

## ***"Fear" as a Witness to Jesus in Luke's Gospel***

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When readers want to summarize the central themes or characteristics of the Gospel of Luke, they often point to Luke's interest in people because he highlights Jesus as Savior. Such general consensus may be found even in introductory books. Theodor Zahn noted that: "Luke, in much stronger colours than any other evangelist, depicts Jesus as the *friend and Savior of those most deeply sunk in sin and farthest astray*."<sup>1</sup> Werner Kümmel also writes that Luke stresses "the human, moving features of Jesus" because "according to Luke Jesus expresses more emphatically than in Mark or Matthew God's love for the despised, both by his behavior and by his message."<sup>2</sup> Norval Geldenhuys agrees that "the fundamental quality of Jesus which Luke wishes to show us is, therefore, that He has come as Saviour, as Redeemer."<sup>3</sup> In other words, many scholars have observed that Luke highlights Jesus as Savior of all classes of people (social outcasts, women,<sup>4</sup> children, and poor). Because of this emphasis, Luke then focuses on people and the various emotions they express. Everett F. Harrison summarizes some of these: praise, joy, peace, forgiveness, weeping, love and friendship, wisdom and understanding, glory, authority, and spirit. Harrison also mentions that, similarly, Luke frequently records the popular response to Jesus' ministry—crowds

1. Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, III, trans. J. M. Trout et. al. (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1977) 72.

2. Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. H. C. Kee (17 ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 139.

3. Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951) 43.

4. See also chapter 2, "Jesus' Teachings and Practice Concerning Women," in *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1985).

filled with amazement.<sup>5</sup> This essay will highlight that one concept: amazement or fear. Luke repeats and places different synonyms for "fear" or awe at key stages in the gospel. Do the people who fear God always bring in Christ's reign? "Fear" is a key response to Jesus' divinity, but it is insufficient by itself for persistence in faith.

Seven word-families are in Luke which might all be translated "fear": θαυμάζω, θάμβος, ἐξίστιμι, ἔκστασις, ἐκπλήσσω, πτοέω, τρέμω, and φόβος (φοβέω, φόβητρον, ἔμφοβος). These words will be analyzed in the context of the literary development of Luke's Gospel.

Even though Luke writes an extensive preface (1:1-4) to his good news, the preface more describes how he writes (e.g., reliably, carefully, thoroughly, comprehensively, orderly) than what the main theme of his work will be.<sup>6</sup> Luke's good news is a challenge to Theophilus to follow God who has come in the person of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit and with authority, to liberate all oppressed people (e.g., 4:18-19). The surprise of Jesus' teachings was the message that it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter his glory (Luke 24:26, 46). The phrase "go into Jerusalem"<sup>7</sup> is a synecdoche (a part) representing this larger key idea that by insisting on going into Jerusalem, the place where true

5. Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 196-97.

Robert F. O'Toole has a chapter on "Joy, Wonder, Blessing, and Praise" wherein he concludes that these words describe how God's salvific will should be received. Luke wants the reader "to participate fully in the joy and wonder of the experience of being blessed because of what God has done, and in the summons to praise God." *The Unity of Luke's Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts*, Good News Studies 9 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984) 260.

Robert C. Tannehill also views the author of Luke-Acts as having "literary skill and rich imagination" with "a complex vision of the significance of Jesus Christ and of the mission in which he is the central figure." Connections within this "unified narrative" are "emphasized strongly and are supported by clear literary signals, such as repetition of key words and phrases, indicating either that the author consciously intended the connection or that the author's message was bound to certain controlling images which repeatedly asserted themselves in the process of writing." *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation I*, Foundations and Facets (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 1, 3.

6. Luke wants to give convincing proof (Acts 1:3 τεκμήριον; Luke 1:4 ἀσφάλεια) to Theophilus. But what is the thematic perspective on Jesus' teachings and actions (Acts 1:1) which give focus to his particular gospel? Jesus is empowered by the Spirit and has authority to liberate all oppressed people, to use the language of Isaiah 61:1-2. (Refer to Appendix 1 for a broad outline of the gospel showing this development.)

Because Luke shows a didactic intent, that intent does not make it any less historical. Richard J. Dillon explains Luke's purpose. The reader can have a "secure" confession having learned that God indeed acted in the events recounted and thereby fulfilled the promises of salvation; "Previewing Luke's Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4)," *CBQ* 43.2 (April, 1981) 225-27.

7. Luke 9:51, 53; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28. See also 9:31.

prophets had been killed, the Messiah demonstrates his need to suffer before he could enter his glory. Once the crowds and even the disciples perceive this teaching, they no longer are receptive to Jesus or they misunderstand his message.

#### "FEAR" IS A KEY RESPONSE TO JESUS' DIVINITY

In the early chapters of the gospel, Jesus' true nature as God is attested among humble people and in everyday occurrences before he begins his ministry (1:5-4:13). The events around God's incarnation are witnessed by people who respond with awe to these wondrous events.

The townspeople who had come to pray for the priestly division of Abijah began "to [wonder] why Zechariah took so long at the incense offering. Their "wonder" is described as "θαυμάζω" (1:21), which signifies "wonder, marvel; honour, admire, worship; say with astonishment."<sup>8</sup> This more positive and everyday term, which occurs twelve times in Luke, is in contrast to Zechariah's own "wonder" inside the temple. When Zechariah saw the angel of the Lord near the altar of incense he felt a "panic" type of fear (1:12 φόβος). According to Liddell and Scott, φόβος refers to "panic flight, panic fear," personified as the son of Ares or Mars, the god of war. Φόβος comes from the poetical verb φέβομαι, "to be put to flight." The verb φοβέω signifies "put to flight, terrify." The active voice never does occur in the New Testament, However the passive voice does: "to be put to flight, be seized with fear or terror." The noun φόβητρον refers to a more specific cause of terror, a "scarecrow or bugbear."<sup>9</sup> The emphatic ἔμφοβος signifies to be "thrown into fear."<sup>10</sup> The φόβος word-family occurs twenty-eight times in Luke. Consequently, in this narrative, the closer one approaches the object of marvel, the being who has come from God's presence, the greater the fear element of the marvel. Luke describes Zechariah's reaction to the angel Gabriel with the same force as a hand striking someone's shoulders: "fear fell upon" Zechariah (1:12). Jesus uses this same verb, ἐπίπτω, to describe the father who ran to his son and "threw" his arms "upon" his neck (15:20). With the same energy and compassion Paul went running to Eutychus who had fallen three stories and "threw himself on" the young man (Acts 20:10). Zechariah's "fear" was so great that Luke personifies the emotion as a warrior attacking him or as an object falling upon him. In addition he heightens the reaction by his use

8. LSJ, 785.

9. LSJ, 1920, 1946-1947.

10. Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Marshallton: National Foundation for Christian Education, 1885) 209.

of pleonasm,<sup>11</sup> two synonyms used in close proximity to heighten one thought: "after having seen, Zechariah was startled (ταράσσω), and fear (φόβος) fell upon him" (Luke 1:12). Ταράσσω means "stir, trouble; agitate, disturb; cause confusion."<sup>12</sup> Because Zechariah was disturbed, fear became an assailant. Consequently, almost all messengers from God have to respond to humans in the same way: "Do not continue to fear" (present imperative, Luke 1:13, 30; 2:9, 10 φοβέω).

Mary uses "fear" or φοβέω in a positive sense in her song of praise: God, my Savior, is merciful generation after generation "to the ones fearing him" (Luke 1:50). The contrast between Mary's question of a more technical nature of the angel ("*How* will this be, since I do not know a man" 1:34) and Zechariah's question, requesting a sign ("*According to what* will I know this?" 1:18) is similar to the different connotations of the same word, φόβος, used about or by each of them. Mary is never described as overwhelmed by fear. Rather, she herself lauds those who are fearful. In the context of her song, the people who continue to fear God are synonymous with the lowly and the poor as opposed to the proud, mighty and the rich (1:48-53). For Mary, "fear" (φοβέω) has even more positive connotations than θαυμάζω, the people's "wonder" as Zechariah's delay in the temple. For her, it means not only "fear," "marvel," "worship" but also "obedience."

The marvel of God's work in the world continues in the gospel in Zechariah's life. When Zechariah supports his wife Elizabeth's insistence that the baby be named "John" in contrast to the current practice of naming the child after a relative: "everyone marveled" (θαυμάζω 1:63). Here is an example where being able to cause marvel in others is a sign of redemption in the causer, Zechariah. After Zechariah begins to speak, that general positive marvel becomes intensified into "fear" (φόβος): "fear came upon all" (1:65). This event is the first event described in the gospel where "fear" or "awe" becomes a reaction of a group. This momentum of "fear" as a proper response to theophany builds up through chapter nine.

The shepherds who told many people about the birth of Jesus and their terror at seeing the angel, caused "all the ones having heard" to marvel (θαυμάζω 2:18). Mary and Joseph marveled (θαυμάζω) at what Simeon says about Jesus (2:33). As with the shepherds, words or messages cause marvel: a Savior has been born. "All the ones hearing" the twelve year old Jesus asking questions of the professors at the

11. For a more extended definition of "pleonasm" and the other literary terms, see Appendix II in my *Paul's Literary Style: A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of II Corinthians 11:16-12:13, Romans 8:9-39, and Philipians 3:2-4:13* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984).

12. LSJ, 1758. Literally, "shake together, stir up" BAGD, 812.

temple were amazed (ἐξίστημι 2:47). Ἐξίστημι, which occurs four times in Luke, is a more intensive word than θαυμάζω or φοβέω. Literally meaning, "I stand out of," ἐξίστημι means "displace, change, alter utterly, throw out of position." Metaphorically, it signifies "drive one out of one's senses" or "confound." The passive or middle can refer to becoming bankrupt, losing consciousness, throwing into wonderment. The related noun ἔκστασις also has the same sense of movement outward. It signifies "displacement," "change," "distractioin of mind from terror, astonishment or anger."<sup>13</sup> In the Book of Acts, Simon Peter uses ἔκστασις to describe the physical condition, which seems to have included a loss of consciousness, in which he saw the vision of the unclean animals coming down from heaven on a sheet (Acts 10:10; 11:5; see also Gen 15:12 LXX). Paul uses the verb ironically for insanity (2 Cor 5:13).<sup>14</sup> Everyone who heard Jesus at twelve did not merely marvel (θαυμάζω), or become filled with fear (φόβος), they were "confounded," "driven out of their senses," "thrown into wonderment" (ἐξίστημι). (That's effective education!) The parents' reaction is described with an even more intensive verb, ἐκπλήσσω, "I strike out of, drive away from." Mary and Joseph felt as if they were hit with a blow (2:48). Πλήσσω, by itself, was used of defeat, destruction, and, specifically, the striking of a warrior, as in 1 Kings 4:2: "*there were smitten* in the battle in the field four thousand men" (LXX). Metaphorically, ἐκπλήσσω refers to people "struck with terror or amazement, struck out of self-possession, driven out of their senses by a sudden shock."<sup>15</sup>

Ἐκπλήσσω occurs at three key places in Luke's Gospel. If ἐξίστημι brings out how Jesus confounded the logic of the teachers, ἐκπλήσσω is not only more intensive but also is here negative. Mary and Joseph reacted from a sudden and startling alarm, seeing their child calmly speaking to others and for three days. Mary's comments show that her amazement was not affirmative. She calls him "child" (τέκνον) although legally he was almost an adult (*m Aboth* 5:21), "Why have you acted to us in this manner? Behold, your father and I, being greatly worried, searched for you" (2:48).

In the second section of Luke's Gospel (4:14-9:50), "fear" or "awe" as a positive response to Jesus' ministry continues to increase. Jesus' ministry centers around Galilee. When Jesus describes his call to ministry from Isaiah 61:1-2: "all testified of him and marveled (θαυμάζω) concerning his gracious words" (4:22). This "fear" does not

13. LSJ, 520; 595; Thayer, 224; BAGD, 275-76.

14. For a study of Paul's style see *Paul's Literary Style* and my and William David Spencer's *2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

15. LSJ, 517; Thayer, 199. Josephus uses ἐκπλήσσω only metaphorically.

remain positive very long. After Jesus accuses them of having less faith than the Gentile Sidonians or Syrians, the marvel changes to "fury" (πλήσσω). Like Jesus' parents, the Nazarenes are "stricken" with anger. This reaction shows the reader that "awe" by itself is only one stage toward belief. By no means will it *necessarily* turn into belief.

At Capernaum, the center for Jesus' ministry in Galilee,<sup>16</sup> the people were shocked (ἐκπλήσσω) at Jesus' teaching since his words were given authoritatively (4:32). When he commanded a demon to leave a man, "fear (θάμβος) came upon all" (4:36). Jesus' teachings had authority. His words had power (4:36). Θάμβος, which occurs twice in Luke, is a noun related to the verb θαμβέω, "to be astonished" or "alarmed." Θάμβος is from a root "to render immovable."<sup>17</sup> Θάμβος means "amazement," which affects one physically.

These two unusual words (θάμβος and ἐκπλήσσω) are used to describe Jesus' ministry in Capernaum. Jesus had strong reactions from his audience. He himself was impressed by one person's faith (7:9 θαυμάζω). However, John explains that later Jesus lost many disciples at Capernaum because he taught that they had "to eat the flesh and drink the blood" of the Son of Humanity (John 6:53-66). Luke records as Jesus speaks to the seventy-two that Capernaum would be brought down to Hades (10:15). Even as Mary and Joseph are alarmed (ἐκπλήσσω) but not receptive, eventually the Capernaum's "fear" or "alarm" does not result in receptive faith in Jesus.

So far in Jesus' ministry in Galilee, his teachings and healing of people cause amazement. In the next incident his power over fish also causes fear. When Peter and his coworkers caught fish after being unsuccessful all night, "amazement (θάμβος) surrounded him and all the ones with him" (5:9). As did the angels, Jesus had to command Simon: "Do not continue to fear" (φοβέω 5:10). This all encompassing amazement forces Simon to his knees, but does not sustain him later when he denies knowing Jesus during Jesus' arrest (22:57-60). Nevertheless, at this point in the narration the crowds continue overwhelmingly to follow Jesus. When Jesus both heals and forgives the paralytic, "all received amazement (ἐκστασις) and glorified God and they were struck (πλήσσω) with fear (φόβος) saying that 'We have seen unusual things today'" (5:26). Luke again uses two synonyms for "fear" (ἐκστασις and φόβος) to intensify the audience's great reaction. They were doubly struck: struck out of self-possession and struck by fear.

16. Matt 4:13; John 2:12; 6:24.

17. Thayer, 282.

The next event of amazement occurs at Nain when Jesus resurrects the only son of a widow: "fear (φόβος) took hold of all, and they glorified God saying that a great prophet has arisen among us and that God has visited his people" (7:16). From power with words, over illness, over fish, over death, Jesus now is seen as having power over the wind and the waters of the great Sea of Galilee. Luke again uses a pleonasm to heighten the disciples' amazement: "And having feared (φοβέω) they marveled (θαυμάζω), saying to one another, 'Who is this that commands even the winds and the water and they obey him?'" (8:25). Probably the disciples were filled with a panic fear (φόβος) when the hurricane or whirlwind (λαίλαψ)<sup>18</sup> swept from the sea curling into the sky. And they probably still were terrified when Jesus stood up in the boat and commanded the elements to cease raging. This double-edged fear resulted in marvel over Jesus' authority. Again and again fear or awe has been a key indicator in humans of the presence of the deity among them.

#### "FEAR" BY ITSELF IS INSUFFICIENT FOR PERSISTENCE IN FAITH

However, fear by itself will not necessarily turn to persistent belief. The next incidents are prolepses of the turn of events about to come at the end of chapter nine. When the townspeople of the region of Gerasenes see the man cured of many demons "they were afraid" (8:35 φοβέω). When they heard from the eyewitnesses how it happened, "a great fear (φοβέω) surrounded them" (8:37). This fear, though, leads them to ask Jesus to leave them. They want no more examples of Jesus' power over insanity. Similarly, when Jairus hears that his daughter is dead, Jesus commands him: "Do not continue to fear (φόβος), only believe, and she will be saved" (8:50). Again, "fear" here contrasts with belief. However, when she comes back to life, her parents are "thrown into wonderment" (ἐξίστημι 8:56).

Fear is incapacitating at the next event. During Jesus' transfiguration into glorious splendor, a cloud envelopes Jesus, Peter, John, and James: "And they were afraid (φοβέω) when they entered into the cloud" (9:34). The disciples did not tell anyone of what they had seen until after the resurrection (9:36; otherwise we never would have read about the event in our three Synoptic Gospels).

The build-up of amazement comes to a climax at the end of chapter nine. After the transfiguration, a father shouts out his frustration with Jesus' disciples who cannot remove a demon which has caused epilepsy in the child from birth (Mark 9:21). When Jesus rebukes the demon, heals the child, and hands him over to the father,

18. LSJ, 1024.

"all were struck with terror (ἐκπλήσσω) at the majesty of God. And while all were marveling (θαυμάζω) at all with [Jesus] did, he said to his disciples, 'Give ear to my words, for the Heir of Humanity is about to be delivered into human hands.' But they did not understand this saying, and it was being concealed from them lest they might understand it, and they were afraid (φοβέω) to ask him concerning this saying" (9:43-45). Three synonyms for "fear" all occur here within three sentences as synecdoches representing the great sense of amazement which has been surrounding Jesus from before his birth throughout his ministry. Ἐκπλήσσω, by itself, is probably the most intensive word for 'fear' in this gospel. Θαυμάζω almost always has positive connotations. Extreme reaction and positive reaction are combined in one verse (9:43). The verse is also very suggestive. If in 5:26 the crowd glorifies God after Jesus heals and forgives the paralytic, in 8:25 the disciples ask who Jesus could be. In 9:43 all were struck with terror at the majesty of God. Who is God? This sentence could very well suggest that Jesus is indeed God incarnate. And, again, Luke writes "all" were amazed.

"All" occurs in *nine* of the thirteen awe-inspiring events in the gospel so far (69%).<sup>19</sup> From the moment when the friends and neighbors of Elizabeth and Zechariah are "all" filled with awe (1:65), Luke is careful to note the overwhelming response of the crowds through chapter seven, when the widow's son was resurrected (7:16). Chapter eight functions as a transition chapter. Ironically, at Gerasenes instead of "all" being filled with fear, they "all" asked Jesus to leave! Of the fifty-three total occurrences of fear synonyms in the gospel over sixty percent occur in the first nine chapters (36% of the book).<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the connotations for "fear" tend to be overwhelmingly positive (79%).<sup>21</sup> In this context, Jesus then begins to teach (9:18ff.) what will result in panic fear among his disciples (φόβος 9:45) and an increasing abandonment of support from the crowds: the Messiah must suffer. "Who is Jesus" has been well attested in these early events: God incarnate, empowered by the Spirit and with authority to liberate all oppressed people (4:18-19). Jesus now begins to develop by teaching and by model what is entailed in following Jesus. Suffering precedes glory. For the first time in Luke's Gospel, Jesus "strengthens his face" or resolves to go into Jerusalem

19. "All" appears in 1:65; 2:18; 2:47; 4:22; 4:36; 5:9, 26; 7:16; 9:43. In 8:37 "all" asked Jesus to leave. In 8:56 Jesus' parents only are present. No "all" occurs in 8:25 or 9:34.

20. See Appendix 2.

21. Of 33 uses of 'fear' in chs. 1-9, there are 7 negative uses. The negative uses are with Zechariah (1:12-13), Mary and Joseph (2:48), the crowd at Gerasenes (8:37), Jairus (8:50), and the disciples (9:34, 45).

and immediately his messengers are no longer welcomed (9:51-52). The Samaritan villagers do not welcome Jesus' disciples. The pathos of Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane, emotionally not wanting to die abandoned by the Father,<sup>22</sup> is presaged in this long circuitous route toward Jerusalem (9:51-19:44)<sup>23</sup> until Jesus finally enters the place that will be his tomb (19:45-22:53). The different synonyms for "fear" (Θάμβος and ἐκπλήσσομαι no longer occurring) now tend to be more negative or less intensive or less representative of all people.

When the man who was mute was able to speak, "the crowds marveled" (Θαυμάζω) 11:14). But some people thought Jesus' power came from Beelzebub while others kept asking for more proofs (11:15-16). Θαυμάζω now appears with its first negative use: "And the Pharisees having seen [Jesus recline at table] marveled (Θαυμάζω) that first he did not sprinkle [his hands] before the meal" (11:38). Jesus did not perceive their "marvel" as complimentary because he criticizes them for their hypocrisy (11:39). In this gospel, this incident records the only negative use of Θαυμάζω.<sup>24</sup> When a crowd of many thousands gathers to hear Jesus, Jesus begins to teach them who is the proper object of their fear: do not fear the one killing the body, do fear the one who can condemn you to hell, yet do not fear that that one will lightly condemn you or not take care of you (φοβέω) 12:4-5, 7, 32). One example of someone missing the fear he should have is the irreverent judge of the parable (18:2, 4 (φοβέω)). Yet the servant afraid of his ruler loses all around by hiding his money in a grave cloth and then losing the little he has (19:21 (φοβέω)).

Once in Jerusalem (19:45-22:53), Jesus finds the religious leaders of his time want to arrest him but do not do so immediately because they feared (φοβέω) the power of his supporters (20:19; 22:2). Even in

22. For a study of the prayers at Gethsemane see ch. 9 in William David Spencer and my *The Prayer Life of Jesus: Shout of Agony, Revelation of Love, A Commentary* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990).

23. He approaches Jerusalem at least twice. He goes from Samaria (9:51-52; 17:11) to Bethany (10:38) to Jericho (19:1), and finally from Bethany (19:29) into Jerusalem (19:41-45). For a summary of some of the major interpretations of the import of Luke's travel narrative see James M. Dowsey, "Jesus' Pilgrimage to Jerusalem," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 14.3 (Fall, 1987) 217-32.

David Gooding (*According to Luke: A New Exposition of the Third Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987] 179-85) has a similar interpretation to my own. He adds that not only was Jesus traveling toward "the suffering of the cross," but also "entering into glory." Jesus' goal was not Jerusalem, but *via* Jerusalem, "being received up." "The journey, then, that Christ took from Galilee to heaven via Jerusalem was both literal and metaphorical, both spiritual and geographical."

For an overview of the biblical teaching on the reasons for human suffering, see A. Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer, tentatively titled *Bruised Heel: Suffering and Joy in Biblical Perspective* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, forthcoming).

24. Outside of Luke's Gospel, θαυμάζω is used negatively in Mark 6:6 and Gal 1:6.

the midst of trying to trap Jesus, they marvel (θαυμάζω) at his replies to their questions (20:26).

Positive marvel or fear is mixed with negative marvel. People have awe for the wrong reasons or lack awe of the proper Person. Marvel no longer effects "all," nor does it necessarily imply appreciation or trust.

In the midst of Jesus' remarks on the last days, Jesus explains the proper reasons for fear: do not be terrified (πτοέομαι) when you hear of war because the time of judgment has not yet come (21:9), fearful events will occur (φόβητρον 21:11), people from fear (φόβος) will faint (21:26). One of these dreadful events forthcoming will be Jesus' betrayal and arrest.

From a generally overwhelming awe-filled response (1:1-9:50) which suddenly becomes more disparate or mixed after Jesus resolves to "go to Jerusalem" (9:51-22:53), at his death and resurrection the variety of responses of Jesus' claims can all be found. The one criminal who "feared" (φοβέω) God asks to come into Jesus' kingdom and is granted that request (23:40-43). While the women are at a loss as to why Jesus' body was not in the tomb, they are "thrown into fear" (ἐμφοβος) by the presence of several angels (24:5). Peter "marvels" when he sees the empty tomb (24:12 θαυμάζω); while the disciples are gathered in Jerusalem going over the recent happenings, they see Jesus: "Having been startled (πτοέω) and becoming thrown into fear (ἐμφοβος)" because they thought they were observing a spirit (24:37). The events at Jesus' resurrection are momentous. "Εμφοβος and πτοέω highlight the passive nature of the humans and their sometimes physical response. The women are so "thrown into fear" that they fall down face forward to the ground (24:5). The disciples in Jerusalem are terrified (πτοέω) 24:37). They respond with joy, marvel (θαυμάζω) and disbelief (24:41). Jesus reiterates the message of his life: "The Messiah must suffer and be raised from among the dead at the third day and repentance for forgiveness of sins for all the Gentiles will be preached in his name" (24:46-47). After Jesus "opens" the disciples' minds and they expectantly await for "power from on high" (24:45, 49), they are finally able to worship Jesus and praise God "continually" (24:52-53).

## SUMMARY

Many synonyms for "fear" have been used in this Gospel. Θαυμάζω highlights the reaction that people give to something unusual, unusual words, messages, events, not ceremonially washing one's hands, a good legal response, even the resurrection. Like the marvel a crowd might feel at a circus, it can sometimes quickly turn to fury

or doubt. It may or may not have anything to do with trusting belief. Θάμβος implies a more intensive amazement from powerful deeds. Ἐξίστημι or ἔκστασις is an intensified marvel, such as the confounding of teachers, the reaction from seeing both healing and forgiving, and finding an empty tomb. Ἐκπλήσσω is an intensified ἐξίστημι, probably the most intensified of the words for fear, metaphorically imparting a sense of being hit with a blow or driven out of one's senses from shock. The result is sometimes anger. The cause can be the apparent flagrant disregard of parental authority, a completely new manner of education, or a very difficult healing. Τρέμω is a physical trembling from fear of punishment in this one reference. Πτόέω is always a negative terror or startling from momentous events such as war or seeing a ghost. Φόβος, φοβέω, and φόβητρον are the most inclusive terms for fear. They can serve as synonyms for θαυμάζω, θάμβος, ἐξίστημι, and πτόέω.<sup>25</sup> Φοβέω can range from panic fear from being overwhelmed by a warrior angel, to an incapacitating fear, fear of reprisal, fear of death, lack of concern, a Shekinah-cloud, or an unexpected healing. It can also be very positive: the experience of people who revere God and sense their lowliness in God's presence, a general respect of God and humans, seeing a great marvel, such as a resurrection, and responding with glorification of God." Εμφοβος is an intensified φόβος with possible physical reactions which cannot be avoided, such as the women feel upon seeing the angels at the tomb or the disciples feel upon first seeing Jesus resurrected.

In the Gospel of Luke, fear is a key concept. Seven word families occur frequently (55 times). "Fear" also is one indicator of the changing nature of Jesus' audience. Up to chapter eight, culminating in chapter nine, the response of awe to Jesus' life builds to a climax whereupon Luke suggests that the people have identified Jesus with God. In addition the repetitious use of "all," the positive connotations for "fear," and the intensification of the concept by word selection and pleonasm, up to chapter eight, indicate the all-encompassing reaction to the presence of the deity. The cause of the fear increases as people come closer to the object of marvel. What causes fear? Angels, words, messages, healing, and power over fish, death, wind, and water. However in chapter nine what is presaged in earlier events (at Nazareth and Capernaum) now becomes explicit. Fear by itself is insufficient for costly belief. In the midst of awe-struck crowds Jesus begins to teach his followers that the kind of Messiah or Savior that God promised is one who must suffer before entering glory. The more focused uses of fear now become disparate even as the large following of Jesus becomes more mixed in response. Positive marvel becomes

25. 8:25; 5:9-10, 26; 21:9-11.

mixed with negative marvel. Jesus has to teach that fear can come from wrong reasons or for the wrong person. Fear is good if it derives from knowledge of God's power, but it is bad if it derives from lack of knowledge of God's power, as in Jairus' case, or lack of knowledge of God's compassion.

Fear is also a key concept not only within the Gospel of Luke as part of Luke's testimony to Jesus' divinity, but also comparative to the other three gospels.<sup>26</sup> These seven word families occur 55 times in Luke, 35 times in Matthew, 36 times in Mark, and 13 times in John. Every gospel notes the marvel and fear surrounding Jesus' life. However, Luke has the most references to the φόβος and θαυμάζω word families and the largest total of synonyms for "astonishment," over one-third of the references in Matthew and Mark, and over three-fourths of those in John.<sup>27</sup> Considering its length, Mark is most similar.<sup>28</sup> Thus, when we remember the Gospel of Luke, we should remember that "fear" is one consistent emotion that people felt in the presence of God's Savior, but with different significances and intensities: anywhere from marvel, appreciation, alarm, altering of one's mind to some degree or a great degree, to panic fear or obeying fear. In our society today, some people do not want fear in any aspect of the Christian life, while others' lives are full of fear. This word

26. See Appendix 3, Synonyms for "Fear" in the Four Gospels.

27. Luke has 53% more references to "fear" than John if you eliminate differences of length (76%-23% = 53%). (100%-24% = 76%; 100%-77% = 23%.)

"Fear" is also an important word in the Old Testament. In the Septuagint, as in Luke's Gospel, φοβέω, φόβος, and θαυμάζω, occur frequently. Θαυμάσιος is also a frequent word in the Septuagint although it never occurs in Luke. Many of the words with prefixes do not appear until or after the apocryphal writings (ἐξίστημι, ἔκθαμβέω, ἔκθαμβος, ἔκθαυμάζω and ἔμφοβος.) Ἐκστασις, θάμβος, ἐκπλήσσω, πτόέω, τρέμω and φόβητρον have some use in the Septuagint. As in the New Testament, these synonyms range in meaning. On the one hand, God is "fearful" (φοβερός) and does not "fear" (θαυμάζω) humans (Deut 10:17; 2 Chr. 19:7). On the other hand, people sometimes should be feared (e.g., aged, Deut 28:50), sometimes not (Lev 19:15). At other times fear is inevitable upon seeing God at work (1 Kgs 14:15; Exod 3:20) or realizing one's own sin (Gen 3:11).

28. Mark has 35% fewer references but it is approximately 43% shorter. Thus Mark, proportionately, has almost an equal percentage of references to "fear" as Luke.

Mark too uses "fear" synonyms to indicate people's amazement at Jesus' powerful deeds (healing and exorcism) (1:27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:20, 42; 6:51; 7:37; 9:6, 15; 12:11 [quotation]) and teaching (1:22; 6:2; 10:24, 26, 32; 11:18; 12:17). They are negatively used to indicate fear of reprisal (5:15, 33; 6:20, 50; 9:32; 11:18, 32; 12:12). The last attested verse for Mark ends with three synonyms for fear (16:8). See also Jesus' own amazement or fear (3:21 [false charge]; 6:6; 14:33), Pilate's amazement at Jesus' silence and death (15:5, 44), fear caused by the angel (16:5-6), and fear as an antithesis to faith (5:36). More than half of Mark's uses of "fear" are unique to his gospel. Fear continues to be an important concept in the Book of Acts but it is not as frequent as in the Gospel of Luke. See Appendix 4, Synonyms for "Fear" in Acts.

study reminds us that fear or awe is inevitable in the presence of the deity, but by itself it will not sustain one in times of suffering or necessarily move one to salvific belief. Fear should be part of faith, but faith is much greater.

## APPENDIX 1

### LUKE CHALLENGES THEOPHILUS TO FOLLOW GOD WHO HAS COME IN THE PERSON OF JESUS, EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT AND WITH AUTHORITY TO LIBERATE ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE

- I. Preface—Luke wants Theophilus to be fully assured of the truth of the good news (1:1-4).
- II. Jesus' true nature as God come to liberate all oppressed persons is attested to before he begins his ministry in his birth among humble people, in his youth, baptism, and temptation (1:5-4:13).  
*(Everyone was filled with wonder).*
- III. When Jesus' ministry centers around Galilee he is empowered to liberate the oppressed. The crowds overwhelmingly follow Jesus, attesting to his divinity (4:14-9:50).  
*(4:18-19—Thesis: Spirit has chosen Jesus to set free the oppressed).*
- IV. When Jesus determines to go to Jerusalem, which meant he would be oppressed himself, the crowds are no longer receptive to him or they misunderstand his message (9:51-19:44).  
*(9:53—The people would not receive Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem).*
- V. When Jesus is in Jerusalem teaching daily in the temple his authority is challenged by the religious leaders (19:45-22:53).  
*(20:2—What right do you have to do these things?)*
- VI. Jesus allows the evil rulers to arrest, condemn, and kill him only to come back to life victorious (22:54-24:53).  
*(24:26, 46—Summary: It was necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter his glory).*

## APPENDIX 2

## Synonyms for "Fear" in the Gospel of Luke

Luke	θαυμάζω	θάμβος	ἕξιστημι ἕκστασις	ἐκπλήσσω	φόβος φοβέω ἔμφοβος φόβητρον	πτοέω τρέμω
1:1-4:13	1:21, 63; 2:18, 33		2:47	2:48	1:12, 13, 30, 50, 65; 2:9, 10	
4:14-9:50	4:22; 7:9; 8:25; 9:43	4:36; 5:9	5:26 (noun); 8:56	4:32; 9:43	5:10, 26; 7:16; 8:25, (τρέμω) 35, 37, 50; 9:34, 45	8:47
9:51-19:44	11:14, 38				12:4, 5, 7, 32; 18:2, 4; 19:21	
19:45-22:53	20:26				20:19; 21:11, 26; 22:2	21:9
22:54-24:53	24:12, 41		24:22		23:40; 24:5, 37	24:37

## APPENDIX 3

## Synonyms for "Fear" in the Four Gospels

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
θαυμάζω	9	6	13	7
ἐκθαυμάζω*		(one quotation)		
θαυμάσιος*				
θαυμαστός*				
θάμβος		4 (v)	2 (adj)	
θαμβέω				
ἐκθαμβέω*				
ἕξιστημι	1	6	4	
ἕκστασις				
ἐκπλήσσω	4	5	3	
φόβος, φοβέω	21	14	30	6
φόβητρον				(one quotation)
ἔμφοβος				
ἔκφοβος*				

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
πτοέω			2	
τρέμω		1	1	
total	35	36	55	13
(% of Luke)	(64%)	(65%)	(100%)	(24%)
approximate	2373	1362	2398	1858
length of gospel				
(# of Greek	(99%)	(57%)	(100%)	(77%)
lines)**		(ending 16:8)	(2402 if 22.42-44 and 23:34a included)	1879 if 8:1-11 included)

\* not in Luke

\*\* UBS 3d ed.

#### APPENDIX 4 Synonyms for "Fear" in Acts

θαυμάζω	5	(one quotation) (cf. 13 in Luke) (2:7; 3:12; 4:13; 7:31; 13:41)
θάμβος, ἔκθαμβος	2	(3:10, 11)
ἐξίστημι, ἔκστασις	12	(cf. 4 in Luke) (2:7, 12; 3:10; 8:13; 9:21; 10:10, 45; 11:5; 12:16; 22:17)
ἐκπλήσσω	1	(13:12)
φόβος, φοβέω	18	(cf. 30 in Luke) (2:43; 5:5, 11, 26; 9:17, 26, 31; 10:2, 4, 22, 35;
ἔμφοβος		13:16, 26; 16:38; 18:9; 19:17; 22:29; 24:25; 27:24)
Total	38	(69% "fear" references in Luke)