

The Work of Wealthy Women: Female Discipleship in Luke 8:1-3

by

Kimberly Penner

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The Jesus movement and Early Church depended on the spiritual, emotional, and financial provisions of many disciples. Women were not excluded from this role. In fact, several individually named women as well as groups of unnamed women are documented within the pages of the New Testament as offering their homes and resources to support Jesus and/or Paul's ministry. For example, the women who travelled with Jesus from Galilee prepared spices and perfumes for the burial of his body (a task that was not specifically designated as the role of women in Jewish or Roman society). In Acts 17:4 we read that "prominent women" were persuaded in Thessalonica to join Paul and Silas.¹ Phoebe (Rom. 16) and Chloe (1 Cor. 1), among others, provided their homes as meeting places for the new communities of believers.

Luke includes many women in his narrative of Jesus' life and ministry. In fact, his gospel devotes substantial content to female characters, giving more names of specific women in Jesus' life than any other gospel. In particular, Luke stresses the importance of women as disciples, both in general statements (8:19-21; 11:27-28) and specific instances, such as Mary and Martha (10:38-42), in reports of women serving Jesus (8:1-3), and in the description of women as witnesses in the passion and resurrection narratives (23:49; 23:55-28:12).²

¹ The default English translation I use for quoting scripture is the New International Version.

² Joel B. Green, ed., "Women," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1992), 880-884.

The women in Luke 8:1-3 are a particular group of female disciples who stand out from their male counterparts. Although they have left home (οἶκος), kin, and honour, to follow Jesus, they choose to take some of their economic resources with them in order to provide for Jesus and the Twelve. Instead of relying solely on the hospitality of others, these women are providers of hospitality. Their actions do not conform to Jesus' call to leave everything (ἄφεντες πάντα) in order to follow (ἀκολουθέω) him.³ However, the language Luke uses to describe them is positive in nature. Several are mentioned by name: Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's Steward, and Susanna. They are caretakers and providers for the group. They are disciples with economic means, yet they are not reprimanded for it.

A. Thesis Statement

In this study I focus on the actions, role, and persons of the women in Luke 8:1-3 by examining the socio-historical context that informs the text as well as the text's role within the gospel as a whole. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, reflecting a widely held opinion, claims that New Testament writings grow increasingly conservative the later they are written.⁴ However, despite the fact that Luke is writing c.85 C.E., this investigation will show that 8:1-3 does not indicate a decline in the radical, counter-cultural, and liberating nature of the Jesus traditions. In this regard, my primary arguments are: 1) that there were wealthy women who funded Jesus' ministry, as is

³ Jesus instructs the Twelve and the Seventy-Two not to take anything with them when sending them out (Lk. 9:3; 10:4).

⁴ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishers, 1983), 288.

reflected in Luke 8:1-3, 2) that the women in 8:2-3 model what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus. It is my goal to study the text within the context of Jesus' ministry, but also how it reflects and engages the context in which Luke is writing.

B. Methodology

This thesis uses a social-historical approach to examine the women in Luke 8:1-3. Social history is a well-established area within the field of historical studies and has proved to be a productive method for analyzing specific segments of a society. In the past, historical research was used to shed light on the great persons and events that shaped Jewish history. As a result, only prominent people, usually those with high economic, political, or religious standing, received attention. A social historical approach represents a shift in focus toward the everyday lives and social subtleties experienced by the majority of the population at a given time.⁵

As more recent scholarship has shown, using only historical methods can “[blind] us to the insight that each NT narrative evokes for its audience a unique narrative world – an ordered whole in which elements mutually condition and illuminate one another – to be studied on its own terms.”⁶ As a result, this study will also employ a literary narrative critical approach concerning the character and function of the women in Luke 8:1-3 within the Gospel narrative.

⁵ Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), xviii.

⁶ John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts*, *Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 12.

Increased openness in biblical studies to the methods of other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, has allowed scholars to ask new questions of old materials.⁷ However, the task of appropriating parts of biblical material for historical purposes that were unintended by its authors and editors is not without controversy. In his social description of early Christianity Wayne Meeks explains that many theologians are opposed to sociological interpretations of religious phenomena because they view them as reductionistic. Some theologians argue that the questions a social historian asks of religious texts seek to extract from them something contrary to, or at least different from, their manifest content or “intention”.⁸ In doing so, they believe that sociologists deny the distinctive character of the biblical text by treating it as the result of nonreligious causes, thus imposing their own belief system on the evidence.⁹ Prior to defending his work as a social historian, Meeks acknowledges that there are in fact good reasons for these allegations since some of the most popular sociological interpretations of early Christianity have been reductionistic, such as the Marxist reading of Karl Kautsky’s *The Foundations of Christianity* and the Chicago school of New Testament studies.¹⁰ However, as Meeks argues, “to assert that only theological interpretation of the canonical texts is legitimate is surely only another kind of reductionism.”¹¹

Although the majority of objections to the use of social historical methods for biblical study identified by Meeks are dated, the task of appropriating parts of biblical material for historical purposes that were unintended by its authors and editors remains a relevant issue. Meeks’ arguments in defense of the use of social historical methods

⁷ King and Stager, xviii.

⁸ Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 2.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹¹ Ibid., 3-4.

continue to hold up today. A simple yet profound argument for the use of social historical methods is best made by Carolyn Osiek: “As the word of God, the Bible transcends culture and history, but as human word the Bible is subject to the historical vision and cultural patterns of the faith communities and writers that produced it.”¹² She thereby emphasizes the role and importance of social historical research in the field of biblical studies.

A large obstacle to exploring the life of women in the Bible is the paucity of biblical, extra-biblical, and archaeological data. However, it is possible to fill in the picture to a certain extent with what is known about women in the first century.

C. Format

This thesis is divided into five chapters: Chapter I “Introduction,” Chapter II, “The Gospel of Luke as a Historical Source,” Chapter III, “Women in the First Century,” Chapter IV, “The Women in Luke 8:1-3,” and Chapter V, “Results and Implications.”

Chapter II lays out the parameters for the rest of the study by exploring what kind of sources the Gospels are and whether or not it is appropriate to view Luke as a historical source for life in the first century. This chapter also highlights several of Jesus’ emphases in his teaching and ministry as described in the Gospel of Luke to serve as a backdrop for the portrait of Jesus that we find in Luke 8:1-3.

¹² Carolyn Osiek, *What are they saying about the social setting of the New Testament?* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 1.

Chapters III and IV constitute the body of this thesis. In these chapters I employ what New Testament scholar Satoko Yamaguchi calls “spiral movement”.¹³ This method requires that I begin by constructing a broad picture by using multi-disciplinary studies to expand the historical imagination to the ancient world, producing a rough sketch. Chapter III thus explores the various contexts of first century Palestine as they relate to women. Rather than go into detail regarding the many particularities and subtleties of the real world of ordinary people, my focus is on the four areas that seem most relevant for examining the lives of Jewish women in first century Palestine/Roman Empire in general, with an eye for how they illumine Luke 8:1-3 in particular:

- 1) Political Reality
- 2) Social Stratification
- 3) Social Systems
- 4) World View

Chapter IV follows Yamaguchi’s second step in which the focus of research spirals inward and becomes more detail oriented. Here I move to a detailed exegesis of Luke 8:1-3 with a particular focus on the women and their actions. This section also revisits the sketch in Chapter III to explore the social historical background in greater detail. In particular, I examine the role that the women in Luke 8:1-3 play within Jesus’ community as those who serve or minister to Jesus and the Twelve.

Chapter V focuses on the results of this study and the implications of Luke 8:1-3 for how one views Jesus’ relationship to women disciples and for Luke’s audience.

¹³ Satoko Yamaguchi, *Mary and Martha: Women in the World of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 11-12.

Chapter II

Luke as a Historical Source

This chapter examines first the Synoptic Gospels generally as historical sources, second, Luke-Acts as a two-volume work, and, third, Luke's memory of Jesus.

A. The Historicity of the Synoptic Gospels

The word gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) means “good news” in Greek. It is also a literary genre used by several of the New Testament writers. Gospel writing style is influenced to some degree by the genre of biography used in antiquity as they “[link] the content of early Christian preaching with the narrative about Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection.”¹⁴ For example, George A. Kennedy considers the preface of Luke’s gospel (1:1-4) evidence that “Luke in the Gospel comes close to being a classical biographer.”¹⁵ Philip L. Schuler is in agreement, but specifies further that the techniques, content, and authorial purposes employed in Matthew, Mark, and Luke all belong to the Hellenistic biographical genre known as the “encomium,” which depicts the life of a historical person while at the same time has a purpose that is not entirely historical.¹⁶ In these ways Luke’s gospel is not an entirely unique genre of writing, but capitalizes on many of the characteristics of Hellenistic biographies.

¹⁴ Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 193.

¹⁵ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 107-108.

¹⁶ Philip L. Schuler, *A Genre for the Gospels* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), 53-56.

There are several other ways of understanding what kind of a source the gospels are. Marcus Borg, for example, views them as 1) a developing tradition, and 2) a mixture of history remembered and history metaphorized.¹⁷ The gospels are a developing tradition in that they are based on traditions about Jesus that have grown over the course of many years prior to being written down. Furthermore, the traditions about Jesus are influenced by the new settings and issues facing the early Christian communities. In other words, perceptions of Jesus' identity and significance are shaped by each community's experience of the risen Christ. Therefore a gospel contains two kinds of information: some that goes back to Jesus, "history remembered," and some that is the product of early Christian communities, "history metaphorized." History metaphorized is a way in which the past is recalled by means of metaphor and simile, as well as Scriptural allusion. The quest for the historical Jesus involves the attempt to separate out the various layers within the tradition, including history remembered and metaphorized.¹⁸

In *Jesus Remembered* James Dunn emphasizes the fact that the gospels are only perceptions of Jesus, yet at the same time historical sources and witnesses. While Borg uses the term "history remembered" to speak of information that is historically accurate, Dunn uses the phrase "Jesus remembered" to refer to the memories and perceptions of Jesus that are found in the Gospels, acknowledging the fact that the Gospels are not autobiographies written by Jesus himself. He describes it this way:

¹⁷ Marcus Borg, "Seeing Jesus: Sources, Lenses, and Method," in *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*, Marcus Borg and E.P. Sanders (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1999), 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

The Synoptic tradition provides evidence not so much for what Jesus said or did in itself, but for what Jesus was remembered as doing or saying by his first disciples, or as we might say, for the impact of what he did or said on his first disciples...[W]e might say that it is precisely the process of ‘remembering’ which fuses the horizons of past and present, by making the past present again. What we have in the earliest retellings of what is now the Synoptic tradition, then, are the memories of the first disciples – not Jesus himself, but the remembered Jesus.¹⁹

What use then are the gospels historically if they cannot tell us exactly what Jesus said and did? Dunn tackles this issue head on:

[T]he idea that we can get back to an objective historical reality, which we can wholly separate and disentangle from the disciples’ memories and then use as a check and control over the way the tradition was developed during the oral and earliest written transmission, is simply unrealistic.²⁰

The historical Jesus is only accessed through the perceptions of his first disciples.

[T]he impact translated itself into the community tradition from the first: the tradition not only bears witness to the impact made by Jesus but is itself part of the effect Jesus had on those he called to discipleship. And the oral character of the traditioning (transmission) process means that in and through the performative variations of the tradition still evident in the Synoptic tradition we are able to hear the stories first told about Jesus and the teachings of Jesus which first drew people into discipleship and sustained the churches in the early years of their common life of discipleship.²¹

At the same time, in the passing on of information, that information is sometimes given a fresh slant. In reality the Jesus tradition is expanded and developed in many different directions. Therefore, instead of asking whether the gospels are historically accurate witnesses to Jesus, the more important question with respect to the gospels as historical

¹⁹ James Dunn, *Christianity in the Making, Vol. 1: Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MT: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 130-131.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 329.

sources is whether the elaborations within the gospel narratives are consistent with the originating impulse.²²

B. Luke-Acts as a Combined Work

This thesis assumes that Luke-Acts is a unified work written by the same person and intended to be read in sequence. This will be important for my study of the women in Luke 8:1-3 in that the larger framework of Luke-Acts sheds light on Luke's view of women. The two parts share many themes as well as parallel structures. For example, whereas the Gospel of Luke proclaims the good news of Jesus the Messiah, Acts proclaims the good news of Jesus as it is received by the believing community by way of the Holy Spirit (*πνεῦμα ἅγία*). Both Luke and Acts also have extensive and symbolic travel narratives. In Luke Jesus travels from Galilee to Jerusalem and in Acts the "way" of Jesus moves from Jerusalem to Rome, the center of the Roman world.²³ Specific to this thesis, the role of female disciples in the Gospel can be compared to the role of female disciples in Acts in an attempt to understand Luke's view of women and Jesus' own treatment and valuing of women.

C. Luke's Memory of Jesus in his Gospel

In the following section I will focus on the themes of 1) healing and exorcism, 2) wealth and possessions, and 3) discipleship within the Gospel of Luke as they relate to Jesus'

²² Ibid.

²³ Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), 97.

teaching and ministry. Each of these themes will be shown to relate to the study of the women in Luke 8:1-3.

1. Healing and Exorcism

Luke 8:2 refers to the women as having been healed. The Jesus we encounter in the Gospel of Luke heals people to show compassion (7:13). More than that, healings and exorcisms are signs that the Kingdom of God is breaking in, revealing the presence of God's reign in the ministry of Jesus (11:20). The healings are holistic in that there is both the forgiveness of sins and physical healing, as in the case of the paralyzed man in Luke 5. Central to these stories is the relationship between healing and faith. Jesus does not depend on people's faith in order to perform miracles (7:11-17). However, he refuses to perform miracles for those who mistrust. In other words, he does not do miracles to prove himself (4:1-13; 23:35-37). In some stories faith is directly linked to healing. The phrase, "your faith has saved you" (7:50) or "your faith has healed you" (8:48) indicates this clearly. In this way, faith is the trust and confidence that God can do miracles. To say that the women were healed by Jesus in 8:2 is thus to say that they were healed both physically and spiritually and that they had faith in Jesus' miraculous abilities.

2. Wealth and Possessions

Luke 8:3 speaks of women who ministered to Jesus “out of their means.” The theme of wealth and possessions looms large in Luke-Acts in general and in the teachings of Jesus in particular. Luke’s emphasis can be capsulized as follows:

- 1) God’s desire is for all to have enough (Lk.9:13; 11:3; 5-13).
- 2) The accumulation of wealth for oneself is the problem, not wealth in and of itself (Lk.12:13-21; 16:13).
- 3) Wealth is a stumbling block/obstacle for entry into the Kingdom of God because it is a sign of self-reliance (Lk.13:29-30; 16:19-31; 18:18-30; 6:20; 24).
- 4) Money and possessions are to be shared (Lk.12:13-21; 12:33; 18:22; 16:9; Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-46; 5:1-11).
- 5) The followers of Jesus should not worry about things (Lk.12:22-34; 10:4).

The term “poor” (πτωχοί) appears eleven times in Luke, representing one third of the references to the poor in the entire New Testament. In Luke 6:20 and 24, for example, a great reversal is promised the poor and the wealthy: “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God [...] But woe to you that are rich, for you have already received your comfort” (NIV). Luke 12:15b adds that “a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” and in Luke 16:19-31 Jesus tells a story about a rich man who ends up in Hades, while Lazarus (a poor man) is carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom when he dies. Luke consistently encourages those with means to support society’s poor and live in solidarity with them by giving away their wealth. Jesus himself provides the ultimate example as he resists building up riches for himself and instead chooses to teach, heal,

speak, and eat with the poor. Given Jesus' and Luke's view on wealth and possessions, the fact that wealthy women are recorded in Luke 8:1-3 as being part of Jesus' entourage stands out as a focus of this study.

3. Discipleship

The theme of discipleship, which is central to Luke's Gospel, is directly related to the issue of wealth in Luke. The women of Luke 8:1-3 are among the group of persons who follow Jesus as he goes about preaching the good news of the reign of God. Involvement in Jesus' mission is the primary requirement of discipleship (5:1-11; 9:1-6; 9:23; 10:1-12). Being a disciple also includes relinquishing attachment to material possessions (12:22-34), which relates to the overarching emphasis on wealth and possessions in the Gospel of Luke. In Luke 5:11 the first disciples are called and "leave everything" to follow Jesus, including their fishing gear, boats, kinship groups/families, and homes. Later, Levi the tax collector heeds the call to be a disciple in the same way, by "leaving everything" (5:28). This act is held up as an ideal in Luke 6:20-23 when Jesus is recorded as saying: "Blessed are you who are poor...Blessed are you who hunger now...because great is your reward in heaven". By leaving everything Jesus' disciples are presumably poor and dependent on the support of others and, ultimately, God.

Throughout the gospel it is thus clear that Luke is concerned with socioeconomic conditions and the plight of the weak and vulnerable in society, especially the widows and the poor. That only serves to highlight the contrast, then, to the women in 8:1-3 who, according to the text, are financially well off. Barbara Reid explains the apparent

contradiction: “The use of material possessions as related to discipleship is a constant Lukan theme, but there is no one model presented for disciples in Luke and Acts.”²⁴ Luke is a gospel written for the poor and marginalized. However, it is also a gospel written for the rich that calls them to share with the poor. The more detached people are from their possessions, the more liberally they will give. There are instances when Jesus tells his disciples to get rid of everything they own (6:20-21; 10:4; 12:22-23; 18:28-30) and times when it is acceptable for disciples to retain some of their possessions. Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, is described as having her own house where “many people had gathered and were praying” (Acts 12:12), which indicates that the building was large enough to hold many people.

Discipleship also means facing rejection and persecution (Lk. 10:3, 10-12; 21:12-19). In Luke 6:27-38 Jesus teaches his disciples how to respond to persecution and how to be faithful with their possessions. They are not to comply with the governing structures of the patron-client system in which “benefactors bestowed favors on beneficiaries, who were then obligated to reciprocate with gratitude and service.”²⁵ Jesus’ message goes against the social and cultural norms that regulated relationships in first century Greco-Roman Palestine.²⁶ When Jesus sends out the Seventy-two disciples (10:1-16) they are told to rely on the hospitality of others rather than carrying provisions for themselves, not “a purse or a bag or sandals” (v.4). As costly and challenging as this may be, in Luke’s view this is what it means to be a disciple. Luke’s memory reflects the impact that Jesus

²⁴ Barbara E. Reid, *Choosing the better part? Women in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 130.

²⁵ Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, *Called to Mission: A Narrative Critical Study of the Character and Mission of the Disciples in the Gospel of Luke*, doctoral dissertation presented to Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education (Ann Arbor, MI: Bell and Howell Information and Learning Company, 2001), 138.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

had on his followers and those who heard the stories passed down. By the end of Luke's Gospel Jesus demonstrates through his own actions that the ultimate cost of discipleship is the way of the cross. In other words, being a disciple of Jesus means being able to commit to self-sacrifice. In Luke 9:23 Jesus tells his disciples "[i]f anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

All of the gospel portraits of Jesus recognize him as a healer, one who sides with the poor, and a teacher who makes disciples. However, a particularly strong emphasis on the theme of wealth and possessions is distinctive to Luke. This background will illumine the portrait of women in Luke 8 as women of means, healed of diseases, and called to be disciples.

Chapter III

Women in the First Century

The following chapter implements a social historical approach that uses the findings of history and literature contemporaneous with the first century. It is divided into subsections that cover four overlapping realities: a) politics, b) social stratification, c) social systems, and d) world view. Each subsection begins by addressing the wider Mediterranean worldview and then moves to the specific Jewish Palestinian context.²⁷ The cosmopolitan setting of Greco-Roman society is that in which Luke's audience received his account of Jesus' gospel in the latter part of the first century. Thus, it is important to examine the ways that the depiction of the women in Luke 8:1-3 reflects or interacts with the social structures of Luke's time and setting as well as how it reflects and interacts with the social structures specific to Jesus' context of rural Palestine.

A. Challenges of Studying Women in the First Century

There are many challenges that accompany a study of women in the first century and, in particular, the women in Luke-Acts. First, gaining accurate information about women in patriarchal societies, such as first century Palestine, poses a challenge. Historians have amply noted that history is most often written by those in power. The voices of the marginalized are thus difficult to hear. As a result, most of the written documents from the first century convey the perspectives of men and it is difficult to have a clear sense of

²⁷ Eric M. Meyers, "The Challenge of Hellenism for Early Judaism and Christianity," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 55, no. 2 (June, 1992), 86.

what life was like for women. Second, in regard to women in Luke-Acts in particular, the overarching category of the “first century” includes multiple social locations and political realities. First, there is a gradual but distinct shift over time from the rural Palestinian context in which Jesus lived (c.30 C.E.) to the urban and wider Greco-Roman context of the early Church that takes shape in the latter half of the century. Second, there is within the believing community a shift in ethnic composition to include both Jews and Gentiles. Third, there is a shift in eschatological expectations from Christ’s immanent return to coping with a delay. In response, fourth, charismatic structures are replaced by formal structures in order to protect and preserve the tradition. Therefore, it is impossible to bracket the first century as a uniform period in history.

Given the nature of the gospel as both memory of Jesus’ time and engagement with Luke’s own context, the women in Luke 8:1-3 reflect Luke’s audience as well as women contemporary with Jesus. This chapter thus includes information from both the first and second halves of the first century. However, for the most part the focus falls on the first half because this is the setting in which Luke places the women in Luke 8:1-3 as travelling companions and disciples of Jesus in Galilee.

B. Political Reality

The purpose of examining the political relationship between the Roman Empire and Palestine is to establish the parameters of the relationship, out of which other, more specific, examples of Roman influence on Jewish Palestine emerge.

Scholarly opinions vary on the pervasiveness of Greco-Roman political influence that exists at the time of Jesus, including the degree of hellenization and urbanization and the speed at which it spread. E. P. Sanders identifies two characterizations of Jesus' historical context in contemporary scholarship. The first pictures Jesus' world as faced with a severe and worsening social and economic crisis. Sanders summarizes the work of scholars such as Richard Horsley, S. Applebaum, and Marcus Borg:

Palestine's small landholders were in a "tightening noose of institutionalized injustices such as double taxation, heavy indebtedness, and loss of land." Peasant families "fell ever more heavily into debt under the steady economic pressures of double taxation." The wealthy lent them money that they could not repay, charged very high rates of interest, and then foreclosed on the property, so that estates became larger and larger while more and more people were forced off the land. There was "rising indebtedness" and a "declining peasantry," the "social-economic infrastructure" was "in decline" and poverty was "worsening."²⁸

While Jewish leaders, such as the priests, added another form of taxation, and are thus partially to blame, in this analysis the Romans are primarily at fault for economic decline and increasing poverty since they are considered responsible for the overarching political system and regional taxation.²⁹

The second characterization views Galilee as, "urbanized, cosmopolitan, and prosperous."³⁰ Summarizing the work of scholars such as Richard Batey, John Dominic Crossan, Gerald Downing, Howard Kee, Burton Mack, and James Strange, Sanders characterizes this view as follows: "Galilee was in fact an epitome of Hellenistic culture," and "life in lower Galilee in the first century was as urbanized and urbane as

²⁸ E.P. Sanders, "Jesus in Historical Context," *Theology Today* 50-3 (October 1993), 430.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 431.

anywhere else in the empire.”³¹ Jesus and his contemporaries were greatly affected by the presence of the Roman Empire, which permeated Palestinian society. Jesus and his followers spoke Greek, knew the Greek theatre (which they attended in Sepphoris), and knew about Cynic philosophy.³² The effects of Hellenization were felt throughout Galilee.

Between these two apparently contradictory characterizations there is a middle ground. Most scholars, regardless of their approach, agree that at the time of Jesus the Jewish social world was in the midst of major social change and upheaval. Borg succinctly summarizes this time in history:

It was a restive time. Jewish revolts against Rome broke out around the time of Jesus’ birth. Forty years after his death, the calamitous war of Jewish rebellion climaxed in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, changing Jesus’ native religious tradition forever. Jesus thus lived in a watershed century.³³

Sanders adds a further element. He focuses on the basic governmental structures, which he believes are “the foundation for a better understanding of Jesus’ context,” but which are “seldom understood very well and which are grossly misrepresented by scholars like Batey and Kee.”³⁴ The three major governments in Jewish Palestine at the time of Jesus were that of: 1) Herod Antipas who ruled Galilee, 2) Caiphas, the high priest, who governed Jerusalem, and in some sense the rest of Judea, and 3) Pilate, the Roman prefect, who generally oversaw the regions of Idumea, Samaria, and Judea, which made up the province of Judea.³⁵

³¹ Ibid., 431.

³² Ibid.

³³ Borg, “Seeing Jesus,” in *The Meaning of Jesus*, 14.

³⁴ Sanders, 432.

³⁵ Ibid., 431.

Although New Testament scholars often focus on Pilate and the influence of Rome, Sanders argues that Pilate and Rome represented the least important form of government in first century Jewish Palestine. Under Roman occupation Jewish people living in Palestine, as well as those living in the Diaspora, lived under the influence of Roman rule while at the same time continued to practice their own religious laws and cultural customs. Neither Herod the Great nor his son Antipas made attempts to turn the Jewish population Greco-Roman, but kept the Jewish law and promoted Jewish customs and independence against Hellenization by refraining from putting images of themselves on coins and establishing Roman courts, law, or Greek educational institutions.³⁶ At the same time, Greco-Roman influences did permeate some areas of society. In Jesus' day, Antipas ruled as Tetrarch on the same four terms and conditions as his father: 1) pay tribute to Rome, 2) defend the borders, 3) prevent revolts from occurring at home, and 4) contribute troops to any military activity that Rome wanted to carry out in nearby countries. When he met these requirements, which was the majority of the time, Rome left him alone and did not send officials to govern Galilee.³⁷ This connection between Herod and Imperial Rome resulted in some resentment from the Jewish population living in Palestine.

In this thesis I follow Sanders' approach, which takes a middle ground. Within Jewish Palestine the Greco-Roman presence was felt in an indirect, yet ever present manner. The Jewish people anticipated liberation from foreign rule and, therefore, the majority of the population did not look kindly upon the Romans. At the same time, Greco-Roman influences permeated Jewish Palestine and were adopted by the people,

³⁶ Ibid., 431.

³⁷ Ibid., 438.

indicating a stronger foreign presence and a positive outlook on behalf of the Jewish people toward some forms of Hellenization. Greco-Roman influences relevant to this thesis that permeated Jewish society include the method of social stratification and internal social systems such as kinship and patronage.

C. Social Stratification

The first century Mediterranean world, including Palestine, was a “pre-industrial advanced agrarian society.”³⁸ In that society agricultural production functioned as the economic foundation in a hierarchical system that disproportionately served the needs of a very small percentage of the population, namely, the ruling elite.³⁹ What follows is a brief overview of the social structure of Imperial Rome, followed by a more detailed analysis of the layers within the complex social hierarchy of first century Palestine, keeping in view the place of women.

³⁸ Osiek, 39. For more information see Sean Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 BCE to 135 CE* (Edinburgh, UK: T and T Clark, 1998), A.J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), and Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

³⁹ In their study of Greco-Roman society as it pertains to families in the New Testament world Carolyn Osiek and David Balch raise a red flag in regards to using the term social “class”. The meaning of this term, they argue, is “vague and heavily dependent on the specific expectations of a particular culture.” For example, Western societies define class by economic status and ideally gravitate toward the “middle class.” However, this is not the case in social distinctions of first century Palestine. As a result, they suggest using an alternative form of classification, namely M.I. Finley’s classifications of “order” and “status”. Finley defines an order as “a juridically defined group within a population, possessing formalized privileges and disabilities in one or more field of activity, governmental, military, legal, economic, religious, marital, and standing in a hierarchical relation to other orders.” Status, on the other hand, is the importance and honor given to an individual or family that takes into account things such as birth and wealth as well as elements of character, personal power, and social connections. The concept of “status” is particularly relevant to the situation in first century Palestine since it permeated society and necessitated appropriate norms of behaviour and lifestyle to maintain personal and family honor. Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 91-92.

1. Social Stratification in Imperial Rome

Despite the many changes that Rome experienced in the shift from Republic to Empire, its economic and social structure remained largely the same. The most obvious division in society was between two main parts of unequal size: the upper strata and the lower strata.⁴⁰ Those who belonged to the upper strata were rich, held higher offices and thus power, enjoyed social prestige and belonged to a corporately organized and privileged order.⁴¹ The lower strata, on the other hand, consisted of people such as peasant farmers, craftsmen, and military personnel. Only two new factors affected the social pyramid of Imperial Rome, namely, the establishment of the monarchy, which sat at the top of the pyramid, and the integration of Roman provinces and provincials into the system of the Roman state and society.⁴² A consequence of the second factor was that the Roman social order was extended to the populations of most of its provinces. Although craft production and trade greatly increased during this time, Rome remained an agrarian state.⁴³

2. Social Stratification in First Century Palestine

The agrarian society of first century Palestine was based economically and politically on a complex and hierarchical system similar to that of Imperial Rome. Gerhard Lenski, one

⁴⁰ Géza Alföldy, *The Social History of Rome*, translated by David Braund and Frank Pollock (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1985), 106.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 97.

of the most influential scholars in this area of investigation, provides a basic overview of the layers that form this social pyramid by differentiating between nine social strata.⁴⁴

Since in an agrarian society land was the basis of wealth, one's position in relation to the land indicated which level of the social pyramid one belonged to.⁴⁵ According to Lenski, at the lowest level of the pyramid, and representing seventy-five percent of the population of Palestine, was the peasant class.⁴⁶ The position of peasants in economic relation to the land was that they either owned their own land or were tenants of someone else's land. As a result, they lived in rural areas, at the heart of which were village life, kinship groups, and relationships premised on loyalty. For the most part people belonging to this group were subsistence farmers. However, they did produce a small surplus vital to the sustainability of the economic relationships that formed the basis of the social hierarchy.⁴⁷ Rural day labourers and local artisans also formed part of the bottom layer of the pyramid since they were associated with peasants. Osiek further defines these people as "rootless day laborers, itinerant craftsmen, and brigands of the countryside and villages."⁴⁸ The role of local artisans was to provide peasants with wood, metal, and stone products for household and agricultural purposes. Because most local artisans only marketed their goods to poor peasants, they remained in the poorest level of the society. Without access to land both the rural labourers and the local artisans depended on other forms of subsistence living, making their lives highly unstable.

⁴⁴ Lenski, 189-281.

⁴⁵ Carolyn Osiek in, *What are they saying about the social setting of the New Testament?* pages 39-43, provides a helpful summary of Lenski's differentiations within the social pyramid of first century Palestine.

⁴⁶ Although Lenski does not use the terms "status" and "order" to describe these social groups, his use of the term "class" and explanation of what distinguishes each group from the next indicates that he means as much.

⁴⁷ Guijarro, "The Family in First Century Galilee," in *Constructing Early Christian Families*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London, UK: Routledge Press, 1997), 56.

⁴⁸ Osiek, 40.

Peasants, on the other hand, were bound to their land.⁴⁹ Osiek notes that the gospels place Jesus of Nazareth among these local artisans.⁵⁰

The next stratum up, according to Lenski, consisted of merchants who worked for the elite as slaves and freedmen and women. They were engaged in most of the commerce that was not directly associated with taxation.⁵¹ Their relationship with the elite is best described by the patron-client association, the merchant's position being that of the "client". Along with the small surplus of goods that peasants produced, patron-client relationships were vital to sustaining the economic structure of first century society.

The higher stratum was that of the "retainers", which Osiek succinctly identifies as "a class of bureaucrats, civil servants, military and religious professionals whose function [was] to support the economic and social system by serving the needs of the elite as extensions of their power."⁵² By the time of Jesus this social stratum was primarily Jewish and occupied roles found in the New Testament, such as local judges, civil administrators, caretakers for absentee landlords, and tax collectors. Tax collectors in particular were disliked by the majority of the population because they worked with Rome to take advantage of the local people. Pharisees and scribes may have also belonged to this stratum.⁵³

Finally, at the top of the social pyramid was the "governing class".⁵⁴ This group made up roughly three percent of the total population in first century Palestine. They

⁴⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Lenski, 248-253.

⁵² Osiek, 41.

⁵³ Lenski, 243-247

⁵⁴ Ibid., 284.

were most likely residents of larger urban areas such as Jerusalem, Tiberias, or Sepphoris in Galilee, whose incomes were derived from the profits of taxation, making them heavily dependent on the peasants from whose money they profited. Their status also depended on their ability to promote Herodian and Roman interests. Examples of people who may have occupied this group include the priestly families who had control of the temple and therefore access to both wealth and political power.⁵⁵

Fiensy has studied the archaeology of the estates of the Jewish aristocracy in Judea and Galilee.⁵⁶ His findings, corroborating Josephus, indicate the presence of a wealthy class living in Jerusalem.⁵⁷ The estates in Jerusalem appear to have been of medium size. In Galilee there is evidence of several large estates, such as those in the vicinity of Sepphoris.⁵⁸ Fiensy refers to depictions of large estates in Galilee in the Gospels, for example, Luke 16:1-12, which mentions debts that include 100 measures of oil and 100 measures of wheat, which would require a significant property or estate to produce.⁵⁹

Not only were the rich and the poor separated economically in the first century, they were often separated spatially since a large percentage of the rich lived in urban areas while a large percentage of the poor lived in rural dwellings. Thus “[Palestinian society] was divided horizontally by the enormous chasm between the wealthy and the

⁵⁵ Osiek, 41-42.

⁵⁶ David A. Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 54-56.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ J. Herz, “Grundbesitz in Palästina im Zeitalter Jesu,” *Palästina Jahrbuch* 24 (1928), 100, quoted in Fiensy, 56.

common masses and vertically by the cultural gap between the urban and rural populations.”⁶⁰

In this society mobility within the strata was common, although it was most often downward. Lenski’s diagram of the pyramid also illustrates that there were internal hierarchies within each layer of society, meaning, for example, that some peasants were worse off than others and some of the elite were better off than others.⁶¹

3. Social Stratification and Women

a) Rights and Freedoms of Women in Imperial Rome

For the most part, women played a subsidiary role in the social structures of imperial Rome. However, there were exceptions. For example, the rights and freedoms of women who belonged to wealthy urban families differed from those who belonged to poorer rural families. In an urban context the household functioned directly within “a system of patronage and structures of personal authority.”⁶² As a result, in a large household the patriarch and matriarch could take on the role of patrons in the town and towards kin who were visiting by exuding hospitality, since hospitality was a central expression of such patronage.⁶³ Although one might assume that only men acted as patrons in a patriarchal society, Osiek and Balch note that prominent women “appear in epigraphical commemorations in large numbers as benefactors, patrons of cities, temples, and social

⁶⁰ Fiensy, 170.

⁶¹ Lenski, 284.

⁶² Halvor Moxnes, “What is Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian families,” in *Constructing Early Christian Families*, 26.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

clubs, and as priestesses of numerous cults, in both Greek and Roman contexts.”⁶⁴ For example, wealthy women held the office of the high priesthood within the imperial cult of Asia Minor and contributed economically by paying certain expenses. The financial need of the cult meant that benefaction by women was very important. It was also common in Greco-Roman society for women of means to give money to religious groups.⁶⁵

Elite women also possessed and utilized “a significant measure of economic and social autonomy independently of their husbands.”⁶⁶ Although women were formally excluded from politics, they were often influential behind the scenes.⁶⁷ Royal and aristocratic women had the ability to exercise power in political affairs by influencing their fathers, husbands, and sons either directly or indirectly. As well, they could act as the head of the household if no male was present.⁶⁸ It was also common for these women to maintain stronger relationships with their fathers than with their husbands, since some Roman fathers among the elite often chose to raise their daughters by granting them an education and economic and political resources. As a result, “elite women were well integrated into society” and the father-daughter tie was strengthened and continued even after the daughter’s marriage.⁶⁹

The increased presence of women in the public domain appears to have been geographically limited to the “more Romanized and less Hellenized areas of the West and in those eastern locations that were under heavy Roman influence because of

⁶⁴ Osiek and Balch, 58.

⁶⁵ Miriam Feinberg Vamosh, *Women at the Time of the Bible* (Herzlia, Israel: Abingdon Press, 2008), 16.

⁶⁶ Yamaguchi, 24.

⁶⁷ Osiek and Balch, 58.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Yamaguchi, 24.

colonization, such as Corinth, Philippi, and the province of Asia.”⁷⁰ For example, it was not uncommon for Roman women to accompany their husbands to formal dinner parties, whereas this was not the case in Greece.⁷¹

Overall, wealthy Roman women in the first century exhibited more social power than women from the lower echelons of society, thus reflecting that class and status were at times more important than sex in the determination of social roles.⁷²

Lower class women were granted different opportunities in the public sphere. For example, there are inscriptions which reveal that non-elite women were involved in commerce and manufacturing in the first century (cf. Lydia in Acts 16).⁷³ These women used some of the money they earned to win them recognition in their cities, similar to their male counterparts.⁷⁴ Poorer women also had greater freedom of movement since the desired seclusion of women was only possible in so far as they were not needed to help provide for the family by sharing in outdoor labour. Thus, “freedom” for peasant women was relative in that it was the freedom to do more work. Nonetheless, poorer women enjoyed managing small businesses, frequenting the market place to buy and sell wares, and working as midwives.⁷⁵ These findings prove yet again that the legal restrictions and protections pertaining to the social freedom of women did not always coincide with what the non-legal sources indicate was really happening.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Osiek and Balch, 59.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 58.

⁷³ Meeks, 24.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Osiek and Balch, 58.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

b) Rights and Freedoms of Women in Palestine

There are many similarities between the rights and freedoms of Greco-Roman women and the rights and freedoms of Jewish women living in first century Palestine. Most significantly, both reflect that there was an increase in social power for women among the society's elite. Within Palestine, this is evidenced by the fact that many Jewish women acted within their respective contexts in roles similar to those of gentile patrons.⁷⁷ As patrons of trade guilds, religious and social organizations, synagogues, and later, house churches, elite Jewish women from large urban families participated in economic and informal political tasks.

Although the majority of population, and therefore the majority of women, was peasant, there were several ways for Jewish women to become independently wealthy. Richard Bauckham identifies seven possible sources of independently disposable property for Jewish women: 1) inheritance by a daughter, 2) deeds of gift, 3) ketubba (money a husband pledges in the Jewish marriage contract that goes to his wife in the event of death or divorce), 4) dowry,⁷⁸ 5) maintenance of a widow from her husband's estate, 6) inheritance of a widow, 7) money earned by working for payment.⁷⁹ Bauckham concludes that an unmarried woman might have property from categories 1, 2, and 7. A

⁷⁷ Susan Marks, "Follow that Crown: Rhetoric, Rabbis, and Women Patrons," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24, no 2 (Fall 2008) 77-96.

⁷⁸ K.C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1998), 40-42 divide the term dowry into three categories, which include: the dowry, indirect dowry, and the bridewealth. All of these categories describe the transfer of goods and services to the bride and groom and their respective families. The difference is who is doing the transferring. For instance, the dowry is given by the bride's kin to the bride and groom, while the indirect dowry is given by the groom's kin to the bride and groom.

⁷⁹ Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 121-133. Bauckham's evidence is derived from the recent findings within legal documents found in the archives of two women, Babatha and Salome Komaise, discovered in Nahal Hever.

married woman would have access to 1, and 2 because any money she earned would be her husband's and her *ketubba* and dowry were not accessible to her unless or until her husband divorced her or died. A divorced woman would potentially have 1,2,3,4, and 7. Finally, a widow could have property in any of the seven categories, although she could only have 3 and 4 if she renounced 5. As well, 6 could replace 3, 4, and 5. Of all of these possibilities, it is clearly the married woman who was least likely to have her own disposable economic means; yet it is possible, especially if she came from a wealthy family.⁸⁰ This knowledge will be important for the study of the Jewish women in 8:2-3 who minister (διακονέω) to Jesus and the Twelve out of their own economic means.

D. Internal Social Systems

The following section examines the roles of social systems prevalent within Greco-Roman society that impacted the lives of Jewish Palestinian women both directly and indirectly: 1) kinship, and 2) patronage.

1. Kinship

Moxnes highlights the importance of the kinship system within the first century and its relation to other social spheres.

The Roman Empire, with the Hellenistic city states and Jewish Palestine, represents types of 'advanced agrarian societies' in which the dominant social spheres were politics and kinship. The other spheres that regularly form part of a social description of society are religion and economics.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ibid., 133-134.

⁸¹ "What is Family," 19.

Kinship is the most basic way that individuals are organized into social groups, roles, and categories. This form of organization is based on parentage and marriage and is present in every society. Schwimmer states that kinship is “constructed from a set of categories, groups, relationships, and behaviors based on culturally determined beliefs and values concerning human biology and reproduction.”⁸² In an advanced agrarian society, such as Palestine, kinship units functioned in a variety of ways. They served as “basic units of production, political representation, and religious bodies for the worship of spiritual beings who were themselves considered members of the kin group.”⁸³

Central to the kinship system is the value of community over individual. A person is not understood apart from his or her kin group; the modern emphasis on the individual does not exist. Instead, the social standing of the family within the community is paramount. Therefore, the primary differences between modern and traditional families, such as those within the first century, are their function and relation within the total system. “In traditional societies the family and the larger kinship group or lineage form the model and basis for other social relations”, whereas in modern societies “the role of a citizen is based on the individual.”⁸⁴

Significantly, the modern understanding of the word “family” (i.e., the nuclear family of husband, wife, and one or more children) does not exist in Greek or Latin. The terminology that is used includes *οἶκος* or *οἶκια* (meaning “house” or “household”) and *πατρία* (meaning “fatherhood” or “family”) in the Greek, and *domus* (household –

⁸² Brian Schwimmer, “Kinship and Social Organization,” Department of Anthropology at the University of Manitoba, Interactive Online Tutorial, last updated in 2003, www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/kintitle.html.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “What is Family,” 15.

including all those under the authority of the *paterfamilias*) and *familia* (indicating people or things) in the Latin. The Latin terms are used primarily to describe a small percentage of the population who live in large households and have many people under their authority.⁸⁵ However, the Greek terms are used in New Testament in a general way to describe a variety of household sizes (Mk. 5:19; 7:30; Lk. 1:27; 1:40; 6:4; etc.).

In a traditional first century family, the head male, or patriarch, was “responsible for procuring the honour of the family, while the head female, the matriarch, was responsible for maintaining its honor through an appropriate sense of shame that circumscribed her behaviour.”⁸⁶ Although views of women varied throughout the first century, “the question of piety and especially of honouring the father reveals unanimity in the ethical statements of the Greek world.”⁸⁷ The Greek word for father, *πατήρ*, is often used in conjunction with the household. In the context of the household the word *πατήρ* denotes patriarchal control in the family.⁸⁸ The Roman understanding of the *patria potestas* functions similarly in civil law. Legally it sets the wife in subordination by denoting the authority and power of the *πατρία*, which also corresponds to the husband’s marital power.⁸⁹ The New Testament usage of the term *πατρία* and *πατήρ* stems from this understanding of patriarchy (Eph. 3:14-15), but at times shifts in meaning so that the authority of the household is shared with others, for example with the *μήτηρ* or wife (Eph.6:1-4).⁹⁰

⁸⁵ “What is Family,” 21.

⁸⁶ Reta Haltman Finger, *Of Widows and Meals* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 128.

⁸⁷ Gottlob Schrenk, “πατήρ,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, 949.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 948-949.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 950.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 984.

Children occupy the lowest level of the hierarchy within the family and are also responsible for protecting the status of their family by bringing honour to their father and mother. On the whole, all members of a kin group work together to help each other and those with greater resources are expected to “share” by means of acting as a patron to others, thereby increasing the family’s honour. To restate, honour and loyalty in the first century is primarily to the family.⁹¹

For Jewish people living in first century Palestine understandings of kinship and life within the household were governed by Torah.⁹² Judaism was at its core an ethnic tradition in that

[i]t fostered a conception and practice of religion which was bound up with Jewish ethnic identity, so that to be Jewish and to practice the ‘ancestral customs’ (*ta patria ethê*) involved a range of distinctive family practices which were of profound religious significance.⁹³

In this way family and kinship structures functioned as a way of protecting against assimilation into the social and cultural aspects of the Greco-Roman world.⁹⁴ The family was the locus for educating young boys and girls about Torah. The *Shema*’ Israel (“Hear O Israel”), which every Jewish person was taught, states that Jews are to take the commandments that God has given them and “impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:7).

The *Shema*’ suggests that everyone, both men and women, fathers and mothers, should teach their children Torah. The evidence is contested, however. Josephus cites

⁹¹ Finger, 129.

⁹² John M. G. Barclay, “The Family as the Bearer of Religion,” in *Constructing Early Christian Families*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge Press, 1997), 69.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

that both women and slaves knew the Torah (*Contra Apionem* 2.181), yet it is unclear whether or not he means *Torah*-study specifically.⁹⁵ In the Mishnah there are incidental references to women studying Torah, yet there are also certain Jewish writers, such as R. Eliezer, who say that it is better to burn the teachings of Torah rather than convey them to women (*ySot.* 3.4, 19a; cf. *bYoma* 66b).⁹⁶ Since religious education took place within the household, it would stand to reason that women, whose domain was the household, were able to have some part in it. However, ultimately our knowledge in this regard is inconclusive.

In both the domestic sphere and the public sphere it was important to follow what God commanded and, as a result, all practices were treated with a “greater degree of seriousness and an expectation of exactitude.”⁹⁷ All aspects of a woman’s, as well as a man’s, life were governed by Torah. Marriage, sexual relations, childbirth, and her role within the home and outside – the daily social, economic, and political involvements of a woman were governed primarily by Torah.

Marriage was a central pillar within the first century understanding of kinship, both within the wider Greco-Roman world and Jewish Palestine in particular. In general, marriage was understood as a social contract between a man and a woman that linked two kinship groups and two households. K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman state that marriage is “a sexual, economic, and (at times) political and religious relationship contracted between families (or segments of the same family) for a male and a female.”⁹⁸ They also note that in preindustrial societies, marriage was rarely an arrangement made

⁹⁵ Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 191.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁹⁷ Barclay, 69.

⁹⁸ Hanson and Oakman, 31.

between a man and a woman since “the parties involved [did] not act as individuals, but members of households.”

The transfer of wealth, most often in the form of land, from one generation to the next was an important social function of marriage in the first century. Inheritance also served as a means of transferring honour and status to subsequent generations within the family. As a result, in this patriarchal society the primary duty of a wife was to bear a son who could receive the inheritance and carry on the husband’s family line, bringing honour to the kinship group.⁹⁹ Therefore, the social status of a wife was taken very seriously.

A wife did not have legal rights over her children.¹⁰⁰ Already when a girl was under twelve years of age she had no right to her own possessions, and any money she earned belonged to her father. Although she could not refuse a marriage arrangement made by her father, she could refuse any arrangements made by her mother or brothers after her father’s death and before she became twelve. Men were also encouraged to marry around the age of twelve.¹⁰¹

In regards to divorce, a man could divorce his wife without her consent for any number of reasons, ranging from adultery to finding another woman that he would rather be with. A man could also have more than one wife.¹⁰² Women, however, were rarely allowed to divorce their husbands and were not supposed to have more than one husband.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Yamaguchi, 16.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.; James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 238.

¹⁰¹ Yamaguchi, 16.

¹⁰² Ben Witherington III, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, ed. Ann Witherington (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4; Ilan, 85.

¹⁰³ Ilan, 66.

Despite these constraints, women were not entirely without respect or rights. Richard Saller argues that from a legal point of view, by the end of the Roman Republic the husband-wife relationship was not entirely patriarchal since it appears to have been the norm that fatherless wives were entitled to independent property rights. As a result,

[i]t is right to say that the *paterfamilias* had a monopoly over property in the *familia*, but wrong to say that he had a monopoly in the household. Just as the Roman father enjoyed leverage derived from his discretion in disposing of property, so did his wife, and the dynamics of influence would depend very much on the assertiveness and relative wealth of husband and wife.¹⁰⁴

The hierarchal nature of the family was steeped in law and custom, however in practice the opportunities for women to break through this pattern were increasing. Meeks notes that, “even Philo, a firm believer in the spiritual and mental inferiority of women, granted that the formidable empress Livia was an exception,” since the instruction that she received allowed her to reason with the power of a man.¹⁰⁵

Within Judaism marriage was important for religious reasons based on *Torah*. Ilan states that “the main Jewish sources” present marriage as the preferred solution to a man’s “plight” and an attempt to preserve the chastity and honour of a woman.¹⁰⁶ However, what stands out most in the Jewish scriptures is that the union between a man and a woman for the purpose of bearing offspring is blessed by God. In Genesis 9 God blesses Noah and his sons, “saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth’” (Gen. 9:1). This is reiterated again in verse seven: “be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.” Even during exile, when many of the Israelites were taken into Babylon, they were called to “marry and have sons and

¹⁰⁴ Richard P. Sallers, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 128-129.

¹⁰⁵ Meeks, 24.

¹⁰⁶ Ilan, 62.

daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease” (Jer. 29:6). The significance of marriage within Judaism was quite clear. Not only was marriage blessed by God, it was a means of God’s blessing and the continuation of the historical covenant with Abraham. It enabled the couple to fulfill the “basic social function of the family”, which was “the formation of a group with the tasks of production and reproduction, sharing, social protection, and worship.”¹⁰⁷

Concerning a woman’s rights, through marriage she entered into her husband’s sphere of authority from her father’s sphere of authority, frequently without being consulted. In the event that her husband passed away a widow could remain with her husband’s household and be maintained from his estate or take her *ketubba* and/or dowry in full and leave.¹⁰⁸

Moxnes notes that although the kinship system plays an important role regarding marriage, inheritance, and power sharing for the elite throughout the first century, in some cases “relations of power [shift] away from a rule based on families towards a form of power [...] more dependent [on] the Roman emperor or the emperor’s representative.”¹⁰⁹ The reorganization of the country into regional groups for the purpose of taxation also decreased the kinship system’s ability to function as a support system for families in the large rural peasant population.¹¹⁰ Within Palestine, during the Herodian

¹⁰⁷ “What is Family,” 30.

¹⁰⁸ Bauckham, 129.

¹⁰⁹ “What is Family,” 27.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

period, villages and neighbours became more important, as well as patron-client relations, since the traditional clan network waned and the extended family was threatened.¹¹¹

Even so, the kinship system continued to play an important part in first century Palestine on a cultural and social level, as well as maintaining its role within the circles of the elite. Patronage might even have been seen as “a form of fictive kinship, in which an extension of familiar loyalties is applied to others not related by blood, law, or other traditional ties.”¹¹² For the majority of the population kinship became tied to collective identity as it continued to act as “the link between the individual as a member of a household and the larger community and the people.”

2. Patronage

Patronage functioned in the first century as a pervasive system of relationships between “patrons” and “clients”. Osiek and Balch define patronage as:

A mutual relationship between unequals for the exchange of services and goods. In addition, the client acquires protection and access to power, while the patron acquires political support where applicable, and prestige and stature in the eyes of others, including peers.¹¹³

Patronage systems are utilized when governing authorities do not provide sufficient access to goods and power to its citizens, when “power functions to enhance the powerful rather than to serve the needs of many.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Ibid., 25. Moxnes points out that the old clan and tribe system may have already been in decline prior to this point, but certainly in Hellenistic times the references to clans becomes less frequent.

¹¹² Osiek and Balch, 54.

¹¹³ Ibid., 48.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Patronage was common practice in Imperial Rome. Social connections between the emperor and particular groups within the social pyramid were based on two kinds of relationships, those between people of similar status (a relationship between equals) and those between people of different social standings (a relationship between patrons and clients; unequals).¹¹⁵ Given its Roman ties, the patronage system in Palestine was most commonly utilized within the Romanized circles of the Herods.¹¹⁶ While much scholarship has been devoted to the patronage system, for the purposes of this thesis it will be sufficient to discuss its basic parameters and its influence on/aspects relevant to women.

Eisenstadt and Roniger identify “the most important [core] analytical characteristics of patron-client relations”¹¹⁷:

1. Patron-client relations are usually particularistic and diffuse.
2. Patron-client relations are based on the simultaneous exchange of various resources for promises of reciprocity, solidarity and loyalty.
3. In a patron-client relationship resources are exchanged at the same time, not separately.
4. Ideally, there is an element of un-conditionality and long range credit built into the patron-client relationship.
5. Patron-client relations exhibit a strong element of interpersonal obligation couched in terms of personal loyalty or reciprocity, even if relations are often ambivalent; they are intertwined with concepts of honour and shame.

¹¹⁵ Alföldy, 101.

¹¹⁶ Bauckham, 162.

¹¹⁷ S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients, and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 48.

6. Patron-client relations are usually based on informal, but strongly binding, agreements.
7. In principal, patron-client relations are entered into voluntarily and can be abandoned voluntarily.
8. Patron-client relations are undertaken between individuals or networks of individuals in a vertical fashion.¹¹⁸

Patrons and clients are mutually obligated to each other, whether legally, socially, or both. A setting in which these patron-client relationships take place is the household. In this case, the patriarch is the patron of the family. Thus, kinship and patronage overlap in this way.

The pros and cons of patronage are complex. Although the patronage system is positive in that it helps to meet the needs of the poor and grant them access to power, albeit limited, the system is exploitative in that it fosters unequal relationships. In effect, it is “a good way to keep social inferiors dependent on their superiors.”¹¹⁹ Public inscriptions indicate that inferiors publically honour their superiors (patrons) for their generosity. However, patrons do not publically acknowledge their clients; it is considered humiliating and brings dishonor to clients if their patrons name them publically since doing so calls attention to their social dependence.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Osiek and Balch, 49.

¹²⁰ Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 149-50.

E. World View

The following section identifies several of the wider Mediterranean cultural presuppositions that permeated Jewish society: 1) honour and shame, 2) group and individual, 3) pure and impure, 4) urban and rural, and 5) gender.

1. Honour and Shame

Concepts of honour and shame pervaded early Mediterranean societies. Bruce Malina defines honour as “the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is one’s claim to worth) plus that person’s value in the eyes of his or her social group,” or “the claim to worth along with the social acknowledgment of worth.”¹²¹ Shame, therefore, is that which is incurred when there is a loss of honour or value. It is “a painful emotion resulting from an awareness of having done something dishonourable; [...] to be disgraced.”¹²² The purpose of shaming is social conformity.¹²³

Each society shares sets of approaches and meanings that are bound up in symbols of power, sexual status, and religion. In the first century one’s role as a male or female determined whom one could control and what status one had within society. Honour was claimed when a person laid claim to a certain status as embodied by his/her

¹²¹ Bruce Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (New York, NY: Routledge Press, 1996), 27.

¹²² Patrick Hanks, ed., et al, “shame,” *Collins English Dictionary* (London, UK: William Collins Sons and Company, 1985), 1338.

¹²³ Richards, 25.

power and sexual role.¹²⁴ There were two kinds of honour: 1) ascribed honour, which was from birth or was received not as a result of doing anything, and 2) acquired honour, which was earned by an individual or group through good deeds.¹²⁵ Malina provides the following example regarding acquired honour: if a young man elopes with the daughter of an honourable father, the daughter is acting out the symbol of disregarding her father's power over her. In this way, the daughter has dishonoured him, and the community in which he lives would deny his claim to honour because he could not control his daughter as a father should;¹²⁶ the daughter's behaviour is clearly linked to her father's honour.

This broad understanding of honour and shame was reflected in Jewish society. Similar to the Greco-Roman context, honour was often acquired and lost in public confrontations in Jewish settings. At risk in these "honour contests" were such factors as where one stood in the assembly, whom one's children married, where one sat at banquets, and one's place in society.¹²⁷ The Gospels record that Jesus' honour was often challenged by others. For example, when the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders asked Jesus, "by what authority are you doing these things [...], who gave you this authority?" (Lk. 20:1-8), they challenged Jesus' honour. In another example, a Pharisees tested Jesus with the question, "which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Mt. 22:34-36). Jesus provided an answer, defending his honour, and delivered a challenge in return. Because the group of Pharisees was not able to formulate an answer to his

¹²⁴ Malina, *Social World*, 27.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹²⁷ Randolph E. Richards, "An Honour Shame Argument for Two Temple Clearings," *Trinity Journal* (Spring 2008), 24.

question they experienced a loss of honour, demonstrated by the fact that “from that day no one dared to ask [Jesus] any more questions” (Mt. 22:41-46).¹²⁸

There were also differences between the Greco-Roman understanding of shame and those within the Septuagint and the New Testament. The word that encompasses the notion of “shame” in the Greek is *αἰσχύνη* (in verb form *αἰσχύνω*).¹²⁹ In contrast to secular society, within the Septuagint Yahweh was most often the subject of this verb. For example, the prophets foretold that Yahweh’s judgment would put their enemies and the ungodly to shame (Isa. 1:29; 41:11; Jer. 2:26). In a sexual sense to be ashamed encompassed a feeling of guilt, which was the result of an act of disobedience against Yahweh (Gen. 2:25).¹³⁰ “*Αἰσχύνη*” rarely refers to the “feeling of shame” in the Septuagint. Instead it mostly denotes “disgrace,” “though sometimes with an emphasis on the fact that this also means being ashamed. Its primary reference is to the shame brought by the divine judgment.”¹³¹ Bultmann states: “What is in view is not so much the state of soul of the *αἰσχυνθείς* [which was the Greco-Roman understanding] but the situation into which he is brought and in which he is exposed to shame and has thus to be ashamed.”¹³²

The New Testament understanding of shame is shaped by that of the Septuagint and Judaism. The verb *αἰσχύνω* is much less common in the New Testament. In its usage it can mean “to shame,” however more commonly it means “to bring to shame.”¹³³ In the gospels a form of this verb occurs in Luke and Mark. In Mark 8:38 (par. Lk. 9:26)

¹²⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹²⁹ H. G. Link, “Shame,” *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol 3, ed., Collin Brown et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 562.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 563.

¹³¹ Rudolph Bultmann, “*αἰσχύνω*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, ed., Gerhard Kittel et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 189.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 190.

ἐπαισχύνομαι means “to be ashamed.” Unlike the Greco-Roman understanding of shame, “the point of reference is not, however, a virtue or vice, but confession of Christ.”¹³⁴

There were many differences between Jesus’ and his contemporaries’ understanding of honour and shame. The majority of these differences stemmed from each side’s definition of what was to be considered honourable and what was to be considered shameful. Jesus, for example, explained to his disciples that instead of earthly rewards and honour, they would receive honour and rewards according to a different definition of such things in heaven (Mt. 5:1-11, 19-24). In this way, they were to abandon society’s evaluation of honour and shame. The apostle Paul also used conventions of shame in original ways.¹³⁵ Although he used common social metaphors from Greco-Roman society such as strength and weakness and parent and child, he commended himself for things that were regarded as socially shameful (2 Cor. 6:4-8). Most people judged themselves by social and cultural standards (2 Cor. 10:12).¹³⁶ According to them, Paul was socially disadvantaged and humiliated, but according to the standard set by Jesus Christ a suffering messiah,¹³⁷ Paul was privileged and honoured. The resistance and confusion that Paul experienced in regard to his teachings indicates that a Greco-Roman understanding of honour and shame permeated the Empire.

2. Individual and Group

¹³⁴ Link, 563.

¹³⁵ Peter Marshall, “A Metaphor of Social Shame: θριαμβεύειν in 2 Cor. 2:14,” *Novum Testamentum* 25 (1983), 309.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 311-314.

¹³⁷ One of the primary issues that Paul tries to help his audiences overcome is the shame of the cross. He wants them to understand this as a paradox in which power is made perfect in weakness. For more information see George Shillington, *2 Corinthians*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA/Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1997).

Within first century society the individual was dependent on the group for the recognition of honour, and the honour of the group depended on the behaviour of the group members.¹³⁸ A special emphasis was ascribed to the honour of the family (associated with sexuality, status and gender distinctions) because family was the main source of honour.¹³⁹

The present North American consciousness differs greatly from the first century consciousness in this regard. North Americans understand the development of consciousness as “the ability to withstand outside forces and proceed instead on one’s own sense of right and wrong independently of social pressure,” whereas people in the first century understood it as “the coherence of one’s public image with the personal self-image. It is important that one’s own self-perception match the perception of significant others.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, there was no sense of individualism in the first century. Instead, people functioned on behalf of the group. The moral norms of this society were set by the group and, as a result, the responsibility for committing to the observance of these norms and the morality, security, and harmony that went with it remained the responsibility of the group. “The honour of the individual person has meaning only insofar as he or she is a member of those groupings.”¹⁴¹

This emphasis on the community over the individual was reflected within the first century Jewish population. “One of the core beliefs of Second Temple Judaism was to view the totality of the Jewish people as an organic whole, almost like a single body that

¹³⁸ “What is Family,” 20.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁴⁰ Osiek, 28.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

was chosen by God.”¹⁴² There were several religious groups a Jewish person could choose to submit to, for example the Essenes, Pharisees, or Sadducees. However, members of each group saw themselves as part of this overarching view of Israel, God’s chosen people.¹⁴³

3. Pure and Impure

Understandings of purity and impurity, as well as laws pertaining to these subjects, were part of the first century Mediterranean worldview, where they were often understood within the context of religion. Because religious life was integrated into all other daily functions it was important to discern sacred space and obey the rules associated with it. Pagan cults, for example, had many laws based on a concern for ritual purity. For instance, “menstruation was considered defiling and rendered pagan priestesses incapable of performing their cultic duties in the temples.”¹⁴⁴

Jewish scriptures contain numerous laws directly related to the concepts of clean and unclean or pure and impure (ex. Lev.7:19-21, 11; Deut.23:9-14). In its most basic sense, uncleanness or impurity is defined as “that which is a threat to or opposes

¹⁴² David Flusser, *Judaism and the Second Temple Period: The Jewish Sages and Their Literature*, English edition, trans. Azzan Yadin (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 8.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8. Ironically, this understanding of a unified Israel that held numerous “Judaisms” together was also the measuring stick by which some groups were cut off for failing to stay on the “path of Jewish sanctity.” The identity of multiple Judaisms was not a view held within these groups. In demonstration of this some groups chose to cut themselves off from the others (in other words excluding everyone but themselves from the true Israel). For example, the community at Qumran that defined itself in terms of ritual purity was a sect that chose to cut itself off from mainstream Judaism.

¹⁴⁴ Vassa Larin, “What is ‘Ritual Im/Purity’ and Why?” *Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* (January 1, 2008), 278.

holiness, and hence must be kept separate from that sphere.”¹⁴⁵ Purity is thus less an ethical category than a cultic one. Some impurities are permitted, in that they occur naturally and necessarily. These impurities are related to death, sex, disease, and the cult. In this case impurity is related to natural human existence and purity is related to God. The two cannot come in contact because “the mortal condition is incompatible with God’s holiness.”¹⁴⁶ However, God created humans and considered them good (Gen. 1:31). Therefore, permitted impurities are not an ethical issue. Prohibited impurities, on the other hand “[grow] out of situations which are controllable and are not natural or necessary, such as delaying purification from impurity [...] sexual transgressions, idolatry, and murder.”¹⁴⁷

Malina explains holiness or purity as “set-apartness”. In terms of its relationship to people, places, events, and things, “set-apartness” is “the experience of the holy, the sacred.”¹⁴⁸ The unclean and impure, on the other hand, is that which does not fit within “holy” space; it belongs elsewhere and “causes confusion in the arrangement of the generally accepted social map because it overruns boundaries and the like.”¹⁴⁹ Things are pure when they are in their proper place and time. Given this understanding of purity, sick and demon possessed people in the first century Palestine are often considered unclean, which affects their ability to interact with others. At times, the gospels refer to the spirits themselves that inhabit people as unclean (ex. Mk. 1:23; 3:11).

As a result, the Jewish understanding of purity and impurity differs from the pagan views in that what is considered impure defined as such within the context of

¹⁴⁵ David P. Wright, “Unclean and Clean (OT),” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, 729.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 739.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 730.

¹⁴⁸ Malina, *Social World*, 125.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 125-126.

Torah, rather than social taboos or supernatural powers.¹⁵⁰ In the New Testament, understandings of purity and impurity are opened to include ethics.¹⁵¹ For example, Jesus proclaims that it is not what goes into the body that defiles it, but what comes out of the body (ex. evil thoughts, sexual immorality, greed) that defiles it (Mt. 7:15-23). In this way, categories of purity and impurity are placed within a sphere of conscience.¹⁵²

4. Urban and Rural

In a society in which the majority of the people lived an agrarian lifestyle, there were stark differences between urban and rural areas and the cultural identities associated with them. Recall that within the first century there was often a connection between urban locations and wealthy people and rural locations and poorer people. Within this reality, it is likely that peasants exhibited a world view that understood urban as “other”. Meanwhile, the wealthy elite living in urban areas likely held a negative view of rural dwellers, which was the result of the socio-economic differences between the two types of geographic locations.

Although Jewish people lived in both urban and rural areas in first century Galilee, there are several reasons why the majority of the Jewish population, which belonged to the rural peasant class, would have exhibited feelings of animosity toward those living in urban areas or to cities in general – both economic and religious. The two most significant urban centers in Galilee during the first century were Sepphoris in the

¹⁵⁰ Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1973), 9-10.

¹⁵¹ Larin, 278-279. Neusner, 12.

¹⁵² Larin, 278-279.

central plain and Tiberias on the west coast of Lake Gennesaret.¹⁵³ One of the reasons why these cities were despised was because in some ways they represented a Greek way of life. For the most part, the rural people of Galilee did not believe in the benefits of Hellenization and, as a result, did not look favourably on the hints of Greek influence that existed in urban centers. They also resented the connection these cities had to the political rule of Rome, albeit indirect. For instance, Tiberias' association with Herod Antipas and Roman imperial rule greatly upset the rural Jewish population because it brought Herodian-Roman power much closer to home.¹⁵⁴

Freyne states that from the start Sepphoris was a “Jewish aristocratic city in the heart of fertile Galilee, given its position of prominence by the Romans originally and aware that this was dependent on their continued good pleasure.”¹⁵⁵ This would explain why Sepphoris did not participate in the revolt against the Romans in 66-70CE and why the Galileans despised it, despite the fact that they shared similar religious loyalties. The Jewish aristocracy in power in Sepphoris was equally suspicious of their Galilean neighbours.¹⁵⁶ According to Freyne, the tensions that had existed between the peasant and the townsman rose to the surface once the war with Rome became inevitable. In the aftermath of the destruction of the temple in 70CE the position of those in Sepphoris must have improved even more so while that of the Galilean peasant can only have deteriorated still further, deepening the divide.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Osiek, 18.

¹⁵⁴ Bauckham, 146.

¹⁵⁵ Freyne, 128. In general, there is some question about whether or not Sepphoris housed a large gentile population before the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. and thus the degree of hellenization that existed at that time. See E.M. Meyers, “Aspects of Roman Sepphoris in the Light of Recent Archaeology,” in *Early Christianity in Context*, ed. F. Manns and E. Alliata (Jerusalem, Israel: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993), 34.

¹⁵⁶ Freyne, 128.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

From the perspective of Jewish peasants another negative feature of new urban centers was that those who could afford to live in them owned increasingly large amounts of land acquired from tax payers who could no longer meet the demands of the governing authorities. The taxation required to build Tiberias and Sepphoris must have been especially burdensome for the peasant population. On the basis of Horsley's findings Bauckham states that "[e]conomically, these cities were surely no exception to the general rule that ancient cities were less a marketing opportunity for the surrounding villages than an economic burden, living off the surrounding territories by way of taxes and rents."¹⁵⁸

The location of the city of Tiberias may have been yet another concern for Jewish people since it was built on a cemetery in defiance of Jewish religious concerns. In fact, this might have been a deliberate move by Antipas in an attempt to draw to the city only those Jewish people who were willing to put their loyalty for him above their religious concerns regarding the city.¹⁵⁹

5. Gender and Gender Roles

The Mediterranean worldview was such that nearly everything in society was differentiated by gender. Not only were people recognized as male and female, but so too were categories of space, time, nature, and God.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, children and their parents were evaluated in terms of gender. It was rare that the roles of either gender ever overlapped. In a patriarchal society the father represented the head of the household and

¹⁵⁸ Bauckham, 146.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid..

¹⁶⁰ Malina, *Social World*, 51.

acted on its behalf in the public sphere, which included things such as “inheritance, land [...], jural relations (i.e. relations on the father’s side), farm animals and implements, adult sons.”¹⁶¹ On the other hand, everything that related to the internal functions of the family was female in nature and therefore the mother’s domain, which included things such as “the kitchen, non-jural relations (i.e. relations on the mother’s side), milkgoats and other household animals, chickens, unmarried daughters, resident daughters-in-law, and boys until they were old enough to be with the father.”¹⁶²

In this kind of society women had their own roles, but, according to feminist scholars from the 20th and 21st centuries, were inherently viewed as “other” and, as a result, were devalued and subordinated to some degree.¹⁶³ However, within the first century this might not have been how men viewed women or how women viewed themselves. As Osiek and Balch state with regard to Palestine, it is impossible to deny the fact that, “women constitute approximately half of all evenly distributed status groups and classes, and because the intimate interaction of males and females is essential for the continuation of the group, women cannot be seen by males as *totally* other.”¹⁶⁴ However, according to this society’s understanding of gender and gender roles “equality” is irrelevant; only a man of similar social status and education could be the equal of another man, and likewise for women.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 55-56.

¹⁶² Ibid., 56.

¹⁶³ Osiek and Balch, 40.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 41.

a) Roles and Treatment of Women in Imperial Rome

Because standards and practices varied widely from place to place one way to assess the treatment of women in the first century is by comparison. The following depiction of Roman women thus includes some comparisons to Greek women, Jewish women, and women living in other parts of the Mediterranean and Asia Minor during roughly the same time.

In general it appears that women living under Roman rule were treated better than women in ancient Greece. Roman matrons were “freer” in the sense that they had increasing access to education, were offered more respect, and had greater influence in society.¹⁶⁶ At the same time a matron remained under the authority of her husband.¹⁶⁷ As well, marriage and childbearing were obligatory for women in Roman upper class society and were viewed by the Romans as part of a woman’s patriotic duties.¹⁶⁸ In fact, if a woman was not married by the age of twenty or was unable to bear children penalties could be incurred under the Augustinian legislation including a reduction in a woman’s inheritance.¹⁶⁹

Legally, Roman women could not hold public office or vote since the law rests on the understanding that women were a weaker sex and therefore should remain under the custody and/or control of men.¹⁷⁰ However, this did not prevent some women from being

¹⁶⁶ Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 19; D.S. Bailey, *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought* (London, WI: Longmans, Green and Company Ltd., 1959), 3; Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 53.

¹⁶⁷ Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1983), 39.

¹⁶⁸ Thurston, 21.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

“deeply involved and highly influential in affairs of state and matters of law.”¹⁷¹ For example, Livia, the wife of Caesar Augustus, acted as an administrator by managing a staff of over one thousand as well as properties in Asia Minor, Gaul, and Palestine. When her husband passed away Livia also became the head priestess in his cult.¹⁷²

Roman matrons were also very influential in the home. They were often in charge of assigning tasks to the servants and supervising the children’s education, while also participating in the domestic tasks of spinning and weaving. By the time of the Roman Empire wealthy matrons were no longer required to bake bread or perform other household chores, such tasks were instead assigned to servants.¹⁷³

There were more opportunities for women in ancient Greece to become priestesses compared to women in ancient Rome. This is due in part to the fact that Roman cults functioned primarily as a method of state control. However, by the second century BCE oriental cults, which were more concerned with meeting the needs of the people, permeated Roman society. As a result, the privileges of women increased. In particular, the Isis cult had a profound impact on Roman women. Isis was “a goddess of loving mercy with whom women could identify” and thus, “her temples were at once a haven for prostitutes and a sanctuary for women to spend the night dedicated to chastity.”¹⁷⁴ In this sense the Isis cult granted increasing freedoms and privileges to women.

Many of these increased freedoms of Roman women were a result of the political shift in Roman politics from Republic to Empire. The mixing of cultures, increase in

¹⁷¹ Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 21.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

wealth, and increase in influence of certain queens and noble women that occurred in the years leading up to the first century of the Common Era initiated resulted in changing attitudes towards women. Evans points out that the two main results of these developments were 1) the increasing emancipation of women, and 2) a decline in the standards of morality.¹⁷⁵ The economic rights of women were on the rise, women were allowed to frequent public markets and events, and marriage between different classes also grew more common. However, not all women were able to access this freedom. The rights and treatment of women, whether derived/legitimated from a legal source or public opinion, were varied and the ideals for equality between women and men were rarely realized in actuality.¹⁷⁶

Overall, the picture of women is mixed. Women living in Rome had more political power than women in Greece or Palestine because they could influence their husbands (who were on the throne or held office). Women living in the city of Rome were also granted greater access to education than women in any other part of the Mediterranean world. As well, they had the right to own property and experienced greater freedoms within marriage since they were able to engage in activities other than those directly associated with being a mother or a wife.¹⁷⁷ Therefore the city of Rome is an example of a patriarchal society in which its female citizens, usually those among the elite, were granted a comparatively great deal of freedom. Yet, at the same time Witherington notes that upper class, imperial, women living in Macedonia were allowed to sit on the throne during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. As well, women in Asia

¹⁷⁵ Evans, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 39-40; Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 25-26.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 26.

Minor were able to hold public office. As a result, by comparison Roman women did not always fare as favorably as women living in other regions.¹⁷⁸

b) Roles and Treatment of Women in Palestine

Gender roles within first century Judaism were affected both by the larger Greco-Roman cultural forces as well as Jewish religious traditions. Within Judaism the legitimation of male primacy stemmed from “the assumption that [the male] ‘seed’ [was] what created a child (Wis. 7:1-2).”¹⁷⁹ Jewish marital customs demonstrated this fact since laws of inheritance, betrothal, and divorce were all heavily biased in the husband’s favour, leaving only a few cautionary checks concerning women (for example, a daughter’s right to maintenance money should her husband pass away).¹⁸⁰ At the same time, however, there are numerous examples in the Jewish Scriptures in which women are honoured and deemed worthy of both respect and certain rights. For example, in the Decalogue Israelites are required to honour both father and mother (Ex. 20:12). Wisdom is personified in the Wisdom literature as a woman (ex. Wis. 6:12-18, 7:7-14, 7:24-27). As well, Proverbs 1:8 teaches, “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.” In this example, both father and mother occupy the role of “teacher” and both deserve the respect of the child. Later Jewish writings convey a

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹⁷⁹ Hanson and Oakman, 24

¹⁸⁰ Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 3.

similar message. For example, the Talmud teaches that a man should love his wife as himself and respect her more than himself.¹⁸¹

That said, Jewish philosophers, like their Greek counterparts, believed that women and men had different souls (Philo, *Special Laws*, 3.178).¹⁸² They also viewed women as sinful and dangerous (Sir 42:12-14; Philo, *On the Virtues*, 38-40).¹⁸³ Negative views of women within Judaism were heavily influenced by Greek and Greco-Roman androcentrism and misogyny.¹⁸⁴ However, some scholars, such as Meyers, argue that the place of women in Israel began to decline already with the emergence of the bureaucratic monarchy prior to Greek influence.¹⁸⁵ Despite this fact, it is possible that both Jewish men and women did not regard a woman's domain within the household as insignificant. Proverbs 31:10-31 describes what it means to be a wife of valour or ability¹⁸⁶ and in doing so highlights the importance of women's work. A wife of valour is honoured for things such as working with wool and flax (v.13), providing food for her family (v.15), and watching over the affairs of her household (v.27). Substantial non-literary evidence also reveals that "Jewish women often took initiative for their lives and activities in spite of male orientation and domination prevalent in their culture."¹⁸⁷ It is clear, once again, that a uniform view of the role of women did not exist in the Judaism of the time.

The role of women in Jewish Palestine was primarily restricted to the household. Witherington goes so far as to say that "the family was the exclusive sphere of influence

¹⁸¹ Babylonian Talmud Yebamoth 62b, Nashim I, Yebamoth I, most conveniently found in *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. I. Epstein (London, UK: Soncino Press, 1935-52), 419ff.

¹⁸² Hanson and Oakman, 24.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ D.M. Scholer, "Women," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 880.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ The Septuagint uses the term ἀνδρεία (the feminine adjective of "manly").

¹⁸⁷ Scholer, 880.

for Jewish women in the first century A.D.”¹⁸⁸ In the household a woman’s duties consisted of, “grinding flour, baking bread, washing clothes, breast-feeding the children for eighteen to twenty-four months, making beds, working with wool, and washing her husband’s face, hands, and feet.”¹⁸⁹ The number of tasks a woman was required to perform depended on how wealthy she was or how many servants she had. If a woman was not married, then she performed these roles within the home of her father, or likely another male relative.¹⁹⁰

Certain tasks that a woman performed within her house could become a profession for her to produce income. Proverbs 31:24 suggests that women worked outside the household to earn money, stating that a woman of noble character “makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.” In rabbinic sources rulings are made concerning women who sell garments, which they made from linen in Galilee.¹⁹¹ Interestingly, this contradicts the rabbinical world view at that time since a woman selling garments publically would have come into contact with her customers, which was deemed not appropriate according to Torah.¹⁹² The historical value of rabbinic sources for shedding light on this period of history has thus been questioned due to their gender bias. As a result, they function best as Tal Ilan uses them in her work on Jewish women living in Greco-Roman Palestine, which is primarily to identify the attitudes of men toward women in rabbinical documents, while at the same time

¹⁸⁸ Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 3.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Ilan, 186-187.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 187.

acknowledging that they may not reflect accurately the experiences of women in the first century.¹⁹³

F. Concluding Comments

The individual experiences of women within the social, cultural, political, and religious setting of first century Palestine varied greatly. Some evidence indicates that there was increased freedom of movement and participation in the public sphere for poorer women because it was necessary in order to help provide for their families. Other evidence suggests that wealthy women had more freedom in public places because they could afford servants to run their households for them and had the money and connections to be involved elsewhere (e.g. politics, market place, cults etc). What is clear is that women in each stratum of the social pyramid had different kinds of “freedom”, such as the freedom to work in the market (peasant women), or the freedom to frequent the market for social purposes (elite women). Given the fact that most women were not wealthy, the majority found meaning within the traditional roles of wife, mother, and leader within the household. A woman’s role within the household was the easiest and most important way for her to bring honour to her family. Wealthy women, however, had the opportunity to bring honour to their families through the role of patron for religious and political groups. One’s identity within a larger kinship group was most important. Finally, for Jewish women in particular, following the Torah was an important and central aspect of life, whether rich or poor, that brought honour to one’s family. For this reason, marriage was expected. These findings will shed light on the exegesis of Luke 8:1-3, both by way of

¹⁹³ Ibid., 186-187.

providing a context for evaluating the roles identified there, and as a way of highlighting the contrast Jesus represents to prevailing cultural and religious mores.

Chapter IV

The Women in Luke 8:1-3

An expanded historical imagination regarding women's lives in the first century, as furnished in the previous chapter, sets the stage for a social-historical and literary-theological reading of Luke 8:1-3 focused on its female subjects. I begin by placing Luke 8:1-3 within the context of both the Synoptic gospels and the narrative structure of Luke. The exegesis of the text follows, and is divided into seven parts: 1) the women as travelers with Jesus, 2) "healed of evil spirits and infirmities," 3) Mary, 4) Joanna, 5) Susanna, 6) "many others," and 7) *διακονία*.

A. Luke 8:1-3 in the Context of the Synoptic Gospels

Much of the content in 8:1-3 is unique to Luke.¹⁹⁴ The language contains typically Lukan words and phrases such as: *Καί ἐγένετο, καθεξῆς, δῶδευεν, and κηρύσσων και εὐαγγελιζόμενος.*¹⁹⁵ For this reason, scholars such as Fitzmyer view Luke 8:1-3 as a Lukan composition.¹⁹⁶ However, there are a few similarities to Mark and Matthew, notably with respect to there being a group of women who travel with Jesus and minister to him. In the setting of the crucifixion Mark states:

¹⁹⁴ So also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981), 695.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 695.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

[S]ome women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there (15:40-41) (NIV).

At that same point in his narrative Matthew states: “[M]any women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee and cared for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons” (27:55-56). In his account of the passion Luke makes a similar observation: “The women, who came with [Jesus] out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how the body was laid; then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments” (23:55-56). A common thread that runs through all of these texts, including Luke 8:1-3, is that the women are described as travelling with Jesus and/or serving him along the way. Of note is that in 8:1-3 Luke adds that the women provided for Jesus and others out of their “possessions”.

These similarities reveal that although Luke 8:1-3 is unique in several ways, the Synoptic evangelists are dependent on widespread tradition regarding the presence of the women in Jesus’ entourage.

B. The Function of Luke 8:1-3 in Luke’s Narrative

The language and position of Luke 8:1-3 within the gospel indicates that it is a transitional narrative summary.¹⁹⁷ Maria Anicia Co defines a “summary” as an “independent and concise narrative statement that describes a prolonged situation or

¹⁹⁷ So also Fitzmyer, 695.

portrays an event as happening repeatedly within an indefinite period of time.”¹⁹⁸ Luke’s use of the verb γίνομαι, “to become”, in the imperfect passive, “it came to pass”, sets this section apart from that which precedes it by indicating a progression of time. The reader is aware that the narrative is moving forward. Luke uses καὶ ἐγένετο repeatedly in his gospel in order to move the narrative forward in time (7:11; 8:1, 22, 40; 9:18, 28, 33, 37, 51). That Jesus “journeyed through (διώδευεν) every city and town” also indicates the passage of time as Jesus travels from place to place. In addition, verse one highlights the continuation of Jesus’ earthly ministry in that he is “proclaiming and preaching the good news of the kingdom of God,” indicating the purpose of his travel.¹⁹⁹

Typical of a transitional summary narrative, Luke 8:1-3 sums up that which precedes it and indicates what is to come.²⁰⁰ It looks backward to Jesus’ statement concerning his mission (4:43) as he fulfills what he has set out to do: preaching (κηρύσσω) and proclaiming the good news (εὐαγγελίζομαι) of the kingdom of God.²⁰¹

Luke 8:1-3 also looks forward in several ways. Firstly, in relation to the Twelve and the theme of discipleship, 8:1-3 precedes two large narrative segments in which Luke describes Jesus’ ministry in word (8:4-21) and in deed (8:22-56). By listening to Jesus’ teachings and observing his miracles the disciples increase their understanding of Jesus’ mission and identity.²⁰² The Twelve have no preaching role in 8:1-3, but they and the group of women are singled out for accompanying Jesus and are witnesses of his preaching and healing ministry. Therefore, the primary characteristic of discipleship at

¹⁹⁸ Maria Anicia Co, “The Major Summaries in Acts: Acts 2, 42-47; 4, 32-25; 5, 12-16: Linguistic and Literary Relationship,” *ETL* 68 (1992) 56-57.

¹⁹⁹ So also Fitzmyer.

²⁰⁰ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 110.

²⁰¹ Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 138.

²⁰² Klassen-Wiebe, 150.

this point in the narrative is being “with” Jesus (8:1). By mentioning the presence of the Twelve Luke prepares us for their coming mission and sending (9:1-6).²⁰³

In terms of Luke’s narrative, then, the ministry of the women in 8:1-3 precedes that of the Twelve. It is not until chapter 9 that Jesus sends out the Twelve with the power and authority to heal and to preach the kingdom of God. The female disciples have either been given a role or have formed one for themselves already in 8:3. Sheila Klassen-Wiebe notes that the “active participation [of the women] in the mission of Jesus is striking in light of the fact that it’s still unclear what role the Twelve will play.”²⁰⁴ Luke remembers Jesus as someone who intended for women to be witnesses and participants in Jesus’ mission from the very early stages of its growth and development.²⁰⁵

Secondly, by introducing this particular group of female disciples early in Jesus’ ministry Luke prepares his audience for the future role that they will play as witnesses to the crucifixion, entombment and resurrection.²⁰⁶ In addition, the women in 8:1-3 might also be part of the group of women present when the apostles are listed in Acts (1:14).

Thirdly, 8:1-3 directly precedes the parable of the sower and the seed (8:4-15). Witherington proposes that the women in Luke 8:1-3 demonstrate what it means to be the living embodiments of what happens when the sower sows his seed in the soil that can receive and nourish it. As models of this particular seed these women also prove that the “good soil” is not limited to a particular class, race, or sex.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Tannehill, 138

²⁰⁴ Klassen-Wiebe, 152-153.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 150.

²⁰⁶ So also Fitzmyer, 696.

²⁰⁷ Ben Witherington III, “On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples – Luke 8.1-3”, *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (New York, NY: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 133-134.

C. The Women of Luke 8 in Light of Luke 7:36-50

Luke 7:36-50 prepares Luke's audience for the important role of women within his gospel and in particular the role of women in 8:1-3. Jesus is invited to the home of a Pharisee named Simon for dinner because the Pharisee has heard it said that Jesus is a "great prophet" (7:16-17) and would like to see for himself if this is true (v.39).²⁰⁸ While Jesus reclines at the table a woman who is known as a sinner in the city enters and anoints Jesus' feet with ointment, wets his feet with her tears, wipes the tears with her hair, and, finally, kisses his feet. Her treatment of Jesus is contrasted with the Pharisee's and her actions are notably more hospitable. While Simon is offended, Jesus defends the woman and responds directly to her by saying "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (v.50). Her experience of "loving much" (v.47) is held up as an example for others to learn about "the depth of God's forgiveness and its powerful effect".²⁰⁹ This positive depiction of a woman's faith prepares the audience for the group of faithful women in 8:2-3.

D. Language Analysis

While most English translations divide 8:1-3 into two (e.g., NRSV, New Jerusalem) or three (e.g., NIV, The Message) the Greek is one long sentence in which the subjects are commonly introduced by the word καί ("and") (e.g. "and he [Jesus]" (v.1), "and the

²⁰⁸ Tannehill, 135.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 136-137.

Twelve” (v.2), “and some women” (v.2)). The following presentation of the Greek text exemplifies the pattern:

<8:1> Καὶ ἐγένετο

ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς καὶ αὐτὸς διώδευεν κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην

κηρύσσων

καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ

καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ, <8:2>

καὶ γυναῖκες τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμένα ἀπὸ πνευμάτων

πονητῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν,

Μαρία ἢ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή,

ἀφ’ ἧς δαιμόνια ἑπτὰ ἐξεληλύθει,

<8:3> καὶ Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου

καὶ Σουσάννα

καὶ ἕτεραι πολλαί,

αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων

αὐταῖς.

My own translation of the text is as follows:

And it came to pass afterwards that (lit. “and”) he journeyed through every city and village proclaiming and preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God, and the Twelve with him,¹ and certain women who were healed from evil spirits and infirmities, Mary being called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,² and Joanna wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna and many others, who were ministering²¹⁰ to them out of the possessions belonging to them.³ (KP)²¹¹

²¹⁰ The Greek verb διακονέω encompasses a variety of meanings and thus can be translated several ways. Some of the most common translations of διακονέω in the New Testament include: to provide, to minister, and to serve. For this reason I have chosen to use the Greek word where possible. Note that when I do use an English translation, as is the case here, it is for convenience sake; I do not intend to limit the meaning of the verb to one particular translation.

Grammatically, the primary subject in the sentence is Jesus and the primary verb is “traveling”. Jesus’ traveling is further defined by the participles κηρύσσων and εὐαγγελιζόμενος. The other subjects in the sentence are the Twelve and the women and their primary action is being “with” Jesus. This shows that the women are in the same relationship to Jesus as are the Twelve.²¹² The women are listed last not because they are less important, but because of the function they fulfill in relation to the whole group of followers (8:3 αὐτοῖς²¹³). Grammatically, Luke mentions Jesus and the Twelve first so that he can indicate to whom the women “ministered”. The importance of the women is shown by the way Luke matches the kind of detail for them that he has earlier provided about the Twelve (6:13-16).²¹⁴

The women are further described by Luke as having been healed from evil spirits and infirmities (αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμένοι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, v.2). Of these women, he names three in particular: Mary or *Maria*, Joanna, and Susanna. In addition, Luke adds that there were other women present as well (ἕτεροι πολλαί).

Finally, Luke states that the women were serving “them” [Jesus and the Twelve] “out of the things belonging to them” (KP; αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων

²¹¹ The initials KP identify my own translation.

²¹² Bauckham, 111; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1978), 316.

²¹³ Bauckham, 110. It should be noted that there are some manuscripts that have αὐτῷ, male singular, in which case the women minister to Jesus alone (see Marla J. Selvidge, *Daughters of Jerusalem*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 114). According to B. M. Metzger, the plural form is “supported by good representatives of the Alexandrian, Western, and Caesarean text-types; the singular (compare Mt 27:55; Mk 15:41) appears to be a Christocentric correction, due perhaps to Marcion” (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (New York, NY: Hendrickson Publishing, 1971), 144; see also Marshall, 317. In addition, Fitzmyer states: “the singular is also suspect because it looks like a harmonization with Matthew 27:55 or Mark 15:41.” 698. For this reason I proceed with the understanding that the women minister to Jesus and the Twelve.

²¹⁴ Bauckham, 112.

αὐταῖς). Αὐτοῖς most likely refers to Jesus and the Twelve, since they are both mentioned prior to the women.

The women are recognized as important subjects in this sentence along with the Twelve. The fact that they are mentioned as a group unto themselves points to the Lukan principle of pairs, in this case women complementing the male group of disciples. The selection of three named women: Mary being called Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, recalls corresponding selections of three male disciples elsewhere in the gospel (cf. Luke 8:51; Mk 5:37; 9:2). Finally, the fact that there are “many [other]” (unnamed) women suggests that the named women form the inner circle within a larger circle including others such as Martha (Lk. 10:40; Jn. 12:2) and Simon’s mother in law (Mt. 8:15; Mk. 1:31; Lk. 4:39) who minister to Jesus and/or the Twelve.

E. The Women as Travelers with Jesus

In Luke’s narrative the women are among the disciples who travelled with Jesus “through every city and village” as he proclaimed and preached the good news of the kingdom of God (8:1). As I. Howard Marshall states, “[t]here can be no doubt that the motif [in 8:2] is historical, for it is firmly fixed in the tradition (Mk. 15:40; cf. Lk. 23:49, 55; 24:6, 10; Acts 1:14).”²¹⁵ That there were women who travelled with Jesus is thus an example of history remembered. With this in mind there is more to be said regarding the historical circumstances that may have impacted such women.

Recall from Chapter III that within the first century Mediterranean world an individual’s identity and honour were tied to that of the group, specifically to his or her

²¹⁵ Marshall, 315.

kin.²¹⁶ In this way, a woman's behaviour was linked to a man's honour; similarly, a man's honour was linked to a woman's honour.²¹⁷ Sexuality, status, and gender distinctions were particularly important as they related to the honour of the family within first century Palestine.²¹⁸ The moral norms of this society were also set by the group and, as a result, the responsibility for observance of these norms and the morality, security, and harmony that went with them remained the responsibility of the group.²¹⁹

Luke 8:1-3 raises important issues in relation to those social dynamics, in particular the issue of honour. Given the social historical context of the first century, the women risked bringing shame on themselves and their kin by leaving their households and travelling with a male rabbi. As Corley states, "the scandal of such wealthy women actually travelling around the countryside without their husbands has not been lost on many commentators."²²⁰ Women who were married, such as Joanna, "braved public condemnation by leaving their husbands to follow Jesus."²²¹ It was unheard of for a Jewish woman in the first century to be the disciple of a rabbi unless her husband or master was a rabbi willing to teach her.²²² Technically, Jewish women were exempt from learning Torah.²²³ They might learn informally or through synagogue teaching, but a woman on her own would not enter into association with a rabbi to become his disciple. That said, the fact that the women are not travelling as individuals, but as a group may to

²¹⁶ Philip F. Esler, *Modelling Early Christianity* (London, UK: Routledge Press, 1995), 142.

²¹⁷ Chapter III, 25-26.

²¹⁸ Esler, 142.

²¹⁹ Chapter III, 29.

²²⁰ Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 118.

²²¹ David C. Sim, "The Women Followers of Jesus: The implications of Luke 8:1-3," *Heythrop Journal*, vol. 30, Issue I, (1989), 52.

²²² Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 111.

²²³ Tucker and Liefeld, 29; Chapter III, 35-36.

some extent diminish the scandalous nature of their presence amongst Jesus and the Twelve.

As shocking as it is within its social historical context, the fact that the women are “with” Jesus fits solidly within the understanding of discipleship in Luke’s Gospel. In 14:26 and 18:29-30 Jesus states that in order to be one of his followers a person must hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brother and sisters and even his own life. Although Luke does not include “husbands” as those persons whom a disciple must leave in order to follow Jesus, the lack of male relations listed in connection with the women in Luke 8:1-3 (with the exception of Joanna) may well indicate that these women have left their families, including husbands, to accompany Jesus.

The women face a choice in regards to the source of honour – honour either from Jesus or from family and the support structures established within society.²²⁴ In their decision to travel with Jesus, the women in Luke 8:1-3 lose the protection of their wider kin groups, making them extremely vulnerable in a world in which a woman’s identity is tied to the group identity of her broader network of kin.²²⁵ Although the choice is a difficult one and the decision to become a follower of Jesus means that suffering will be a reality, discipleship includes both losses and gains. For example, Luke 12:51-53 and 14:26-27 depict the loss of honour and hostility from relatives,²²⁶ yet disciples gain a new fictive kin group that is built on the hope of the kingdom of God.²²⁷

²²⁴ Esler, 150.

²²⁵ Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women around Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (London, UK: SCM Press Ltd., 1982), 69.

²²⁶ It is also likely that discipleship often included the loss of wealth, since wealth and honour often went hand in hand. See Chapter III, 41-43.

²²⁷ Luise Schottroff, *Let the Oppressed Go Free*, trans. Annemarie S. Kidder (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 95.

F. “Healed of Evil Spirits and Infirmities”

The women in 8:1-3 are said to have been “healed of evil spirits and infirmities.” The Greek suggests that the characterization of having been healed covers all of the women who are identified in these verses.

1. Terminology

In order to understand what Luke means by “healing” we need to examine how this term as well as other related terms, such as health, miracles, evil spirits and infirmities, were used in first century society. People living in the Greco-Roman world understood “health” as a state of well being more than the ability to function.²²⁸ The Hebrew word *shalom*, which encompasses understandings of peace, and physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing, is similar in meaning. “Illness”, then, was understood as a culturally devalued state of being, including, but not limited to, “disease” or “sickness”, which referred to an individual’s bodily malfunction.²²⁹ As a result, healing involved “the provision of personal and social meaning for the life problems that [accompanied] human health misfortunes.”²³⁰ Therefore, to assert that the women were *healed* of evil spirits and infirmities reveals that they have been restored to a state of physical, mental, spiritual, and social well-being.

²²⁸ Yamaguchi, 69; John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament – Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 92.

²²⁹ Yamaguchi, 70; Pilch, 93.

²³⁰ Pilch, 93.

The women are said to have been healed of evil spirits. In Luke's descriptions of ailments afflicting women, "spirits" are frequently mentioned: Peter's mother in law is afflicted with a spirit (4:38); a woman who is stooped over and healed by Jesus has a "spirit" of infirmity (13:10); and in Acts 16:16 Paul liberates a woman possessed by a "spirit" of divination.²³¹

In the first century demon possession was a form of illness. Gerd Theissen points out that one should not be quick to assume that demonic possession in the gospels is simply a reflection of a "primitive worldview" and thereby conclude that "we moderns know that these "demons" were really only [undiagnosed] mental disorders."²³² He argues that demonic possession is not the New Testament way of speaking about diseases, especially mental disorders.²³³ Instead, it encompasses the wider meaning of illness in that the person's entire well being is affected.

It is thus not possible to conclude with finality whether or not the women in Luke 8:1-3 who were healed of "evil spirits" were sufferers of what we refer to today as mental disorders. What we do know is that a person with an evil spirit was considered impure or unclean and thus suffered a devalued state of being within society.²³⁴ Illness affected everyone in a person's kinship group.

Predictable social codes did not always apply, however, in that there were occasions where the ill were not ostracized by their kinship groups. The healing stories in the New Testament are demonstrative of this. For example, a father could become a

²³¹ Ibid., 99.

²³² Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983) quoted in Arland J. Hultgren, "The Miracle Stories in the Gospels: The Continuing Challenge for Interpreters," *Word and World* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2009), 129-135.

²³³ Theissen quoted in Hultgren, 132-133.

²³⁴ Pilch, 110-111.

supplicant for a daughter who was sick (Mk 5:21-24, 35-43; Mt 9:18-19, 23-25; Lk 8:40-42, 49-56), or son with an evil spirit (Lk. 9:37-40), and a mother could advocate for her demon possessed daughter by arguing with Jesus (Mk 7:24-30; Mt 15:21-28).²³⁵ In these ways kinship structures sought to include the individuals who brought shame and/or impurity upon the group. Thus the patriarchal social codes of gender and social status that existed within first century society were sometimes ignored. This makes it difficult to say whether or not the women in Luke 8:2-3 were ostracized by their social networks prior to being healed.

2. Religion: Magic, and Miracles

Belief in religion and the power of magic and the miraculous was common in the Greco-Roman world, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or class.²³⁶ People believed that extraordinary things, such as disease and natural disasters, happened as a result of divine and demonic powers or spirits. In this way, a miracle was a sign of divine intervention.²³⁷ Many religious “propagandists” appealed to their audiences by presenting their gods and leaders as sign workers.²³⁸ In the Gospel of John Jesus is recorded as having performed “signs” that pointed to his divinity. In this way Jesus’ signs were sometimes viewed as evidence that he was a prophet as did the crowds, for example, after witnessing the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6:14. Signs were used in a similar fashion in pagan traditions. For example, the goddess Isis was promoted for her miraculous powers related

²³⁵ Yamaguchi, 75.

²³⁶ Yamaguchi, 67; Pilch, 99.

²³⁷ Yamaguchi, 66.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

to childbirth, fertility, and healing.²³⁹ As Dieter Georgi has shown, missionaries in the latter half of the first century and into the second century generated public attention through “extraordinary, often ecstatic performances.”²⁴⁰ The attention they generated “was directed not only at the missionaries themselves but also at the deity they represented.”²⁴¹ Georgi argues that this was also the case with Jewish missionaries. Josephus mentions several Jewish magicians and miracle workers, such as a man named Eleazer who invoked Solomon when doing exorcisms.²⁴² Luke is aware of a Jewish magician working for Sergius Paulus in Cyprus (Acts 13:6-12; see also Acts 19:11-20 and the sons of Sceva the Jewish High Priest in Ephesus). Juvenal describes a Jewess who interprets dreams for a wage.²⁴³ The role of prophet and priest were common roles for women in Hellenistic times and women in these roles “were expected to perform deeds worked by the spirit.”²⁴⁴

Jesus’ miracles were understood as being divine in origin. In the gospel of Luke in particular, Jesus’ healings are evidence that God, or God’s spirit, is at work in Jesus.²⁴⁵ This function of Jesus’ miracles is apparent in the way that Luke emphasizes the acclamations that conclude the healings (5:26; 7:16; 9:43; 13:13; 18:43). The healings make it clear that Jesus heals by the power of God.²⁴⁶

Assurance of the power of God is also made evident in the many exorcisms documented in Luke in particular, and the synoptic gospels in general. In the Gospel of

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Dieter Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 101.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 102.

²⁴² Josephus, *Ant.* 8.46-48.

²⁴³ Juvenal, *Satire* 6.

²⁴⁴ Georgi, 103; Chapter III, p.11.

²⁴⁵ Harold Remus, *Jesus as Healer* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 58.

²⁴⁶ Remus, 58.

Mark demons are told to keep silent because they proclaim the true identity of Jesus as the Son of God (Mk. 1:25; 3:11-12). In Acts those whom Jesus healed are said to have been “oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38). In this way, it is apparent that Jesus viewed a large part of his mission as “primarily a battle with the demonic and, concomitantly, an expression of the realization of the kingdom of God in the face of the defeat of Satan.”²⁴⁷ The women in Luke 8:1-3 were among the beneficiaries of Jesus’ successful battle. In this role, and as symbols of Jesus’ role as healer and exorcist, they are living embodiments of the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

3. Healing, Exorcism and Discipleship

Faith is not always a requirement for healing to occur in Luke, but it is often the response to healing (7:11-17; 13:10-13). Thus Jesus does not depend on peoples’ faith in order to perform miracles. However, he does not perform for those who mistrust; he does not do miracles in order to prove himself (4:1-13, 23:8-9, 35-37).

Within the gospels, if faith does not follow healing, there is often a risk of becoming ill or demon possessed for a second time. Luke 11:15-26 (paralleled in Matthew 12:43-45) indicates that if an evil spirit is cast out and returns to find it’s old home empty and put in order it will return with seven spirits even more wicked than itself. If this “emptiness” is a sign that the healed person did not receive the gospel, then someone who does become a believer in Jesus is no longer “empty” and in danger of

²⁴⁷ Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1999), 263.

being re-possessed by evil spirits.²⁴⁸ The women in Luke 8:1-3 are examples of people who are no longer empty since they eagerly grasp hold of the good news. Instead of returning home without praising God (e.g., Lk. 17:11-19), they respond to Jesus' miracles with faith and do not leave the door open and the house empty for evil spirits to return. In this way, they model what it means to be Jesus' disciples.

G. The Women of Luke 8

The purpose in each of the following sections regarding the individually named women in Luke 8:2-3 is to unearth as much information as possible about their historical characters and their roles within the narrative of Luke's gospel. It is particularly important to keep social location in mind in order to understand both what it meant for the women to leave their homes to follow Jesus and what possible sources of economic means they had out of which they provided for Jesus and the Twelve.

1. Mary

a) Background

Mary is the first woman that Luke lists in 8:2-3. In fact, she is the only woman whose name appears in all the lists of women in the gospels and is commonly placed first (Mt. 27:56-61, 28:1; Mk. 15:40-47, 16:1; Lk. 24:10). Although none of the gospels describe

²⁴⁸ Thomas, 217.

her initial encounter with Jesus, she is most significant as a witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.²⁴⁹

In contrast to the gospels of Mark and Matthew, Luke introduces Mary Magdalene early in Jesus' ministry rather than at the cross. As Witherington states, "she is undoubtedly important and Luke wishes to mention her so her devotion and willingness in Luke 24 will be seen as the proclamation of someone who has long been one of [Jesus'] disciples."²⁵⁰ The fact that she is both named and mentioned first indicates that Luke intends us to understand that she plays a prominent role among the other women who follow Jesus.²⁵¹

Beginning in the sixth century the Western Church developed traditions in which Mary Magdalene was identified with the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50. However, there is no historical evidence to support these identifications.²⁵² In fact, the evidence in the canonical gospels is very much against such an identification. Mary is introduced formally in Luke 8:2 with no suggestion that she is a figure who is already known to Luke's audience.²⁵³

b) Name

In Luke 8:2 Mary is referred to as "Mary called Magdalene" (Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή). Μαρία is a common name in the first century popularized because of the

²⁴⁹ Raymond F. Collins, "Mary Magdalene," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 579-581; I. Howard Marshall, 316.

²⁵⁰ Witherington, "On the Road," 137.

²⁵¹ Witherington, *Women in the ministry of Jesus*, 117-118.

²⁵² So also Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 131; I. Howard Marshall, 316.

²⁵³ Witherington, *Women in the ministry of Jesus*, 117-118.

importance of Miriam, Moses' sister, in Jewish lore. As a result, "Mary called Magdalene" is identified by her place of origin, Magdala. This is either a matter of gospel writer, or is simply how she was known within the tradition. Other notable Marys include Jesus' mother, Mary the mother of James, James, and Salome (Mk. 15:40), and Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus (Lk. 10:38-42).

c) Marital Status

Mary is not named in association with a man.²⁵⁴ There are many instances where women are identified among Jesus' disciples in reference to their male relatives.²⁵⁵ However, as Bauckham points out, just because Luke does not identify Mary Magdalene by her husband does not mean that she does not have one. In cases within the New Testament where women are identified in relation to their male relatives or spouses, the men who are mentioned are themselves disciples.²⁵⁶ If Mary Magdalene has a husband whom she leaves to follow Jesus and who is not himself a disciple, he is not mentioned because such relationships are no longer defining for the community of Jesus' followers. Bauckham suggests that her previous demon possession may, however, offer a clue since it seems unlikely that anyone would have married her or stayed married to her in such a state.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Since marriage was important for a variety of reasons in the first century (e.g. for financial security, roles within the household, and requirements of Torah; cf. Chapter III, 20-22), if Mary was single it was likely not the result of personal choice.

²⁵⁵ Examples include: Simon's mother in law (Lk.4:38; Mk. 1:29-38; Mt. 8:14-17), Mary the mother of James (Lk. 24:10; Mk.16:1), and Mary the mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14).

²⁵⁶ In the examples cited above, Simon and James are both disciples of Jesus.

²⁵⁷ Bauckham, 119; Witherington, "On the Road," 137.

d) Place of Residence

Mary is identified by a place name, Magdala. Magdala, which means “tower” in Aramaic, was a small town on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, four miles north of Tiberias and seven miles south of Capernaum.²⁵⁸ It was an important fish export center in the Roman period, but lost its position as “head of the toparchy” in favour of Tiberias.²⁵⁹ The Jewish historian Josephus refers to Tarichaea, which means “(salted) fish” in Greek, and is likely the same town.²⁶⁰ Its name fits with what we know about Magdala being an important fish export center, which was likely the source of the town’s wealth.²⁶¹ According to Josephus, the town was home to thousands of Jewish people.²⁶² Other sources state that Magdala was predominately Gentile and, as a result, not very respected among Jewish people. Collins notes that rabbis attributed its fall to immorality.²⁶³ Representing a middle ground, Horsley proposes that lower Galilee was more cosmopolitan and Greco-Roman culturally compared to Upper Galilee.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁸ Boyd Luter and Kathy McReynolds, *Women as Christ’s Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 67.

²⁵⁹ James E. Strange, “Magdala,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, 463-464.

²⁶⁰ Marshall, 316; Fitzmyer, 697.

²⁶¹ Hershel Shanks. “Major New Excavation Planned for Mary Magdalene’s Hometown,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 33, no 5 (S-O 2007) 52-55.

²⁶² Shanks states that “if Josephus’s city called Tarichaea is the same as Magdala, as seems highly likely, then Magdala suffered a major defeat in the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66–70 A.D). According to Josephus, the Roman general (and later emperor) Titus attacked the city from the sea. The city attempted to defend itself in the only sea battle of the war. It was a disaster for the Jews. Six-thousand Jews were killed. Those who survived fled to Tiberias. The then-emperor Vespasian ordered 6,000 of the refugees from Magdala to be sent to build a canal in Greece and 30,400 to be sold as slaves.”

²⁶³ Collins, “Mary Magdalene,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, 579.

²⁶⁴ Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 92.

Magdala was a place where people who were cut loose from their ancestral lands and village communities came to find work.²⁶⁵ Being from Magdala, Mary may have been such a person. Perhaps it was through her or a male relative's involvement in the fishing trade that she acquired her economic means. However, Bauckham is not sure that her standing in the circle around Jesus is due to financial means:

There may be some force in the argument that Mary Magdalene had to be named by Luke here because she was much the best-known woman disciple of Jesus, and so may not have been notable among those who made financial contributions, whereas Joanna and Susanna are named as notable instances of women who were able to contribute substantially to the economic needs of Jesus and the disciples.²⁶⁶

Unfortunately, lack of information makes it impossible to know with certainty what the socio-economic status of Mary Magdalene was. Yet, as the following section indicates, more can be deduced from the information regarding her demon possession.

e) Seven Demons

Luke identifies Mary as one “from whom seven demons had gone out” (8:2; cf. Mk 16:9). Although the exorcist is not named, Luke clearly implies it was Jesus, since he explains Mary's support and loyalty to Jesus and the Twelve in connection with the exorcism.²⁶⁷ The number seven indicates that her illness was particularly severe and, in turn, that her healing was nothing short of miraculous.²⁶⁸ In the biblical tradition, the number seven “transcends the concrete notion of counting to include elements of

²⁶⁵ Richard A. Horsley, “Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel,” in *Christian Origins*, vol. 1, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 37.

²⁶⁶ Bauckham, 117.

²⁶⁷ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. II: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 658. As I will discuss later, her healing may represent a call to follow Jesus as his disciple; See Meier's Vol. III, *Companions and Competitors*, 77.

²⁶⁸ So also Marshall, 316.

completeness, energy, and fullness, thus lending it special significance.”²⁶⁹ The Greek word for seven, ἑπτὰ, occurs eighty-seven times in the New Testament alone and most often in Revelation (thirty-one times). The gospels and Acts use the word a combined total of thirty-one times: seven loaves of bread (Mt. 15:34, 36; Mk 8:5,6), seven baskets of left over bread (Mt. 15:37; Mk. 8:8), seventy times seven as the number of times one ought to forgive someone (Mt.18:22), seven demons or evil spirits (Lk. 8:2, 11:26; Mk.16:9), seven husbands (Mt. 22:25-28; Mk.12:20-23; Lk. 20:29-33), and seven leaders (Acts 6:3). It is also used frequently in the Jewish Scriptures. For example, the importance of the number seven is apparent in the creation accounts in Genesis and has ongoing significance as the Sabbath day. What these examples, and many others, indicate is that throughout the Bible, the number seven is used to symbolize completeness or perfection.²⁷⁰ As a result, the fact that Mary Magdalene is healed of seven demons indicates the totality or completeness of her previous possession by evil spirits.²⁷¹

Luke adds the information that Mary was healed of seven demons as a way to identify her, and thus implies that the reader knows to whom and to what extraordinary event (namely Mary’s healing) he is referring. Although the language of 8:1-3 is typical of Luke, the specific information regarding Mary Magdalene could be pre-Lukan.²⁷² Mark 16:9 also records that Mary Magdalene was healed of seven demons, which suggests that Luke got it from that earlier gospel unless, as I suggest above, this was widely known. Meier, using the criteria of embarrassment and coherence, confirms the

²⁶⁹ E. Otto, “Seven,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 14, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 351.

²⁷⁰ Walter A. Elwell et al., ed., “Symbolic Use of Numbers,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1561.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1561.

²⁷² Meier, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, 658.

pre-existence of this information. Firstly, using the criterion of embarrassment, he notes that all of the gospels remember Mary Magdalene as an important witness to the crucifixion and burial of Jesus and as a witness to the empty tomb. Therefore, “it seems unlikely that the early Christian tradition would have gone out of its way to cast doubt on the reliability of such a pivotal figure by recasting her – for no apparent reason – as a former demoniac.”²⁷³ Secondly, in regard to the criterion of coherence, if Mary was healed by Jesus from a particularly severe case of possession, this would explain her dedication to him, to the point of leaving behind any social networks, family, and honour that she could have reclaimed or returned to following her healing, in order to join Jesus and provide for him up until his death and resurrection.²⁷⁴ If we consider Luke 8:2 “history remembered,” then we receive additional information concerning Jesus’ exorcisms, namely that “at least some of the recipients of these exorcisms, notably Magdalene, became loyal and lasting disciples – which only stands to reason in this case.”²⁷⁵

As previously mentioned, Mary’s demon possession may have had an impact on her ability to find a husband or to stay with one, but what would the economic impact have been? How did a multiply possessed woman, likely without husband, have property and funds? While the information we know about Magdala indicates that the export of fish was a likely source of wealth for people living in this town, it does not explain Mary’s potential connection to this business given her situation as a demon possessed woman, potentially without a husband. Certainly not everyone in the town was wealthy.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 658-659.

Thus, given the known circumstances regarding Mary Magdalene it is unlikely that she was or would have been understood by Luke's audience to be a wealthy woman.

2. Joanna

a) Background

Joanna is named second (8:3). The fact that she is listed second and by name indicates that she too is a prominent member of the group of women who travel and provide for Jesus and the disciples.²⁷⁶ Her name is preserved by the post-Easter community as a witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.²⁷⁷

Richard Bauckham provides the most recent compilation of historical findings related to Joanna.²⁷⁸ Bauckham believes that there is "more to be known than has hitherto been realized and that her significance in Luke's Gospel is greater than his two references to her might immediately suggest."²⁷⁹

b) Name

The name Joanna, Ἰωάννα, is Jewish in origin and appears twice in the New Testament, both times in Luke (8:3, 24:10). However, there are five or six known records of Palestinian Jewish women from extra-biblical sources who have the name, making it the

²⁷⁶ Moltmann-Wendel, "The Women around Jesus," 137.

²⁷⁷ There is also the possibility that Luke mentions her because she was one of his sources for the content that is unique to his gospel. Ben Witherington III, "Joanna," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, 855.

²⁷⁸ As a result, I will draw heavily on his work in this regard.

²⁷⁹ Bauckham, 109.

fifth most popular woman's name in Jewish Palestine.²⁸⁰ The popularity of the name may be due in part to the fact that Ἰωάννα is the female equivalent of the male name, Ἰωάννης, or John, which is the fifth most popular name among Jewish Palestinian men at the time.²⁸¹ Joanna means, "Yahweh is a gracious giver."²⁸² Joanna's name is thus well suited to her actions in 8:1-3 as providing for Jesus and the Twelve out of her possessions, even if the common nature of the name among Jewish women indicates that this is probably no more than coincidence.

c) Marital Status

Joanna is identified not only by name, but also in relation to her named husband, Chuza, who is in turn identified in relation to his role as Herod's "steward" (ἐπιτρόπος).²⁸³ The fact that Luke both names and describes Joanna's husband is exceptional among the gospel's references to female disciples. In all other instances where female followers of Jesus are named in connection with a male relative, the male relative is also a disciple of Jesus. However, this conclusion is not made explicit in Luke 8:2, nor is Chuza mentioned elsewhere in the biblical text and, therefore, it is unknown whether or not he is a disciple of Jesus.

Chuza is identified as Herod's ἐπιτρόπος (Lk 8:3). In Acts 13:1 another connection to Herod's household is noted when Luke refers to an early Christian named

²⁸⁰ L. Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem, Israel: Israel Antiquities Authority/Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), 202 quoted in Bauckham, 143.

²⁸¹ Bauckham, 143.

²⁸² "Ἰωάννα," *Strong's Concordance*, [article online] available at <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G2489&t=KJV>, accessed February 7, 2010.

²⁸³ I will say more about Chuza's role as "steward" below.

Manaen who is a member of the court of Herod.²⁸⁴ Even if Chuza is one of Jesus' disciples, his name is extremely unusual. As a result, for the simple purpose of identification "he need not have been described as Herod's steward."²⁸⁵ It is thus clear that Luke wants to highlight Joanna's connection to Herod's court. Bauckham lists five possible reasons:

- 1) to highlight her ties to wealth, thereby revealing her source of economic means out of which she provided for Jesus and the Twelve;
- 2) to point to her high social status as a way of legitimating the Jesus movement;
- 3) to incorporate information that makes it easier for his audience to identify with this group of Jesus followers;
- 4) to name a source of his gospel tradition;
- 5) to remind his audience that Herod Antipas is still in power at this point within the narrative and to build suspense about how Herod might react to Jesus later on.²⁸⁶

Of these five possibilities, Bauckham argues that the first one, highlighting Joanna's ties to wealth, is the primary reason Luke connects Joanna to Herod's court.²⁸⁷ Bauckham is not alone in making this connection. Yet, as Bauckham acknowledges, some scholars argue that Joanna is the most unlikely woman in the group to have been independently wealthy since she is also the only one who is indicated as having a husband.²⁸⁸ Recall from Chapter III that there were seven possible sources of independently disposable property for women, but a married woman was least likely to

²⁸⁴ Johnson, 131.

²⁸⁵ Bauckham, 119.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 119-120.

²⁸⁷ Chapter III, 9-10. As the wife of one of Herod's managers Joanna belonged to the top tier of the social pyramid. In their political roles, she and her husband promoted Herodian and Roman interests, which made them targets to those who resented Rome's political authority in Palestine.

²⁸⁸ Bauckham, 117.

have financial resources at her disposal because she was under the protection of her husband. That said, it was still possible for a married woman to have her own disposable economic means from either a deed of gift or daughter's inheritance.²⁸⁹ Based on his research from the documents pertaining to Babatha and Salome Komaise, Bauckham states that, "at least in wealthier families it would not have been unusual for married women to have property of their own with full ownership rights."²⁹⁰

Bauckham suggests yet another possibility for Joanna's source of wealth, namely, that she is a widow. Just because Chuza is mentioned does not mean he is alive, especially if Luke's intention is to include him in order to show Joanna's connection to Herod's court and, in doing so, her access to wealth.²⁹¹ Therefore, Joanna may be a wealthy widow, in which case her financial independence is even greater.²⁹²

d) Chuza

As previously noted, Chuza is not a common name in the biblical text, or elsewhere. Based on five occurrences of the name Chuza in Nabatean archaeological finds, Bauckham argues that Chuza's name is likely Nabatean.²⁹³ For Herodian rulers, the Nabatean kingdom was the second most important foreign power after Rome, owing to "the proximity, to economic relationships, and to policies of expansion in the direction of Herodian territories [...] [and] also family connections."²⁹⁴ Although the Jewish religious

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 121.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 134.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 117.

²⁹² Ibid., 135.

²⁹³ Ibid., 157. So also Marshall, 317.

²⁹⁴ I. Shatzman, *The Armies of the Hasmonaeans and Herod* (TSAJ 25: Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1991), 305-7 quoted in Bauckham, 157.

community strictly frowned upon marriage between Gentiles and Jews, it was not uncommon in the Herodian family for political reasons.²⁹⁵ Likewise, Joanna and Chuza's marriage may have been arranged for political reasons, although Chuza probably converted to Judaism upon his marriage. As Bauckham notes, Chuza's conversion would have been made easier by the fact that Nabateans, as Arabs, circumcised their sons at the age of thirteen.²⁹⁶ While Chuza was Nabatean, Joanna likely belonged to a leading Jewish family in Tiberias or a Galilean family of Herodian supporters.²⁹⁷

The word used to describe Chuza's position in relation to Herod is ἐπιτρόπος, meaning "foreman" that is "one who commands the workers" or "one who assigns work to the workers".²⁹⁸ Apart from Luke 8:8, it appears in the New Testament only in Matthew 20:8 and Galatians 4:2. In Matthew it refers to the person who oversees his master's vineyard (Mt 20:8) and in Galatians 4:2 it is translated as "guardian" of a minor (NIV). In the case of a royal court, ἐπιτρόπος refers to the finance minister of the kingdom, administering revenues from taxation, for example.²⁹⁹ Josephus records that a favoured freedman occupied this position in Agrippa I's reign, and in the Nabatean kingdom an aristocrat named Syllaeus was the ἐπιτρόπος of King Obodas.³⁰⁰ Chuza must thus have been a high-ranking official at Herod's court, although he might not have been the only ἐπιτρόπος. As a high ranking official he was most likely Herod's business manager or a political appointee, since ἐπιτρόπος can also refer to a political office.³⁰¹

²⁹⁵ Bauckham, 159.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 161, based on Josephus, *Ant.* 1.124.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 142.

²⁹⁸ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, second edition, ed. Rondal B. Smith and Karen A. Munson (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), 482.

²⁹⁹ Bauckham, 135-136.

³⁰⁰ Josephus, BJ 1.487.

³⁰¹ Virgil R. L. Fry, "Chuza," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, 1022.

Either way, Chuza would have been a man of some wealth, which in an agrarian society such as his meant owning land.³⁰² Bauckham argues that the rarity of the name Chuza, as well as the plausibility of its bearer being Nabatean at the court of Herod, is significant proof that Luke's information about Joanna in terms of her being a member of the Herodian aristocracy, is historically reliable and thus reflects an accurate memory of Jesus' time.³⁰³

e) Place of Residence

Herod Antipas administered his government from Tiberias. As his steward, Chuza, along with his wife Joanna, would have also lived there.³⁰⁴ Tiberias was a pro-Roman city. People who settled in Tiberias honoured Antipas' Roman patrons by giving their sons Roman names.³⁰⁵ The city itself, brand new, was named after the Roman emperor Tiberius. Horsley concludes that prominent Jewish members of the Herodian court at Tiberias were well "Hellenized Herodian clients."³⁰⁶ As a result, the relationship between Tiberias and rural Galilee was not good. As stated in Chapter III, peasants fostered feelings of anger and resentment toward wealthy cities such as Tiberias and Sepphoris that were more closely connected to Greco-Roman culture and influence, not to mention the Herodians as wealthy pro-Roman leaders.³⁰⁷ Generally speaking, royal capitals at

³⁰² Bauckham, 137-138; Moltmann-Wendel, 133-136.

³⁰³ Bauckham, 161.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 139 & 145.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

³⁰⁶ Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 170.

³⁰⁷ Freyne, *Galilee*, 123; Chapter III, 32-34; Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 201.

Sepphoris and Tiberias “bore down heavily on the people both visibly and materially.”³⁰⁸ Therefore, by identifying Joanna as someone from the Herodian upper class of Tiberias Luke made it obvious that she crossed a huge social gap to become a follower of Jesus and that she was a prominent woman.

The synoptic gospels make no mention of Jesus ever visiting Tiberias or Sepphoris. However, Luke records that within Galilee cities are very much a part of Jesus’ mission and ministry (8:1; cf. 8:39). Jesus’ “opposition is not to places as such, but to certain values that are associated with city dwellers, especially among the elites who shaped and dominated their ethos.”³⁰⁹ Luke 7:24-25 illustrates this well. Jesus alludes to the negative characteristics of a leader from Herod’s court and compares them to a better example of a leader, namely, John the Baptist.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces (Lk 7:25, NIV).

Herod Antipas is referred to twelve times in Luke’s Gospel and always negatively, frequently in regard to John’s death or as a threat to Jesus’ life. The contrast in Luke 7:25 is between John the Baptist’s clothing and way of life and the luxury of the ruler that John criticized for marrying Herodias (Lk. 3:19-20). The difference in clothing also symbolizes the clash of values personified in John and Herod. Jesus takes John’s side in the conflict of values between the prophet and the court.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Horsley, *Christian Origins*, 37.

³⁰⁹ Sean Freyne, “Town and Country Once More: The Case of Roman Galilee,” in *Galilee and Gospel: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2000), 68.

³¹⁰ Bauckham, 149.

Luke 7:25 is a measure of the decision Joanna makes to follow Jesus. She leaves her position of power and privilege as the wife of Herod's steward, dressed in "soft garments", in order to travel with Jesus and support his ministry. In doing so, she takes a double risk. To those she leaves behind she risks being identified with Jesus and losing status and honour. To those she joins in Jesus' community she risks being identified as the wife of Herod's steward.³¹¹ As Bauckham states, Joanna took a remarkable step in associating herself with Jesus' disciples, "who were, in the eyes of her social circle, almost despicably inferior, while at the same time in their [the disciples'] eyes she deserved not the esteem given to social superiors but the contempt given to this particular ruling elite by ordinary Galilean people."³¹²

We can thus sharpen Luke's intentions in identifying Joanna as Herod's steward's wife. Her connection to Herod's court identifies her socially as an outsider to Jesus' group of itinerant followers, which means she is welcomed by Jesus into his close knit community as an outsider. Joanna thus breaks through barriers of class and economic status because she belongs to the upper tier of the social pyramid but leaves this tier in order to join Jesus' group of peasant and merchant followers. She also breaks through political barriers because she is of a pro-Roman stratum. She thus switches loyalties when she chooses to follow Jesus.

The most relevant historical comparison to Joanna is the wife of Pheroras, Herod the Great's younger brother.³¹³ According to Josephus she belonged to a group of women at the court of Herod who adhered to the teachings of the Pharisees. Pheroras' wife paid the fine for six thousand Pharisees who refused to take the oath of allegiance to Caesar

³¹¹ Moltmann-Wendel, 139.

³¹² Bauckham, 161.

³¹³ Ibid., 162.

and the king (Ant. 17.41-42). Like Joanna, she is an example of a woman who supported a religious group in opposition to the expressed political leanings of her kin groups. Pheroras' wife "took an independent religious-political position by adopting Pharisaism."³¹⁴ Joanna, on the other hand, chose to follow a particular individual, Jesus, who, like John the Baptist, preached a religious-political message contrary in many ways to those within the Romanized Herodian circles to which Joanna belonged.³¹⁵

Even with the similarities to Pheroras' wife, Joanna's case is unprecedented in that not only did she help finance Jesus' mission, but she also joined "his itinerant followers in their countercultural lifestyle."³¹⁶ Choosing to follow Jesus was made difficult because she had to consent to leave plush circumstances for a life of simplicity and poverty. As Bauckham suggests, perhaps she viewed her financial contribution to the group as putting right some of the economic wrongs that she had been involved in as Chuza's wife.³¹⁷ In this way, Luke may have named Mary Magdalene and Joanna first because they were examples of female disciples who overcame enormous obstacles and took numerous risks in order to be with Jesus. Whereas Mary Magdalene's strong demon possession indicates her difficult past, Joanna's connection to Herod's court through Chuza points to the radical nature of her decision to leave wealth and status behind in order to join Jesus' community. Bauckham summarizes:

³¹⁴ Tal Ilan, "The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism During the Second Temple Period," *HTR* 88 (1995) 1-33, 14.

³¹⁵ The shared nature of Jesus' and John's missions resulted in Jesus being mistaken for John during his earthly ministry (Mt. 14:1-2; Mk. 6:14; Lk.9:18-19).

³¹⁶ Bauckham, 162.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

Joanna is not just an illustration of the fact that Jesus attracted followers from the social elite as well as from the ordinary people and the poor. In deciding not only to support Jesus but also to take part in his ministry by traveling with him and his itinerant disciples, Joanna may well have been motivated initially mainly by the healing she had experienced, but it was a radical step right outside the Herodian establishment to which she belonged and into the life of the ordinary people of Galilee and of the marginalized and rejected of society whom Jesus often attracted and sought out.³¹⁸

3. Susanna

Susanna is the third and last of the named women in 8:1-3. Hardly anything is known regarding her historical character. Yet, that she is named individually suggests she played an important role within the group of women who followed Jesus by supporting the group financially. Luke does not ascribe to her any additional information as he does for Mary and Joanna. Perhaps Susanna's leadership role is less prominent. It could also be the case that she requires no further introduction within the group of women in the text and for Luke's audience. To reiterate, the fact that she is named indicates that she is likely well-known and someone of importance.

4. "Many Others"

That there were "many others" following Jesus is significant. As Tucker and Liefeld note, a cursory reading of the passage could overlook the fact that there were many others travelling with Jesus and the Twelve besides the three named women.³¹⁹ The gender of "many others" is feminine (πολλαί), making it clear that they are women. There are not

³¹⁸ Moltmann-Wendel, 150. See also "Joanna," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 855.

³¹⁹ Tucker and Liefeld, 28.

only three women travelling with Jesus and providing out of some presumably independently disposable source of economic means, but a whole group of women, making the entire pericope of 8:1-3 noteworthy as Luke's window into Jesus' community. Out of the larger crowds who come to hear Jesus teach, Luke deliberately singles out two particular groups for special mention: the Twelve and the women.³²⁰ Minimally, this indicates that Luke imagines Jesus' circle as including "many women". As Halteman Finger points out, "[i]n literature written from a male oriented point of view, (which includes the entire New Testament), women are never mentioned unless they are exceptional or have become a problem (for men)."³²¹ It is thus significant that they are mentioned as a group in Luke 8:3, one that provides for Jesus and the Twelve. This positive description indicates that Luke includes them not because they are a "problem", but because they are an "exception". They are exceptional because they are women who choose to follow Jesus despite the risk of bringing shame to themselves and their families. The women are participants in the public sphere of Jesus' ministry, far from the safety of the household.³²² In addition, Joanna, a wealthy, urban, woman from Tiberias provides financial support for Jesus and the Twelve. In Luke's view women play an important role within the community as disciples and economic providers. In doing so, he portrays a very different picture from that which most contemporary people have of Jewish Palestinian women living in the first century.³²³

³²⁰ Bauckham, 112.

³²¹ Finger, 258. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 44.

³²² See chapter III, 56.

³²³ Tucker and Liefeld, 29.

H. Διακονία

1. Background

The last clause of 8:1-3 has received the greatest amount of attention in the history of interpretation of this paragraph. Much of the debate surrounds the translation and interpretation of the Greek verb διακονέω. Because “the use of διακονία in isolation does not say much in the Greek language about the status or specific task of the person involved in it, the context is extremely significant.”³²⁴ Finger, for example, shows that Luke is aware of the different meanings of the word and uses different nuances of it in Acts 6:1-6. The “daily διακονία” in verse one is defined by “to serve tables” in verse two and “service of the word” in verse four. Thus, “[a]ccording to the apostles, there is a ministry that involves tables and a ministry that involves speaking.”³²⁵ In Luke 8:1-3 another nuance of the word διακονία is added: ministry out of one’s possessions.

“Διακονέω” occurs a total of thirty-seven times in the New Testament, most frequently in Luke-Acts (7 times in Luke, 2 times in Acts), Matthew (five times), and Mark (four times). According to Beyer, “the concept of serving is expressed in Greek by many words which are often difficult to differentiate even though each has its own basic emphasis.”³²⁶ Διακονία in particular has “a stronger approximation to the concept of a service of love.”³²⁷ As stated above, it is sometimes used in its original sense of “to wait

³²⁴ John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

³²⁵ Finger, 257.

³²⁶ Hermann W. Beyer, “διακονέω,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel et al., vol II (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 81.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

at a table” (Lk. 17:8; Jn. 12:2), in which case there is a distinction between “the worthy man reclining on the couch and the girded servant or attentive woman.”³²⁸ An example is found in Luke 4:39 (also Mt. 8:15; Mk. 1:31). After Jesus heals Simon’s mother-in-law “she got up and began to wait (διακονέω) on him”. Quesnell argues that Simon’s mother-in-law is depicted as performing a diaconal function, as in an act of discipleship, since the scene recalls the early Christian ritual meal.³²⁹ As a result, she is acting as a leader within the community of faith. However, evidence in support of his argument is lacking. More convincing is the argument that Simon’s mother-in-law’s act of service is set within the basic pattern of Greco-Roman miracle stories in which the activity of the healed person acts as evidence for the cure.³³⁰ The fact that she is able to perform the routine task of extending hospitality to her guest through the preparation of food confirms her healing. In such instances διακονία incorporates the meaning of “table waiting”. Yet, it need not be limited to “table waiting” since this sociologically lowly activity becomes the expression in practice of the ideal of discipleship according to Jesus.

Jesus comprises many things under the term διακονία, such as giving food and drink, extending shelter, providing clothes, and visiting the sick and prisoners. Additionally, examples of διακονία relate to both men (e.g. the disciples Mt. 25:44; Lk. 22:26 and Paul Rom. 15:25) and women (e.g. the women who were with Jesus Mt. 27:55; Mk. 15:41; Lk. 8:3, Martha Jn. 12:2, and Simon’s mother-in-law Mt. 8:15; Mk. 1:31; Lk.4:39), human and divine (e.g. angels Mt.4:11; Mk. 1:13, the Son of Man Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45, and the Lord Lk. 12:37), and rich and poor. Thus, the term is not restricted by

³²⁸ Ibid., 84.

³²⁹ Quentin Quesnell, “Women in Luke’s Supper,” in *Political Issues in Luke-Acts*, 59-79, ed. R.J. Cassidy and P.J. Scharper (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 71.

³³⁰ Corley, 119.

gender, nature (human or divine), or social standing. Rather, within the New Testament serving others “comes to have the full sense of active Christian love for neighbour and as such it is a mark of true discipleship of Jesus.”³³¹ In this way, διακονία comes to mean “participat[ing] in the authority and in the work of looking after the needs of a circle of people without distinctions”.³³² This is demonstrated by the fact that both women and men participate in their communities’ exercising of power; both Phoebe and Paul “serve”.³³³ Phoebe is both a minister (διάκονος) and a patroness or guardian (προστάτις; Romans 16:1-2).

Jesus reorients the value of διακονέω so that what was once considered a lowly role of serving others becomes a highly revered model of discipleship. It is not the action that changes, although its scope is broadened to include other forms of service, but its value. Even so, this verb is the source of much pain in the history of the church because it is used to subordinate women and enforce traditional gender roles that limit the role of women to serving, as in table waiting, within the church and the household. A rereading of this clause will indicate that this interpretation of διακονία does not apply in Luke 8:1-3.

³³¹ Ibid., 85.

³³² Louise Schottroff, *Lydia’s Impatient Sisters* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 209.

³³³ Ibid., 209-210.

2. The Meaning of *διακονία* in Luke 8:3

a) *Διακονία* as Financial Provision

Like Simon's mother-in-law, the women in Luke 8:1-3 have been healed, after which they minister to Jesus and the Twelve. However, there are several differences. First, the pericope in 8:1-3 is not a healing narrative, but a summary passage. Although this group of women "had been healed" (v.2), their healing is not the central focus of the pericope. As a result, it is unlikely that the service they provide to Jesus and the others is mentioned in order to show the immediacy of their healing and the fact that they have been healed. Second, the setting is different. Where Simon's mother-in-law is healed in her home and then serves those present in her home, drawing a closer connection between *διακονία* and table waiting, the women in Luke 8:1-3 are travelling with Jesus. They are on the road, in which case the provisions the community requires are different. Travelling missionaries were dependent on mobility as well as financial provision from "patrons".³³⁴ In Luke 8:1-3 the Twelve are dependent on the financial support of the women because they left behind their occupations to follow Jesus (e.g., Peter, James, and John in 5:11). Additionally, "having rejected him in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30), it is unlikely that Jesus' family and neighbors would have provided for his support."³³⁵ Within this context it is most likely that the *διακονία* of the women is economic in nature.

³³⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, 168.

³³⁵ Reid, 128.

Analysis of the Greek text corroborates that the service the women provide Jesus and the Twelve is financial in nature.³³⁶ The prepositional phrase ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς specifies the relationship between the verb (διακονέω) and the noun (the women). The participle ὑπαρχόντα, which functions in verse 3 as a noun, is a derivative of the verb ὑπάρχω which literally means, “to exist”.³³⁷ It occurs frequently in Luke (8:3; 11:21; 12:15; 12:33; 12:44; 14:33; 19:8) where it refers to possessions, property, money, or goods.³³⁸ It is also used in Acts 2:45: “they would sell their property and possessions.” Therefore, the phrase ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, “out of the possessions,” indicates that the women’s διακονία is economic in nature.³³⁹ The feminine dative “αὐταῖς” indicates that the possessions belong to the women, literally, “of the things that were with them” or “of the things existing/belonging to them” (i.e. their possessions). Significantly, the grammar implies that they have their own source of wealth and that they give of it rather than the resources of a husband or relative. In addition, the verb διακονέω is in the imperfect tense, conveying that the women served in this capacity repeatedly.³⁴⁰ Thus, the implication is that the women in Luke 8:1-3 were

well off (e.g. Joanna) and able to provide financially for the travelling preachers; so large a company of people could not travel around together as one group without some provision for their needs; when it was a case of missionaries travelling in pairs they could expect to be put up by local people.³⁴¹

³³⁶ So also Marshall.

³³⁷ Walter Bauer, et al., “ὑπάρχω,” *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 845.

³³⁸ Reid, 127; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, et al., “ὑπαρξις,” *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament Volume 1* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), 560.

³³⁹ So also Johnson, 131.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Marshall, 317.

b) Διακονία as Table Waiting

Mary Evans and Reta Haltmann Finger argue that the women's διακονία is both monetary and provision in the form of food preparation and distribution.³⁴² Given the importance of gender specific roles in the first century it is likely that some of the women in 8:1-3 helped prepare food for Jesus and the disciples as they travelled. Ben Witherington III stresses that “being Jesus’ disciples did not lead these women to abandon their traditional roles in regard to preparing food, serving, etc.”³⁴³ He also highlights the significance of the fact that the women in 8:2-3 are using their traditional roles in a new way.

What is unique about the actions of Jesus’ women followers is that the traditional roles of hospitality and service are seen by them as a way to serve not only the physical family but also the family of faith...The transformation of these women involved not only assuming new discipleship roles, but also resuming their traditional roles for a new purpose.³⁴⁴

Along the same lines, Acts reveals how modeling early “churches” on the household played a significant part in enabling women to assert their right to leadership within the ἐκκλησία and share their wealth the way that they did.³⁴⁵ These women began using their traditional roles of hospitality and service to serve both the physical family and the family of faith, using a traditional role for a new purpose.

The social standing of Joanna raises a flag in regard to this argument supported by Evans, Finger, and Witherington. The clause, ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς (out of their possessions) renders the role assumed by the women, most certainly Joanna, that of a

³⁴² Evans, 51. Finger, 10.

³⁴³ Witherington, “On the Road,” 247.

³⁴⁴ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 117-118.

³⁴⁵ Tannehill, 139.

benefactor or patron, rather than the traditional role of hospitality and service women filled within the household. It is difficult to imagine Joanna, a wealthy woman with a connection to Herod's court, preparing food. If indeed this is the case, it is a drastic shift in status and is not an example of someone who used her "traditional role for a new purpose."³⁴⁶ Witherington is right in that the women do revise a role within society, but it is the role of patron, rather than that of table waiting. These women act as economic providers for Jesus and the Twelve, yet receive no public inscriptions, amenities, or special treatment in return until their efforts are remembered in writing by Luke decades later. Thus, the original Greco-Roman meaning of the term "patron" is altered.

c) Διακονία as Discipleship

Discipleship is characterized by servanthood (Lk. 22:26). This "gives increased dignity to the roles of service undertaken by the women [in 8:2-3]."³⁴⁷ Yet, Luke does not explicitly call the women "disciples". We are thus faced with a question: are the female followers of Jesus acting as disciples, despite the fact that they are not named as such? John P. Meier contends that: "[c]learly, certain passages in the Gospels, especially when taken together, seem to portray women followers of Jesus as equivalent disciples."³⁴⁸ In particular, he draws on the texts that mention the group of women who followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and served him (Mk. 15:40-41; Mt. 27:55-56; Lk. 23:55, 8:1-3).³⁴⁹ Although there are differences with regard to individuals named, both the Synoptic

³⁴⁶ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 117-118.

³⁴⁷ Thurston, 107.

³⁴⁸ Meier, *Companions and Competitors*, 74.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

Gospels and the Gospel of John place certain women at the crucifixion of Jesus and at the discovery of the empty tomb. Common to all is Mary Magdalene.³⁵⁰ This multiple attestation of sources supports the

[e]xistence of female followers who traveled with Jesus, supporting and serving [him] out of their own means, and standing by [him] at his crucifixion when most if not all of his male disciples deserted him – and what should qualify for discipleship if not such steadfast service and loyalty to Jesus even unto the cross?³⁵¹

Yet none of them are given the name “disciple” (μαθητής). Meier gives two considerations why. First, Luke, as well as the other evangelists, may be inhibited by “the lack of specific call stories narrating how Jesus summoned particular individual women to follow him.” The Gospels do not record any literal call stories of women. However, it is unlikely that Jesus did not summon the women who travelled with him or at least gave his clear consent after the fact.³⁵² That the women who travel with Jesus in Luke 8:1-3 have been healed, Mary Magdalene in particular from seven demons, may suggest that at times “the women who were cured by Jesus saw their cures as equivalents to being called to follow Jesus, an interpretation Jesus accepted.”³⁵³ It is apparent that there were women who followed Jesus for a long duration, beginning with his ministry in Galilee and continuing with him on his final journey to Jerusalem. However, the fact that there are no call stories of women recorded in the tradition may have influenced Luke not to use the title “disciple” for each of the women “since one of the main components of discipleship – a component verified in the case of a number of male disciples – was missing.”³⁵⁴ In

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 77.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

Luke 6:17 a “great crowd of [Jesus’] disciples” is mentioned. Yet, there is no specific example of a woman being called.

Second, the term “disciple” may not have been applied to women during Jesus’ time because of the constraints of the time and place, including a time-lag between new realities and new words to describe them.³⁵⁵ Jesus preached with the desire to communicate with and persuade the people around him. He was innovative as an itinerant leader with a group of disciples (similar to John the Baptist) within the Jewish-Palestinian context. That said, “it might be expecting too much that a new form of the word ‘disciple’ [that was feminine] would also have been coined during the two or so years of Jesus’ ministry.”³⁵⁶ In Jesus’ lifetime the word “disciple” only existed in the masculine form in Hebrew and Aramaic. Thus, it may be the case that “Jesus and his disciples never used a special word for female disciples in Aramaic – for the simple reason that none existed – and so the Greek Gospels that flow from that tradition used no such word either.”³⁵⁷ Luke does refer to Tabitha as μαθήτρια, the feminine form of the noun μαθητής in Acts 9:36. Apparently in his newer composition he feels the liberty to use it since he is not so tightly constrained by “a normative tradition and the usage of previous Christian documents (e.g. Mark and Q).”³⁵⁸

In regards to the question of whether or not the women in Luke 8:1-3 are disciples, then, we are left with the paradox that although the female followers of Jesus were not disciples in name, they were in reality. Meier’s states:

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 78-79.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 78.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 79.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

Certainly the reality rather than the label would have been what caught most people's attention...Yet, scandal or no scandal, Jesus allowed them to follow and serve him. Whatever the vocabulary, the most probable conclusion is that Jesus viewed and treated these women as disciples.³⁵⁹

The servanthood that the women in 8:1-3 model through their ongoing financial contributions should thus be viewed as an act of discipleship, despite the fact that the women are not explicitly called "disciples."

But is *διακονία* an act of discipleship if the Twelve, Jesus' inner circle of disciples, are not engaged in it? This question relates to the use of *αὐτοῖς* ("to them") in Luke 8:3 and the fact that "the women are described in the nonreciprocated role of service to the males."³⁶⁰ If *διακονία* is a characteristic of discipleship, then why aren't the Twelve recorded as serving out of their possessions? Green argues that the women's nonreciprocated role of service does not mean that Luke is "operating at this juncture with a firmly established view of the unassailable authority of the Twelve or a divinely legitimated division of labor in the mission of those who follow Jesus."³⁶¹ The Twelve have not been granted any authority at this point in the narrative. Just like the women, they are only "with" Jesus. However, the characterization of the women is not focused on their waiting on the men, but that they, like Jesus, serve others (cf. 22:24-27) and are a good example of people who live by Jesus' message on faith and wealth.³⁶² Furthermore, their example anticipates "Luke's portrait of the early Christian community among whom

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 80.

³⁶⁰ Thurston, 107.

³⁶¹ Green, 320.

³⁶² Ibid.

‘no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common’ (Acts 4:32).”³⁶³

We might ask, finally, whether the female disciples, even though they, Joanna for certain, minister out of their wealth, squares with the understanding that discipleship means denouncing one’s material possessions. The answer lies in discerning whether or not the women are acting as patrons or not.

Luke’s gospel reflects the patronage system that was prevalent in the first century Mediterranean world, “a system of relationships grounded in inequality between the two principals.”³⁶⁴ In a patron-client structure a benefactor receives honour and status for providing financial support to the city, temple, cult, etc. Therefore, love of honour is the primary reason for benefactions.³⁶⁵ An example in Luke is found in 7:1-10, where the elders (i.e., the clients) believe that the centurion (i.e., the patron) “deserves Jesus’ help since he built the synagogue in Capernaum.”³⁶⁶ Yet, overall, Luke is “more concerned with the patronal system as such, a system by means of which those in need (clients) are controlled by those (patrons) to whom they are indebted.”³⁶⁷ In Luke Jesus redefines the patron-client relationship in the context of his circle of followers and thus turns the values of first century society on their head. During the Last Supper Jesus says to his disciples:

‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.’ (Lk 22:25)

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 202.

³⁶⁵ Finger, 137; Chapter III, p.23-24.

³⁶⁶ Green, 202.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

The women in Luke 8:2-3 are models of Jesus' teaching in this passage. First, they act counter-culturally as wealthy patrons or benefactors who give of their resources, but do not expect something in return. There is no simultaneous exchange of resources.³⁶⁸ Second, unlike a relationship between patrons and clients, which is unequal, the women do not view themselves as superior to Jesus and the Twelve. Thirdly, points one and two indicate that honour is no longer the result of self-reliance, social standing, or wealth for the women. Instead, servanthood is considered honourable and a characteristic of discipleship, as is indicated by the fact that they are remembered by name for the service that they provide for Jesus and the Twelve.

It should be noted that being remembered by name in the tradition both orally and in writing is not the equivalent of being publically honoured within Greco-Roman society since such rewards are no longer important to followers of Jesus. As well, the women do not act as clients by returning generosity to Jesus, their patron, for his role in healing them of their infirmities. Jesus explicitly teaches that it is important to lend without expectation of repayment (Lk. 6:32-36), which indicates that social reciprocity is not promoted. Instead, he offers a vision of "the free generosity of God and its imitation by God's people."³⁶⁹

In Jesus' ministry debts are canceled. His mission is to release persons from evil in all of its guises, including the evil of the never-ending cycle of gifts leading to obligations. His graciousness toward these women is not repaid by their benefactions; rather, his graciousness is mirrored in theirs.³⁷⁰

In the specific example of Joanna, Bauckham states:

³⁶⁸ Chapter III, 40.

³⁶⁹ Bauckham, 165.

³⁷⁰ Green, 319.

[Joanna] cannot have been regarded in the company of the disciples of Jesus as a patron-benefactor in the usual sense [... T]he Herodian aristocracy of Tiberias would not have been regarded with respect by ordinary Galileans such as most of Jesus' disciples, but as collaborators with an exploitative and idolatrous foreign power. But, more decisively still, the radical reversal of status taught by Jesus and practiced in the community of his disciples is incompatible with the honor and status attributed to a wealthy benefactor by her beneficiaries.³⁷¹

Therefore, the financial service that the women provide Jesus and the Twelve in 8:3 is not the reciprocated generosity of a client to a patron. Nor is Luke's purpose for naming the women in 8:2-3 to bestow honour to them as patrons of the Jesus and the Twelve. Instead "the role of patron or benefactor is subverted within a community where the usual forms of social status and honor are reversed."³⁷²

I. Concluding Comments

Differing results are found within Luke's narrative with regard to the financial standing of the women in 8:2-3. From a social-historical standpoint it is unlikely that Mary Magdalene had the financial resources to minister to Jesus and the Twelve in such a way. However her importance within the tradition as a dedicated female follower of Jesus and witness to his death and resurrection grants her a prominent position in 8:2. The description of Joanna as the wife of Herod's steward, on the other hand, indicates that she would have had the financial resources to minister to Jesus and the Twelve. Yet, as Chapter V will point out, it is significant that according to Luke all of the women in Luke

³⁷¹ Bauckham, 163.

³⁷² Ibid., 165.

8:1-3 give of their financial resources. They do so in ways that are both radical (choosing to travel with a male rabbi, leaving plush and stable circumstances, using their resources for new purposes) and familiar to them (offering financial provision as benefactors or other forms of hospitality within the household prior to joining the community of Jesus and the Twelve). At least some of the women (e.g., Joanna) were wealthy and no doubt all of them experienced the risks that came with travelling with a rabbi and his male companions. Luke's portrait of these women as wealthy providers fits within his larger portrait of prominent believers in Luke-Acts, including Levi (Luke 5:27-32), Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector (Luke 19:1-10), Barnabas, a property owner (Acts 4:36-37), an Ethiopian eunuch, who was a court official in charge of the entire treasury of the queen of the Ethiopians (Acts 8:27), Mary, whose house was a gathering place of the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, a luxury good (Acts 16:14),³⁷³ prominent women in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), influential Greek men and women in Beroea (Acts 17:12), Prisca and Aquila, who hosted Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-11), and who had the means to travel with him to Ephesus and establish a new mission base there (Acts 18:19-28).³⁷⁴ In this way, Luke articulates that wealth and discipleship are not mutually exclusive and "while Jesus [addresses] himself especially to the poor (who [constitute] a vast majority of the population at that time anyway), he [does] not address himself solely to the poor."³⁷⁵ The decisive factor for discipleship, then, "is how a

³⁷³ This is debatable; some scholars argue that purple cloth dealers were looked down on because of the smell and stain of the dye. See Schottroff, 65.

³⁷⁴ Reid, 130.

³⁷⁵ Meier, *Companions and Competitors*, 76.

follower uses his or her possessions. The Galilean women put their faith into action by paying the expenses [of the Jesus' mission].”³⁷⁶

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

Chapter V

Results and Implications

Recall from the introduction my main arguments regarding Luke 8:1-3: 1) there were wealthy women who funded Jesus' ministry, and 2) the women in 8:2-3 model what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus. In order to evaluate the first of these two statements I return to the issue of history remembered and history metaphorized.

A. History Remembered and History Metaphorized

An important underlying question within this study has been whether the picture that Luke paints in 8:1-3 is historically plausible regarding the circle around Jesus, or whether it is Luke wishing to present this picture as a model for the wealthy in the churches in which his gospel is being read. I ask this question having come to the conclusion that Luke's account is a reliable memory and begin summarizing the results by examining the implications for how one views Jesus.

1. Jesus

An analysis of the women in 8:1-3 implies several things about how one views Jesus. Firstly, the fact that the women and the Twelve are "with Jesus" (v.1) implies that from the very early stages of his ministry Jesus had female disciples and that they traveled with him, despite the cultural and religious problems this posed. The act of women traveling

with a male rabbi remained controversial for Jewish people in the latter half of the first century. It is unlikely, therefore, that this information is a projection of Luke's community back into Jesus' time. As Ben Witherington III states:

There is little reason to question the authenticity of the information that women travelled with and served Jesus and the disciples since this conduct was unheard of and considered scandalous in Jewish circles. It is unlikely to have been invented by a Christian community which contained converted Jews and which did not wish to appear morally suspect to a Mediterranean world that was already sexually and morally indulgent.³⁷⁷

We can thus infer that within the context of his ministry Jesus held a very different view of women than many of his Jewish and Greco-Roman contemporaries: he welcomed them as traveling companions, financial providers, and disciples.

Secondly, the fact that several of the women in 8:1-3 are named indicates that they were well known and thus played important roles within Jesus' community of disciples, which paints a picture of Jesus as one who was not opposed to women acting as leaders in his community of followers.

Thirdly, as discussed in Chapter I all of the gospel portraits of Jesus recognize him as a healer and a teacher who makes disciples. The implications of Luke 8:1-3 are in line with this tradition as Jesus is pictured as one who heals the women and includes them in his travels. We can only infer that he teaches them as his disciples as they travel from place to place. In this regard the text contains elements of history remembered.

Fourthly, in Luke 8:3 Jesus accepts the ongoing material support of Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and several other women. In this way Jesus affirms the actions of people who

³⁷⁷ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 110-111.

give out of their financial resources to support his work. Serving in this capacity should thus be revered as a form of ministry and discipleship.

Finally, Mary and Joanna's presence among the community of Jesus' followers, given demon possession in the case of Mary and identification with Herod's court in the case of Joanna, indicates that Jesus embraced social outcasts.

Chapter IV highlighted one implication that is a potential contradiction to the over-arching portrait of Jesus within the Gospel of Luke, namely, that Jesus accepted into his circle wealthy disciples. Luise Schottroff asserts that there were no wealthy women following Jesus and supporting him out of their wealth. Instead, she attributes this reference in Luke 8 to later experiences of the early church in the cities of the Roman Empire outside Palestine, which she believes Luke projects back into Jesus' time,³⁷⁸ an example of history metaphorized. However, evidence from the first half of the first century indicates that it was common for wealthy women, both Jewish and pagan, to support religious and political leaders financially.³⁷⁹ Jesus would have required this kind of support for his ministry.

Throughout the synoptic gospels it appears that Jesus' disdain for wealth and possessions is disdain for a variety of underlying issues, such as self reliance, rather than possessions in and of themselves. The women in Luke 8:1-3 do not have this kind of attachment to their possessions. As a result, Jesus' acceptance of their financial provision fits with the original impulse that Jesus is one who affirms those who trust and depend on God rather than their own economic means. In this way, the implications for Jesus in

³⁷⁸ Schottroff, *Let the Oppressed Go Free*, 92.

³⁷⁹ Chapter III, 11.

Luke 8:1-3 fit within the overarching portrait of Jesus in the gospels and can thus be understood as history remembered, rather than history metaphorized.

2. The Women

A social historical study of Luke 8:1-3 reveals that much of the information Luke provides regarding the women is history remembered. First, the fact that the women travel with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem is attested in all of the synoptic gospels, which increases the historical reliability of this tradition. Second, Mary's demon possession is likely an allusion to an extended pre-existing and known narrative. Third, the rarity of Joanna's husband's name, Chuza, and the likelihood that someone with such a name would be a Nabatean at the court of Herod suggests that Joanna did live in Jesus' time as a member of the Herodian aristocracy. Fourth, it is historically plausible that some of the women were wealthy. For example, Joanna's connection to Herod's court is a sound indicator of her wealth and status within society. There is no reason why Joanna could not have provided for Jesus and the Twelve out of her possessions as a first century patron would have. Yet in 8:1-3 the role of patron is revised. The women, Joanna for certain, act as economic providers for Jesus and the Twelve, but do not propagate a relationship between un-equals for the purpose of self glorification. Thus, the term "patron" in the traditional Greco-Roman sense of the term no longer applies.

3. Luke's Audience

While it contains a great deal of information that is history remembered, 8:1-3 does reflect some realities of the latter half of the first century, which makes the text relevant for Luke's audience.

As previously indicated, the majority of scholars date Luke's Gospel c.85 C.E.³⁸⁰

According to Tannehill, Luke's primary audience was:

a group of late first century churches of diverse social composition [...] including people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, social status, and wealth. There were Jews and Gentiles, women and men, poor and relatively wealthy people, common people and a few members, perhaps, of the elite or of the retainer class who had important positions with the elite.³⁸¹

He quotes Moxnes: "We can envisage Luke's community as a group of non elite persons who are culturally and ethnically mixed but who also include among them some who come from the elite periphery."³⁸² Several wealthy elites within the Roman Empire in the latter half of the first century claimed Jesus as Christ. For example, Theophilus, to whom the gospel of Luke is addressed (1:1-3), appears to have been of high standing since Luke refers to him as "most excellent" (κράτιστε).³⁸³ "Κράτιστε" is the common Greek equivalent for the Latin *egregius* (a title for a member of the "knights" of Roman society, which also came to mean "procurator").³⁸⁴ This implies that "Theophilus was socially respected and probably well off, or highly placed in the society to which Luke had

³⁸⁰ D. L. Block, "Luke, Gospel of," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot Mc Knight et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 498-499.

³⁸¹ Tannehill, 24.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁸³ Fitzmyer, 300.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

access.”³⁸⁵ There is also evidence in Acts and the Pauline letters that suggests that wealthy people participated in the Jesus movement.³⁸⁶ Luke is writing for this broad audience that encompasses both rich and poor. He is concerned with the issues that they face proclaiming Jesus as Christ and living accordingly as believers.

The status and wealth of certain individuals belonging to Luke’s audience gave their communities influence. Tannehill goes so far as to say that “much of the teaching about poverty and wealth in Luke makes most sense when directed to people who have some wealth.”³⁸⁷ The data that I have collected does not eliminate the possibility that women, wealthy women no less, were disciples of Jesus from the early stages of his ministry. At the same time, Luke finds in this tradition something he employs for his own particular audience. Luke 8:1-3 appeals to Luke’s audience of wealthy men and women because it defends the presence of women of means within the new community of faith. In addition it defends the presence of Gentiles within the community of faith since in 8:1-3 the character of Joanna is married to a Nabatean presumably with Greco-Roman leanings. This concern fits with one of the potential purposes of Luke’s gospel, which is “to provide a sociological legitimation of full fellowship for Gentiles and a defense of the new community.”³⁸⁸ In this regard Luke 8:1-3 is thus both history remembered and history metaphorized.

Finally, the relevance of 8:1-3 for Luke’s community is that it describes a counter cultural reality in which honour, kinship, and the patron-client relationship are redefined.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Balch and Osiek, *Families*, 97. For example: the mother of John Mark in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), Prisca and Aquila at Rome and/or Ephesus (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19), Nympha (Col. 4:15), and Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40).

³⁸⁷ Tannehill, 25.

³⁸⁸ Block, 498.

In this way, 8:3 is an example for the wealthy people in Luke's community of how they should distribute their funds and how the Church should receive both funds and founders. This counter cultural reality reflects Jesus' close circle of followers (history remembered).

For the wider society at the time, 8:1-3 is notable for the following reasons: 1) it challenges existing roles of women who remain in the household with their male relatives or spouse; 2) it diminishes the importance of kinship ties and changes the function of the patron-client relationship; 3) it challenges existing notions of honour and shame. What society finds dishonourable or shameful, Luke remembers Jesus as finding honourable.³⁸⁹ Yet, for the people within Luke's community who had already heard of Phoebe, Prisca, Lydia, and other female leaders within the Pauline movement, the leadership role, social standing, and economic resources of the women in Luke 8:1-3 was nothing out of the ordinary.

Although Luke 8:1-3 does not offer an unfiltered record of Jesus and his circle of followers, but contains a mix of history remembered and metaphorized, in its entirety it is consistent with the originating impulses of the gospel tradition. In this way it serves as a valuable witness to the life and ministry of Jesus and the life and ministry of Luke and his community.

B. Narrative-Critical Findings

Even though there is very good reason to see 8:1-3 as reflective of Jesus' own ministry, we can still appreciate its role within the narrative artistry of Luke as a writer. A

³⁸⁹ Esler, 145.

narrative-critical approach highlights findings in regards to the major themes in Luke, how they come to expression in this passage, and what place the passage has in the gospel as a whole.

1. Major Themes

As stated in the introduction, one of the major themes in Luke is discipleship. Within the narrative the women in 8:1-3 play the role of wealthy female disciples. The indicator that the women are acting as disciples is the fact that they are described as travelling “with” Jesus and the Twelve as Jesus continues his ministry, which Luke cites as a requirement for discipleship (14:25-35).

Luke’s gospel draws a connection between healing and preaching in the ministry of Jesus (e.g. 6:18-19).³⁹⁰ This is evidenced in Luke 8:1-3 when Luke uses the words “preaching and proclaiming” for a third time (see 4:18; 43-44) to describe Jesus’ ministry and then in verse two implies that Jesus healed the women of “evil spirits and sicknesses.” Luke 8:2 also recalls 7:21-22, where Jesus is said to have been healing from evil spirits and sicknesses and preaching the good news to the poor.³⁹¹

Another major theme in Luke’s narrative is service and care for those in need. This theme is carried through 8:1-3 in which the women serve Jesus and the Twelve, travelers dependent on the generosity of others. The Christology of Luke’s gospel, which depicts Jesus as one who serves others, gives added significance to the role that the women take on. The focus of 8:2-3 is their trust and provision rather than their wealth. In

³⁹⁰ Johnson, 131.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

this regard, the findings in this thesis indicate that not all disciples sold everything they owned in order to follow Jesus. Jesus made radical demands on those with property and the women in 8:2-3 submit to these demands by giving out of their possessions to Jesus and the Twelve. They are accepted as Jesus' followers and spoken well of for the financial support they gave to Jesus' ministry.

2. Role of the Pericope in the Gospel

Luke 8:1-3 is transitional; it reflects the spread of Jesus' ministry and the presence of his disciples around him as he travels. It also begins a section of the narrative (8:1-21) that is characterized by hearing and doing God's word. In doing so, it "[heightens] the sense of movement and itinerancy in Jesus' ministry" and models a positive response to Jesus' announcement of the kingdom.³⁹²

The positioning of Luke 8:1-3 is such that it introduces the women as economic providers for Jesus and the Twelve early in Jesus' ministry, prior to the sending of the Twelve and the Seventy-Two. In their role as providers the women model the kind of faith and hospitality that the Twelve and the Seventy-Two are instructed to rely on when they enter a town with no provisions of their own (9:3-4; 10:4-7). The women are thus recognized as important supporters of Jesus' minister at a time when this does not always come easily (e.g. 4:29; 9:5; 10:10-11). This kind of support system is also modeled in the book of Acts in which traveling apostles depend on the hospitality of other believers wherever they go (e.g. Acts 13; 16; 17). The work of the Kingdom thus depends on the

³⁹² Leander E. Keck, et al., ed, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 173.

complete trust of some on God's provision for their needs, and the hospitality of others to meet those needs. Each role presents its own challenges and models faith in Jesus the Messiah.

In light of these insights Luke 8:1-3 serves as a significant text on its own, both historically and narratively, while at the same time it points forward to the role of women in the passion and resurrection narratives. Some of Luke's most important themes are present: the universalism of the gospel, qualities of true discipleship, and good news to the poor and marginalized. The women are a part of these themes as they model service to others out of their material possessions and represent marginalized people who are drawn into the circle of Jesus' followers.³⁹³

C. Conclusion

Women play a significant role in Luke's narrative. The various references to women throughout Luke's gospel "demonstrate both Jesus' concern to extend God's mercy to women as well as to men and Luke's sensitivity to Jesus' radical departure from the social conventions of his time."³⁹⁴ Luke's description of Jesus' relationship with the women in 8:1-3 is an example of this phenomenon. These women are important members of Jesus' community of followers. Most importantly they are revered within the narrative as those people who receive the good news, grasp hold, and remain by Jesus' side as

³⁹³ Witherington, "On the road," 134.

³⁹⁴ Keck, 24.

committed witnesses to the crucifixion, entombment, and resurrection.³⁹⁵ In this way they continue to serve as unlikely role models for Luke's community of early Christians.

³⁹⁵ Chapter IV, 4.

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