authority over enemy (9:7-9) Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. Herod said, "John beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.	Luke 10:17-24	A'	"Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning" (see 2:2-4//11:15) (11:15-16) As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."
			Herod kills James and dies. Peter preaches, Passover, Saul & Barnabas chosen (12:1-3, 21-24) About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also ... On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat on the pulpit, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. But the word of God increased and multiplied.

sent itself that would not otherwise be noticed. To help you see this, I'll point out **a couple of differences** between Luke at this point and Mark/Matthew. First, we notice when we

² Roy Atwood, “4. The Structure of Luke’s Two Volumes: Parallel & Chiastic Stories in the Gospel of Luke & the Acts of the Apostles,” *Ascended King*, <https://ascendedking.com/lessons/the-architecture-of-acts/4-the-structure-of-lukes-two-volumes/>.

compare Luke 5 and its 5 different stories to the Mark and Matthew that Matthew has the first stories occurring in three different chapters. Mark has them appearing in two different chapters. For Luke, they are all together.

Now, **the last three stories** of Luke 5 appear in the same order and a single chapter in both Mark and Matthew. So there isn't that much different here to think about. However, Luke's *second* story (Jesus cleansing a leper) appears an entire chapter earlier in Matthew (Matt 8:2-4 whereas the next story is 9:1-8). And Luke's *first* story (the calling of Peter) is separated from the rest of the material in both Mark and Matthew (see chart below). In other words, **Luke is arranging ch. 5 differently** from Mark or Matthew.

Mark 1:16-20	Matt. 4:18-22	Luke 5:1-11
Mark 1:40-45	Matt. 8:2-4	Luke 5:12-16
Mark 2:1-12	Matt. 9:1-8	Luke 5:17-26
Mark 2:13-17	Matt. 9:9-13	Luke 5:27-32
Mark 2:18-22	Matt. 9:14-17	Luke 5:33-39

What's more, **the first story in Luke has a long addition** that is not found in any other Gospel. Why might that be?

On the mini-level (as we will see later), this allows Luke to make a theological statement through his story which centers on Peter's response to the amazing miracle of fish done by Jesus. At the chapter level, this allows Luke to compile a series of stories that work backwards from one another, something that can't be done in the same way in Mark or Matthew because of their arrangements.

To help you see this another way, let's consider our sections again. First, we have Jesus calling the first disciples. Later, however, he calls *another* disciple. Why not put those all together? If you say that he is simply following the chronological order, then why not separate them with many more stories like Matthew does? Second, in between these callings, we back-to-back stories of miraculous healing, first a leper, then a paralytic. Is Luke deliberately arranging these all together to give us a bigger picture?

Once we begin to analyze the chapter, we find that this seems like it is exactly what Luke is doing. In fact, it is very remarkable, and Dr. Atwood has seen something that the arrangement of the stories in Luke literally bears out. They in fact show the transition from old to new covenant, but in a stunning way that is vital for all people to see and believe. The arrangement looks something like this:

- A. JESUS TAUGHT the multitudes (5:1-3)
- B. The GREAT CATCH of fish (5:4-11A)
- C. THEY forsook all, and FOLLOWED HIM (5:11B)
- D. The LEPER HEALED (5:12-15)
- E. AND HE WITHDREW HIMSELF INTO THE WILDERNESS, AND PRAYED (5:16)
- D'. The PARALYTIC HEALED (5:17-26)
- C'. A tax collector named LEVI FOLLOWED HIM (5:27-28)
- B'. The GREAT CATCH of tax collectors and sinners (5:29-35)
- A'. JESUS TAUGHT the scribes and Pharisees (5:36-39)³

Jesus Teaches the Multitudes (Luke 5:1-3)

Let's start with the first three verses. It begins simply enough. "On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God..." (Luke 5:1). In other words, Jesus is teaching the crowds. This verse sets up the story to follow, but not before it gives us the setting. "He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret." Remember, Jesus has been teaching in the synagogues all around the Sea of Galilee, healing as many as came to him. This is the same lake, now called by its Hebrew name (see Num 34:11; Josh 13:27), which might be named after the shape (a lyre from *kinnor*) or

³ See Christine Smith, "Luke 5:1-39 Chiasm," *A Little Perspective* (March 8, 2016 on website version), <https://alittleperspective.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Luk-5-1-to39-expanded-chiasm.pdf>. Demonstrating that this creative chiasm is real, each individual unit makes up its own internal mini structure(s). See Appendix.

the *kinnar* trees which grow around it.⁴ And it says, “He saw two boats by the lake” (2a).

It continues, “But the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets” (2b). This is the central focus of this introduction. There are fishermen who are washing their nets after the long day of work. In the OT, fishing is sometimes used to describe the judgment of God. But it also is sometimes an image of blessing and new life. Ezekiel says, “Thus says the Lord God: I will throw my net over you with a host of many peoples, and they will haul you up in my dragnet” (Ezek 32:3; cf. Ecc 9:12; Amos 4:2; Hab 1:15–17; Ezek 26:5, 14; 29:3–7). But Jeremiah 16:16, a verse that will pop up again in a moment, is more ambiguous. “Behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the LORD, and they shall catch them.” Does this mean take them out of the water and eat them or capture them and keep them alive and restore them to a new place?⁵

We know this is the center because the boat is repeated, and then the teaching. “Getting into one of the boats, which

⁴ “Sea of Galilee,” Wikipedia. Last accessed March 3, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Galilee.

⁵ This verse is echoed in Luke 5:10 where Luke uses the word *zōgrein*, literally, “to catch alive.” In 2 Tim 2:26 the use is “preservation of life,” and thus the idea can mean “restoring to life.” See Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”* New Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 237-38. On the metaphorical use of fishermen, see Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 290.

was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land” (3a). Remember, Jesus has just been in Simon's house where he healed his mother-in-law. The two are obviously friends. These verses conclude, “And he sat down and *taught the people from the boat*” (3b). Now, without getting into it yet, it is important here to notice that at the end of the chapter we also see Jesus teaching. In fact, he only does this (formally) at the beginning and end of the chapter. It says, “He also told them *a parable*...” (36). Just what this parable was will give us the final climactic contrast which will show us the transition from the old to the new covenant which comes through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Great Catch of Fish (Luke 5:4-11)

While it is possible to see vv. 1-11 as a single unit of thought,⁶ I think it is better to break it down as introduction

⁶ For example: Luke A Welch, “Call for Help, There is Too Much Work – Luke 5.1-11 Chiasm,” Subtext (June 18, 2013), <https://lukeawelch.wordpress.com/2013/06/18/call-for-help/>.

Term	Verse	Key	Luke 5.1-11
A	1	Crowds follow Jesus	
B	2	Fishermen leaving boats and done with nets	
C	3	Boat leaves the land	
D	3-4	Teaching	
E		Jesus speaks to Simon	
F		Catch of fish	
G	5	Simon speaks to Jesus	
H		The nets descend	
I	6	Nets breaking for fish	
J	7	Needed help from co-laborers	
I'		Boats sinking for fish	
H'	8	Peter descends	
G'		Simon speaks to Jesus	
F'	9-10	Catch of fish	
E'		Jesus speaks to Simon	
D'		Content of teaching	
C'	11	Boats return to the land	
B'		Fishermen leaving everything	
A'		Disciples follow Jesus	

(1-3) and main story (4-11).⁷ It begins with Jesus, after finishing his lesson, telling Simon to “put [his boat] out into the deep” (4). It ends with all the boats being brought back to land (11).

The first thing Jesus tells Simon is to let down his nets for a catch (4b). A catch of what? Obviously, a catch of fish. But again, this will be repeated, just before the boats come back, where Jesus will tell them that from now on, they will catch men (10). Many know this story quite well. But have you noticed these inverse parallels? They are intentional.

Simon is rather exasperated by Jesus, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!” The word “master” (*ep-istatēs*) is an interesting word, especially because this has no parallel in Matthew or Mark. It is a rare word, even in the LXX, and only Luke uses it in the New. It translates the Egyptian taskmasters of Exodus 1 and 5. In 2 Kings 25:19 it is a commander of an army. In Jeremiah, it translates Zephaniah who was put in charge over madmen who prophesy lies in God’s Name. This isn’t a term of endearment. But it is a term of authority, and Simon recognizes Jesus as such. He quickly adds, “But at your word I will let

⁷ Smith (Appendix) and the *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* see these exactly the same way.

down the nets.” He knows what Jesus has just done for his mother-in-law, but he also knows that today they’ve had zero fish caught up in their nets.

But lo and behold! “When they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking” (6). As we learn in the other Gospels, “they” includes his brother Andrew (Matt 4:18; Mark 1:16). But Luke is laser-focused on Simon. I want to point out just here that at the end of the chapter we will see something else breaking. It is a parallel, so they are meant to viewed together.

I can only imagine what Simon and Andrew must have thought at that moment. Working so hard all day, then this man comes by, tells them to put their nets in the water one last time, and suddenly, there are so many fish that the very nets begin to burst. Who is this person Jesus that the very fish obey him? Truly, “master” is an appropriate word that Peter had chosen.

Quickly, “They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.” (7). Again, there is a parallel to this verse. Luke repeats “partners.” We learn that these “partners with Simon” were “James, and John, the sons of Zebedee” (10).

It tells us that between the four of them, “They came and *filled both the boats*, so that they began to sink” (7b). Again, this verse has a parallel. Vs. 9 says, “he and all who were with him were astonished at *the catch of fish that they had taken*.” This leaves the ever important center, which, as we have seen so often already in Luke, is theological and a confession. “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’” Simon and Luke confront you with the all-important question. What is the only reasonable response to someone as powerful as this? You bow down and hope he will not haul you into his net, especially when you know that such a haul is seen by OT prophets as judgment against sin. This is why Peter responds the way that he does. He knows the prophecies of Ezekiel and others. And he is terrified, because he knows himself a sinner.

In fact, all the men in the boats were “astonished,” but it is Peter who makes the confession of his sinfulness. But just here, rather than as Amos predicts that God will, “Take you away with hooks” or Jeremiah, “hunt you from every mountain and hill,” Master Jesus gives a word of *good news*, gospel. “Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men’” (10b). This is an amazing

statement, because hunting them from the mountains is the second half of Jeremiah's, “I am sending many *fishers*, and they shall *catch them*.” Jesus is not coming to judge his friends. He is coming to tell them that they are going to fulfill Jeremiah's prophecy. They will now do the catching. And from now on, they will catch men. (As a side note, this is part of the origin, along with the beginning of the age of Pisces, that Christians are called *fishes* in the early church).⁸ They can't be sure of what this means yet, and neither can we. Because it could very well still mean that they will become the executioners of God's wrath. But that's why we need to keep reading the rest of the chapter.

They Left Everything and Followed Him (Luke 5:11)

The last words of vs. 11 serve as a parallel to the short story of Matthew-Levi what we will see in vv. 27-28. Just

⁸ Tertullian, “We little fish, after the image of our Ichthys Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor otherwise than swimming in the water are we safe” (*On Baptism* 1). Combining the judgment and salvation imagery, Clement of Alexandria refers to the “hateful waves of the sea of vices” from which the “chaste fishes” are saved (*The Instructor* 3); Jerome says, “By the word of God [we] are lifted out of the abysmal waters of this world like so many fish” (*Homily 92 on Psalm 41(42)*); Ambrose says, “So even for you this world is the sea. It has diverse floods, heavy waters, severe storms. And do you be fish, that the water of the world may not submerge you” (*On Sacraments* 3). Cyril of Jerusalem, “You are a fish caught in a net of the Church. Let yourself be taken alive: don't try to escape. It is Jesus who is playing you on His line, not to kill you, but, by killing you, to make you alive” (*Procatechesis*, par. 5). Quotes in Lois Drewer, “Fisher-man and Fish Pond: From the Sea of Sin to the living Waters,” *The Art Bulletin* 63.4 (Dec 1981): 534, 35.

notice the language here. “*And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*” What a statement! These fishermen (It is possible that at least **seven** of the disciples were fishermen, Ryken, *DBI*.) left their life-time profession and their material possessions (though, obviously, not wives and such) and **immediately followed Jesus**. This is the demand of being Jesus’ disciple and not many will do it. Where would he take them? What kind of an adventure would be in store for them?

Healing the Man with Leprosy (Luke 5:12-15)

The first adventure Luke will tell us about is not far from here. Jesus is in “*one of the cities*” (12) of the region of the Sea of Galilee. While in it “*there came a man full of leprosy*. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, ‘*Lord, if you will, you can make me clean*’” (12b). It is interesting to contrast Peter’s ***sinful uncleanness*** with this man’s ***ritual uncleanness***. In the law, you were not allowed to go to the temple if you had any kind of disease. So this story is focusing on more **OT imagery**.

Such a statement can only come from faith. Someone without faith would never have even bothered. Why would

you, if you didn't believe Jesus could do such a thing? But the one who asks, receives. “*And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘I will; be clean.’*” And immediately the leprosy left him” (13). Think about this miracle. Today, we have drugs that can cure leprosy. But not in one second. Jesus does something we still can’t do even today! A second miracle in as many stories.

Notice again more repetition. “If you will.” “I will.” “A man with leprosy.” “The leprosy left him.” This gives us another central focus—the healing touch of Jesus of Nazareth. Those with faith who come to him alone for healing will be healed. He wills it. He does it. Charles Spurgeon said: “The ‘I will’ of an emperor may have great power over his dominions; but the ‘I will’ of Christ drives death and hell before him, conquers disease, removes despair, and floods the world with mercy. The Lord’s ‘I will’ can put away your leprosy of sin, and make you perfectly whole.”⁹ It reminds me of the old Gaither song made so popular by Elvis, “He Touched Me.” “Then the hand of Jesus touched me, And now I am no longer

⁹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Parables and Miracles of Our Lord*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 2:59. In Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 1, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 220–221.

the same ... Something happened, and now I know, He touched me, and made me whole.”⁹

Suddenly, the one man becomes a multitude (vv. 14-15). And the focus turns deliberately to the old covenant and ritual purity. “And he charged him to tell no one, but ‘go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.’ But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities.” People wonder why Jesus would command those he heals to keep their mouths shut. Maybe it is reverse psychology. Maybe it is because he knew his time had not yet come. Whatever the case, we again have more repetition. *Tell no man* becomes *his fame went abroad*. *Show yourself to the priest* becomes *a testimony to them*. This creates another central focus, this time it is a sacrifice. “Make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded.” This is incredibly important to see, because it shows that in fact the old covenant with all of its rules and regulations, laws and stipulations, is in view. And God wants you to see this in his word at this place, because what is about to happen is staggering.

⁹ Bill and Gloria Gathen, “He Touched Me” (1963).

He Withdrew to Desolates Places to Pray (Luke 5:16)

We come next to what might seem like a throw-away line. “But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray” (Luke 5:16). You wouldn’t even know it was here by the ESV’s headings. But this verse falls right between the two healing stories. Given that the other stories all parallel each other, this appears then to be the very heart of chapter 5.

Luke has been quite insistent that the wilderness (*erēmos*, possibly related etymologically to *hermon*) is an important place for Jesus. We’ve seen how the voice in the wilderness calls to make straight the paths, or as my friend Derek Gilbert recently told me, the voice cries, “In the wilderness make the paths straight.” In other words, the paths are only going to be made straight *by going into the wilderness*, the place we have seen that Jesus goes to win his epic battle with the devil.

Jesus is becoming popular and it is increasingly difficult for him to find time alone, but not just alone, alone with his heavenly Father. The very God of the universe now clothed in human flesh finds it necessary to spend time praying and he must go out of his way, to the very place he was just tempted to find a place to do it. If ever there was a lesson

here on the importance for us to find a way, no matter how hard, to be alone with God for spiritual restoration, it must be a verse like this. There is a reason it is the heart of the chapter, for it is only through dependence upon the heavenly Father that Jesus in human flesh continues on. How much more us?

But this verse is not merely here to encourage you to emulate the Lord. It is more so here to help you see that it is through this activity that God would work such a great work through Jesus that it can truly be said that a brand new covenant is being ushered in through his ministry. Vs. 16 and the prayers of Jesus are the pivot upon which the rest of the chapter turns and through which the new covenant comes.

Healing the Paralytic (Luke 5:17-26)

Thus, we are able now to see the second of the two healing stories of the chapter and compare them to one another. We come to one of the best known stories of the NT. It is the story of tremendous faith surrounded by terrifying unbelief. The story of our lives: Light in the midst of darkness;

hope in the middle of despair. As Ambrose put it commenting on the water, “So even for you this world is the sea. It has diverse floods, heavy waters, severe storms. So be fish, that the water of the world may not submerge you.”

The story is framed by Jesus continuing to heal people, but suddenly, we get our first glimpse at the Pharisees. “On one of those days, as he was teaching, *Pharisees and teachers of the law* were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal” (Luke 5:17). Clearly, Jesus’ fame is spreading now, beyond the region of Galilee, all the way to the center of Israel, far away in Jerusalem.

At this point, we are introduced to the second healing. It is truly a remarkable tale. “And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus” (18). To state the obvious, paralyzed people to this day do not “just get healed.”

I recently heard the incredible story of Dave Hartsock, a skydiving instructor out of Houston. Having had a very busy day, he was asked to go on one last dive with a woman whose son was also diving separately. Long story short, they had a catastrophic problem with the parachutes, and right

before they hit the ground, Hartsock turned his body to take the full impact of the fall, hoping it might save the woman's life. Incredibly, it did. Even more miraculously, Dave also survived, but not before **acquiring paralysis that he still suffers with from the neck down.**¹⁰ Over the centuries, we've spent probably trillions of dollars trying to figure out how to make people walk who have had their necks broken, sometimes even just trying to figure out how to be able to live without being on a breathing machine. But what Jesus is doing all around Galilee is so remarkable that these men all think he will be able to heal a paralyzed man? Incredible!

Their faith suddenly comes into view. “**But finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus**” (19). I remember wondering as a child how crazy it was that **they cut a hole in someone else's roof!** I bet that guy wasn't very happy! But the fact is, their ancient roofs did not necessitate a saw and dropping tons of 2x4s and shingles on people. These were reed and clay covered roofs that had some kind of movable tiling. But this story also sticks in my head from a craft my Sunday School teacher had

¹⁰ To hear this harrowing take, see “[Instructor Decides Their FATE in Midair](#),” *MrBallen* (Feb 11, 2023).

us do when I was very young. We had little pieces of string that we used as the ropes, and we cut a hole in the paper roof and then would lower the guy down ourselves! **The image stays with me.** There's no other story like this.

Jesus thought so too. “**And when he saw their faith, he said, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you’**” (20). It's just here that we need to make **our first comparison** with the parallel story. Previously, Jesus **put out his hand and touched a man**. This time, **Jesus speaks to him**. Previously, Jesus had *healed* the leper. Jesus is *not healing* this man's paralysis. Rather, he is **healing something else. His sin!**

But this **enrages** Pharisees and scribes. “**And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’** When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, ‘**Why do you reason in your hearts?**’¹¹ (21-22). Notice again the repetition. “**They began to reason...” “Why do you reason in your hearts?” “Who is this?” “Who can forgive...”** This creates a center: “**Who speaks blasphemies?**”

In this way, the hand of healing from the previous story is contrasted with the **blasphemous mouth** of this one. It is only after this moment that Jesus finally heals the man. This

¹¹ The ESV has “question” rather than “reason” here. But it is the same Greek word as before: *dialogizomai*.

is because he needed to expose the heart-attitude of those with unbelief before he finished his gospel healing of full man—soul and body. So he tells them, “‘Which is easier, to say, *'Your sins are forgiven you,'* or to say, *'Rise and walk'*? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’— he said to the man who was paralyzed—‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home’” (23-24). “And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God” (25). And story concludes with a similar reaction as we saw from the disciples. “And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, ‘We have seen extraordinary things today’” (26). And why not? They just saw a man with a broken back and crushed vertebrae do something that even we today cannot do—heal him so that he immediately gets up and walks.

This is a truly extraordinary miracle. Unprecedented. And it created great fear among all the people. Who was this that was in their midst? Jesus didn’t even need to touch him to heal his paralysis. He just spoke the word and it was so. Even more, the man didn’t get up and walk even one second before the word was spoken, not even when he said his sins were forgiven. He was still paralyzed at the point. What

kind of a person can do this? This is unfathomable power, witnessed by many, many people. Yet, though they saw it, many still did not believe. Miracles will not make anyone believe. Only faith that Jesus is who he says he is will do that. Faith is what moves mountains, not sight.

The thing is, many Christians miss something that would not have been missed by the crowds, the disciples, or the scribes and Pharisees. When they ask, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” They are simultaneously 100% correct in that assessment and yet blind at the same time. So who exactly was this in their midst?

This first set of parallels—these two miraculous stories—begs for an answer to this question. In the first miracle, Jesus simply does what other healers of the OT had done, and yes, that too was extraordinary. But now, he is doing something unprecedented. Or is he? We read about someone who is very mysterious in the OT who also forgives sins, and I’m not talking about a human agent that some commentaries want to cite.¹²

¹² For instance, Nathan in 2Sam 12:13 who the IVPBBC commentary says was an agent of forgiveness. I would call him the agent of the message of forgiveness, but not an actual agent who forgives their sins against God, for only God can in fact do this. Two points should be said about this. Jesus tells us to forgive people their sins (e.g. Matt 6:14). But this is not talking about forgiving their sins against God; rather, it is their sins against us. Second, Jesus tells the disciples that they have the power to bind and loose, which is very obviously related to forgiving

In Exodus 23 we read, “Behold, I send *an angel* before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, *for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him*” (Ex 23:20-21). Later, in Judges, we see that the people did not obey. “*Now the angel of the LORD* went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, ‘I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break *my covenant* with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ But you have *not obeyed my voice*’” (Jdg 2:1-2).

Notice that the covenant is right here, near the pardoning of sins. Who gives the covenant? *The Angel of the LORD*. And yet, in other places, it is God or the LORD. Notice that the Angel must be obeyed. And yet, in other places, it is God

people (cf. Matt 18:18-22). Some have taken this to mean that Christians (or often more specifically priests or pastors, sometimes in their office not person) have the power that God alone has. I don't think so. The context is still forgiving people of their sins against *you*. We can certainly tell others that God forgives them. In our Liturgy, we say, “*The Scripture declares to you that your sins are forgiven...*” This is our way of expressing that we have the duty to convey the message and that this message is binding because it comes from God himself. But we have changed this from the older Reformed liturgies that say things like, “*I forgive you in the name of God...*” We do not like this confusing language, even if it does represent a truth. Rather, “*The absolution is a public declaration that God has forgiven our sins.*” Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 151. (Ironically, it is the wonderful liturgy that Horton and the URC churches developed which our church takes its cue, but we had to change this very language even though they do not actually believe that humans have the power that God alone has.)

or the LORD who must be obeyed. Notice that someone other than God, namely the Angel, can forgive sins. And yet, only God can forgive sins. The conclusion is inevitable. The Angel of the LORD simply is God—*God the Son*.

When Jesus tells the man his sins are forgiven, the Pharisees knew full well that there was someone else who could forgive sins, someone who was not the Father, yet someone who is the One True God. They knew this, but they chose instead to call Jesus a blasphemer, even though the prophecy was that John the Baptist (the messenger, Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17; 7:27) would prepare the way for the coming of *the Angel of the Lord*—in human flesh (see Mal 3:1 and table below).

The Origin of Malachi 3

Ex 23:20-21	Isa 40:3; Jdg 2:1ff	Mal 3:1
"Behold, I send an angel (<i>malak; aggelos</i>) before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.	A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isa 40:3)	"Behold, I send my messenger (<i>malak; aggelos</i>), and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple;
²¹ Pay careful attention to him [<i>malak; aggelos</i>] and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.	Now the angel (<i>malak; aggelos</i>) of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break <u>my covenant</u> with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? (Jdg 2:1-2)	and the messenger (<i>malak; aggelos</i>) <u>of the covenant</u> in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

In this, we see our first signs that a dramatic change has occurred once Jesus comes back from that prayer in the wilderness. No longer is the focus on going to the temple to be cleansed. Rather, it is now on Jesus *actually making a person clean* simply by a word of forgiveness—for he is God. This is the work of the new covenant.

Levi, the Tax-Collector, Followed Him (Luke 5:27-28)

We find a second seismic shift occurring in the next short section which parallels that single verse, “They forsook all, and followed him” (Luke 5:11). This is the sudden insertion of the story of Matthew-Levi in a place that is not at all where Matthew himself puts it! It isn’t that the two contradict, but rather that Luke has left out certain stories at this point because he needs you to see the obvious parallel he is about to make.

“After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And leaving everything, he rose and followed him” (Luke 5:27-28). This simple, short story is stunning when compared to the previous. Peter, Andrew, John, and James apparently all needed an incredible miracle to persuade them

to follow Jesus. Levi, whose name means “Companion” or “Joined To,” needs none. Furthermore, while we might expect those from a respectable trade such as fisherman to be chosen to be disciples, the same can hardly be true of a tax-collector. Indeed, this is the IRS agent of the ancient world, as despised then as today. This is all the worse since he has a name (Levi) that shows he should have chosen to pursue a religious vocation, but instead chose a scandalous one! This all shows a second great change is occurring. Jesus is calling not just those expected, but those unexpected. In fact, tax-collectors are always identified with or as “sinners.” Sinners are unclean people in the OT, more old covenant language. But in calling this man to follow him, Jesus is signaling that a new covenant is here. And he is its Messenger, its Agent, its God.

The Great Catch: Of Sinners (Luke 5:29-35)

This is fleshed out in the next story, which we identified earlier as something like, “A Question About Fasting.” But it is much more than this. In fact, while there is both fasting and feasting in this story, which set each other off as opposites, the parallel is also about food, namely, the fish. Two stories: fish and feasting.

Apparently, Levi was so taken with Jesus and being allowed to identify with him, that Luke tells us, “Levi made him a great feast in his *house*”¹³ (Luke 5:29). Here, then, we have the feasting. But now, the tax collectors are multiplied. “And there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.” Let’s note that there was also a large number of fish in the previous story. More parallels.

But the Pharisees and scribes are also here again. Notice, *they only appear after Jesus goes into the wilderness*, not before. It’s almost like they become the new devil (John 8:44). “And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’” (30). This question is not as horrible as you probably think that it is. For in the Law of Moses (old covenant again), “sinners” are viewed as “unclean,” and if unclean, you had to be very careful not to touch them or anything they touched, lest you acquire ritual impurity yourself and not be allowed near the presence of God in the Temple. But they

¹³ Some have speculated that the “house” can be viewed metaphorically or symbolically as well as literally. If this is the case, it might refer to the “house of Pisces,” in that this story is parallel to the fish story. This might also have a parallel in the “house” the man with water carries in Luke 22:10, symbolizing Aquarius. This would be the language of “ages,” astronomical ages of procession: the age of Pisces, the age of Aquarius. Though it is usually pagans who make these connections for nefarious reasons, there is nothing necessary in seeing this that necessitates a pagan conclusion. God uses his seasons and years for his purposes.

are still living in the old covenant model, not seeing that their Messiah has come to bring in the new.

The question, “Why do you eat and drink,” is repeated again in **vs. 33**, “And they said to him, ‘The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, *but yours eat and drink.*’” So again, we are being pointed to a **middle**. This one is rather mind-blowing.

“And Jesus answered them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but *sinners to repentance*’” (**33b**). This is an arrow aimed straight at the heart of a self-righteous legalistic moralist like a Pharisees, who believed that his own external law-keeping was what mattered to God. These men didn’t think they needed to get well, for they were the very definition of spiritual health and vitality! After all, they spent their lives studying God’s holy word!

But there’s something else going on here. This center directly parallels the center that we saw in the fishermen story—the confession of Peter. “Depart from me; for I am a *sinful man, O Lord*” (**8**). Peter’s response, whether done out of terror of a prophecy or not, was exactly what was needed. **Humility. Self-awareness** of his sinful condition. Recognition of just who it was that was in his midst. This is precisely

what you must realize as you come to this same God in worship today. And when you do, you know that just like Simon-Peter and Levi-Matthew, Jesus will have mercy, but much more than mercy, he will give every manner of spiritual blessing in heavenly places to his people. What eye has seen or mind conceived of such grace?

Jesus continues, “Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? *The days will come* when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.” This wonderful imagery is rich in theological meaning from the OT. For in the OT, the bridegroom is applied to God himself (Isa 54:5-8; 62:4-5; Jer 2:2; Ezek 15; Hos 2:18, 21). This is the first of many places that it is applied to Jesus (2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27; Rev 19:7-10; 21:2). Jesus is God incarnate. Curiously, the Rabbis even said that Messiah would be the bridegroom.

These same Rabbis also said it was forbidden to fast on certain days, and weddings were one of them. This reminds me of the parable Jesus tells elsewhere of the wedding feast, where he calls many to the banquet, but after those invited refuse to come, the stragglers, the hagglers, the sinners the prostitutes, or in the words of Johnny Cash, “rambler, the gambler, the back biter,” that suddenly the wedding hall is

filled to the brim with people. This in turn fits exactly what we see in Levi's house with all those tax-collectors and sinners at this feast. And this has led some people to see that the great catch of fish has now become, just like Jesus said it would, *a great catch of men*. Little fishes as the early church called them! But now we are able to see that this catch is not for judgment, *but salvation*.

Jesus Teaches the Scribes and Pharisees (Luke 5:36-39)

The chapter ends the way it began, with Jesus teaching. He tells them now a parable. “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good’” (Luke 5:36-39). This (second) famous saying is rather obscure to us today, because we don't use wineskins, but glass bottles. In those days, skins of animals were scraped of their hair and sewn together to hold all kinds of liquids. But when fermentation

took place, it would expand the skins, tears the stitches, and ruin the container.

Both sayings are talking about the new vs. old. This is a parable. It has a hidden meaning. What do they represent? This is where we now come face to face with what we've been seeing from the beginning. Luke has masterfully stitched together several stories to show you the difference between the old covenant, which was itself still glorious, and the new covenant, which is infinitely more so. But the wine-skin part, this is directly parallel to the fish and nets. For what happened when too many fish got in those nets? They tore. And what happens when the wine seeps into the skin? It tears.

The meaning then is obvious. When a new covenant comes, and its God with it, it cannot be stitched together with the old, it cannot be put into the old's container. Jesus' covenant is as superior to the old as Jesus himself is to Moses. This entire chapter of the ministry of Jesus is put together to show this to you, to prove it.

The new covenant is now bursting forth upon this world through Jesus Christ like the best wine bursting out of an old skin. It is now clothing people like a new garment that covers filthy rags. While men are busy washing their

nets after a terrible day at sea, expecting perhaps judgment from God like Jonah, Jesus is fishing for men, bringing unclean sinners into his kingdom, forgiving their sins, healing their diseases, and doing it all in the power of God. There have been so many caught, that the nets are overflowing. Cyril of Jerusalem put this all together saying, “You are a fish caught in a net of the Church. Let yourself be taken alive: don’t try to escape. It is Jesus who is playing you on His line, not to kill you, but, by killing you, to make you alive” (*Procatechesis*, par. 5).

But it is only the sinner who may be caught up in these nets of grace. And Christ is The Center. He must be. Calvin says,

There is such purity in Christ he absorbs all uncleanness and pollution, He does not contaminate Himself by touching the leper, nor does He transgress the Law.... [He] stays whole, clears all our dirt away, and pours upon us His own holiness. Now, while He could heal the leper by His word alone, He adds the contact of His hand, to show His feeling of compassion: no wonder, since He willed to put on our flesh in order that He might cleanse us from all our sins.... Here is a thing which we pass over without much impression at an idle reading, but must certainly ponder, with much awe, when we

take it properly—that the Son of God, so far from abhorring contact with the leper, actually stretched out His hand to touch his uncleanness.

(Calvin, *Harmony of the Gospels*)

All who get Christ do so by believing what they hear in the Gospel. It is truly good news. So believe upon him today and see the newness of the covenant he brings that takes all our diseases and filth away.

Appendix

Luke 5:1-39 Chiasm

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<p>1A) 5:1-3 YESHUA TAUGHT the multitudes;</p> <p>1a) 5:1a And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God;</p> <p>1b) 5:1b-2a He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 and saw two ships standing by the lake; central axis) 5:2b But the fishermen were gone from them, and were washing their nets;</p> <p>2b) 5:3a And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and asked him that he would put out a little from the land;</p> <p>2a) 5:3b And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship;</p>	<p>A) 5:36-39 YESHUA TAUGHT the scribes and Pharisees;</p> <p>1a) 5:36a And He also spoke a parable to them: No man puts a piece of a new cloth on an old [garment] is implied];</p> <p>1b) 5:36b If so, then the new makes a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new does not match with the old (i.e., both are ruined);</p> <p>1c) 5:37a And no man puts new wine into old wine skins; central axis) 5:37b Or else the new wine will burst the wine skins, and be spilled, and the wine skins shall be destroyed;</p> <p>2c) 5:38a But new wine must be put into new wine skins;</p> <p>2b) 5:38b And both are preserved;</p> <p>2a) 5:39 No man also having drunk old wine immediately desires new, for he says: The old is better.</p>
<p>1B) 5:4-11A The GREAT CATCH of fish;</p> <p>1a) 5:4a Now when He had left speaking, He said to Simon: Launch out into the deep;</p> <p>1b) 5:4b-6 And let down your nets for a catch. 5 And Simon answering said to Him: Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net. 6 And when they had done this, they took up a great multitude of fish: and their net broke;</p> <p>1c) 5:7a And they signaled to their partners, who were in the other ship, that they should come and help them;</p> <p>1d) 5:7b And they came, and filled both ships, so that they began to sink; central axis) 5:8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Yeshua's knees, saying: Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord;</p> <p>2d) 5:9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken;</p> <p>2c) 5:10a So also was James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon;</p> <p>2b) 5:10b And Yeshua said to Simon: Fear not; from this time forward you shall catch men;</p> <p>2a) 5:11a And when they had brought their ships to land;</p>	<p>B) 5:29-35 The GREAT CATCH of tax collectors and sinners;</p> <p>1a) 5:29 And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of tax collectors and of others that sat down with them;</p> <p>1b) 5:30 But the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying: Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?</p> <p>central axis) 5:31-32 And Yeshua answering said to them: They that are whole do not need a physician; but they that are sick; 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;</p> <p>2b) 5:33 And they said to Him: Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but Yours eat and drink?</p> <p>2a) 5:34-35 They cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them;</p> <p>1a) 5:34a And He said to them: Can you make the children of the bridechamber fast;</p> <p>1b) 5:34b While the bridegroom is with them?</p> <p>central axis) 5:35a But the days will come;</p> <p>2b) 5:35b When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them;</p> <p>2a) 5:35c And then they shall fast in those days;</p>
<p>1C) 5:11B THEY forsook all, and FOLLOWED HIM;</p>	<p>C) 5:27-28 And after these things He went out, and saw a tax collector named LEVI, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him: Follow Me. 28 And he left all, rose up, and FOLLOWED HIM;</p>
<p>1D) 5:12-15 The LEPER HEALED;</p> <p>1a) 5:12a And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold, a man;</p> <p>1b) 5:12b Full of leprosy, who saw Yeshua;</p> <p>1c. 1) 5:12c Fell on his face, and pleaded with Him, saying: Lord, if You will.</p> <p>1c. 2) 5:12d You can make me clean; central axis) 5:13a And He put forth His hand, and touched him;</p> <p>2c. 1) 5:13b Saying: I will;</p> <p>2c. 2) 5:13c Be clean;</p> <p>2b) 5:13d And immediately the leprosy departed from him;</p> <p>2a) 5:14-15 Great multitudes came to be healed;</p> <p>1a) 5:14a And He charged him to tell no man;</p> <p>1b) 5:14b But go, and show yourself to the priest;</p> <p>central axis) 5:14c And offer for your cleansing, as Moses has commanded;</p> <p>2b) 5:14d For a testimony to them;</p> <p>2a) 5:15 But so much more His fame went abroad; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities;</p>	<p>D) 5:17-26 The PARALYTIC HEALED;</p> <p>1a) 5:17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them;</p> <p>1b) 5:18-19 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. 19 And when they could not find a way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his bed into the midst before Yeshua;</p> <p>1c) 5:20 And when He saw their faith, He said to him: Man, your sins are forgiven you;</p> <p>1d) 5:21a And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason;</p> <p>1e) 5:21b Saying: Who is this;</p> <p>central axis) 5:21c Who speaks blasphemies?</p> <p>2e) 5:21d Who can forgive sins, but God alone?</p> <p>2d) 5:22 But when Yeshua perceived their thoughts, He answering said to them: Why do you reason in your hearts?</p> <p>2c) 5:23-24 What is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you;' or to say, 'Rise up and walk?' 24 But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins;</p> <p>2b) 5:24b-25 (He said to the paralyzed man), I say to you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go into your house. 25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that upon which he had lain, and departed to his own house, glorifying God;</p> <p>2a) 5:26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying: We have seen strange things today;</p>
<p>CENTRAL AXIS) 5:16 AND HE WITHDREW HIMSELF INTO THE WILDERNESS, AND PRAYED;</p>	

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