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FOUNDATIONS FOR A BIBLICAL MODEL OF SERVANT
LEADERSHIP IN THE SLAVE IMAGERY OF LUKE-ACTS

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APPROVAL SHEET

FOUNDATIONS FOR A BIBLICAL MODEL OF SERVANT
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To my Lord, Jesus Christ, who has redeemed me and called me to serve Him with all that I am. To Katie, my love. Your sacrifice and support demonstrate God's grace in my life and I am so thankful for you. To our children, Caleb, Joshua, Andrew, and Elliana. You give me such joy and I pray that you will faithfully serve the Lord.

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PREFACE

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Finally, I am humbled and amazed by God's grace to purchase me as His own possession and entrust me with leadership in my home and His church. It is my ambition to please Him in everything I do and my prayer that, by His grace, I will put into practice the very principles of leadership considered in this study. Christ is my Savior, my Lord, and my example of humble service and I will follow after Him as long as He permits me to serve Him on the earth.

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

Servant leadership presents a counterintuitive paradigm of power in leadership in which the leader gives up control to empower others to reach their fullest potential for the good of the organization and society as a whole.¹ The lofty rhetoric, compelling stories, and bottom line success of servant leadership theory have made it an attractive leadership model in business and religious organizations over the past forty years. Bass optimistically predicts that, “the strength of the servant leadership movement and its many links to encouraging follower learning, growth, and autonomy, suggests that the untested theory will play a role in the future leadership of the learning organization.”² Many Christian writers have enthusiastically embraced this countercultural leadership model which reflects certain biblical themes such as selflessness, service, and humility.³ While Nair is

¹Peter Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 234. The inclusion of a chapter on servant leadership in the 6th ed. of this compendium of leadership theory is strong evidence for the popularity and significance of this theory in contemporary leadership discussions.

²Bernard M. Bass, “The Future of Leadership in Learning Organizations,” *Journal of Leadership Studies* 7 (2000): 33.

³Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005); Jeanine Parolini, *Transformational Servant Leadership* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2012); James C. Hunter, *The World’s Most Powerful Leadership Principle: How to Become a Servant Leader* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2004); Ken Blanchard, Bill Hybels, and Phil Hodges, *Leadership by the Book: Tools to Transform Your Workplace* (New York: Waterbrook, 1999); Calvin Miller, *The Empowered Leader: 10 Keys to Servant Leadership* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995); Stephen Graves and Thomas Addington, *Life@Work on Leadership: Enduring Insights for Men and Women of Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002); C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Discovering the Secrets of Servant Leadership from the Life of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1998).

certainly correct that the connection between service and leadership goes back thousands of years, the distinctive model of servant leadership extant in contemporary theory has its origins in the philosophical presuppositions and altruistic principles of Robert Greenleaf only forty years ago.⁴ While the practical value of Greenleaf's theory was quickly recognized and endorsed by popular leadership writers, only recently has servant leadership been developed into a cohesive theory including antecedent conditions, servant leader behaviors, and leadership outcomes.⁵ These developments of the theory, in addition to the thousands of books and articles published on the topic of servant leadership from Christian and secular perspectives, suggest that servant leadership is arguably one of the prevailing leadership theories for the current generation.⁶

As servant leadership has grown in popularity many Christian leaders have broadly adopted the presuppositions and methodology of Greenleaf uncritically, correlating them to the example of Christ without careful attention to the anthropological and teleological underpinnings of Greenleaf's theory. In recent years several Christian theorists have begun to critique some of the underlying assumptions of Greenleaf's servant leadership model and called for a more biblically-based paradigm of selfless leadership.⁷ Niewold warns, "Servant leadership in its

⁴Keshavan Nair, *A Higher Standard of Leadership: Lessons from the Life of Ghandi* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1994), 59.

⁵Northouse, *Leadership*, 223-25.

⁶Amazon.com lists approximately four thousand books on servant leadership of which almost half are written with some connection to Christianity. These books represent the popular appeal of servant leadership while the thousands of articles on servant leadership in scholarly journals reveal an ongoing interest in this theory from the academic community.

⁷Some examples include Yvonne Bradley, "Servant Leadership: A Critique of Robert Greenleaf's Concept of Leadership," *Journal of Christian Education* 42 (1999): 43-54; Joe Anderson, "The Writings of Robert K. Greenleaf: An Interpretive Analysis and the Future of Servant Leadership" (a paper presented at the Servant Leadership Roundtable, Virginia Beach, Virginia, May 2008); Galen

secular form is based on non-Christian secular and religious ideas. But even in its Christianized form it is reflective of a heterodox and distorted Christology, which in turn helps perpetuate.”⁸ Some, such as Kathleen Patterson, have attempted to correct the existing model of servant leadership by augmenting it with Christian principles, such as *agapao* love.⁹ Even these attempts to ameliorate the flaws of servant leadership have drawn mostly from other secular theories or superficial study of Scripture, leading Patterson herself to concede, “There is a gap in servant leadership literature connecting the theory to its proper Christological and biblical origins. . . . If the theory is to be complete, research needs to be conducted to fill this apparent lack.”¹⁰ Greenleaf’s theory has been appropriately criticized for its humanistic anthropology, eclectic spirituality, and insufficient teleology. However, attempts to construct a distinctively biblical model of servant leadership have failed to develop a comprehensive viable alternative.¹¹

A careful exegetical approach to the study of servanthood as a metaphor in Scripture reveals that the leader is not called to be a servant after all, but rather a slave who is obedient and ultimately accountable to God as his or her Master. Terms which are frequently translated “servant” in the Old Testament (עֶבֶד) and the New Testament (δοῦλος) denote slavery rather than mere servanthood, describing a

Wendell Jones, “A Theological Comparison between Social Science Models and a Biblical Perspective of Servant Leadership,” Ph.D. diss. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012.

⁸Jack Niewold, “Beyond Servant Leadership,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 1 (2007): 118.

⁹Kathleen A. Patterson, “Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model,” Ph.D. diss., Regent University, 2003.

¹⁰Quoted in Jones, *A Theological Comparison*, 2.

¹¹Jones, *A Theological Comparison*, and Anderson, *The Writings of Robert Greenleaf*, both offer trenchant critiques of Greenleaf but fail to develop an exegetical alternative that considers the canon of Scripture as a whole rather than one or two pertinent passages.

“slave (whether literal or figurative) whose person and service belong wholly to another.”¹² This provocative image conveys a much richer and more demanding metaphor than servanthood when understood within its cultural context. One cannot responsibly exegete passages that repeatedly describe leaders and even Christ himself with slave language without considering the distinctive paradigm of Christian leadership that this metaphor implies. While there has been a surge of popular and scholarly interest in the metaphor of slavery in Scripture as a model for Christian discipleship, to date the slave metaphor’s relation to leadership, in contradistinction from secular models, has received very little focused attention.¹³

Thesis

Many Christian leaders and theorists have developed a paradigm of servant leadership based on secular servant leadership theory and selective exegesis of biblical passages that use servant terminology. Unfortunately they have generally overlooked a foundational exegetical detail concerning the lexical and cultural referent of slavery rather than servanthood. Therefore, it will be argued that the slave imagery used in Scripture as a whole and in Luke-Acts in particular offers a distinctively Christian paradigm of leadership in contradistinction to the follower-oriented servant leadership paradigms that have gained popularity in secular and

¹²Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 25.

¹³Some examples of the popular and scholarly attention recently devoted to the slave metaphor in relationship to discipleship include Harris, *Slave of Christ*; John MacArthur, *Slave: The Hidden Truth about Your Identity in Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010); Michael Card, *A Better Freedom: Finding Life as Slaves of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009). A few authors have noted the slave metaphor as having some significance in relationship to a biblical understanding of servant leadership but have not developed and differentiated an alternative model of leadership based on a study of the metaphor of slavery in Scripture. Jones, *A Theological Comparison*, and Don N. Howell Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003) are two such examples.

Christian literature alike. Rather than attempt to provide a comprehensive canonical treatment of the slave theme as it relates to leadership, this study will focus specifically on how the metaphor is used in Luke-Acts to evaluate the importance of the metaphor in the exemplary and didactic ministry of Christ and then how the metaphor was used in Luke's narrative account of the early church and its leaders.

This study will argue that slave leadership in Luke-Acts was rooted in both Hebrew and Greco-Roman understandings of slavery in which Christians generally and leaders particularly were to understand their salvation as placing them in subordination to God as Master with clear ethical implications for the manner in which leadership was to be carried out. A model of slave leadership encompasses the leader's identity and behavior comprehensively. First, leadership as slavery means that the leader becomes God's possession on the basis of his redemption and therefore the leader belongs to God and is placed under the Lord's absolute authority.¹⁴ Second, the leader's identity is found not in accomplishments or ability but in his or her relationship to God as Master. The leader's life and existence are found in Christ and this entails a great responsibility as the leader represents God in his service. Third, a slave leader exercises delegated authority from the Master, therefore his words and actions carry weight, not because of who he is, but because of whom he serves. The leader is both in authority and under authority, accountable to the master and responsible for the people he serves.

Fourth, the slave leader focuses on pleasing the Master by subordinating his own will to that of the Master. The slave leader is expected to internalize the will

¹⁴ Here and throughout this study masculine pronouns will be used in reference to a Christian leader. It is readily affirmed that both men and women exercise important leadership roles in God's kingdom, and this choice was made as a matter of convenience and to facilitate stylistic simplicity. Masculine pronouns were chosen because of the biblical pattern of male leadership within the church specifically described in 1Tim 3 and Titus 1.

of the Master so that he demonstrates the character and priorities of the Master in every leadership situation, even in the absence of explicit commands. Fifth, the leader as slave is compelled to give complete and unconditional obedience to God as Master. The leader may not pick and choose which of the master's commands to obey. The faithful slave carries out the will of the master, calling Him Lord and living it out. Sixth, just as a slave was entirely dependent upon the master for provision and direction, so a slave leader is constantly dependent upon the Lord and His indwelling presence for empowerment and discernment. Finally, the slave may be susceptible to abuse or mistreatment as a result of his unconditional obedience to the Master's will. It will be shown that the slave leadership paradigm which is evident in Luke-Acts is further reflected in the use of the metaphor of slavery as a designator of leadership as found in the rest of the New Testament. The metaphor of slavery suggests a markedly different paradigm of leadership than contemporary models of servant leadership have offered and this study will investigate the lexical, socio-cultural, and exegetical implications of this metaphor for Christian leadership.

Void in Existing Leadership Literature

The proposed void in the research literature is predicated upon the premise that current secular servant leadership models are incompatible with a Christian worldview. This section will first outline the primary deficiencies of Greenleaf's servant leadership model to highlight the need for a biblically-based model. While this section will offer a theological critique of Greenleaf's model of servant leadership, it is acknowledged that Greenleaf shifted the leadership landscape toward a more biblical model of leadership that eschews self-interest, expresses concern for others, and gives consideration for the broad implications of the leader's actions. Despite these contributions, Greenleaf's humanistic servant

model is built upon a flawed foundation, reflecting secular presuppositions regarding anthropology and teleology. Even most Christian paradigms of servant leadership are incomplete because they rely on Greenleaf's model more than a robust and canonical consideration of the servant/slave metaphor. These deficiencies reveal the need for a biblically-based, distinctively Christian model that is theologically coherent and theoretically consistent which can serve as a corrective for secular paradigms and a foundation for Christian models of servant leadership. Next, it will be argued that the clarion call for a thoroughly biblical paradigm of servant leadership has been left largely unanswered in the literature. Finally, the scholarly literature on the slave metaphor has focused almost exclusively on the didactic and titular use of the image of slavery in the New Testament, especially in Paul's epistles, so that the parables and narrative discourses employing slave terminology found in the gospels and Acts have been generally overlooked. I will suggest that careful attention to these literary genres, specifically in Luke-Acts, fills a scholarly gap in discussion of the slave metaphor in Scripture.

Deficiencies of Greenleaf's Servant Leadership Theory

Greenleaf articulates an extremely optimistic view of human beings and their natural, latent potential to pursue selfless ends, self-actualize, and subsequently meet the needs of individuals within society.¹⁵ He suggests that, given the right social and leadership climate, humanity will, by their own volition, become more caring, ethical, and just.¹⁶ Servant leadership is permeated by humanistic assumptions regarding humanity's ability to create a utopian society through self-

¹⁵Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 49.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 65.

actualization and free individual choice.¹⁷ Even Christian writers such as James Hunter optimistically proclaim that “human beings have the unique ability to *choose* to be different from their nature.”¹⁸ Scripture is clear that every person is bound by sin and is inwardly-focused apart from the redemptive work of Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:5-8). The characteristics of servant leadership including selflessness, humility, and exemplary character demand God’s presence to transform the leader’s desires and will. To his credit, Greenleaf recognized the need for some catalytic agent, such as “religious conversion, psychoanalysis, or an overpowering new vision,” to transform someone into a servant leader. However, he failed to identify salvation and sanctification as the only such means to that end.¹⁹ Anderson makes the observation that “Greenleaf believed strongly in the capabilities of the human spirit, but failed to really understand the capabilities of the Holy Spirit that dwells in the heart of those that are born again.”²⁰ Therefore, servant leadership identifies appropriate redemptive ends but lacks the redemptive means, appropriated only through faith in Jesus Christ, to overcome human depravity.

Greenleaf’s humanistic anthropology is directly connected to his humanistic teleology in which the primary goal of the leader is to serve the highest priority needs of followers to facilitate their own self-actualization.²¹ As a result,

¹⁷Bradley, “Servant Leadership,” 44.

¹⁸Hunter, *The World’s Most Powerful Leadership Principle*, 135.

¹⁹Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Power of Servant Leadership: Essays by Robert K. Greenleaf*, ed. Larry Spears (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1998), 23.

²⁰Anderson, *The Writings of Robert K. Greenleaf*, 8.

²¹Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (Westfield, IN: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 1970), 15.

servant leadership places a premium on empowering and developing people to become self-actualizing, autonomous, and creative contributors to the organization.²² Every member of the organization is considered uniquely gifted, intrinsically valuable, and brimming with latent potential and the leader must give individualized attention to assist followers in achieving their potential.²³ Patterson attempts to integrate a Christian motive into this model by suggesting that *agapao* love is a foundational component of servant leadership which moves toward others with attention to their individual needs rather than viewing them as a means to an end.²⁴ James Hunter builds upon Patterson's concept and defines love as "the act of extending yourself for others by identifying and meeting their legitimate needs and seeking their greatest good."²⁵ In spite of these attempted correctives, the *telos* remains the same: the needs of the follower. The follower is the one who identifies his or her highest priority need and the follower is the one who determines the greatest good.

Discerning theorists concede that such absolute submission to followers is untenable and argue that parameters must be established to avoid destructive patterns in the organization.²⁶ However, the question remains: who will determine the nature and scope of those parameters and upon what basis? Anderson suggests that a biblical paradigm of servant leadership requires a shift from focusing on

²²Dirk van Dierendonck, "Servant Leadership: A Review and Synthesis," *Journal of Management* 37 (2011): 1245.

²³Robert C. Liden et al., "Servant Leadership: Development of a Multidimensional Measure and Multi-Level Assessment," *The Leadership Quarterly* 19 (2008): 161.

²⁴ Patterson, "Servant Leadership," 8.

²⁵Hunter, *The World's Most Powerful Leadership Principle*, 86.

²⁶Bradley, "Greenleaf and Servant Leadership," 51.

“serving followers and society to focusing on serving God.”²⁷ While Jesus was always attentive to the needs of those he met, at times he intentionally left their felt needs unmet because they were misguided or shallow (Matt 16:1-4, John 6:26). In Scripture, authority and direction are established by God and the Christian leader is a servant of the Lord and His agenda first and foremost (Gal 1:10). God’s perfect character and glory define both the ends and the means of leadership, providing the ‘true north’ by which Christian leaders must orient their decisions and behavior.

The final deficiency of Greenleaf’s model is its eclectic spirituality with a clear predilection for principles drawn from eastern mysticism which fit with Greenleaf’s humanistic ideals.²⁸ Despite the fact that many Christians appropriate his model, Greenleaf never claimed to be a Christian and his thinking was shaped by a syncretism of Unitarian, Buddhist, and Judeo-Christian principles.²⁹ Greenleaf reflects this eclectic spirituality in his writings as he frequently cites Jesus but only as a selfless moral example, “the greatest of the avatars,” who had a deep tenderness for the needs of others and sacrificed his own interests on their behalf.³⁰ Greenleaf’s use of Scripture is supplementary to his primary argument and he freely augments its teaching to fit his presuppositions.³¹ For instance, he decries the hierarchical delegation advocated by Jethro in Exodus 18 because it centralizes power in the leader and smacks of spiritual elitism. He concludes, “A close examination of Jethro’s principle reveals that it does not assume Moses in the role of servant.

²⁷Anderson, “The Writings of Robert K. Greenleaf,” 12.

²⁸Jones, “Theological Comparison,” 75.

²⁹Greenleaf, *The Power of Servant Leadership*, 267.

³⁰Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 337.

³¹Greenleaf, *The Power of Servant Leadership*, 58.

Clearly he is the dominating leader, dedicated though he may be to his job.”³² Greenleaf’s presuppositions preclude the deity and supreme authority of Christ and moralize the substitutionary atonement as a selfless example of servanthood comparable to other great religious figures. These diverse spiritual influences, when paired with the optimistic humanism of servant leadership, suggest that leadership is a type of spiritual quest instead of an authoritative trust both granted and enabled by the God of the Bible.

The Need for a Biblical Paradigm of Servant Leadership

The preceding survey of servant leadership’s deficiencies highlights the need for a model of Christian leadership that is rooted in the truth of Scripture and centered on God’s character and purposes. Bradley was one of the first to recognize some of the deficiencies of Greenleaf’s model and call for a more precise biblical approach which takes into account the complex dynamics of authority and accountability within leadership.³³ However, she does not even allude to how such a model might differ from Greenleaf’s theory, let alone attempt to construct such a paradigm. Anderson’s essay ably exposes key deficiencies of Greenleaf’s model and then urges Christian leaders to continue in the trajectory already established by Greenleaf by moving away from focus on self and ultimately focusing on serving God for His glory.³⁴ “God-centered servant leadership,” he explains, is “the exercise of leadership in such a manner that God is always honored by the decisions, actions, service, and intentions. . . . Lives are no longer focused first on men, and on what

³²Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant Leader Within: A Transformative Path* (Mahwah, NJ:Paulist, 2003), 43.

³³Yvonne Bradley, “Servant Leadership: A Critique of Robert Greenleaf’s Concept of Leadership,” *Christian Education Journal* 42 (1999): 52.

³⁴Anderson, “The Writings of Robert Greenleaf,” 12.

men want, and they are all about God and what He wants.”³⁵ This is a vital conceptual shift in the formation of a Christian paradigm of servant leadership by correcting both the anthropology and teleology of Greenleaf’s model. While Anderson’s model is rich conceptually, it is anemic both biblically and practically, orienting the reader to God but offering minimal biblical support regarding the basis or expression of this model.

Galen Jones posits a clear distinction between Greenleaf’s model of servant leadership and the biblical perspective, arguing that Scripture must be the foundation of any theological paradigm of servant leadership.³⁶ While most of Jones’ writing is aimed at deconstructing secular perspectives, he does outline a model of leadership based on Christ’s instructions in Mark 10:43-45, arguing that Christian leadership is to be contradistinct from secular models and that Christian leaders are literally slaves, not servants, of the Lord.³⁷ This emphasis on a distinctively biblical model of servant leadership is a welcome development and Jones’ observations are helpful as far as they go. However, his argument is necessarily limited in scope and therefore his paradigm is based almost entirely on Mark 10:43-45 and the paradox of power through powerlessness. The most trenchant observation of Jones’ model is the shift from servant to slave language as he recognizes that the term often translated ‘servant’ in Scripture is literally a word meaning ‘slave’ which fundamentally alters one’s understanding of ‘servant’ leadership.³⁸

³⁵Ibid., 18.

³⁶Jones, “Theological Comparison,” 33.

³⁷Ibid., 39.

³⁸Ibid., 16.

Don Howell presents the most systematic biblical theology to date of the servant metaphor in Scripture in his book *Servants of the Servant*. Howell's very first paragraph cites the centrality of עֶבֶד and δοῦλος terminology and the cultural background of chattel slavery for understanding the biblical paradigm of a leader, whom he describes as a "servant of the Lord."³⁹ Howell argues in his first chapter that the Old Testament employs the terminology of slavery for leaders as well as for Israel as a whole by transforming the metaphor from describing an oppressed slave to depicting a redeemed "servant."⁴⁰ However, Howell gives no rationale for why עֶבֶד should mean indentured slavery to a master in one instance while describing voluntary servitude in another, especially since the clear lexical meaning of the word is 'slave.' Howell's discussion of δοῦλος in the New Testament likewise acknowledges the pejorative connotation of the term for slavery which entails forfeiture of opportunity for self-determination.⁴¹ It is ironic then that he argues that δοῦλος, when used of believers, should be translated " 'servant(s)' rather than 'slave(s),' for the entire personality is now a voluntary rather than compulsory participant in the act of obedience."⁴² Howell effectively redefines the meaning of δοῦλος by such an arbitrary decision without biblical or lexical support. Consequently, the remainder of his study describes leadership as voluntary servanthood which misses the theological and practical significance of the metaphor of slavery to describe Christian leadership.

³⁹Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 6.

⁴⁰Ibid., 7.

⁴¹Ibid., 11.

⁴²Ibid., 13.

Scope of Scholarly Research

The extant scholarly literature on the metaphor of slavery in Scripture is broadly divided into two different categories: evaluation of the socio-cultural background of slavery in New Testament literature and hermeneutical exploration of the significance of the metaphor as it is used in the rhetoric of the New Testament. The socio-cultural background will be given further consideration in chapters two and three but a brief overview of the research on the rhetorical use of the slave metaphor will reveal a predilection for Paul's writings despite the fact that Christ regularly employs the metaphor in His teaching. One of the first scholarly articles to call attention to the significance of the slave metaphor was written by Margaret Willink in 1928 in which she argued that Paul used the title "slave of Christ" as a designator of leadership.⁴³ Perhaps because of the explicit use of "slave of Christ" in Paul's salutations, subsequent exegetical literature has focused predominately on the Pauline usage of the metaphor.⁴⁴ The resources that do consider the slave metaphor in the gospels often focus on Mark 10:43-45 or one of its parallels and the connection between Christ as divine servant/slave and His mission to serve all of humanity.⁴⁵ While it is granted that Christ's "it is not so among you" leadership

⁴³M. D. R. Willink, "Paul, A Slave of Christ," *Theology* 16 (1928): 46-47.

⁴⁴Annang Asumang, "Captured by Christ Jesus: Paul as Christ's Trophy Slave in Philippians 3:12c," *Conspectus* 12 (2011): 1-38; Michael Brown, "Paul's Use of δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in Romans 1:1," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 (2001): 723-37; John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Brian J. Dodd, "Christ's Slave, People Pleasers and Galatians 1.10," *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996) 90-104; Sam Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons: A New Rhetoric Analysis on Paul's Slave Metaphors in His Letter to the Galatians* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Geoffrey Turner, "The Christian Life as Slavery: Paul's Subversive Metaphor," *Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010): 1-12.

⁴⁵Rikki E. Watts, "Jesus' Death, Isaiah 53, and Mark 10:45," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, ed. William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1998), 125-151; David Seeley, "Rulership and Service in Mark 10:41-45," *Novum Testamentum* 35 (1993): 234-50; Narry F. Santos, *Slave of All: The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark* (New York: Sheffield Academic, 2003); Jones, "Theological Comparison."

discourse (Matt 20:26, Mark 10:43, Luke 22:26) and His example of foot washing in John 13 make important contributions to a biblical understanding of the slave metaphor, their isolation from the author's narrative development and further use of the metaphor makes one's understanding fragmentary at best.

Other scholars who have attempted a more canonical approach to the slave metaphor and its development have still failed to give adequate attention to the slave metaphor in the gospels, most notably the parables, and the narratives in the book of Acts. I. A. H. Combes, in her excellent work *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church*, devotes less than two pages to the contribution of the synoptic gospels to the development of the slave metaphor.⁴⁶ Similarly, Dale Martin's *Slavery as Salvation*, admittedly a book focused on the development of the metaphor in Pauline Christianity, provides only a three paragraph summary of the slave metaphor in the gospels.⁴⁷ Murray Harris offers the most comprehensive scholarly development of the metaphor as he presents an integrated picture of slavery as a New Testament metaphor for Christian discipleship by examining its function in the gospels and epistolary literature.⁴⁸ Even this excellent treatment is limited to two pages dedicated to the slave parables while the book of Acts is employed merely for its historical timeline rather than considering its contribution to the development of the metaphor in the early church.⁴⁹ John MacArthur's recent

⁴⁶I. A. H. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 70-71. In Combes and the other resources mentioned in this paragraph there are references to the synoptics and Acts sparsely interspersed throughout the works but they receive very little exegetical development.

⁴⁷Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 52-53.

⁴⁸Harris, *Slave of Christ*.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 47-48, 157-63.

popular work, *Slave*, likewise devotes only two pages to the significance of Christ's use of the slave metaphor with the rest of his book developing the metaphor as conveyed by Paul and applied to the church.⁵⁰

There is a significant void in the research of the slave metaphor in Scripture as contemporary socio-cultural analysis of ancient slavery has seldom been used as an interpretive tool in the parables of the synoptic gospels and the narrative of the book of Acts, especially as it applies to the practical application of the metaphor as a descriptor of leadership or even discipleship. Jennifer Glancy is one of the few scholars who has rigorously considered the slave parables in light of the historical context of ancient slavery.⁵¹ However, Glancy's work primarily uses the parables to support her thesis that the New Testament reinforces the cultural brutality of slavery and she isolates the texts from their interpretive context arguing that Christ endorses the most problematic aspects of ancient slavery.⁵² J. Albert Harrill in his brief article, "The Psychology of Slaves in the Gospel Parables," also considers the slave parables in their social context without consideration of the interpretive clues in the context of the biblical narrative.⁵³ Harrill attempts to reconstruct the fears, motives, and reasoning of slaves in the parables by drawing parallels to classical Greco-Roman slavery based upon the depiction of slaves in

⁵⁰MacArthur, *Slave*, 41-43.

⁵¹Jennifer Glancy, "Slaves and Slavery in the Matthean Parables," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000): 67-90.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 71.

⁵³J. Albert Harrill, "The Psychology of Slaves in the Gospel Parables: A Case Study in Social History," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 55 (2011): 63-74.

ancient Roman comedy.⁵⁴ He concludes that the depiction of slaves in the gospel parables is not realistic, but rather idealistic rhetoric to reinforce cultural ideals.⁵⁵

Elizabeth Dowling reflects the influence of both Glancy and Harrill, reconstructing slavery as an institution marked by abuse, vulnerability, and oppression in her article, “Luke-Acts: Good News for Slaves?” which most closely approximates the scope of the present study.⁵⁶ Rather than expounding on the significance of the metaphor of slavery, Dowling approaches the text from a liberationist perspective and critiques the manner in which Luke-Acts seems to reinforce the harsh realities of first-century slavery. Mary Ann Beavis’ article is a lone example of the type of Christian scholarship that is needed in integrating socio-cultural reflection and hermeneutical precision to interpret Christ’s parables appropriately.⁵⁷ This study will strive to apply similar principles to a comprehensive study of the slave metaphor throughout Luke-Acts to begin to address the lack of scholarly reflection on the slave metaphor in its interpretive context in Luke and Acts.

Methodology

The following dissertation is a biblical, historical, and theological analysis of the slave metaphor in Luke-Acts with specific attention to its implications for Christian leadership. The methodology of its argument will follow the basic pattern employed by Timothy Laniak in his excellent book, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*,

⁵⁴Ibid., 66.

⁵⁵Ibid., 73.

⁵⁶Elizabeth V. Dowling, “Luke-Acts: Good News for Slaves?” *Pacifica* 24 (2011): 123-40.

⁵⁷Mary Ann Beavis, “Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8)” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 37-54.

in which he examined the cultural background of shepherd imagery as a metaphor and then traced the development of the biblical shepherd metaphor throughout Scripture with specific attention to observations and application of the metaphor to Christian leadership.⁵⁸ Rather than offering a canonical survey of the metaphor, the current study will strive to rigorously engage the metaphor as used in Luke-Acts in order to correlate the findings with the extant research on Old Testament and Pauline usage. After establishing a socio-cultural background for the metaphor, this study will compare the usage of the metaphor in Luke-Acts to the cultural reality in order to discern the continuity and discontinuity of the presentation of the metaphor of slavery and the historical practice of slavery. A historical-grammatical hermeneutic will be employed for relevant texts in Luke-Acts containing slave language, imagery, or allusions in a metaphorical sense. Passages that use Greek terms such as *δοῦλος*, *οἰκέτης*, *οἰκονόμος*, *παῖς*, *ὑπηρέτης*, *σύνδουλος*, and *δουλεύω* will be examined as will passages that use related slave language, such as *κύριος*, in which the context suggests a slave metaphor. I will synthesize the findings of this exegetical study, correlate them broadly to the use of the metaphor elsewhere in Scripture, and draw conclusions for the practice of leadership related to the proposed thesis.

Because this study demands the intersection of socio-historical, exegetical, theological, and leadership literature, a wide variety of resources will be employed in the development of its argument. This study begins with Scripture in its original languages and English translations because the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant, and sufficient revelation and it must be the final authority for one's understanding of the slave metaphor and its practical leadership significance. The historical background

⁵⁸Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

will benefit from a wide variety of monographs, books, and articles related to ancient Near Eastern, Hebrew, and Greco-Roman slavery, interacting with various perspectives on the referent of the metaphor and the connotations it conveyed to the original audience. The exegesis of relevant texts will incorporate insights from commentaries, word study tools, scholarly articles, early church fathers and resources specifically dedicated to the interpretation of parabolic literature. The synthesis of findings from Luke-Acts will be integrated into the use of the slave metaphor in the epistles and the early church by employing existing exegetical and theological treatments of the metaphor in Pauline literature. Finally, the principles of leadership drawn from the study of the slave metaphor will be contrasted with existing Christian and secular models of leadership to demonstrate the unique contribution of this metaphor for the practice of Christian leadership.

Delimitations

While this dissertation seeks to be comprehensive in its treatment of the slave metaphor, several limitations must circumscribe its scope. First, given the intricacies of Greco-Roman and Hebrew slavery this study will critically employ the existing research on the subject such as works by Harrill, Combes, Byron, Martin, Westermann, Weidemann, and Patterson. A detailed defense of the referent of the slavery metaphor based upon an examination of primary sources is beyond the scope of this study. Second, lexically this study will utilize studies of *δοῦλος*, *οἰκονόμος*, *דָּבָר* and other relevant terms that have already identified the semantic range, the nuances of the term in the historical context, and near semantic parallels. While brief evaluative comments may be offered, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive polysemantic examination of terms based upon primary sources outside of Scripture.

Third, the עֶבֶד motif in the Old Testament is polyvalent and pervasive relating to the image of God in humanity, the identity of Israel, the roles of prophets, and the expectations of Messiah. While this study will provide a brief overview of this motif as it informs the New Testament usage of the metaphor, a comprehensive study of this motif in the Old Testament is beyond the scope of this study. Fourth, the gospel accounts will be considered original and complete in their current canonical form without speculation regarding sources or editorial license. While at times Luke's accounts will be compared to synoptic parallels, a detailed discussion of source theory will not be undertaken. Finally, this dissertation will be restricted to the use of the metaphor of slavery in relationship to leadership and discipleship in Luke-Acts. Passages describing physical slavery and metaphorical slavery to sin are beyond the scope of this study except as they inform the central research purpose. Usage of the slave metaphor outside of Luke-Acts will be treated in a survey fashion without offering comment on every use of the slave metaphor in its exegetical context.

The purpose of this dissertation is to offer a constructive proposal for how the metaphor of slavery to Christ defines the nature and exercise of Christian leadership. Any critique or correction of existing theories is secondary to this priority of developing a biblical and theological model of leadership. Because the research will be an exegetical and theological treatment of slavery as a metaphor for leadership it is argued that, to the extent the conclusions are grounded in Scripture and marked by a sound hermeneutic, there are no limitations to the generalization of the research findings in their theological content. The application of this content will be culturally conditioned by the opportunities and challenges faced by Christian leaders in America in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 2

SLAVERY IN PRE-CHRISTIAN HEBREW LIFE AND THOUGHT

The study of the metaphor of slavery in Luke-Acts must necessarily begin with an investigation of the denotation and connotation of the slave imagery underlying it. This is complicated by the fact that the New Testament represents an intersection of Hebrew tradition, Greco-Roman society, and distinctive teaching from Jesus which establishes new paradigms for Christian life and practice. In order to discern the function of the slave metaphor in Luke-Acts this study will examine the actual conditions of physical slavery and the corresponding implications for the metaphorical usage of slavery as a rhetorical tool, first in pre-Christian Israelite society and then in the Greco-Roman milieu.¹ The self-identification of both Mary and Zechariah as slaves of the Lord (Luke 1:38, 48; 2:29) suggests a Hebrew background to their use of the slave metaphor as an expression of humility, dependence, and obedience. Mary's response in Luke 1:48 specifically echoes the language of Hannah's vow to the Lord in 1 Samuel 1:11 both lexically and conceptually.² Mary describes Israel collectively as the *παῖς* of God (Luke 1:54) and Zechariah cites the prophetic expectation for the house of David, the Lord's *παῖς*

¹ Edwin Yamauchi, "Slaves of God" *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* (1966): 35. Yamauchi makes the important point that the metaphorical use of slave imagery, especially in religious contexts, draws its denotation and connotation from the conditions of slavery known in a given society.

² The LXX uses *δούλη* twice in 1 Sam 1:11 to convey Hannah's humble and dependent status before her *κύριος*, which is the same word Mary uses twice to humbly submit to the will of the Lord and marvel at His gracious initiative (Luke 1:38,48).

(Luke 1:69) which parallel the slave language used metaphorically to convey national identity and messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. Luke further presents Christ as the *παῖς* of God (Acts 3:13), the fulfillment of the Isaianic suffering עֶבֶד (Luke 2:32, 22:37; Acts 13:47).

Luke's apparent dependence upon the Old Testament usage of slavery as a metaphor of both leadership and discipleship argues for an overview of physical and metaphorical slavery in Israelite society with focused attention on the aspects germane to Luke's usage of the language and imagery of slavery. This examination of pre-Christian Hebrew slave language will begin with a historical examination of physical slavery in the Ancient Near East (ANE) and in Israelite society. A lexical examination of the semantic range of עֶבֶד will demonstrate the variety of ways in which this slave language could be employed including literal chattel bondage, deferential court language, and the submission of an inferior to a superior. This chapter will then trace the development of the religious use of the slave metaphor in the Old Testament Scriptures in an effort to identify the primary referent and associations of the "slave of God" metaphor given the broad semantic diversity of the slave language in Israelite society. Finally, slavery in the second temple literature will be considered to determine its literal and metaphorical sense.

A Proposed Definition of Slavery

Before undergoing an examination of the historical and ideological background of Hebrew slavery, it is necessary to offer a basic definition of slavery so that, from the outset, this study offers semantic and conceptual clarity regarding what is meant by "slavery." This is even more important because antebellum American conceptions of slavery are inescapably affected by the exploitive practice of southern slavery in the nineteenth century. Murray Harris helpfully defines a slave

“(whether literal or figurative) as someone whose person and service belong wholly to another.”³ This concise and memorable definition encompasses the diverse practices of slavery in history by distilling a complex social institution down to its fundamental character. At the root of slavery is the idea that the slave is owned by the master as his possession and thus the master is free to use him however he wishes.⁴ As a corollary to this fundamental understanding, a slave’s status was no longer defined by family background, national identity, or social standing for his identity was defined exclusively by his relationship to the master.⁵ As the master’s possession, the slave was not autonomous or free to choose his own actions, but instead was subject to the master’s will and responsible for exclusive obedience to the master’s commands.⁶ Because he belongs exclusively to the master, a slave is completely dependent upon the master for provision and direction and the slave’s

³ Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 25.

⁴ J. P. M. Van Der Ploeg. “Slavery in the Old Testament,” *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 22 (1972): 82. Harris likewise observes the absolute nature of the master’s ownership which he roots in the Roman understanding of *dominium* (absolute control) and *potestas* (absolute power). Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 26. Dandamaev offers several different definitions of slavery in ancient Babylon which demonstrate diverse understandings of deprivation and coercion but all the definitions share the basic understanding that the slave is the possession of his master. Muhammad Dandamev, *Slavery in Babylonia: From Nabopolassar to Alexander the Great (626-331BC)* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 72-76. As one further example, Dexter Callender defines a slave as “a person deprived of freedom who may be purchased or soled and, as such, is the property of another, used in accordance with the will of that owner.” Dexter Callender Jr., “Servants of God(s) and Servants of Kings in Israel and the Ancient Near East,” *Semeia* 83/84 (2003): 68.

⁵ Paul V. M. Flesher, *Oxen, Women, or Citizens? Slaves in the System of the Mishnah* (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press: 1988), 18. Hezser demonstrates the role of denationalization and alienation in shaping the slave’s new social and personal identity. Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

⁶ While gender-neutral language will be used throughout this study where appropriate, when referring to master and slave I will use masculine pronouns as a matter of convenience. It is acknowledged that there were mistresses and female slaves in Hebrew as well as Roman society.

primary responsibility is to please the master.⁷ This brief definition and its amplified implications are sufficient to establish a broad understanding of what is meant by “slavery” without venturing into discussions of the character of the slavery, whether benevolent or malevolent, the duration of the slavery, or the social status of the slave within society. These variables will be discussed in the examination of Hebrew and Roman slavery but the basic understanding of a slave being possessed by and subject to his master is a necessary foundation for that discussion.

Socio-Historical Background of Hebrew Slavery

Since a metaphor is necessarily rooted in the symbolic universe of a specific culture, this study begins with an examination of physical and metaphorical slavery in Hebrew culture and surrounding societies. This socio-historical overview will provide potential associations of the metaphor of slavery as rhetorical device in Hebrew thought.

Slavery in the Ancient Near East

While it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive examination of the institution of slavery in the ancient Near East, the historical background of Israelite slavery entails some comparison and contrast to the sociological and religious significance of slavery in the nations surrounding Israel.

Practice of physical slavery in the ancient Near East. The first slaves in the ANE were captives who were taken in war as demonstrated by the fact that the earliest word for slave is the Sumerian term *Nita-Kur* which means “man of another

⁷ Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 115.

country.”⁸ There were at least four identifiable categories of slavery in the ancient Near East. First, the domestic slave was a chattel slave, typically a foreigner taken captive in war, who became the exclusive property of the master and served in the master’s house as a part of the larger family unit.⁹ Second, the debt slave was not usually a foreigner, but rather a fellow countryman who was forced to work for his creditor for a limited span of time in order to pay a debt (Code of Hammurabi §113-117).¹⁰ It is important to note that the debt slave was not owned by the master, but was required to work to pay off his debt for a period not exceeding three years.¹¹ Temple slaves were literally enslaved to a deity and served in various capacities in the function of the cult.¹² Finally, state slavery consisted of large groups of people, typically taken captive in war, which became the property of the king and were subject to forced labor, often in very hazardous environments.¹³

Compared to ancient Greece and Rome, chattel slaves made up a very small percent of the population in ancient Near Eastern societies, mostly carrying

⁸ Isaac Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East: A Comparative Study of Slavery in Babylonia, Assyria, Syria and Palestine from the Middle of the Third Millennium to the End of the First Millenium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 1.

⁹ Annals of ancient kings describe how the war captives that were spared were regularly reduced to slavery. For examples see George Barton, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929), 119-123. See also John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 38. Van Der Ploeg, “Slavery in the Old Testament,” 77.

¹⁰ The Code of Hammurabi limited debt slavery to three years while Israelite slaves could be kept for six years.

¹¹ Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 38.

¹² In one instance, the king of Akkad presents Enlil 6 slaves as tribute following his victory at Elam. Barton, *Royal Inscriptions*, 125. Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East*, 101.

¹³ Sargon boasts, “At that time, with the [labor] of enemy peoples my hand has captured, I built a city at the foot of Mount Musri above Nineveh . . . and called its name Dur Sharrakin.” Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1926), 2:42.

out domestic and agricultural duties within individual households.¹⁴ In spite of the existence of chattel slavery in the ancient Near East, slaves were still viewed as human beings who, based upon the law codes, had had some basic, inviolable rights (Code of Hammurabi §171, 175, 282).¹⁵ While a slave was still considered a person, rather than mere property, it is unwarranted to suggest that slavery was a neutral social institution in which “the status of being a slave bore little stigma.”¹⁶ Flesher contends that the slave was treated only slightly better than mere property¹⁷ and while Van Der Ploeg acknowledges the distinction between Roman and ANE slavery, he maintains that the practice of slavery in the ancient Near East was evil and degrading.¹⁸ Slaves could be branded with their master’s mark like cattle as a symbol of ownership and as a clear statement of social status for any slaves that might contemplate running away (Code of Hammurabi §146; 226-27).¹⁹ Though the scope of slavery in the ancient Near East was clearly much smaller than that of ancient Rome, the slave was still broadly understood as chattel, the property of his owner who was subject to the will of his master.²⁰

¹⁴ Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel Social Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 80.

¹⁵ Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East*, 121-22. While it is acknowledged that such laws may not have been consistently observed, their very existence suggested a higher valuation of slaves than corresponding Greco-Roman legal provision.

¹⁶ Edward Bridge, “Enslaved to an Artifice: A Study into the Truth behind the Title of Deference, ‘Slave/Servant’, as used in the Ancient Near East before the Time of Alexander the Great” *Humanity: The Journal of the Newcastle-Macquarie Humanities Postgraduate Symposium 2* (2008): 3.

¹⁷ Flesher, *Oxen, Women, or Citizens?*, 21.

¹⁸ Van Der Ploeg, “Slavery in the Old Testament,” 83.

¹⁹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 84.

²⁰ Callender, “Servants of God(s),” 72. Dandamaev concludes that aside from the Greco-Roman concept of the slave as a “talking tool,” there were no clear differences in the position of slaves in Babylonian and Roman society. Dandamev, *Slavery in Babylonia*, 76.

Rhetorical use of slave language in the ancient Near East. Even though slavery was not widely practiced in ancient Near Eastern society, the concept of slavery had a strong influence ideologically as a metaphor for subservient relationships with other people, and even with the divine. Diakonoff argues that the concept of slavery in ancient Near Eastern societies was a relative, rather than absolute, concept in which everyone was a slave to the person in authority over him or her.²¹ The strong sense of hierarchy, duty, and submission within ancient societies was conveyed by the metaphor of slavery. “Thus using words which also mean ‘slave,’ the speaker indicates that he or she places him or herself in complete subordination to, and dependence on, the person addressed.”²² For instance, in the Amarna letters the supplicant calls himself “your slave/servant” (*ardu*) when addressing the Pharaoh as an expression of subjugation (El Amarna 106:6; 141:39) and loyalty (El Amarna 131:24), taking on himself the king’s yoke by hearing and obeying his word (El Amarna 147:41-51; 195:16-23).²³ The phrase “your slave” then became a regular part of social discourse and was used in a variety of ways from polite deference (Sachou Elephantine Papyrus 1:1) to unreserved subjection (Lachish

²¹ Mikhailovich Diakonoff, ed., *Ancient Mesopotamia, Socio-Economic History: A Collection of Studies by Soviet Scholars* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987), 1-2.

²² Curt Lindhagen, *The Servant Motif in the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1950), 56.

²³ As an example, Aziru addresses the king as “my lord, my god” and proclaims “I am your servant, and on my arrival before the king, my lord, I spoke of all my affairs in the presence of the king, my lord. My lord! Do not listen to the treacherous men who are slandering me before the king, my lord. I am your servant forever.” (El Amarna 161: 4-10) Translation from Anson F. Rainey Z’L, *The El-Amarna Correspondence: A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of El-Amarna based on Collations of All Extant Tablets*, ed. William Schniedewind and Zipora Cochavi-Rainey (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 799. See also Helmer Ringgren, “עֶבֶד ‘eved’,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 10:380.

Letters 2:2-4; 5:3-4).²⁴ All of the king's subjects were considered his slaves because they were in submission to his will and dependent upon his protection (Code of Hammurabi 129).²⁵ In a special sense, the court officials and lesser rulers were called "slaves of the king," denoting their authority and status as emissaries carrying out the king's wishes in official business.²⁶ This more narrow use of the metaphor is reflected frequently on seal inscriptions in which the king's business is carried out by high officials whose seals identify them as slaves of the king/ruler.²⁷ Though Bridge insists that such titles were simply expressions of loyalty and deference,²⁸ Lindhagen suggests that the slave metaphor often transcends mere formal etiquette to communicate that all the work the servant does "is to be determined only by the master: he may deal with the servant as he pleases, and the servant on his side does everything his master wishes."²⁹

The slave metaphor was also used to express the relationship of human beings to the divine as several Mesopotamian creation accounts convey that humans were created to be the slaves of the gods (*Enuma Elish* 5:139; 6:8, 34-36; Atrahasis

²⁴ Bridge, "Enslaved to an Artifice," 5. Bridge cites the Lachish letters as a primary example of servile language used in correspondence in which the writer addresses the one in authority as "Lord" and identifies himself as "your servant." While Bridge concludes that this was not a formula of submission but merely an expression of polite deference, Lindhagen is certainly correct when, citing the same Lachish letters, he concludes "properly speaking 'thy servant' is a formula of subjection." Lindhagen, *Servant Motif*, 59.

²⁵ Dandamaev, *Slavery in Babylonia*, 74.

²⁶ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. T. J. Hallett (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 350.

²⁷ William Hallo, "Seal Inscriptions," in *Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection*, ed. B. Buchanan (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 440-62.

²⁸ Bridge, "Enslaved to an Artifice," 7.

²⁹ Lindhagen, *Servant Motif*, 60.

Epic 195).³⁰ Similarly, a Sumerian text describes humanity as doing the work of the gods, specifically in the planting and tending of agricultural fields, so that their labor would directly benefit the gods they served.³¹ Prayers of petition for mercy or provision regularly cited creation as the basis of the supplicant's slave relationship to his divine master (Prayer to Marduk 1:66; 2:72). Yamauchi demonstrates how widespread the "slave of god" motif was in the ancient Near East by noting the prevalence of theophoric names in virtually every ancient Near Eastern society (El Amarna 118:25; 138:29).³² The slave imagery was not only used to describe humanity in general. Similar to the king's officials being designated as the "servants of the king," kings and other royal officials frequently referred to themselves as "servant of the god" (Ras Shamra 49:VI:8; 51:II:29; 2 Aqht I:35) which simultaneously conveyed their submission to the deity and their status as his representative.³³ It is striking that an ancient Near Eastern king was often described as the "son of god" to indicate the close relationship he enjoyed with the deity as he reflected the essential character of the deity in his rulership.³⁴ The corresponding designation as "slave/servant of god" seems to refer to the work that he does on

³⁰ Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 11, 241. The people are described as the possession of the gods who were compelled to carry out the will of the gods.

³¹ For text and translation see Giovanni Pettinato, *Das Altorientalische Menschenbild und die Sumerischen und Akkadischen Schoepfungsmythen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter: 1971), 74-77. Callender, "Servants of God(s)," 71.

³² Yamauchi, "Slaves of God," 31-33.

³³ Bridge, "Enslaved to an Artifice," 2. Bridge cites many different seal inscriptions that refer to someone as a servant of the deity and also notes Egyptian examples in which the Pharaoh would use servile term in relation to his status before the gods.

³⁴ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: IL: Crossway, 2012), 396-97.

behalf of the deity, often being depicted as the farmer or agricultural worker of the god who carried out deity's will upon the earth.³⁵ Callender concludes that “the servant-lord relationship played a significant role in defining and articulating the relationship between humanity and the divine.”³⁶ In spite of the fact that slavery was minimally practiced in the ancient Near East compared to Greco-Roman society, slavery as a metaphor was frequently employed to express humble submission to a human or divine authority with nuances of complete dependence, exclusive obedience, and representative authority.

Slavery in Ancient Israel

Within Israelite society, the Old Testament presents two primary classes of physical slavery: Israelite indentured servants and foreign chattel slaves. Israelites were only permitted to enslave their countrymen as debt slaves, comparable to the debt slavery practiced in the broader sphere of the ancient Near East, in which the creditor does not possess the person but is entitled to his service for a limited period of time.³⁷ Leviticus 25:39-46 circumscribes the practice of this debt slavery by refuting the notion that a Hebrew debt slave is even a slave at all, contending that he should be considered a hired servant (Lev 25:40) and a brother (Lev 25:46). Flesher notes that such indentured servants preserved their personal autonomy, were not owned by the master, and continued to derive their status from their national

³⁵ Callender, “Servants of God(s),” 72. This theme will be explored more fully in the subsequent section regarding the development of the metaphor in the Hebrew Scriptures, but these two epithets for the king seem both ubiquitous in the ancient Near East and essentially complementary.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 41. While the code of Hammurabi limits debt slavery to three years, the Old Testament sets the limit at six years.

identity and personal background rather than from their relationship with the master.³⁸

The clear rationale for not treating fellow Hebrews as slaves is given in Leviticus 25:42 in which God declares that Israelites must not be sold as slaves for they are His slaves on the basis of their redemption from Egypt. The Israelites were identified as the עֶבְרִים of the Lord and thus their identity, service, and obedience belonged exclusively to the Lord and not any human master. This is reinforced in Leviticus 25:47-55 when God demands that Israelites redeem a fellow countryman who is enslaved by a foreigner “For the sons of Israel are my servants (עֶבְרִים); they are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God” (Lev 25:55).³⁹ Byron observes that this practice preserved Israel’s national identity and maintained a cohesive covenant community by recognizing that they could have no absolute human master for they belonged exclusively to the Lord as His possession.⁴⁰ This pattern persisted in Israelite society so that even in Roman times the rabbis considered being Hebrew and being a slave as mutually exclusive social realities.⁴¹ Deuteronomy 15:13-14 instructs masters, upon the release of a Hebrew debt slave, to give gifts generously to furnish him in his new freedom, citing their own liberation from slavery in Egypt as the basis for their treatment of fellow Israelites. The only situation in which an Israelite could become permanently enslaved is outlined in Exodus 21:5-6. If a Hebrew slave voluntarily declined his freedom on the basis of his love and loyalty to his master he would become the

³⁸ Flesher, *Oxen, Women, or Citizens?*, 18.

³⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Version.

⁴⁰ Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 43.

⁴¹ Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 28.

master's slave for life and was to have his ear pierced with an awl as a symbol of his slave status, perhaps comparable to the marks placed on the hands of slaves in the ANE (Elephantine Papyrus K5).⁴² "Israelite exclusive servitude to God is then precisely the basis for its sharp rejection of all forms of human servitude, whether chattel slavery, the prolongation of debt slavery, or "forced labor."⁴³

In contrast to the restrictions applied to the service of Hebrew indentured servants, Leviticus 25:44-46 permits Israel to keep foreigners as domestic chattel slaves who are their "possession" and they are free to "treat them as permanent slaves" (Lev 25:46). These foreign slaves would lose their ties to family and any sense of national identity and they would assume a new identity based upon their relationship to the master and his household.⁴⁴ In Israelite society, this denationalization began with the rite of circumcision that marked their inclusion in the Israelite community (Gen 17:12-13) by virtue of their representative identity in service of a Hebrew master.⁴⁵ Although the chattel slave is possessed by the master, he is not merely a piece of property but rather "a dependent member of his master's household in particular and of Israelite society in general."⁴⁶ Once circumcised, the slave was permitted to participate in Israel's religious observances such as Passover (Exod 12:43-44) and the Sabbath (Deut 5:14). The extent of the new identity of chattel slaves is demonstrated by the provision that grants the priest's slaves the

⁴² De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 84.

⁴³ Callender, "Servants of God(s)," 79.

⁴⁴ Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 40.

⁴⁵ Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 30.

⁴⁶ Flesher, *Oxen, Women, or Citizens?*, 22.

privilege of eating the priestly rations, in some sense taking on the master's status by being his slave (Lev 22:11).

The Old Testament laws governing the treatment of chattel slaves are generally considered more humane than those of the surrounding nations.⁴⁷ For instance, if a slave was permanently injured by his master the law requires that he be released from slavery (Exod 21:26-27). In contrast, the ancient Near Eastern laws only imposed penalties if someone injured a slave belonging to another, and even then it was only monetary compensation to the master.⁴⁸ Although a slave was treated as a person in Israelite society by virtue of his connection to the covenant community, the Old Testament laws still treated him in some respects as the owner's property. If a master beat his slave and he died that day then the master was subject to some undefined punishment. But if the slave survived for a day or two after the beating and then died the master was not culpable for "the slave is his property" (Exod 21:20-21).⁴⁹ Physical punishment of foreign slaves was apparently customary (Prov 29:19) which is why such excesses had to be carefully regulated. The personhood and value of a slave is most clearly articulated in Job 31:13-15 when Job recognizes the common humanity he shares with his slaves and the resultant responsibility to treat them humanely.

A chattel slave was considered an extension of the master as an intermediary in business and as such he operated with the full authority of the master.⁵⁰ This is illustrated in the story of Abraham's slave in Genesis 24 in which

⁴⁷ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 28.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁹ Flesher, *Oxen, Women, or Citizens?*, 23.

⁵⁰ Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 71.

Abraham commissioned him to go as his emissary to get a wife for Isaac and he did so with his master's full authority (Gen 24:49) and an urgency (Gen 24:56) that made it clear that he was carrying out his task exclusively for the benefit of his master. The slave was completely dependent upon his master for direction and provision for the slave could not operate independently either personally or economically. Therefore, while the slave was obligated to give exclusive and unconditional obedience to the master, the master had a reciprocal responsibility to care for his slave through basic provision and protection (Lev 25:6). While the number of such slaves during the Old Testament period is difficult to ascertain, the texts that do enumerate the slaves in a household or group (1 Sam 25:42; 2 Sam 9:10; Neh 7:66-67) seem to indicate that most households did not have more than two or three slaves.⁵¹ While Israelite debt slaves were not actually considered slaves, Israelite society was familiar with chattel slavery in which slaves were the possession of the master, forfeiting autonomy and assuming a new identity in order to serve him exclusively with unconditional obedience. It will be suggested that this expression of the institution of slavery forms the basis of the metaphorical usage of slavery in the Israelite court and cult.

Two final forms of slavery which were also extant in ancient Israel will be mentioned briefly. Forced labor was apparently common during the early days of the monarchy with captives from war being conscripted to labor on projects for the state (2 Sam 12:31; 1 Kgs 4:6). Deuteronomy 20:10-15 explains that forced labor was a key component of the conquest strategy which provided a "permanent and inexpensive source of labor."⁵² Solomon frequently employed forced labor to

⁵¹De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 84.

⁵² Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 46.

complete his building projects, often using foreigners to complete the work (1 Kgs 9:15-22). However, the Israelites were not exempt from responsibilities in the corvee and Solomon conscripted their labor specifically for the building of the temple (1 Kgs 5:13-16). Even in the function of state slavery the significance of national identity persists as the Israelites were conscripted temporarily for specific projects and then allowed to return home while the foreign slaves served the state projects perpetually (1 Kgs 9:21). A subset of such state slaves were temple slaves such as the subjection of the Gibeonites to serve as temple slaves after their deception of Joshua and the Israelites (Josh 9:27). There is evidence that foreign slaves continued to serve in the sanctuary by assisting the Levites (Neh 3:31, 11:3) but Ezekiel 44:7-9 makes it perfectly clear that the service of foreigners in the sanctuary was displeasing to the Lord. Thus, neither corvee nor temple slavery seem to have been widely practiced in ancient Israel.

Lexical and Semantic Scope of Hebrew Slave Terminology

The preceding survey of Hebrew physical slavery provides the requisite foundation to examine the semantic range of the polysemous word for slave, עֶבֶד, as it is employed in the Old Testament Scriptures. The primary purpose of such lexical study is to discern to what extent physical slavery, as it was practiced in Israel, is the vehicle for the metaphorical use of slave language including what connotations it may have evoked. Because of the frequency of the metaphorical usage of slave terminology, this section represents a confluence of lexical and rhetorical research to discover the denotation and connotation of servile terms in the Old Testament.

Denotation of עָבַד in Literal Usage within the Old Testament

The Hebrew verb עָבַד carries the basic meaning “to work, serve” and it is the object or manner of the service in context that gives this verb its specific nuance.⁵³ It can refer to agricultural work (Gen 2:5, Deut 15:19), serving a king as his subjects (Judg 9:28), serving as a slave (Exod 1:14), or serving God (Exod 3:12, Ps 22:31). The noun עֶבֶד, derived from the verbal form עָבַד, has the basic meaning of “slave,” though it can be used metaphorically for those who are not.⁵⁴ Ringgren argues that at its essence, an עֶבֶד is a person who is subordinated to another and thus the nature and object of that subordination define its precise meaning in the text.⁵⁵ Literal slavery is the first and foundational meaning of this term in the Old Testament and, as will be shown, even non-literal uses of עֶבֶד have some associations with the institution of physical slavery.⁵⁶ Though some Israelites are called debt slaves and held for a limited period of time, the actual slaves in Israel were foreigners who, though they had basic rights, were understood to be the master’s property and entered into a lifelong relationship of unconditional subjection and exclusive obedience to the master.

A brief analysis of the Greek translation of the Hebrew עָבַד in the LXX may provide insight into how the translators understood the type of service this term denoted and attempted to convey its nuances in their approach to translation. While Greek has many words that can indicate voluntary or compulsory service, the LXX uses two terms, *παῖς* and *δοῦλος*, and their corresponding word groups almost

⁵³ Ringgren, “עָבַד ‘*eved*,” 382.

⁵⁴ Van Der Ploeg, “Slavery in the Old Testament”, 74.

⁵⁵ Ringgren, “עָבַד ‘*eved*,” 387.

⁵⁶ Walter Kaiser, “עָבַד (*abad*), work, serve,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, B. K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:639.

exclusively to translate the term עֶבֶד.⁵⁷ Both of these terms refer to slavery and the relationship of dependence and obedience that it implies.⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that Greek offers several nuanced terms which could connote some degree of voluntary service (διάκονος, ὑπηρέτης) which the translators never used to translate עֶבֶד.⁵⁹ While παῖς and δοῦλος may have carried slightly different nuances in the nature or type of slavery experienced, Wright argues that these two terms in the *Koine* of the period and the context of the Old Testament were basically interchangeable.⁶⁰ In Leviticus 25:44 παῖς and δοῦλος are used interchangeably while Genesis 44:33 treats παῖς and οἰκέτης as synonyms. First Samuel 16:15-16 similarly refers to the same group of people using both παῖς and δοῦλος. Bryon concludes that there was no identifiable translation strategy and that Greek slave terms are used interchangeably and with great flexibility to convey “a relationship of obligation, obedience, and respect between unequal parties.”⁶¹

Given the synonymous nature of these slave terms, in this study the specific Greek term used to translate עֶבֶד in a given passage will not be considered

⁵⁷ Walther Zimmerli and Joachim Jeremias, “παῖς θεοῦ,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:654. Of 807 instances of עֶבֶד the LXX translates this term as παῖς 340 times and δοῦλος 327 times. *Oiketes* (36 times) and *therapon* (46 times) are the only other two word groups used with any frequency.

⁵⁸ K. H. Rengstorf, “δοῦλος” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 2:266. While Rengstorf attempts to make a distinction between παῖς as a natural relationship of slavery and δοῦλος as imposed slavery, this fails to take into account the fact that δοῦλος is extensively used to describe one’s relationship to God. It also does not account for the passages, such as Lev 25:39-44, in which the terms are used interchangeably. At the very least his differentiation of these two terms lacks adequate lexical and contextual support.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁶⁰ Benjamin G. Wright, “Eved/Doulos: Terms and Social Status in the Meeting of Hebrew Biblical and Hellenistic Roman Culture,” *Semeia* 83/83 (2003): 108. Wright speculates that perhaps παῖς suggests a greater familiarity between slave and master.

⁶¹ Bryon, *Slavery Metaphors*, 27.

instructive regarding the nuance or connotation of the term. While still requiring evaluation as to how עֶבֶד was employed metaphorically, it is evident from the Greek terms used to translate this Hebrew concept that it is rooted in the socio-historical relationship of slavery rather than a more general concept of voluntary servitude. This is especially significant for the unique designation of Israel as the slaves of God which places them under His sovereign authority in exclusive dependence and unconditional obedience.⁶²

Connotation of עֶבֶד in Non-Literal, Secular Usage in the Old Testament

The meaning of the non-literal uses of עֶבֶד depend largely on what associations with literal slavery one believes are preserved in the metaphorical language of slavery. Some suggest that the metaphor had become disassociated with literal slavery so that servile language was simply a polite convention to acknowledge a person's authority, denoting only a general sense of subordination.⁶³ However, Bridge argues persuasively that “when slave terms are used metaphorically, aspects of the institution of slavery are actively evoked which make the metaphoric uses work.”⁶⁴ The following survey of non-literal uses of עֶבֶד will attempt to identify what

⁶² Wright, “Eved/Doulos,” 109. Zimmerli suggests that the Greek emphasis on human autonomy and the nearness between God and man may have influenced the translation strategy in the Pentateuch, causing the translators to broadly avoid δούλος to denote one's relationship with God. He notes that the latter translators seem to return to the original force of this distinctively Hebrew concept of the nation as slaves to the sovereign God using δούλος as the primary designator of this relationship. Zimmerli and Jeremias, “παῖς θεοῦ,” 675.

⁶³This seems to be Ringgren's conclusion based upon his distillation of the meaning of *eved* to individual subordination to another. Ringgren, “עֶבֶד ‘eved,’” 387. Schultz argues that the metaphor had become a matter of mere convention in the court but that it retained the association with slavery in its theological usage as an expression of this “human slave/divine master relationship.” Richard Schultz, “Servant, Slave,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997), 4:1189.

⁶⁴ Edward J. Bridge, “The Metaphoric Use of Slave Terms in the Hebrew Bible,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23 (2013): 14.

associations with slavery, if any, are preserved in the lexical and rhetorical function of slave language in the Old Testament.⁶⁵ Based upon the historical overview of slavery, possible associations could first include being one's possession (Lev 25:46) with potential allusions to being purchased or redeemed. A derived identity may be a second association that hearkens to memory the fact that slaves left behind their national and familial ties when they became a slave in a master's household. In some cases this identification with the master may include the association of status or authority on the basis of the position of the master. Work, whether forced or voluntary, on behalf of the master and according to the will of the master is a third association that stems from the subordination explicit in the slave relationship. Exclusive obedience is a fourth association for a slave was obligated to devote his service to accomplishing the master's will and disobedience or devotion to another master was not tolerated.⁶⁶ Finally, a slave was dependent upon the master for provision and protection, an obligation that might serve as the basis of a slave's request or appeal.⁶⁷

Although Byron suggests that metaphorical slave language sometimes operated without "immediate reference to the institution," he goes on to assert that it denotes a relationship marked by obligation and obedience.⁶⁸ Given the preceding list of associations with slavery, one could counter Byron's claim by clarifying that

⁶⁵ "Rhetoric" and "Rhetorical" will be used in this study primarily to discuss the way in which figures of speech and their associations are used as vehicles to carry denotation and connotation in the narrative and didactic discourse of Scripture. This does not directly intersect with the discipline of rhetorical criticism in New Testament studies such as one might find in the work of Hans Dieter Betz. For a more complete discussion of rhetoric and the slave metaphor see Sam Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons: A New Rhetoric Analysis on Paul's Slave Metaphors in His Letter to the Galatians* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁶⁶ Rengstorf, "δοῦλος" 268.

⁶⁷ Lindhagen, *Servant Motif*, 56.

⁶⁸ Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 37.

both obligation and obedience are immediate, though not comprehensive, references to the institution of slavery. A metaphor functions by calling to mind certain associations or aspects of a commonly understood word or object (the “vehicle”) which fittingly describe another word or object (the “tenor”) without assuming that the vehicle is analogous to the tenor comprehensively.⁶⁹ It is also important to clarify that the associations of the metaphor must be defined by the cultural and contextual understanding of the biblical writers rather than the associations that might be attributed to the metaphor of slavery in twenty-first century America.⁷⁰ An analysis of the various metaphorical uses of slavery in the Old Testament will attempt to determine if the metaphor preserves any associations with literal slavery or whether it simply reflects the cultural convention of acknowledging a power differential between unequal parties which was prevalent in the ancient Near East.⁷¹

Subjects in relationship to their king. Approximately one-fourth of the occurrences of עֶבֶד in the Old Testament describe the relationship of individuals or a nation to a king.⁷² While עֶבֶד sometimes refers to a king’s personal slaves and household servants (1 Sam 29:10, 2 Chr 8:18, Gen 21:25), it also designates the people in the kingdom collectively as the עֶבְדֵי־יְהוָה of the king because they are his

⁶⁹ Bridge, “Metaphoric Use,” 14. I am indebted to Bridge for his helpful approach to understanding the function of metaphor and the significance of associations in the various uses of “slave” in the Old Testament.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁷¹ It is acknowledged that if the metaphor of slavery is used without certain associations such as possession, representative identity, and exclusive obedience, it is appropriate to translate עֶבֶד as “servant” since it refers to something that differs substantively from physical slavery. However, it will be argued that the language of slavery should be preserved relative to Israel and her prophets in their relationship to God because of the striking dependence upon the institution of slavery and its associations within the Old Testament.

⁷² Schultz, “Servant, Slave,” 1186.

subjects.⁷³ When David was contemplating a census of the nation Joab reminded him that all of the inhabitants of Israel were servants of the king (1 Chr 21:3). As the king's subjects, the Israelites were compelled to participate in forced labor (1 Kgs 5:13-16) or be conscripted for military duty (1 Chr 27:1-15) at the king's command. The people acknowledged this relationship and responsibility even in their petition for Rehoboam to ease their "yoke" promising "we will serve you" (1 Kgs 12:4). This metaphorical use of עֲבָד first reflects the association of work on behalf of the king, whether literally through forced labor or figuratively through the payment of taxes. This also communicates a subordinate relationship to the king and the expectation of submission to his commands. In 1 Samuel 8:17 Samuel warns the people of the king's absolute power to conscript their service and possess their resources predicting, "You will become his עֲבָד." This may suggest a second association of possession as all that they are and have seems to be at the king's disposal to be used as he wills.⁷⁴ Third, the subjects of the king were bound to exclusive obedience, "voluntarily or involuntarily doing his bidding."⁷⁵ A final association is dependence as the designation "your servant" is often the basis for an appeal to the king for protection or provision (2 Sam 19:37, Neh 2:5). Even though the king's subjects were not literally his slaves, the many associations with the relationship and responsibilities of physical slavery suggest that this metaphorical usage draws heavily from the vehicle of slavery and is not simply diplomatic convention.

Vassals in relationship to their suzerain. Similarly, vassal kings and nations are called the עֲבָד of the ruling king to describe their subjection to his rule

⁷³ Ibid., 1187.

⁷⁴ Bridge, "Metaphoric Use," 21.

⁷⁵ Schultz, "Servant, Slave," 1187.

(Gen 14:4, 1 Sam 17:9) which might entail paying tribute or forced labor.⁷⁶

Deuteronomy 28:48 predicts the exile and subjection of Israel to a foreign nation anticipating that they will serve (עָבַד) their enemies in subjection and deprivation, depicted as having an iron yoke around their neck. A defeated city or army would frequently be called the slaves of the victorious nation (2 Kgs 17:3) and be compelled to serve their suzerain as a condition of their surrender (1 Sam 11:1). This use of the metaphor of slavery preserves the association of work or labor as the vassal was obligated to serve the king who was the beneficiary of their labor. Nehemiah 9:36-37 directly declares that subjection to a foreign king demands that he receive the fruit of their lands and their labors. The exile of Israel to Babylon employs such slave imagery as Israel is compelled to put its neck under the yoke of the king, continuing their agricultural labor in service of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27:7-17).

The harsh conditions and oppression associated with vassalship seem to be an ancillary association of slavery since mistreatment and deprivation could characterize physical slavery were apparently a normal part of such an arrangement.⁷⁷ While possession does not seem to be a direct association with the vassal relationship, exclusive obedience was an association and rebellion or disregard for the suzerain was harshly punished (2 Kgs 24:1). In some cases dependence might be an association of the vassal relationship such as when the vassal nation was threatened by an invading army (2 Kgs 16:7), but such an association depends largely on the context. There seems to be evident connotations of physical slavery in the metaphorical language describing vassal nations as “slaves” evoking a sense of subordination, oppression, servile labor, and exclusive obedience (El Amarna 55:4,

⁷⁶ Ibid. For an ancient Near Eastern parallel see El Amarna 59:2.

⁷⁷ Bridge, “Metaphoric Use,” 22.

187:11).⁷⁸ It is possible that this strong association stems from the fact that slaves in the ancient Near East were drawn primarily from conquered nations.⁷⁹ Thus to be conquered by an enemy is equated with becoming their slaves (1 Sam 4:9). Given the reflection of physical slavery in vassal language, it is instructive to note that God allows Israel to be subjected to Shishak as his slaves (עֶבְדֵי־יָם) specifically so that they might know the difference between serving a despotic suzerain and serving the God of Israel as their master (2 Chr 12:8). Such parallel metaphorical usage may suggest that even the religious usage of the slave metaphor retains key associations with physical slavery.

Court officials and emissaries in relationship to the king. While all of the subjects of the king were properly understood as his slaves, עֶבֶד is often used to designate an official, courtier, or other individual who specially served the king which has clear parallels to the ancient Near Eastern court.⁸⁰ Ringgren contends that such language “merely reflects a convention customary in both the OT and the ancient orient at large, and does not mean that the speaker is a slave of the addressee.”⁸¹ Members of the king’s court could be described as his עֶבֶד (Gen 41:37-38, Judg 3:24, 1 Sam 16:15) as were the king’s military commanders (1 Kgs 16:9; 2 Kgs 9:5). Many individuals described as a servant of the king were high ranking

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ For instance, the Dilumites became vassals of Assyria and were forced to pay tribute in the form of treasure and slave labor. Daniel D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib*, University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, vol. II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 137.

⁸⁰ Piotr Michalowski provides a wide variety of letters and from the third dynasty of Ur which demonstrate a consistent pattern of an official giving their name, their title, and their status as the servant (*ardu*) of the king. In the seals particularly the servant status of the writer is placed in the emphatic position with the repeated pattern “[official’s name] is your servant!” Piotr Michalowski, *Letters from Early Mesopotamia*, vol. 3, ed. Erica Reiner (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1993), 59, 67-68, 72-73, 84, 95-96.

⁸¹ Ringgren, “עֶבֶד ‘*eved*,” 391.

officials who were granted significant authority and responsibility to operate on behalf of the king as his official emissaries (2 Sam 14:19, 15:35; 1 Kgs 15:18; 2 Kgs 19:5). Such individuals were subservient to the king and commissioned as his representative in affairs of the state.⁸² When David's servants were abused by Hanun in 2 Samuel 10:2-6 David considered the treatment of his delegates a direct affront to him personally for they were carrying out the king's will as his representatives.⁸³

A basic but foundational association of this metaphor is work, though clearly voluntary, in a subservient relationship for the benefit of another. Even a high official was cognizant of the fact that he was ultimately subordinate to the king's authority and accountable to him as sovereign. A second association is exclusive obedience for the emissaries of the king were expected to carry out his will as his authorized representative. Failure to do so had immediate and drastic consequences for such servants of the king (2 Sam 18-19).⁸⁴ While the dependence of such officials was not the complete dependence of a slave, this should still be recognized as an association for "these individuals were dependent on the king's favor and provision for their positions and livelihood."⁸⁵ Representative identity and the corresponding status or authority that it entails is a new association that emerges with this use of the metaphor. Just as slaves operated as an extension of their master in personal and commercial matters (Gen 24), the official עבְדֵי־מֶלֶךְ of the king were

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Lindhagen observes "An insult to David's *evedim* was first and foremost an insult to David himself." Linhagen, *Servant Motif*, 76.

⁸⁴ Edward Bridge suggests that such representatives were simply expressing loyalty and did not communicate servile submissiveness. Bridge, "Enslaved to an Artifice," 6. However, the clear accountability to the king and consequences for displeasing the king suggest a greater level of subordination that Bridge seems to acknowledge.

⁸⁵ Schultz, "Servant, Slave," 1187.

granted authority and status by virtue of their subordination and identification with the king. While it is granted that such individuals were not literally slaves of the king, it is misleading to suggest, as Ringgren does above, that slave language used in the king's court was merely polite convention employing a dead metaphor which had become disassociated with any notion of physical slavery.⁸⁶ The subservient labor, representative authority, and exclusive obedience which circumscribed the role of these royal officials can be traced directly back to aspects of physical slavery as it was known and practiced in ancient Israel.

Inferiors addressing their superiors. Slave language was used at times to communicate deference, apparently as a formula of submission describing one's relative status before one of superior status.⁸⁷ This form of the metaphor is used in many different contexts to describe a wide variety of relationships which makes this the broadest semantic category of עֶבֶד.⁸⁸ Genesis 44:18-34 is a clear example of such language when Joseph's brothers repeatedly referred to themselves as "your servants" in the presence of Joseph and then Judah requested that Joseph allow "your servant" to become "your slave" (Gen 44:33). Jacob's humble entreaty of Esau (Gen 33:14), Abigail's submissive stance before David (1 Sam 25:24), and a widow's plea before the king (2 Sam 14:7) all seem to use slave language as a diplomatic convention which is differentiated from the status of physical slavery. However, even language that accords with courtly style may still retain associations with physical slavery, albeit more conceptual than concrete, which inform how such usage should be understood.

⁸⁶ Bridge, "Metaphoric Use," 14.

⁸⁷ Ringgren, "עֶבֶד 'eved,'" 392.

⁸⁸ Bridge, "Metaphoric Use," 25.

The use of servant language for deference still carries the association of work and submission as the speaker humbly acknowledges his or her relative status and subjugation to the one who is addressed as “lord” (יְדֹנָי).⁸⁹ This may reflect the broader cultural expectation that everyone was a slave to someone and the self-designation “your servant” communicated one’s self-understanding as a social inferior who was bound by certain obligations to the superior who possessed some degree of power over the inferior.⁹⁰ Dependence and even possession can be associations with this usage as the subordination of the speaker also entails complete dependence upon the one addressed in a manner that Lindhagen connects directly to the institution of slavery.⁹¹ Such dependence is evident by the use of “your servant” to introduce a request with the expectant hope that the humble dependence of the עֶבֶד will be met with the gracious provision of the יְדֹנָי, reminiscent of a master’s care for his slave (1 Sam 12:19, 20:8, 22:15).⁹² Absalom’s deceptive use of such deferential language (2 Sam 13:24) does not imply that the metaphor was merely a formal substitute for a personal pronoun but rather lends credence to the suggestion that it was intended to communicate loyalty and subservience. A final association is one’s obligation to obey the master, at least in the realm in which the speaker is properly understood as one’s עֶבֶד.⁹³ Even in its most formal and non-literal usage, the metaphor of slavery as a self-designation of deference still preserves key

⁸⁹ Ringgren, “עֶבֶד ‘*eved*,” 392.

⁹⁰ Bridge, “Metaphoric Use,” 26.

⁹¹ Lindhagen, *Servant Motif*, 56.

⁹² Ringgren, “עֶבֶד ‘*eved*,” 392.

⁹³ Lindhagen, *Servant Motif*, 60. Lindhagen concludes that all the work “in which the servant is concerned, is to be determined only by his master: he may deal with the servant as he pleases, and the servant on his side does everything that his master wishes.”

associations with physical slavery including subservient work, dependence, and obedience.

The Religious Use of the Slave Metaphor in the Old Testament

While such a detailed lexical and rhetorical analysis may seem beyond the scope of this study, it provides the necessary context to evaluate whether the metaphorical use of slave language to describe people in relationship to God preserves associations with ancient slavery or represents an adaptation of courtly convention to express generic humility or subservience.⁹⁴ The notion that the religious use of the slave metaphor reflects courtly convention is broadly, though at times uncritically, accepted and can be traced, at least in part, to the conclusions of Zimmerli and Jeremias in *The Servant of God*.⁹⁵ Their work, a portion of which was later published as the article on *παῖς θεοῦ* in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, contends that the religious use of עֶבֶד mirrors the courtly use of the metaphor to depict an inferior approaching a superior with humility and

⁹⁴ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 1:775. This source makes no distinction between the use of the metaphor in the court and the use of the metaphor in prayer.

⁹⁵ The reasons for the broad acceptance and relatively uncritical evaluation of the position that the slave metaphor reflects courtly convention are certainly multifaceted and complex. However, two primary reasons may be suggested. First, the antebellum American view of slavery is indelibly imprinted with the horrors and prejudices that characterized American slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It should also be noted that segregation and prejudice were still the cultural norm when Lindhagen, Zimmerli, and Jeremias were publishing their works. It is understandable that researchers would gravitate toward aspects of the metaphor that were unencumbered by the prejudices and preconceived ideas of their audience related to slavery. Murray Harris makes an excellent argument for this perspective in regard to translation of slave terms in Scripture. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 183-91. Second, it seems far more palatable to understand the metaphor as describing the free submission of a servant before a king or superior than to acknowledge the complete subordination of one's being and will implied by a slave's relationship to his master. The forfeiture of autonomy and unconditional obedience of a slave is discordant with western notions of independence and self-determination which may explain the popular predilection for the idea of being a servant, rather than a slave of God. For a recent example of how the slave metaphor is recast in terms of voluntary servanthood see Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 7.

submission.⁹⁶ Lindhagen's earlier work, *The Servant Motif in the Old Testament*, had likewise acknowledged the use of the slave metaphor in certain cases as merely a "formula of subjection."⁹⁷ Though Lindhagen demonstrated that the religious use of the metaphor was rooted in the exodus from Egypt and entailed exclusive service, total dependence, and unconditional obedience to God, he argued that such associations were derived from a *bai'a* type covenant in which an inferior was submissive and obedient to his superior.⁹⁸

Some lexical aides have adopted the suppositions of Zimmerli, Jeremias, and Lindhagen as Ringgren presents the metaphor as a formulaic expression of obsequiousness. His presentation focuses almost exclusively on the association of subordination implied in the slave metaphor with virtually no discussion of how other associations of physical slavery might have bearing on the metaphor, religious or otherwise.⁹⁹ More recently, some scholars have departed from the consensus of עֶבֶד as a general statement of submission and reconsidered the religious use of the slave metaphor in light of the historical reality of physical slavery. Schultz acknowledges the formulaic use of the metaphor in the courts but asserts that the theological use of the metaphor depicts a "human slave/divine master relationship" which transcends polite convention and defines the reality of one's relationship with

⁹⁶ Walther Zimmerli and Joachim Jeremias, *The Servant of God*, rev. ed. (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1965), 15.

⁹⁷ Lindhagen, *Servant Motif*, 63.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹⁹ Ringgren, "עֶבֶד 'eved,'" 387. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* explicitly states its dependence upon Zimmerli, Jeremias, and Lindhagen as well but places all religious use of the metaphor in a single, nondescript category. Therefore it is unclear how the metaphorical usage would be understood by Koehler and Baumgartner. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew Aramaic Lexicon*, 775.

God.¹⁰⁰ This section will further reexamine the rhetoric and associations of slavery in relationship to God in the Old Testament by studying the relevant usage in its context and considering what associations with physical slavery are conveyed.

Theological Categories of the Slave Metaphor

Nearly one-third of the Old Testament instances of עֶבֶד refer to the relationship of humanity before God with individuals or the nation of Israel as a whole designated as “God’s slave.”¹⁰¹ While other ancient Near Eastern religions acknowledged that one could be a slave of the gods and enjoy a special relationship with him, such a relationship was limited to a few select individuals who underwent a special ritual to be designated as such (Ras Shamra 1K 153, 155; *Ugaritica* V, 163).¹⁰² Combes observes that the national identification of Israel as the corporate עֶבֶד of God is without parallel in the ancient Near East.¹⁰³ This section will trace the development of the religious usage of the metaphor in the Old Testament using historical, cultural, and contextual clues to determine the rhetorical significance of the slave metaphor when Israel and its leaders are described as the עֶבְדֵי יְהוָה of the Lord.

Creation: service as royal representatives. A survey of the slave metaphor in the Old Testament Scriptures begins with the creation account. This explores

¹⁰⁰ Schultz, “Servant, Slave,” 1189-90. Bridge is another scholar who has argued for a reexamination of the religious use of the slave metaphor with special attention to the associations with physical slavery preserved in its rhetorical use in its context. Bridge, “The Metaphoric Use of Slave Terms,” 14.

¹⁰¹ Schultz, “Servant, Slave,” 1189.

¹⁰² Rengstorf, “δοῦλος,” 269.

¹⁰³ I. A. H. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 44. While many ancient peoples understood themselves as slaves of their gods, there were no parallels found of an entire nation being corporately considered as the slave of her god.

whether there was any parallel to the ancient Near Eastern creation accounts in which the people were created as the slaves of the gods with the king as their foremost representative. Van Der Ploeg traces the origins of the religious use of the slave metaphor in Scripture to Eden positing, “Man was created by Got [*sic*] and therefore totally depending on Him; his supreme scope (and privilege) is to serve Him.”¹⁰⁴ Peter Gentry argues persuasively that the language used in Genesis 1:26 to describe the creation of humanity in the image (צֶלֶם) and likeness (דְמוּת) of God reflect the ANE understanding of the king’s role as obedient son and subservient ruler before the gods.¹⁰⁵ Kings in the ANE claimed power and legitimization for their rule by claiming a special relationship with the gods and identifying themselves as the chief servant or slave of the gods to carry out their will upon the earth through royal rule.¹⁰⁶ This rhetoric of subservience communicated complete dependence upon the gods,¹⁰⁷ representative authority from the gods,¹⁰⁸ and the responsibility to embody the character and power of the gods as the king carried out the will of the

¹⁰⁴ Van Der Ploeg, *Slavery in the Old Testament*, 85.

¹⁰⁵ The ancient rulers were described as being in the “image” of their god in the sense that they reflected the god’s abilities and character, having been appointed by the god to mediate his rule. For instance, an inscription at the temple in Karnak records Amen-Re speaking to the king, “I let them see your majesty as lord of light, so that you shone before them in my likeness.” Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 2:36-37. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 191.

¹⁰⁶ Julian Reade, “Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art,” in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, ed. M. T. Larsen (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 342. Reade concludes that the predominant theme in Assyrian sculpture was that the king was a servant of the gods, acting as their agent upon the earth.

¹⁰⁷ John Baines, “Ancient Egyptian Kingship: Official Forms, Rhetoric, Context,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 17.

¹⁰⁸ W.G. Lambert, “Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 55.

deity upon the earth.¹⁰⁹ Theologically, the god was the king over the land and the king's unique servile relationship to the divine was the basis of his authority to rule as a representative of the god, a regent reflecting the character of the deity upon the earth.¹¹⁰

The biblical creation account employs some of the same rhetorical imagery adopted by ancient Near Eastern kings to describe the relationship and responsibility of all of humanity to God. Peter Gentry asserts that in Genesis 1:26 “likeness” (דְמוּת) refers to a covenant relationship between God and humanity so that Adam is understood as the son of God which parallels the privileged relationship with the divine claimed by ancient Near Eastern kings¹¹¹. The corresponding term “image” (צֶלֶם) describes the relationship of humanity to the world God created so that Adam is also a “servant king” with parallels to the monarch's claim of divinely endowed authority using slave language.¹¹² The commission to rule over the earth is a natural functional implication of the human covenant relationship with God which has both horizontal and vertical dynamics.

¹⁰⁹ As illustrated by the humble worship of the king on the stela of Ur-Nammu in Babylon and the depiction of Rameses II performing daily rituals for the gods. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 10-11.

¹¹⁰ Baines, “Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia, 68. Gentry similarly concludes, “The behaviour of the king reflects the behaviour of the god . . . Since the king is the living statue of the god, he represents the god on earth. He makes the power of the god a present reality.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192.

¹¹¹ Takamitsu Muraoka, “The Tell-Fekherye bilingual Inscription and Early Aramaic,” *Abr-Nahrain* 22 (1983-1984): 79-117.

¹¹² An Assyrian text declares, “You, O king of the world, are an image of Marduk; when you were angry with your servants, we suffered the anger of the king our lord; and we saw the reconciliation of the king.” Hermann Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*, State Archives of Assyria, vol. 8 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992), 188-89. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 194-95. Gentry's detailed argument is beyond the scope of this study but his conclusions are drawn from ancient Near Eastern inscriptions that use these two terms of the king in parallel, but distinct ways.

God created humanity in his image for a special relationship with him which entailed a responsibility for all of humanity to rule as His representatives in creation, subservient to and dependent upon God as Master. While only the king in ANE societies could claim the status of servant ruler, God extends this privilege to all of humanity by virtue of the fact that all people are made in God’s image and are therefore qualified to mediate His rule and reflect His character upon the earth.¹¹³ While not as explicit as some ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, Genesis 1 suggests that all people were created to be servants or slaves of God, a responsibility only properly understood in the context of a covenant relationship with God which made humanity His privileged possession and demanded exclusive and unconditional obedience. Wolf captures this relational responsibility well asserting, “God is the Lord of creation; but as God’s steward he [humanity] also exerts his rule, fulfilling his task not in arbitrary despotism but as a responsible agent. His rule and his duty to rule are not autonomous; they are copies.”¹¹⁴ From the very beginning humanity is cast in a privileged, subservient relationship to God, responsible to mediate His rule and accountable to Him to do so.

The rebellion of Adam and Eve distorted, but did not destroy, the image of God in humanity and God set into motion His plan of redemption to restore humanity to a right relationship with Himself. The responsibility to serve God as His עֶבֶד becomes clearer in the accounts of the patriarchs as the Lord extends an unconditional covenant to Abraham and his descendents promising “I will bless and multiply your descendents for the sake of my servant (עֶבֶד) Abraham” (Gen 26:24). Here God himself identifies Abraham as His עֶבֶד, a usage that is clearly different

¹¹³ Ibid., 197.

¹¹⁴ Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 160-61.

than a supplicant identifying himself as “your servant” in prayer. This indicates that this metaphor was not simply a polite form of address before the Lord but a designator of the privilege and responsibility that a covenant relationship with God entailed. Exodus 32:13 and Deuteronomy 9:27 describe Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob collectively as “your servants” and Abraham’s slave describes Isaac as “your [God’s] servant” (Gen 24:14). These early and pointed uses of the metaphor designate the patriarchs as examples of the dependence and obedience that God expects from his people while maintaining an emphasis on the covenant relationship that forms the basis of their service of God.

Israel as the slaves of God. While the earliest uses of the slave metaphor are more subtle or implicit, the exodus from Egypt marks a clear and unambiguous foundation for the religious use of slave rhetoric in Israel. The Israelites were literal slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, subjected to oppression and hard labor and required to give unconditional obedience to their taskmasters for the benefit of the state in general and the Pharaoh in particular (Exod 1:11-14). God instructed Moses to go to Egypt to demand the release Israel, which he describes as his “son,” (Exod 4:22) from Egyptian slavery “so that he may serve (עָבַד) Me” (Exod 4:23).¹¹⁵ The call to “let my people go” is repeatedly and consistently followed by the purpose/result clause “that they may serve me” (Exod 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3). This demonstrates that the exodus was not about Israel’s freedom but instead marked a change of masters and a transfer of ownership, calling Pharaoh to release the

¹¹⁵ There is a clear parallel to the designation of Adam as obedient son and servant king as described in the preceding discussion of the creation account. This also anticipates the role of the king and ultimately the messiah who would be both son and servant of God.

Israelites from serving him so that they might serve the Lord.¹¹⁶ Levinson avers that the purpose of the exodus “is not freedom in the sense of self-determination, but service, the service of the loving, redeeming and delivering God of Israel, rather than the state and its proud king.”¹¹⁷ God’s ultimate victory over Pharaoh demonstrated that God was the true King and Master over Israel and the exodus marked the redemption of Israel from Egyptian slavery that they might serve faithfully as slaves of God.¹¹⁸

The ensuing covenant ceremony at Mt. Sinai confirms this interpretation as God cites the redemption of Israel from Egypt as the basis of His ownership of Israel, calling them “My own possession among all the peoples” (Exod 19:5). This subservient relationship demanded obedience to His will (Exod 19:5) and exclusive service to God by rejecting any other competing master because they were now slaves of the Lord (Exod 20:2-3).¹¹⁹ The use of the slave metaphor to describe Israel’s relationship to God was inextricably linked to the historical reality of the exodus in which Israel was liberated from slavery to Egypt and was given a new identity as God’s slaves, responsible to serve God as their master. Leviticus 25:39-46

¹¹⁶ David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 42-46. There is a New Testament parallel to this concept in Rom 6 in which the sinner is in bondage to sin but is redeemed from that sin in order to serve as a slave of God (Rom 6:22). “Believers ‘having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness’ (Rom. 6:18). This manumission from the bondage of a supposed independence into freedom does not lead to a new independence. Rather, the one manumitted is set free for the ‘obedience of faith’ which he presents to his Lord, Jesus Christ, as his servant.” R. Tuente, “Slave,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 3:597. It is again assumed that humanity cannot ultimately be autonomous but will be serving a master in obedience and submission.

¹¹⁷ John Levenson, “Exodus and Liberation,” in *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 147.

¹¹⁸ Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 49.

¹¹⁹ Josh 24:14 and 1 Sam 12:6-11 use the same theological reasoning, calling the people to exclusive obedience and service to God on the basis of their redemption from Egypt by his hand.

describes slavery of fellow Israelites as an encroachment on God’s exclusive role as master, “For they are my servants (עֲבָדִים) whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold in a slave sale” (Lev 25:42). The clear parallel between slavery to God and slavery to humanity is reinforced in Leviticus 25:55 when God concludes the section on institutional slavery with a two-fold assertion that the Israelites belong to Him as His עֲבָדִים and He is their exclusive אֱדֹנָי.¹²⁰ Using similar language, the Lord assures Israel in Isaiah 43:1 that they belong to Him as His possession on the basis of His work of creation, redemption, and gracious election. “When Yahweh created Israel he automatically made her his *eved*. . . As Yahweh’s servant, Israel is no longer entitled to go her own way. Her *telos* from then onwards is to perform the will of another, under obligation to obey her master in everything.”¹²¹ The slave metaphor does not seem to be a rhetorical device merely to convey humility but rather it forms a religious and national identity that draws directly from Israel’s experience of literal slavery with the new reality of God as their redemptive master and they as his exclusive possession. Callender observes, “Israelites are “servants” (*‘ebdym*) exclusively to YHWH, and therefore cannot rightfully be “servants” of others, whether another god, a domestic or foreign king, or another Israelite.”¹²²

¹²⁰ Peter Williams asserts, “In the case of עֲבָד יְהוָה the subjection and ownership are far more absolute than they are for any עֲבָד of a human master. Nor is it legitimate to discount יְהוָה from being a “real” master and to argue that the real conditions of an עֲבָד with a human master were rather different from an עֲבָד with a divine one, since the translator cannot simply set aside the thought world of the ancient text and give meaning altogether separate from it.” Peter J. Williams, “Slaves’ in Biblical Narrative and in Translation,” in *On Stone and Scroll: Essays in Honor of Graham Ivor Davies*, ed. James Aitken and Brian Mastin (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2011), 448.

¹²¹ Lindhagen, *Servant Motif*, 154.

¹²² Callender, “Servants of God(s),” 79. Linhagen affirms this perspective noting, “As Yahweh’s servants, Israelites may not be slaves to any one else, Israelite or foreigner. Just as Yahweh is the only right owner of the land, he is also the only right master of Israel. He has rescued Israel

Throughout the Old Testament Israelites individually and corporately are identified as “slaves of God,” demonstrating the significance and richness of the metaphor which broadly defines the relationship between God and His people. God himself identified Israel as His slave (Isa 41:8-10) whom He had chosen, gathered, and commissioned to make God known among the nations (Isa 43:10-13). This divine designation is consistent with God’s design in creation in which He initiated a special relationship with humanity which enabled them to embody His character and carry out His will upon the earth. While chattel slaves in the ANE often had their bodies branded like cattle to show possession (Code of Hammurabi §226-27),¹²³ Isaiah 44:5 describes the faithful as those who recognize they are God’s exclusive possession and have marked their hands with a tattoo or marking that says “belonging to the Lord.”¹²⁴ This sense of derived identity common in physical slavery is evident in the self-identification of Israelites as the “slaves of God.” When foreign soldiers asked the Israelites who were rebuilding the temple for their names they responded simply, “We are servants (עֲבָדִים) of the God of heaven and earth” (Ezra 5:11). As God’s slaves the Israelites recognized God as their master and “identify themselves not by a personal name but by who it is they serve.”¹²⁵

from bondage to the inhabitants and the gods of Egypt, and he will not share his dominion over the Israelites with anyone.” Lindhagen, *Servant Motif*, 121.

¹²³ Yamauchi, “Slaves of God,” 33.

¹²⁴ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 84.

¹²⁵ Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 55. A similar pattern can be found in the LXX translation of Jonah 1:9 in which Jonah responds to an inquiry regarding his identity and nationality by asserting, “I am a slave (δοῦλος) of the Lord, and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.” While this seems to be a mistranslation based upon the Masoretic text, Byron observes that such a translation “may also suggest that the translator was more familiar with the idea of Israelites as the slaves of God than as Hebrews.” Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 56.

The accounts of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace (Dan 3) and Daniel in the lion's den (Dan 6) illustrate the exclusive devotion and unconditional obedience to the Lord that characterized God's faithful slaves. Nebuchadnezzar, having observed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's unflinching obedience and God's powerful deliverance, identified them as "servants (עֲבָדִים) of the Most High God" (Dan 3:26). Even as a foreign king, Nebuchadnezzar could recognize that they belonged to the Lord and refused to give their service or worship to another. Daniel is likewise addressed as "עֲבָד of the living God" by a Gentile king when Darius inquires of Daniel to see if the God whom he continually served had extended protection to His faithful slave (Dan 6:20). The fact that slavery to God was both a self-identification made by Israelites and an ascribed designation made by God and others suggests that the rhetoric of slavery was not mere religious convention but an expression of identity, dependence, and obedience to God as master. The slave of God metaphor used broadly of God's people was rooted in the exodus event and dependent upon key associations with institutional slavery such as derived identity and exclusive obedience to God.

The associations of the slave metaphor in relation to God are further elucidated by how Israelite worshippers used slave imagery and expectations in their statements of loyalty and petitions for protection to the Lord. Psalm 86:2 is illustrative as the psalmist cries out, "Guard my life for I am devoted to you. You are my God, save your servant who trusts in you." The worshipper's supplication recognizes his responsibility to God as exclusive Master and calls upon God to fulfill His reciprocal responsibility, ultimately rooted in His covenant relationship, to protect and provide for the worshipper as His slave.¹²⁶ Other prayers petition God

¹²⁶ Edward Bridge, "Loyalty, Dependency and Status with YHWH: The Use of 'abd in the Psalms," *Vetus Testamentum* 59 (2009): 368.

for His assistance so that “your עֶבֶד” might know the will and way of the Lord and obey it, demonstrating his loyalty to God and dependence on God’s provision to serve Him properly (Ps 119: 38, 124-25, 135).¹²⁷ Bridge suggests that such loyalty and dependence reflect a slave’s relationship to the master for the slave is entirely dependent upon the master in all things and consequently is responsible to serve the master in all things.¹²⁸ Samuel uses the slave metaphor as an expression of his willingness to humbly obey whatever commands God would give him, as a slave waiting for instructions from his master (1 Sam 3:9-10). Dependence and submission are further reflected in the imagery of Psalm 123:2 in which the worshipper declares, “As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master . . . so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy.”¹²⁹ Such expressions of worship reveal that the psalmist is not approaching God merely as a subject to a king or an inferior to his superior, but rather as a slave to his master whose life and service belong to the Lord and who is completely dependent upon the Lord’s provision and protection.¹³⁰

Leaders as exemplary slaves. Slavery to God was used metaphorically to describe Israel corporately and faithful worshippers individually, but it was also employed to designate exemplary individuals, who in the Old Testament exercised

¹²⁷ Schultz connects the primacy of obedience to a master’s will to this passage defining the עֶבֶד of God “as one who is completely devoted to understanding and obeying God’s law, even making this the subject of petitions.” Schultz, “Servant, Slave,” 1190.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 371.

¹²⁹ Neh 1:10 is a parallel example in which Nehemiah cites the exodus as the basis for Israel belonging to God as his slaves and Nehemiah presents his petition humbly as the slave of the Lord who is devoted to God’s plan and purpose.

¹³⁰ Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 441.

formal or informal leadership in submission to God’s ultimate authority. Moses is described as God’s עֶבֶד more than 40 times and 18 times he is designated as the יְהוָה עֶבֶד which seems to be a title of authority and honor for one who was called out from God’s slaves that he might lead God’s people according to God’s will (Ps 105:25-26).¹³¹ Numbers 12:7-8 describes the world as God’s household and Moses as his faithful slave manager whose primary qualification to lead is his privileged closeness in his relationship with God.¹³² As God’s exemplary slave Moses was entrusted with great authority by God as an agent of God’s deliverance (Exod 1), a mediator of God’s covenant (Exod 19-24), and a recipient of God’s revealed will for His people as recorded in the Pentateuch.¹³³ Such a use of עֶבֶד as a designation of leadership seems to preserve some of the same associations with slavery as those of a king’s officials who enjoyed a close relationship with their master and were specially commissioned to act with his authority to carry out his will.¹³⁴ Joshua was similarly identified as the עֶבֶד of the Lord (Josh 24:29; Judg 2:8) as a designation of leadership which placed him in authority and under authority as the leader of God’s people.

The title “slave of God” not only conveyed a sense of authorized authority but also highlighted the exemplary obedience and submission displayed by key leaders such as Abraham (Ps 105:42) and Moses (2 Kgs 18:12), often in contrast to the disobedience of the rest of God’s people. In the wake of Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness Caleb is set apart by God as “my עֶבֶד” specifically because “he has had

¹³¹ Daniel Block, “My Servant David: Ancient Israel’s Vision of the Messiah,” in *Israel’s Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 44-45.

¹³² Edward Bridge, “The Use of עֶבֶד in Prophetic Literature,” *Australian Biblical Review* 60 (2012): 40.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³⁴ Shultz, “Servant, Slave,” 1191.

a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly” (Num 14:24). God links the exemplary obedience of a slave with the titular use of the metaphor even more explicitly when He contrasts the wicked rule of Jeroboam with “my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes” (1 Kgs 14:8). Job is also identified and defended by God as “my עֶבֶד” who fears God and turns away from evil so that he is characterized as “blameless and upright” (Job 1:8, 2:3). These men were given the honorific title “slave of God” to juxtapose their authority and humility, their commission to lead and their willingness to follow. Their close relationship to God and embodiment of His character qualified them uniquely to act as His representative regents by leading His people as exemplary slaves who were ultimately following the Master.¹³⁵ Zimmerli concludes that the designation of leaders as slaves, using δούλος in the LXX, “betrays plainly that the translator wished to view even these great men of history not after the pattern of the free kingly ministry, but after that of the humble slave.”¹³⁶

The king as subservient ruler. In all of the Old Testament, David is most frequently referred to as God’s עֶבֶד as the honor of leadership and expectation of discipleship converge to define the expectations of kingship.¹³⁷ In God’s covenant with David to establish his royal dynasty He calls David His עֶבֶד in his role as ruler over Israel (2 Sam 7:8) while also describing the close and personal relationship he enjoys with God as that of a father and a son (2 Sam 7:14).¹³⁸ These echoes of Eden

¹³⁵ Ringgren, “עֶבֶד ‘eved,’” 394.

¹³⁶ Zimmerli and Jeremias, *The Servant of God*, 40.

¹³⁷ Block, “My Servant David,” 47.

¹³⁸ Ps 89:20-27 also describes David as his chosen עֶבֶד and his obedient son.

reveal that in a special way the king was God's chosen agent on the earth, an exemplary slave who was expected to serve God and lead the people in faithful obedience to God. The Israelites were the slaves of God and their king was a fellow slave, a "first among equals," whose authority was rooted in his willingness to yield to God's ultimate authority through obedience and dependence.¹³⁹ Different than ANE kings who claimed status as the slave of their gods, the king was not deified but instead enjoyed a close relationship with God so that he displayed God's character in his rule and submitted to God's will in his obedience (Ras Shamra 49:VI:8; 51:II:29; 2 Aqht I:35). "The occupant of the throne ruled the state on behalf of the deity not as a deity."¹⁴⁰ This kingly use of the metaphor not only looks back at creation but also anticipates both redemption and consummation when someday the Davidic "מֶלֶךְ" will reign as king in right relationship with God and perfect rule of God's people forever (Ezek 34:23-31).

When Israel first demanded a king to rule over them Samuel warned that a request for a king was an expression of an idolatrous heart which forsook undivided allegiance to God by living in submission to an earthly master of their own choosing. Samuel's prophetic warning demonstrates in detail how a ruling king may conscript their service and confiscate their possessions, "effectively causing them to become enslaved to their king rather than God"¹⁴¹ (1 Sam 8:17-18). Because of the danger of autonomous and self-determining leadership, God provides explicit instructions regarding kingship in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, stipulating that the king must be appointed by God from among His redeemed people. God warns that the

¹³⁹ Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 54.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

king must not yield to the temptation to effect his own will through wealth, political alliances, or military prowess (Deut 17:16-17). Instead he must be immersed in God's revealed will by copying and studying the Scripture so that he will obey God as the ultimate ruler and maintain humility as a fellow slave among his countrymen (Deut 17:18-20).¹⁴² Donald Murray observes that David is called a נָגִיד (prince) rather than a מֶלֶךְ (king) to emphasize that God is ultimately the king and the earthly ruler is "instituted and guided by the authoritative deferent of Yahweh's will for his people, the prophetic mediator of the divine word."¹⁴³ The king's responsibility to serve God as Master by serving others is directly cited in 1 Kings 12:7 when Solomon's advisors instruct Rehoboam to "be a servant (עֲבָד) to this people and serve them" as the people petitioned him to mercifully reduce his demands for their corvee labor. Moshe Weinfeld suggests that the pattern of the king serving God by serving His people can be traced back to the establishment of the monarchy when Samuel proclaimed that the king would "walk before the people," a figure of speech that communicated loyalty and service in the ANE.¹⁴⁴ David's role as עֲבָד and son demanded that he not usurp God's ultimate authority but instead remember that he

¹⁴² Solomon's humble entreaty to the Lord repeatedly employs the phrase "your slave" to demonstrate his dependence upon God for wisdom and direction (1 Kgs 3:7-9). Hezekiah is the only other king described as God's slave apparently as a title of honor because of his steadfast dependence upon God and his unwillingness to yield to the threats of Sennacherib (2 Chr 32:16)

¹⁴³ Donald F. Murray, *Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension: Pragmatics, Poetics and Polemics in a Narrative Sequence about David (2 Samuel 5.17-7.29)* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 304. Throughout Israel's monarchy the kings were evaluated almost exclusively on the basis of whether they served the Lord or other gods, doing what was right or what was evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kgs 15:34, 16:2). David was indentified explicitly as an עֲבָד of the Lord who followed God wholeheartedly, "doing only what was right in my eyes" (1 Kgs 14:8).

¹⁴⁴ Moshe Weinfeld, "The King as the Servant of the People," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982): 190.

was appointed by God and accountable to God to follow him exclusively and care for God's people sacrificially.¹⁴⁵

In 1 Samuel 12:19-25 Samuel assured the people that the danger associated with following a king could be averted by continuing to follow God wholeheartedly. He warns, "But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be swept away" (1 Sam 12:25). After Israel's continued disobedience and idolatry God fulfilled His promise and sent His people into exile. He had redeemed them so that they might serve Him as master exclusively and faithfully but they had chosen instead to give their service to other gods (2 Chr 7:22). The exile marked a reversal of the exodus, returning Israel to human slavery "so that they might learn the difference between my service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries" (2 Chr 12:8). God allowed them to be subjected again to a foreign master to remind them of the responsibilities and blessings that came with their identity as slaves of God. Israel's choice of masters would ultimately determine whether she would enjoy the blessings of abundance and peace associated with God's covenant relationship or whether she would experience hunger, thirst, and nakedness in service of her enemies (Deut 28:47-48). The clear parallel between physical slavery and the religious use of the metaphor of slavery to God reinforces the notion that the associations and expectations implicit in biblical slave imagery reflect the patterns of institutional slavery known in Israel and the ANE.

Prophets as messengers of the Lord. Another group of people uniquely designated as the עֲבָדֵי יְהוָה of God are the prophets who were commissioned as God's messengers to call God's people to repentance. The prophets are usually described

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 310. Murray argues that the primary purpose of David's rule was promoting the welfare of those he led because they were God's people who must be led according to God's plan.

collectively by God as “my עֲבָדִים the prophets,” divinely commissioned agents of proclamation and revelation (1 Kgs 9:7; Amos 3:7; Jer 7:25). Elijah’s prayer on Mount Carmel reveals the authority and obedience implied in his role as a slave messenger imploring God, “Let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant (עֲבָד) and I have done all these things at your word” (1 Kgs 18:36). A prophet’s life was completely directed by God’s will as Master so that he would do whatever God asked, go where God commanded, and speak what God declared (2 Sam 12; 1 Kgs 18:1,12; Isa 7:3-9; Jer 11:1-8).¹⁴⁶ Arthur summarizes, “From the moment he answered Yahweh’s call, the classical prophet ceased to be a free man. He was now in bondage to the divine word. He must go where he was sent and say what he was commanded to say.”¹⁴⁷ A prophet’s role as slave of God emphasized his status and his obedience. He was commissioned by God as an authoritative messenger and faithful to carry out His will in the face of persecution and opposition. The prophets, like the exemplary leaders and appointed kings, were marked by a close relationship with God which was ultimately the basis of their authority and responsibility as His emissaries.¹⁴⁸

Messiah as suffering “servant” and ruling king. A final and pivotal use of the slave metaphor is Isaiah’s anticipation of the advent of an unidentified “עֲבָד of the Lord” who would bring about justice (Isa 42:4), endure frustration in his restorative task (Isa 49:4), remain obedient in the face of violent opposition (Isa

¹⁴⁶ Bridge “The Use of *eved*,” 41.

¹⁴⁷ David Arthur, *A Smooth Stone: Biblical Prophecy in Historical Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 104.

¹⁴⁸ Bridge, “The Use of *eved*,” 42.

50:5-6), and ultimately bear the sins of the people through his death (Isa 53:1-12).¹⁴⁹ The identity and significance of this “suffering servant” has been widely and hotly debated but for the purpose of this study it is sufficient to affirm the conclusion of Jeremias that this עֶבֶד anticipated a messianic figure who would act as God’ agent for the restoration of His people at some point in the future.¹⁵⁰ Block argues persuasively that this עֶבֶד is a Davidic figure who finally and fully brings justice and extends his reign over a global restored kingdom as savior and king.¹⁵¹ This figure is unflinching in his obedience to the commands of the Lord and his anonymous designation as the “עֶבֶד of the Lord” may indicate that, just as a slave is defined by his master, his identity and commission are completely derived from the fact that he belongs to the Lord.¹⁵² This use of the slave metaphor, translated *παῖς Θεοῦ* in the LXX, depicts the messiah as the fulfillment of God’s ideal king, God’s faithful messenger, and God’s exemplary slave who eternally exists in right relationship with God so that he perfectly represents his character to God’s people as his royal representative.

This Davidic messiah would bring about a new act of redemption so that God’s people are set free from slavery to other nations with the result that “they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them” (Jer 30:8-9). This return to God’s creation design of obedient sonship and subservient

¹⁴⁹ It is well beyond the scope of this study to undergo a thorough study of the identity of the Isaianic suffering servant. This study will defend the position that the servant is the messiah, a Davidic kingly figure who initiates the new covenant and ultimately consummates his reign by establishing his eternal kingdom. I am indebted to Daniel Block for his excellent summary of this complex issue and the interested reader should refer to his work for more detail. Block, “My Servant David,” 49ff.

¹⁵⁰ Jeremias and Zimmerli, “*παῖς Θεοῦ*,” 682-700.

¹⁵¹ Block, “My Servant David,” 50.

¹⁵² Jeremias and Zimmerli, “*παῖς Θεοῦ*,” 668.

rulership on the earth necessitated a new covenant so that God's people could be rightly related to God and one another once again on the basis of his gracious initiative. The promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 contrasts the covenant of Sinai which Israel forsook with the new covenant in which God places the law in their hearts and restores the close relationship which he intended. The prophets anticipate that the work of the messianic עֶבֶד will be exemplary and restorative, returning Israel and the nations to right relationship with God so that they might serve as his royal representatives upon the earth.

Summary and Implications

This survey of the religious uses of the slave metaphor in the Old Testament reveals that the diversity of uses of the metaphor find several common associations evoked from the practice of physical slavery rather than expressing courtly convention or mere rhetoric of humility.¹⁵³ First, slavery to God makes one His own possession (Exod 19:4) on account of His act of redemption. This initial thread is the essence of the definition of slavery offered at the outset as one's person and worship belong exclusively to God.¹⁵⁴ Second, the faithful worshippers of Yahweh demonstrate the same derived identity of a slave before their master, even identifying themselves in public discourse by the simple designation "עֶבֶד of God" (Ezra 5:11). A corollary of this association is the status and authority that are expressed when the slave metaphor is used as a designation of leadership or kingship. Just as a slave carried out the will of the master with the full authority of

¹⁵³ Bridge, "The Use of *eved*," 34.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Williams argues that ownership is the primary thrust of this metaphor in relationship to God for "there can be no ownership more absolute than ownership by YHWH." Williams, "Slaves' in Biblical Narrative," 452.

the master, so too the prophets, kings, and even Messiah find their identity and authority by virtue of their relationship with God himself.

Work is a third association as the slave of God was called to carry out the master's will faithfully and completely as a demonstration of one's right relationship with God. A slave is not autonomous, but rather submissive to the will of another and this association extends from God's election of Israel as His slave to the responsibility of kings to study and carry out the instructions from God. Fourth, exclusive obedience characterizes a faithful slave. Divided allegiance or idolatry was met with judgment including the return of Israel to physical slavery that they might be reminded of their responsibility to obey the Lord wholeheartedly. Finally, just as a slave was completely dependent upon his master for provision and protection, the supplication of faithful worshippers reveals their hope and expectation that God will answer their entreaty on very basis of their identity as His slaves. The metaphor of slavery to God is rich with allusions to the relationship of a slave to his master but this does not imply that a relationship with God is merely impersonal duty as a result of compulsion. Throughout the Old Testament the metaphor of slavery is connected to God's gracious initiative and covenant promises which call His people to a right relationship with Him so that they can rightly carry out His will upon the earth.

Jewish Slavery in the Second Temple Period

The second temple period provides a vital link between the literal and metaphorical slavery described in the Old Testament and the slave language used in the New Testament. It is important to examine the denotation and connotation of slave language in the second temple literature which may give interpretive clues for understanding slave language in Luke-Acts. This section will broadly consider

instances of physical and metaphorical slavery in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works from this period and in relevant texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls. This analysis will specifically consider which aspects of slave terminology in second temple literature are consonant with the Old Testament usage while noting areas of discontinuity and rhetorical development where applicable.

Slavery in the Apocrypha

The deuterocanonical works refer to physical slaves exclusively in foreign contexts with reference to the ubiquity of slavery in Assyria (Jdt 10:23; 13:1) and Babylon (Sus 1:27). Jews feared being conquered by invading armies which would lead to their enslavement to foreigners (Jdt 7:27), a reality which they experienced when Israel was conquered by the Greeks (1 Macc 3:41) and later during the first conquests of Judea by Rome (Plutarch, *Vita Pomp.* 45.1-5). The testimony of torture and harsh treatment of slaves in 3 Maccabees 7:5 is typical of the treatment Jewish slaves could expect from foreign captors. Slavery to foreign captors was considered a natural result of war and was marked by harsh treatment and menial service, all of which is consistent with the Old Testament presentation of foreign slavery. The fact that Jews were enslaved by the Greeks and subsequently enslaved and occupied by the Romans suggests that Jews would have been very familiar with the realities of slavery in the Greco-Roman world.

Most of the slaves described in the Jewish literature of the second temple period were Gentile chattel slaves (Lev 25:45-46), owned by Jews, who could be transferred as property and were considered the most lowly class in society (Wis 18:11). Although Jewish literature used many different Greek terms for slaves, δούλος and παῖς were the primary terms for slave which is reflected in the translation

of עֶבֶד in the LXX.¹⁵⁵ Slaves are described as messengers and attendants who served their masters obediently (Tob 9:1-2) and sometimes endured arduous labor. Ben Sira advocates grueling labor for all slaves and torture and fetters for wicked slaves, acknowledging that excessively harsh treatment may result in the slave running away (Sir 35:25-33).

While the metaphorical use of slave language to express submission to a king or authority was common in the ancient Near East and the Old Testament as an expression of deference, it is far less frequent in the second temple literature. When it is used in the apocrypha it is usually in the context of an ancient Near Eastern society in which a person is addressing someone in authority over him, whether that be a king (Jdt 3:4), a military commander (Jdt 5:5), or a person of nobility. This usage mirrors the associations of submission, obedience, work, and dependence found in the Old Testament use of the metaphor between authorities and subordinates. In Judith 11:4 Holofernes describes all of the king's subjects as "servants of my lord King Nebuchadnezzar" and assures Judith that her submission as a slave to the king's authority will place her under the king's protection. The decreasing frequency of such deferential language likely reflects the influence of Hellenistic thought which eschewed servile rhetoric in relationship to authorities because of a high priority on autonomy and self-determination.

While slave language was used less frequently to convey a subordinate's submission to an authority, it was used more frequently to philosophically describe slavery to desire and passion, a usage also found in the writings of the Cynics and Stoics during this period (Euripedes, *Hel.* 728-731; *Ion* 854-856). Because the Greeks prized freedom, servitude to any power or person was considered shameful

¹⁵⁵ Wright, "Ebed/Doulos," 105.

(Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse* 14.1)¹⁵⁶. This mindset seems to influence some Jewish thought in which a person might be enslaved to desire (4 Macc 3:2), emotions (4 Macc 13:2) and sin. In such instances, the slave metaphor was used in a derogatory manner to describe one who was under the power of a desire or vice which resulted in slavish obedience and the surrender of freedom (1 Esd 4:26). This new rhetorical development which is evident in the apocrypha is found frequently in the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria who lived at the very end of the second temple period (*Spec* 4.91; *Prob* 11, 159).

The most common rhetorical use of the slave metaphor during this period was to describe the relationship of a pious Jew before the Lord. Supplicants regularly petition God with the self-designation “your slave” to describe their humility and submission before the Lord (Wis 9:5; Sg Three 1:10), a usage found frequently in the first chapters of Luke’s gospel (Luke 1:36, 48; 2:28).¹⁵⁷ In parallel with the Old Testament, the Israelites are collectively understood as the slaves of the Lord (Sir 36:22; Sg Three 1:62; 2 Macc 7:6) which pointed to their national identity as God’s possession on the basis of His redemption.¹⁵⁸ Second Maccabees 8:29 describes a corporate prayer in which the Israelites petitioned the Lord for reconciliation, addressing God as Lord and themselves as God’s servants.¹⁵⁹ During

¹⁵⁶ Moises Silva, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 3:767.

¹⁵⁷ In *Joseph and Aseneth* 17:7, Aseneth addresses God as “your maidservant” in a manner very similar to Mary’s prayer in Luke 1:48.

¹⁵⁸ In 4Q158 fragment 2 Moses is instructed to lead the people out of Egypt to “go as slaves.” The fragmentary nature of this text makes it difficult to decipher but the reference to the Israelites as slaves after their redemption suggests that perhaps the author was not presenting the Israelites as slaves of God who was their new Master.

¹⁵⁹ This very closely approximates the pattern of the early church in corporate prayer as they address God as their Lord and understand themselves as “your slaves” (Acts 4:29).

this period the slave metaphor, used rhetorically, was primarily used to encapsulate the Jewish religious identity before God in prayer and worship.

Slavery in Second Temple Pseudepigrapha

Jewish pseudepigrapha reflect the same patterns observed in the apocryphal texts. Physical slavery was presented as ubiquitous in foreign nations (*Jos. Asen.* 9:3; 18:1; *Let. Aris.* 14) and it was understood that foreign conquerors would take captives as their slaves (*Pss. Sol.* 2:6; 8:21). The pseudepigraphal *Letter of Aristeas* claims that 100,000 Jews were captured by Ptolemy who took the best of the men to be soldiers and made the rest of the captives slaves to compensate his soldiers for their military service (*Let. Aris.* 13-14). After the author's appeal, the king, presumably Ptolemy II, agrees to demonstrate his magnanimity and devotion to God by redeeming all of the Jewish slaves at a price of 20 drachmas each (*Let. Aris.* 20).¹⁶⁰ The king then flatly criticizes the practice of enslaving those captured in war as "absolute injustice" which is "against all propriety" (*Let. Aris.* 23). This account suggests a moral aversion to the evil of slavery which is discontinuous with any other records of slavery in Israel or the ancient Near East. While the pseudepigrapha do not detail the abuse of slaves, it was understood that slaves were given some of the most menial and distasteful tasks as demonstrated by Aseneth's willingness to act as a slave who washes the feet of Joseph (*Jos. Asen.* 13:12).

The metaphorical use of slave language as an expression of submission to an authority is infrequent in the pseudepigrapha (*Jos. Asen.* 28:2), reflecting the trend observed in the apocryphal literature. While the deferential use of slave

¹⁶⁰ It is unclear whether this would have been the actual price of the slaves in society or simply a royal accommodation to partially compensate his soldiers.

language decreased, the references to slavery to passion or desire increased, reflecting the Hellenistic trend toward describing a person as metaphorically enslaved to emotions (*T. 12 Patr.* 4.18.6) and sinful desire (*T. 12 Patr.* 4.15.3). Jews continued to use the metaphor in the prayers recorded in the pseudepigrapha, bringing their humble entreaties before the Lord in submission to His sovereign authority over them (*1 En.* 84:6). Consistent with the Old Testament and apocrypha, the Israelites were collectively identified as God's slaves (*Pss. Sol.* 10:4) which captured their privileged status as God's possession and their responsibility to Him rooted in their redemption at the Exodus. So strong was this identification that Joseph's brothers describe their father to Pharaoh's son simply as a "servant of the Most High God" (*Jos. Apen.* 23:10). In both the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha key Israelite figures, such as the patriarchs (*2 Macc* 1:2) and Joshua (*Pss. Sol.* 18:12), are also presented as the exemplary slaves of God. Although such uses often have a titular sense without much context to supply associations of the metaphor, the manner of the usage in parallel with the Old Testament rhetorical form, suggests representative authority and derived identity as even the leaders of God's people are understood as His slaves. While the pseudepigraphal texts offer little new information regarding the use of slave terminology in the second temple period, the evidence they provide is consistent with the patterns observed in the apocrypha and the use of slave language in the Old Testament.

Slavery in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Qumran community provides a unique glimpse into Jewish exposition and practice during the second temple period. Because their writings preserve regulations that govern both the physical and spiritual lives of its adherents the references to slavery in the Dead Sea Scrolls is of particular interest. The

Qumran community forbade the sale of Israelite slaves, specifically citing their redemption from Egypt as the basis for the prohibition with clear dependence on Leviticus 25:39-45 (4Q159 Frs. 2-4). The sources which do mention slavery of Jews in the deuterocanonical period suggest strong continuity with the Old Testament regulations and practice. After surveying the relevant sources, Jeremias asserts that during the second temple period Jewish slavery of fellow Jews “was regulated in accordance with the humane Old Testament prescriptions.”¹⁶¹

The Qumran community did allow the possession of Gentile chattel slaves (Lev 25:45-46), owned by Jews, who could be transferred as property (4Q Ostr 1) and were responsible for submission to their masters (4Q197 Fr. 5) even when that entailed grueling labor (4Q 254 Fr. 5). The Qumran community provides evidence that foreign slaves were circumcised as proselytes (CD XII, 10) and assimilated into the community and its religious observances (CD XVI, 6) in accordance with the Old Testament regulations (Gen 17:12; Exod 12:44). This natal alienation from the slave’s former life allowed him to participate in the Jewish worship on the basis of his new identity. A slave of a priest was permitted to eat the priestly portion of food (4Q251 Fr. 16) in conjunction with Leviticus 22:11 and once gentile slaves were assimilated proselytes they could not be sold outside of the Jewish community (CD XII, 11). Although the slave was a part of the worshipping community, he was still under the absolute power of the master and therefore any religious observances were dependent on the permission of the master.

While harsh treatment of slaves was broadly accepted in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that some Jews attempted to curb excessive abuse of slaves by not only requiring the emancipation

¹⁶¹ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 312.

of a slave permanently injured by the master's rod (Exod 21:26-27) but also requiring the master to pay for the medical treatment and lost time of the slave (4Q251 Fr. 8). This development of the biblical regulations for the treatment of slaves extends to foreign slaves the same rights as those enjoyed by free men (Exod 21:18-20) relative to abuse. However, it is clear that slaves were still subject to discipline (4Q251 Fr. 7) and reprimand by their Jewish master (CD XI, 12) which was permissible under Old Testament law (Lev 25:45-46). This evidence indicates that Jewish enslavement of gentiles in the second temple period was consistent with the Old Testament pattern of assimilation through circumcision and observing basic safeguards against abuse. The development of additional safeguards in application of the Jewish law may suggest a recognition of the common humanity slaves and masters shared.

The Qumran community did not use slave language as an expression of deference to human authority but they did recognize that the slave metaphor captured the absolute power of the master and the subservient submission of the subordinate such as when God defeats Israel's enemies and declares, "I have made him a slave" (4Q522 Fr. 9). Not surprisingly, the Qumran community did not generally adopt the Hellenistic trend of using the slave metaphor negatively to describe a person enslaved to passion or desire (4Q416 Fr. 2). In contrast, the rhetorical use of slave language as an expression of personal piety seems to be more frequent in the Dead Sea Scrolls as the phrase "your slave" is used 30 times in the prayers and hymns of the community (1QH 4.22-25; 5.19; 6.6). When used in supplication, the metaphor expresses a variety of associations including dependence, humility, obedience, and possession. Much as a slave might petition his master for protection with an affirmation of the slave's humble submission to the master's authority, Jewish worshippers approached God by recognizing His exalted power and their corresponding humility and dependence. The metaphor was also used to

describe Israel corporately as one text urges the Israelites to live out their identity as God's chosen servant by serving God freely rather than living as a slave to sin (4Q416 Fr. 2). This rhetoric, which seems to gain popularity in Jewish practice, is consistent with the Old Testament usage of the metaphor to convey humility, obedience, and dependence before God.

Some texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls also employ the slave metaphor to describe exemplary figures in Jewish history who were specially called and commissioned by God to lead in Israel. The prophets are often collectively designated as "your servants" which is consistent with the Old Testament's own description of their identity (1 QS I, 2-3; 1 QPHab VII, 1-5). David, the figure most often described as the slave of the Lord in the Old Testament, continues to be recognized as God's slave during the second temple period (1 QM 11.2). While the second temple period saw slave rhetoric begin to shift from the oriental emphasis on slavery as submission to authority to the Greco-Roman themes of slavery to passion and desire, there is strong agreement between the Jewish practice and rhetoric of slavery and that found in the Old Testament. The Jews understood and observed the Mosaic regulations regarding slavery and they frequently used the slave metaphor to capture their national and religious identity as God's slaves who had been purchased for His service.

Conclusion

This chapter began by positing a definition of slavery and examining the cultural practice of slavery in the ancient Near East as well as in Israel. It was concluded that chattel slavery was known and practiced in both milieus and seemed to form the backdrop of the metaphorical usage of slave language. Lexical investigation found that עֶבֶד at its root indicates physical slavery though it can be

used metaphorically for those who are not slaves. A survey of metaphorical uses of עֶבֶד found that whether describing the relationship of subjects to their king, vassals to their suzerain, or inferiors to their superiors, the vehicle of slavery retained key associations derived from physical slavery even in its most non-literal application. The religious use of the slave metaphor in the Old Testament was traced from God's design in creation to the expectation of messianic restoration. It was concluded that the slave metaphor was rooted historically in the Exodus and the corresponding expectations of Israel and her leaders were frequently articulated using the imagery of a slave and his master. While broadly serving as a picture of discipleship for Israel nationally and individually, it was also a designator of leadership for those who were exemplary in their obedience and commissioned by God as his authorized representatives on the basis of their close relationship with him. The frequency with which David is designated as the עֶבֶד of the Lord highlights the kingly role as one who is in authority and under authority, accountable to God for rightly ruling God's people. The exile and return to slavery heightened the expectation that one day God's appointed עֶבֶד would bring deliverance, justice, and a new covenant as he ruled over Israel and the nations. The second temple period maintained the Old Testament practice and rhetoric of slavery even as the Greco-Roman Empire established itself in Judah. While it will be shown in the following chapter that Greco-Roman slavery also informs the image of slavery as it is used in Luke-Acts, the Old Testament expectations and associations evoked by the slave of God theme form a key conceptual backdrop for understanding the metaphor of slavery as an image of leadership and discipleship in the Lukan narrative.

CHAPTER 3
SLAVERY IN GRECO-ROMAN
LIFE AND THOUGHT

I have argued that the Hebrew use of the slave of God metaphor necessarily informs one's interpretation of the slave metaphor in Luke-Acts. However, the complex nature of the metaphor and the cultural milieu of Luke's first-century readers require the exegete to consider how the practice of physical slavery in the Roman Empire may influence the connotation or denotation of the slavery metaphor in the Lukan narrative. While scholars often debate whether the Hebrew or Greco-Roman concept of slavery forms the primary backdrop for the use of the metaphor in the New Testament, most agree that both cultures would have shaped the metaphor's rhetorical significance through its diachronic development.¹ By the first-century A.D. even Jewish writers such as Josephus and Philo spoke of slavery, whether physical or rhetorical, in Hellenistic terms.² The frequency of literal slaves

¹ Two examples of scholarly extremes are illustrative of the spectrum of rhetorical opinion. Byron strongly favors a Jewish background for the New Testament metaphor and argues for its significance, almost to the exclusion of any consideration of Greco-Roman society. John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 37-59. On the opposite extreme, Jennifer Glancy explores the metaphor exclusively from a Greco-Roman standpoint to highlight the brutality of the institution of slavery in the first-century, effectively ignoring the historical development of the metaphor in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9-38. Harris is an example of a scholarly mediating position which recognizes the historical and rhetorical influence of both Hebrew and Greco-Roman slavery by highlighting their overlap as well as their distinctive contribution to the nuance of the metaphor. Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 25-45.

² Benjamin G. Wright, "Eved/Doulos: Terms and Social Status in the Meeting of Hebrew Biblical and Hellenistic Roman Culture," *Semeia* 83/83 (2003): 107. Wright provides an excellent overview of the development of Jewish thought on physical and metaphorical slavery in the second

mentioned in the Lukan narrative demonstrates the ubiquity of Greco-Roman slavery in society such as the accounts of the centurion's slave (Luke 7:1-10), Cornelius' slaves (Acts 10:7), and the slave girl in Philippi (Acts 16:16). Furthermore, the parables of Jesus often describe rural, urban, and household slaves and employ elements distinctive to Greco-Roman slavery such as a slave overseer (Luke 12:42-48), a slave's financial portion (*peculium*) entrusted by the master (Luke 19:13), and the lowliness of a household slave (Luke 17:7-10). When Jesus speaks of slavery metaphorically He highlights aspects of slavery known and practiced in Roman society, utilizing the relationship and responsibility of the slave to his master to illustrate key aspects of leadership and discipleship.

Since Jesus and Luke's audience lived in a Greco-Roman society and the narrative regularly references the practice of Greco-Roman slavery, this chapter will provide an overview of physical and metaphorical slavery in the first-century A.D. Roman Empire with focused attention on the aspects that seem to inform Luke's usage of slave imagery. As with the previous chapter on Hebrew slavery, this chapter begins by considering the historical practice of physical slavery in Roman society to properly understand the economic and social dynamics of this complex institution. A lexical examination of the *δοῦλος* and *κύριος* word groups will outline their basic semantic range and compare and contrast *δοῦλος* with *διάκονος* in relationship to slavery. Other Greek terms describing slavery will be discussed as they arise in the text of Luke-Acts in subsequent chapters. Finally, this chapter will outline possible associations of the metaphor given Greco-Roman slavery as the vehicle. These categories, in conjunction with the associations considered in the

temple period and to what extent their cultural and historical backgrounds influences their translations of slavery terminology in the LXX.

previous chapter, will provide a rhetorical framework for interpreting the significance and development of the slave metaphor in Luke's writings.

Socio-Historical Background of Roman Slavery

While scholars have a large number of texts, inscriptions, and artifacts that provide information about the practice of slavery in the Roman Empire, historical reconstructions of the institution of slavery vary widely from a benign social construct to a means of harsh and oppressive exploitation. A historical reconstruction is dependent on what sources are used and how they are interpreted as many legal texts and documents written by slave owners may simply have served as legal fiction, promising protection that was not extended or describing slavery as less oppressive than it actually was.³ Because nearly all of the legal and literary texts describing slavery were written by the social elite, the social historian has no firsthand accounts from the slave's perspective (i.e. Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.43; *Life of Aesop*). Therefore, he or she must attempt to reconstruct the life and experience of a first-century Roman slave by analyzing and interpreting the perspective of the ruling class.⁴ The historian's own bias and aim also affects how the sources are interpreted such as Jennifer Glancy's approach which seeks to "uncover and uplift the lives of 'real slaves' from their victimization of being abused bodies."⁵ The goal of this historical consideration of Roman slavery is to reduce the complexity of the subject by making appropriate generalizations while incorporating the perspective or

³ I. A. H. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 35.

⁴ Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 1-2.

⁵ J. Albert Harrill, "The Slave Still Appears: A Historiographical Response to Jennifer Glancy," *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007): 214.

corrective of various scholars where appropriate. This historical reconstruction will provide the necessary framework to consider the lexical denotation and the rhetorical connotation of slave terminology in Luke-Acts.

Physical Slavery in Greco-Roman Society

While slavery in the ancient Near East (ANE) was practiced more sporadically, the Roman system of slavery was complex, pervasive, and an integral part of Roman society. Keith Hopkins estimates that approximately one-third of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves, numbering approximately ten million people with perhaps an even a larger percentage of slaves within the city of Rome itself.⁶ While some offer a more conservative estimate that one-fifth of the population were slaves,⁷ Westermann contends that one-third of the empire were slaves and another third were former slaves now living as freedmen.⁸ Slavery was a social reality that was integrated into every institution and facet of Roman society so that in the course of daily life one would encounter slaves from the household, to the marketplace, to the fields. So ubiquitous was slavery in Roman society that Martin asserts that “almost no one, slaves included, thought to organize society any other way.”⁹ Slaves were an indispensable part of the Roman economy and thus throughout the Roman Empire one would encounter slaves laboring for their

⁶ Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 99-102.

⁷ Mary Ann Beavis, “Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 38.

⁸ W. L. Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1955), 83.

⁹ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 42. While Martin has been criticized for presuming to know the thoughts of the slave class, he observes that liberated slaves would immediately enslave others as evidence for his assertion.

master's profit in hopes of becoming free themselves one day.¹⁰ Different from slavery in the New World, Roman slaves came from a variety of races and nationalities and served in a vast array of roles in society which meant they were not easily identified by their appearance or vocation.¹¹ The only thing they had in common was their status as slaves.

Defining characteristics of Roman slavery. The definition for slave proposed in the previous chapter was “someone whose person and service belong wholly to another” and this broad definition certainly encapsulates the identity and responsibilities of Roman slaves as well, regardless of their race or function in society. Three characteristics, already introduced in the previous chapter, effectively define the social reality of Roman slavery: they were owned as property, subject to an alien will, and natively alienated. First, slaves were considered the legal property of the master and Roman law placed slaves in the same category as land or cattle which might be bought, sold, or punished at the will of the master.¹² Although legally slaves were considered mere objects, in practice the personhood of slaves was not completely denied as they were generally granted extremely basic rights and privileges based more on custom than law.¹³ However, the master possessed the absolute power of ownership (*dominica potestas*) and the slave was compelled to

¹⁰ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 29.

¹¹ S. Scott Barchy, “Slavery, New Testament,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:66.

¹² Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery*, 35.

¹³ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 37. Combes observes that a few laws were passed in an attempt to curb the harshest brutality against slaves but it is unclear whether these laws made any difference in the actual practice of Roman slavery. Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 41.

obey the master or suffer the consequences (Plato, *Gorgias* 2.543).¹⁴ A early Greek slave contract details, “If Eisiais does not serve or do as she is ordered let Kleomantis have power to punish her in any way he wishes; he may beat her, chain her or sell her.”¹⁵ Different than in the ancient Near East, slaves were considered little more than talking tools, and legally the slave was a mere object with no right to legal recourse or protection.¹⁶ Because freedom and autonomy were highly prized in Greco-Roman society, the subjection and powerlessness of slaves was viewed with scorn and the loss of autonomy considered repulsive (Euripedes, *Ion* 854).¹⁷ Roman slaves were the exclusive property of the master which made them powerless socially and legally to act independently of the master.

As property Roman slaves were completely subject to the will of the master at all times and absolute obedience was expected (Xenophon, *Cyr.* 8.1.4).¹⁸ Being owned by the master meant that the slave’s identity and service were oriented exclusively to the master so the slave no longer possessed any autonomy of will or action. “The slave was a dominated thing, an animated instrument, a body with natural movements but without its own reason, an existence entirely absorbed in another. The proprietor of this thing, the mover of this instrument, the soul and the

¹⁴ David J. Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 112.

¹⁵ *Fouilles de Delphes* 3.3.329. Translation from Richard A. Horsley, “The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and Their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars,” *Semeia* 83/84 (2003): 51.

¹⁶ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 37. It has been documented that during the first-century several important rulings extended some basic protections as a tacit recognition of their humanity but the absolute power of the master and powerlessness of the slave were still in place. Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 113.

¹⁷ K. H. Rengstorf, “δοῦλος” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 2:261.

¹⁸ Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 113.

reason of this body, the source of this life, was the master.”¹⁹ This extreme form of domination gave the master unlimited power over the slave which often resulted in physical and sexual abuse (Plutarch, *Moralia* 288A).²⁰

Social and natal alienation is a third defining characteristic of Roman slavery as the slave was stripped of any personal identity, which Patterson describes as “social death,” and was forced to find his identity exclusively in relationship to his master.²¹ Wiedemann observes that this is a corollary to the slave’s absolute subjection for “the slave has no kin, he cannot assume the rights and obligations of marriage; his very identity is imposed by the owner who gives him his name.”²² Euripides describes how Queen Hecuba of Troy was captured and made a slave. Her former splendor and power had no bearing on her new identity and responsibilities as a slave (*Trojan Women*, 455-512). This new social identity was inaugurated when the slave was acquired and the slave became a part of the household (*familia*), under the complete authority of the head of the household (*paterfamilias*). The slave had no individual identity apart from his or her relationship to the *familia*.²³ In spite of this role within the *familia*, the slave was still psychologically and socially an outsider without social ties or rights.²⁴ Slavery carried a social stigma, even for prominent slaves, because slaves were degraded in society as unfree, outsiders, and

¹⁹ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 4.

²⁰ Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 29.

²¹ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 5.

²² Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 1.

²³ Sam Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons: A New Rhetoric Analysis on Paul’s Slave Metaphors in His Letter to the Galatians* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 22.

²⁴ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 7.

morally worthless.²⁵ Wiedemann suggests that slavery effectively served as a method of social integration and assimilation in which slaves would leave behind their former ties and take on a new identity, first as a slave (outsider) and then as a Roman freedman (insider).²⁶ The slave as property, the absolute power of the master, and the loss of social identity are therefore proposed as the defining characteristics of Roman slavery that distinguished slaves from the rest of society.²⁷

Social roles and responsibilities. Slaves in Roman society could serve in almost any job a free person might and slaves could be found working as doctors, laborers, tutors, craftsmen, fishermen, business managers, and prostitutes.²⁸ Urban slaves worked more closely with the master while rural slaves engaged in more manual labor, often under the supervision of a slave overseer in the master's absence (Plutarch, *Ti. C. Gracc.* 8; Plautus, *Most.* 1). Slaves in the mines and the galleys had the hardest lives, often dying from the brutal working conditions they endured.²⁹ Household slaves were responsible for menial tasks which might include waiting tables, untying sandals, washing feet, and emptying chamber pots.³⁰ Because a slave's identity was derived from the status and authority of the master, a few slaves of powerful masters had positions of power or influence as agents of the master.³¹

²⁵ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 31, 43.

²⁶ Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 3.

²⁷ These three constituent elements were also identified by William D. Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 6.

²⁸ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 11.

²⁹ Williams, *Paul's Metaphors*, 113-14.

³⁰ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 12.

³¹ Bartchy, "Slavery, New Testament, 69-70.

Martin argues that such upwardly mobile slaves would have made slavery more desirable, specifically citing the slaves in Caesar's household whose authority and privilege were greater than most free citizens.³² However, such privileged positions were very rare for slaves and Patterson counters that even elite slaves bore a social stigma because they were powerless outsiders, totally dependent on their master.³³ Slaves did not constitute a single homogeneous class but ranged from menial to managerial roles and responsibilities in the empire.

Sources of slaves. Roman slaves initially were primarily captives in war from the empire's broad military campaigns (Dio Chrysostom, 15; Varro, *Res Rust.* 2.10.4).³⁴ The word for slave (*servus*) meant "to keep safe" and was derived from the custom of selling captives taken in war rather than killing them.³⁵ Patterson observes that slavery generally originated from situations that would have otherwise resulted in the death of the individual, such as exposed infants or captives of war, but instead the individual experienced social death by becoming human property.³⁶ The conquered people were forcibly alienated from their family, culture, and social identity and subjugated, often through harsh and exploitive means, to a Roman master.³⁷ Another source of slaves was exposed infants who were unwanted by their parents and abandoned to either die or be rescued by slave traders who would raise

³² Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 7.

³³ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 331-32.

³⁴ Williams, *Paul's Metaphors*, 113.

³⁵ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 37.

³⁶ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 5.

³⁷ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 73.

them as their property (Stobaeus, *Flor.* 77.7).³⁸ By the first-century the most common source of slaves was homeborn slaves who were born to a slave mother in the master's household.³⁹ Slaves could also be bought and sold on the open market and their price varied based upon their skill, age, and gender (Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.43.4).⁴⁰ While there are some historical examples of people selling themselves into slavery, this was extremely rare and was not a means of social mobility but simply an act of desperation to provide for oneself or one's family (Marcian, *Digest*, 1.5.5.1; Suetonius, *Grammarians* 5.21).⁴¹ Slaves in the Roman Empire came from many different sources but all were stripped of their personal identity, whether noble or peasant, and given a new identity as the exclusive property of the master.

The slave's relationship to the master. When a person became a slave to a master he or she was brought into the *familia* under the authority of the *paterfamilias*, often living in the master's house along with the other slaves.⁴² From that point on the slave's individual identity was subsumed by the identity of the master, being entirely dependent on the master for existence, status, and purpose within society. Sometimes this derived identity would be demonstrated by a change of name since the former name had died with the former self.⁴³ Slaves would often use the title "slave of (master's name)" as they carried out the master's business for it identified them as belonging to the master and sent with the authority of the

³⁸ Ibid., 75.

³⁹ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁰ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 34.

⁴¹ Horsley, "The Slave Systems," 36.

⁴² Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 46.

⁴³ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 55.

master.⁴⁴ The slave's entire existence was sustained only by the master's provision and protection and was oriented exclusively to pleasing the master by doing his will. While it was possible for a slave to enjoy the goodwill of his master in a close working relationship (*Odyssey* XV: 363-365),⁴⁵ this was clearly the exception as cruelty and mutual hostility generally characterized the slave's relationship with the master (Seneca, *Ep.* 47.5).⁴⁶ It was the status and character of the master that determined whether a slave's life would consist of back-breaking labor, harsh punishment, or dignified service. Slaves were permitted very few privileges including participation in worship in the religion of the household,⁴⁷ common law cohabitation,⁴⁸ and attending public events such as the theater or gladiatorial games.⁴⁹

The slave's complete identification with the master allowed him to act as an agent or intermediary for the master, whether that meant exercising the master's authority or enduring the master's punishment.⁵⁰ So complete was the master's ownership of the slave that the slave was sometimes euphemistically referred to as a "body" of the master. As Aristotle observed, "The slave is part of the master, in the

⁴⁴ Martin provides a helpful collection of funeral inscriptions which demonstrate how a slave might have understood his status by association. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 47-49. Ceslas Spicq, "δοῦλος," in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:382. Spicq observes that free men were identified by *tria nomina* while slaves had only *cognomen* specified by the genitive use of the owner's name.

⁴⁵ Rengstorff, "δοῦλος," 272.

⁴⁶ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 42.

⁴⁷ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 68.

⁴⁸ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 38.

⁴⁹ Westermann, *Slave Systems*, 108.

⁵⁰ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 10.

sense of being a living but separate part of his body.”⁵¹ The slave could therefore be sent to conduct business or communicate information in the place of the master, acting with the same authority as the master in matters of commerce or government.⁵² The extent of this representative authority is demonstrated in a third-century A.D. contract in which the master declares, “I have empowered you by this document to administer my estate in Arsinoe, and to collect the rents and, if need be, to arrange new leases or to cultivate some land yourself, and to give receipts in my name, and to transact any business connected with stewardship just as I can transact it when I am present.”⁵³ Patterson concludes, “Everything, clearly, depends on the power of the master: if the master is all powerful and the slave is his surrogate and personal agent, it is inevitable that, acting under his authority, the slave too will be powerful.”⁵⁴ If a person abused or insulted a slave who was carrying out the master’s will it was considered an assault on the master’s dignity and authority for the slave was an extension of the master himself.⁵⁵ While slaves could not actually possess wealth, a master would often entrust a portion of his property, called a *peculium*, for his slaves to administer, investing the master’s resources with relative freedom (Varro, *Res Rust.* 1.17.5; Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 5.16).⁵⁶ If a

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Pol.* 125. 4a 16.

⁵² Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 43.

⁵³ David Daube, “Neglected Nuances of Exposition in Luke-Acts,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 25 (1985): 233.

⁵⁴ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 306.

⁵⁵ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 12. Glancy cites several examples of slaves who were imprisoned or punished on behalf of the master.

⁵⁶ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 7.

slave invested his master's money well he could even use the *peculium*, though still the property of his master, to purchase his own freedom.⁵⁷

The slave's identity as a possession of the master and responsibility as an agent of the master required that the slave be unconditionally obedient to the will of the master. The slave had no choice but to carry out the will of the master without question and without exception.⁵⁸ Harrill provides a vital insight to this aspect of Roman slavery when he observes that Roman slaves who were praised as exemplary were not merely those who followed orders in slavish duty, acting as automatons completing their required tasks (Plutarch, *Moralia* 551e). "The Roman notion of mastery defined the ideal slave not in terms of obedience to individual commands of the master but in terms of having accepted the master's wishes so fully that the slave's innermost self could anticipate the masters' wishes and take the initiative."⁵⁹ Every slave was subject to the master's will, but masters highly valued those slaves who knew the master's character personally and internalized his will sufficiently so that even in the master's absence the slave could effectively serve as the master's agent. Seneca observed the significant difference between services a slave rendered out of mere duty and those rendered out of internal desire which often entailed unprompted initiative and personal sacrifice (*Ben.* 3.19.1-4).⁶⁰ A good and faithful slave "completed and developed what the master had only suggested or even unconsciously desired."⁶¹ While virtually all slavery entails subjection to an alien

⁵⁷ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 38.

⁵⁸ Beavis, "Ancient Slavery," 41.

⁵⁹ J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 21.

⁶⁰ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 95n15.

⁶¹ Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 23.

will, Roman society prized slaves who internalized the master's will, conforming their own desires, thinking, and behavior to the master rather than offering external obedience alone.

Masters possessed absolute power over their slaves which meant that the position and treatment of slaves depended entirely on the nature of the master, whether cruel or compassionate.⁶² The life of the slave was determined by the nature of his lord. There are some historical examples of slaves that were treated humanely or sometimes affectionately by their masters who chose to cultivate respect and even love in their slaves rather than employing fear and intimidation. Pliny the Younger was one such master who had deep affection for his slave Zosimus which he demonstrated by caring for all of his slave's medical needs when he contracted tuberculosis (*Ep.* 5.19).⁶³ However, such masters were the rare exception and most slave owners used their unlimited power to engender fear in their slaves, subjecting them to harsh discipline and cruel treatment. Capricious masters might have slaves flogged for the most minor infraction such as a cough or hiccup (Seneca, *Ep.* 47.3, 5, 17-19; Plutarch, *Cato Major* 5.1).⁶⁴ Slaves were accountable to the master for complete and unquestioned obedience to his will and even responsible and managerial slaves were subject to cruel disciplinary practices if the master deemed their compliance insufficient.⁶⁵ The cruel and violent treatment of slaves was so prevalent that Roman literature used the epithets "whip-worthy" and "gallows

⁶² Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 11.

⁶³ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 41. The care of the centurion for his ailing slave in Luke 7 is a similar example of a master who seemed to care personally for his slave.

⁶⁴ Horsley, "Slave Systems," 41-2.

⁶⁵ Williams, "Paul's Metaphors," 114.

bird” to refer to slaves.⁶⁶ Romans tended to treat slaves with suspicion and contempt and Gaius Cassius concluded, “You will never coerce such a medley of humanity except by terror.”⁶⁷

Cruel treatment of slaves. Recent scholarship on the topic of Greco-Roman slavery has drawn attention to the cruelty of slavery in the empire by describing the widespread physical and sexual abuse that resulted from the master’s absolute power and the slave’s utter powerlessness.⁶⁸ Because the body of the slave belonged to the master, female slaves and, in some cases young male slaves, were especially vulnerable to sexual abuse by the master and any children born from those unions were the master’s property and became additional slaves in his household (Petronius, *Satyricon* 75.11).⁶⁹ While beatings and privation were common forms of physical abuse for slaves, more severe measures such as branding, amputations, hot tar, and even crucifixion were also used to inflict punishment and perpetuate intimidation (Cicero, *Pro Cluentio* 177).⁷⁰ Branding or tattooing on the slave’s face was often the consequence for a runaway slave as the master’s mark of ownership was burned into the slave’s body to clearly demonstrate to the slave and society that

⁶⁶ Beavis, “Ancient Slavery,” 43.

⁶⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 14 40.1. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from ancient Greco-Roman writers are taken from the LOEB classical library editions.

⁶⁸ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 1-14. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*. While Patterson and Glancy have provided an important corrective to the optimism of Bartchy and Martin who tended to minimize the cruelty of the institution, Patterson and Glancy seem to swing the pendulum too far in the opposite direction, making violent domination the defining characteristic of Roman slavery. This presentation seeks to present a mediating position which recognizes the diversity of Roman slave experiences while also acknowledging the rampant cruelty that did exist.

⁶⁹ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 9. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 10.

⁷⁰ Horsley, “Slave Systems,” 43. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 42.

the he belonged exclusively to another (*Digest* 47.10.15.44; Justinian, *Codex* 3.36.5).⁷¹

Crucifixion was the most severe punishment for slaves and was used as a means of execution and humiliation, effectively serving as a deterrent for any slaves who might contemplate rebelling against the master's authority.⁷² Crucifixion was so degrading and repugnant that death by crucifixion held immense social stigma and came to be known in Roman society as *servile supplicium* (slave's punishment) even when those executed were not slaves (Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.11).⁷³ Hopkins rightly concludes, "The viciousness of Roman slavery, the exploitation, cruelty and mutual hostility are worth stressing because modern accounts often focus instead on those elements in Roman philosophy, literature and law which point to the humanitarian treatment of slaves, and to the willing loyalty of some slaves to their masters."⁷⁴

Manumission and patronage. Manumission was the slave's only hope of freedom, either by the master's permission or the purchase of the slave's freedom. It was surprisingly common in Roman society for masters to grant slaves their freedom, legally declaring them to be a free subject rather than a subjugated object.⁷⁵ The well attested regularity of manumission led Wiedemann to assert that slavery in

⁷¹ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 13. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 59.

⁷² Mark T. Finney, "Servile Supplicium: Shame and the Deuteronomic Curse – Crucifixion in Its Cultural Context," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* 43 (2013): 125.

⁷³ Martin Hegel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 62.

⁷⁴ Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 121.

⁷⁵ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 93. Williams cites historical examples such as Sulla who allegedly manumitted 10,000 slaves at his death which may have led to Augustus' law stated that masters could not free more than 100 slaves at their death. Williams, *Paul's Metaphors*, 119.

Roman society was a “process rather than a permanent condition,” a temporary means of integrating outsiders into the larger society.⁷⁶ Roman literature suggests that many slaves hoped to be manumitted by the age of thirty⁷⁷ but Glancy observes that short life expectancies and grueling labor endured by slaves often left them dead or unproductive by that point.⁷⁸ Roman manumission was often prompted by economic, not social or humanitarian concerns as manumission released the master from the obligation of caring for an unproductive slave while providing him with the manumission price to purchase additional slaves.⁷⁹ Masters would use the hope of manumission to promote eager compliance among slaves or perhaps to gain a reputation for their benevolent character (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Roma*. 4.24.1-6; Pseudo-Aristotle, *Oikonomikos* 1.5.6).⁸⁰

Slaves were only manumitted by paying a price to the master for their freedom, thus being redeemed from slavery either through the financial means which they had earned through the *peculium* or through the generosity of a family member or benefactor (Varro, *Agriculture*, I, 17.5).⁸¹ Ignatius and Clement describe how first-century Christians would sometimes pool their own resources to purchase the freedom of enslaved members of their local congregation which Callahan terms “ecclesiastical manumission (1 Clem 55.2; Ignatius, *To Polycarp* 4.3).”⁸² If the master

⁷⁶ Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 3.

⁷⁷ Bartchy, “Slavery, New Testament,” 70-71.

⁷⁸ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 94.

⁷⁹ Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 119.

⁸⁰ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 40.

⁸¹ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 8.

⁸² Allen Callahan, “A Note On 1 Corinthians 7:21,” *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 17 (1989-90): 113.

was a Roman citizen the former slave would generally be granted citizenship upon manumission, although the freedman still had a special relationship of dependence upon the master who was now his patron (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 4.24.4).⁸³ The slave still owed his former master loyalty, service, and dependence as a freedman which realistically meant that even after manumission the master retained the services of the slave (*P. Oxy.* 494).⁸⁴ Glancy concludes that even the practice of regular manumission further reinforced the institution of slavery in Roman society by forcing slaves to compensate their masters for their freedom while requiring that the freedmen continue in social obligation to their former masters.⁸⁵ Roman physical slavery was a pervasive social institution in which slaves were property, completely subject to the master, and social outsiders who had no identity apart from the master.

Metaphorical Slavery in Greco-Roman Society

Different than in the ancient Near East, the metaphorical use of slave language in Roman society is fairly rare. When it is used as a metaphor it is almost always pejorative, referring to one who is enslaved to passions or other forces in one's life which restrict individual freedom (Plutarch, *Bruta.* 4).⁸⁶ Tacitus describes political tyranny as slavery (Agricola 14) and any situation in which one is ruled by another is also called slavery (*Germania* 45). Freedom and unrestricted individual autonomy were highly prized in Roman society and therefore a metaphor which

⁸³ Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 3.

⁸⁴ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 283.

⁸⁵ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 94.

⁸⁶ Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 43.

entailed unconditional submission to an alien will and the restriction of personal choice was repudiated (Epicetus, *Dissertationes* 3.22.69).⁸⁷ The only exception in Hellenistic thought was Plato's contention that every true citizen should be enslaved to the laws, defined by Plato as the transcendent goal and guide for all of humanity (*Leg.* 3.698a). But even this slavery was not an expression of dependence as much as it was a declaration of independence from any human authority.⁸⁸ Stoic philosophy employed the metaphor to describe slavery to vice and fortune and suggested that moral freedom was of far greater significance than physical freedom (Aischines, *Timarchos* 42).⁸⁹ This framework became a means of justifying the practice of physical slavery since someone could be free in mind and spirit though physically subjected to a human master.⁹⁰

The metaphor of slavery to a deity is extremely rare in Greco-Roman thought in contrast to its central role in Hebrew culture and religious practice (Tacitus, *Germania* 10).⁹¹ Those called slaves of the deity in Roman society were generally literal slaves who served in the temple and identified the god as their owner.⁹² Deissmann argued that the sacral manumission formulae found at Delphi

⁸⁷ Rengstorf, “δοῦλος,” 261.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁸⁹ Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 13. For instance, Aischines writes “(Timorchos) behaved as he did because he was a slave to the most shameful pleasures: to gluttony and extravagant dinner parties and flute girls and courtesans and dice and the other things by which no properly-born and free man should be mastered.” Aischines, *Timarchos* 42. Translation by R. Just, “Freedom, Slavery and the Female Psyche” *History of Political Thought* 6 (1985): 112.

⁹⁰ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 38.

⁹¹ Although Euripedes sometimes uses the metaphor of being a slave of the deity, Rengstorf effectively demonstrates that the metaphor only captures the necessity of obedience and not any sense of absolute dependence upon the Lord (Euripedes *Ba.* 366, 426). Rengstorf, “δοῦλος,” 264.

⁹² Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 44.

were evidence for a form of redemption that also entailed metaphorical slavery to the gods. The slave would symbolically be “purchased” by the god, using the slave’s own money, thus giving the emancipation of the slave divine sanction and purpose.⁹³ However, Deissman’s proposal has rightly been dismissed for sacral manumission was not a religious transaction but was simply a legal fiction by which a slave could circumvent his inability to enter contracts on his own by ceremonially being purchased by the deity.⁹⁴ The slave did not become the property of the god nor did he have any obligations to the god. In fact, the fictitious sale to the god may have granted the slave freedom precisely because the god would not exercise his property rights over the slave.⁹⁵ The pejorative use of the metaphor of slavery in Roman thought and the dearth of any concept of slavery to a deity in the Roman cult stands in stark contrast to the prevalence of the metaphor in Hebrew and ancient Near Eastern culture and cult.

Slavery in Philo and Josephus

As Hellenistic Jews, the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus provide a helpful link between the Jewish and Greco-Roman thought world. Both of these Jewish writers refer to the contemporary practice of Greco-Roman slavery while also commenting on the Old Testament laws and rhetoric of slavery.⁹⁶

Philo. For Philo slaves occupied the lowest class of society (*Decalogue* 165) who lived in fear of the master (*Spec. Laws* 1.128) and were powerless to resist

⁹³ Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 228.

⁹⁴ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 85.

⁹⁵ Bartchy, “Slavery, New Testament,” 72.

⁹⁶ Wright, “Eved/Doulos,” 89.

the abuse they were sure to endure (*Creation*, 85; *Alleg. Interp.* 201). Slaves could range from homeborn domestic slaves to stewards of the master's estate (*Good Person* 35). Those who were entrusted with authority as a steward could exercise the master's authority in administering the estate. By his account, many of the Jews in Rome were those captured in the Roman conquest of Judea and brought to Rome as slaves before ultimately being manumitted (*Embassy* 155). Philo's depiction of chattel slavery seems to fit with Greco-Roman slavery, although he is certainly cognizant of the biblical laws. Philo shows a semantic preference for δούλος to denote a slave while παῖς usually is used for "child" except when he is citing the Greek biblical translations.⁹⁷

Philo presents the biblical regulations for Jewish slavery as more humane than Greco-Roman slavery (*Virtue* 121-123; *Spec. Laws* 2.79-82) and his citation of these laws suggest that Jewish slavery was still practiced in some form in the first-century A.D (*Spec Laws* 1.12). Philo argued that no one is a slave by nature (*Spec. Laws* 2.69) and that slaves, by virtue of their humanity, should be clearly distinguished from the animals which were created only to labor for their master. The practical application of this philosophical commitment is illustrated by two Jewish groups, the Essenes and the Therapeutai, whom Philo praises for having repudiated physical slavery. The Essenes, Philo explains, condemned slave owners as unjust for they violate human equality and transgress the law of nature (*Good Person* 79). The Therapeutai, a group of pious Jews in Egypt, objected that slavery was contrary to human nature and perpetuated inequality and oppression on one's fellow human beings (*Virtue* 70). Although in principle Philo acknowledges that slavery entails inequality and involuntary servitude, his aristocratic sensibilities bleed

⁹⁷ Ibid., 103.

through when he describes slaves as an indispensable possession in the operation of society (*Spec. Laws* 2.123).

Philo most frequently uses slave language philosophically to describe a person's metaphorical slavery to his or her desires, emotions, or appetites. Consistent with Stoic philosophy, Philo emphasizes freedom of the will over physical freedom and warns against allowing the will to become enslaved to base passions (*Creation* 167; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.156). If someone allows the senses and appetites to rule him, Philo argues he has become a slave even though he may be physically free (*Spec. Laws* 4.91; *Good Person* 159). Conversely, Philo argues that a person could be physically enslaved but, in reality, be free because he was free from bondage in his spirit (*Good Person* 40, 50-51).

Philo also uses the slave metaphor to describe one's relationship to God, asserting, "The purified mind rejoices in nothing more than in confessing that it has for its master the One who is Lord of all. For to be the slave of God is the greatest human boast" (*Cherubim* 117). Expounding on this metaphor, he describes true piety as serving God in the same manner as a slave to his master, willingly and obediently without hesitation (*Worse* 56). While Philo is consistent with the Old Testament use of the metaphor in this regard, Rengstorf insightfully observes that Philo does not employ the metaphor to magnify God or determine the responsibility of humanity light of proper theology.⁹⁸ Instead, the metaphor is used philosophically as an alternative to slavery to creation (*Worse* 146), effectively exalting the individual who has freedom of self-determination in service of God (*Alleg. Interp.* 194). Rengstorf concludes, "Although he stands in linguistic affinity with Judaism, so far as concerns the use of this word group he is materially outside

⁹⁸ Rengstorf, "δοῦλος," 269.

it, belonging rather to the Cynic tradition.”⁹⁹ Philo’s treatment of slavery is heavily philosophical with an emphasis on the slavery to passion and the inequity of physical slavery in light of shared humanity. While he does demonstrate an understanding of the slave metaphor found throughout the Old Testament, in many ways it becomes adapted to fit his philosophical arguments.

Josephus. As a historian, Josephus’ treatment of slavery focuses primarily on the chattel slavery of the Roman Empire, although he does reflect an awareness of the biblical laws regarding slaves (*Ant.* 16.1). For Josephus slavery was the forfeiture of all freedom, the absolute subjection to another’s power.¹⁰⁰ The horrors of Roman slavery are best captured in the speech Josephus attributes to Eleazar during the siege of Masada. Eleazar calls the remaining patriots to die unenslaved for if the Romans captured them they would certainly be subjected to slavery with torture, sexual violence, and death from exhaustion (*J. W.* 7.379-386). Josephus records that the Romans captured and enslaved many of the Jews in their conquest of Judea (*J. W.* 1.180; 2.68; *Ant.* 17.289) which is consistent with the Greco-Roman practice of taking slaves through conquest. Slaves are presented as miscreants and the dregs of society as he equates them with evildoers (*J. W.* 4.508) and outcasts (*J. W.* 5.443). Similar to Philo, Josephus primarily uses *δοῦλος* for slave while *παῖς* generally means “child” which seems to suggest a shift in the denotation of *παῖς* within Greco-Roman society.¹⁰¹ Josephus also mentions that the Essenes refused to keep slaves because they felt it was unjust to do so (*Ant.* 17.21) as a simple matter of fact. Josephus does not offer any philosophical reflection on the justice of slavery nor does he employ the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Wright, “Ebed/Doulos,” 98.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 99.

rhetoric of slavery in the religious sphere. Therefore his primary contribution to the Greco-Roman background of slavery is to confirm its brutality and ubiquity in first-century Judea.

Lexical Background of Greco-Roman Slave Terminology

While the Hebrew noun עֶבֶד was used exclusively in the Old Testament to denote slavery, the Greek language offers at least 6 different word groups that carry servile connotations and may convey the social reality of Greco-Roman slavery.¹⁰² Finley observed, “The Greek language had an astonishing range of vocabulary for slaves, unparalleled in my knowledge.”¹⁰³ The diversity of terms provided greater precision and nuance compared to the broad semantic range of עֶבֶד which allowed authors to clearly delineate the nature and purpose of the servant or slave. While Wright concludes that many of the slave terms were basically interchangeable by the first-century BC,¹⁰⁴ Beyer maintains that each word still preserved a distinctive emphasis which gave it a unique semantic niche.¹⁰⁵ The following section will examine the semantic range of three key Greek terms, and their corresponding word groups, employed throughout Luke’s writings: δούλος, διάκονος, and κύριος. This focused examination will attempt to discern the extent to which the practice of Greco-Roman slavery informs the denotation or connotation of these terms which were regularly employed in a metaphorical sense in the New

¹⁰² These word groups are οἰκ-, διάκον-, παῖς, ὑπηρέτη-, θεραπ-, and δούλ-. R. Tuente, “Slave,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 3:592-96.

¹⁰³ Moses I. Finley, “Was Greek Civilization Based on Slave Labour?” *Historia* 8 (1959): 146.

¹⁰⁴ Wright, “Ebed/Doulos,” 107.

¹⁰⁵ H.W. Beyer, “διακονέω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 2:81.

Testament. While alternative servile terms will be discussed in detail in their Lukan context, this survey attempts to establish a lexical foundation for the terms most frequently employed to depict the slave-master relationship both literally and metaphorically in Luke's writings.

Literal and Rhetorical Denotation of δούλος

The δούλος word group is straightforward in its basic meaning which conveys “the status of a slave or an attitude corresponding to that of a slave.”¹⁰⁶ The Greek etymology of this term can be traced to an adjective which meant “unfree” in contrast to the freedom so highly prized in Hellenistic society.¹⁰⁷ The semantic range of this term is properly delimited to refer exclusively to slavery and its corresponding status, obligations, and limitations and therefore “it is wrong to translate *doulos* as ‘servant’ so obscuring its precise signification in the language of the first century.”¹⁰⁸ This semantic emphasis is concealed in many New Testament translations when δούλος is translated “servant,” specifically when used as a metaphor for a Christian's relationship to God.¹⁰⁹ The noun δούλος is used 124 times in the New Testament with 29 of those instances found in Luke-Acts while the verb δουλεύω appears a total of 25 times with 4 of those found in Luke-Acts. Therefore, a careful examination of the slave metaphor in Luke's writing requires a clear understanding of the meaning and usage of the δούλος word group in the New Testament including its social connotation and metaphorical implications.

¹⁰⁶ Rengstorf, “δούλος,” 261.

¹⁰⁷ Spicq, “δούλος,” 380.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 183.

The fact that *δοῦλος* clearly delineates slavery suggests that the historical background of Greco-Roman slavery already described provides a basic backdrop for the connotations of this word group. The *δοῦλος* did not belong to himself but was the exclusive and legal property of another and therefore he surrendered his autonomy and subordinated his will to his master (*κύριος*).¹¹⁰ The absolute commitment and unconditional obedience of a slave to his master precluded any autonomy or initiative on the part of the slave apart from the will of the *κύριος*.¹¹¹ The slave's labor was compulsory, not voluntary, and therefore his only choice was obedience or punishment. The slave's entire existence was oriented toward obeying the master's will exclusively for the benefit of the master without any expectation of compensation or reward.¹¹² Tuenté concludes, "The distinctive thing about the concept of the *doulos* is the subordinate, obligatory and responsible nature of his service in his exclusive relation to his Lord."¹¹³

This word group is used in the New Testament first to express literal physical slavery, describing the status of actual slaves in relationship to their masters. The centurion's slave (Luke 7:2) and the slaves of the Roman Cornelius (Acts 10:7) are examples of this usage in Luke's writings and the slavery described clearly reflects a Greco-Roman social framework.¹¹⁴ The responsibilities and status of slaves in the parables, although used as metaphorical vehicle to convey spiritual truths, provide great insight into the referent of slavery in Christ's socio-historical

¹¹⁰ Tuenté, "Slave," 592-93.

¹¹¹ Rengstorf, "δοῦλος," 270.

¹¹² Spicq, "δοῦλος," 382.

¹¹³ Tuenté, "Slave," 596.

¹¹⁴ Rengstorf, "δοῦλος," 270.

setting. The slaves in the parables owe the master unconditional obedience, administer a *peculium* on behalf of the master, and oversee fellow slaves in the absence of the master on a rural estate which are all associations that seem to fit best in a Greco-Roman context.¹¹⁵ The unique nature of parabolic literature provides a natural link between the literal and metaphorical usage of the δούλος word group in the New Testament.

Metaphorically this term can refer to someone who is committed exclusively to serve and obey the will of another. The richness of this metaphor in the Old Testament was already outlined in the previous chapter and the rhetorical significance of the metaphor in the New Testament will be explored more fully in the subsequent section. While this metaphor can describe the relationship and responsibility of all people to God on the basis of His role as sovereign Creator,¹¹⁶ in the New Testament the most prominent metaphorical usage of δούλος is to describe the relationship of Christians to Jesus as the κύριος (2 Cor 4:5; Gal 1:10; Jude 1:1).¹¹⁷ In contrast to the metaphor of slavery to Christ, Paul explains in Romans 6:17 that all people are by nature slaves to sin, powerless to break free from servitude to this despotic master by one's own effort or initiative.¹¹⁸ Christ's redemption of believers from their slavery to sin entails a new relationship of slavery to God (Rom 6:22) with exclusive obedience and unconditional dependence upon the divine κύριος.¹¹⁹ "When Christ undertakes the work of redemption, He makes the redeemed His own

¹¹⁵ Tuenté, "Slave," 597.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 595.

¹¹⁷ Rengstorf, "δούλος," 274.

¹¹⁸ Tuenté, "Slave," 596.

¹¹⁹ This is directly analogous to the use of the metaphor in the Old Testament in which the Israelites were redeemed from Egypt to become the exclusive possession of God as Lord.

possession, giving them directions and goals by which to shape their lives.”¹²⁰ In this transfer of ownership the Old Testament paradigm of slavery to God takes on a new and deeper significance in light of the redemption Christ secured for all of humanity through his sacrificial death.

Paul and others in the early church also used *δοῦλος* metaphorically in the title “*δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ*” to identify themselves as those exclusively devoted to Christ, acting with His authority, and ultimately accountable to Him as Lord.¹²¹ This title seems to employ the metaphor of slavery as a designator of leadership in which the leader derived his identity, authority, and responsibilities from his relationship with Christ. Finally, Christ himself is described metaphorically as a *δοῦλος* in Philippians 2:7 and He acts in the pattern of a slave when He washes the feet of His disciples in John 13. The striking reversal of the *κύριος* who becomes a *δοῦλος* highlights the obedience, humility, and submission of Christ who ultimately died a slave’s death by crucifixion in order to secure the redemption of humankind. In its diverse uses, *δοῦλος* has an unmistakable semantic domain so that, whether used literally or metaphorically, it does not denote of a free servant or employee but rather a slave who belongs unreservedly to his master.

Literal and Rhetorical Denotation of *διάκονος*

While *δοῦλος* focuses on subjection to a master, *διάκονος* indicates personal service of another which can take place in a wide variety of contexts.¹²² Tuentje argues, “It is precisely the concept of *douleuo*, in contrast to that of *diakoneo*

¹²⁰ Rengstorf, “*δοῦλος*,” 275.

¹²¹ Ibid., 277.

¹²² Beyer, “*διακονέω*,” 81.

that emphasizes the obligatory character of the service for God.”¹²³ The basic meaning of the *διάκονος* word group was to serve by waiting tables which eventually was expanded to encompass service of another person more generally.¹²⁴ At times a slave is the one who serves (*διακονέω*) at the table or as a personal attendant of the master which is clear in Luke 17:8 and Matthew 22:13 in which *δοῦλος* and *διάκονος* are apparently used interchangeably. The *διάκονος* word group refers more to the nature and focus of the service, namely humble service of the needs of another, without addressing the social identity of the one serving. Therefore a slave, a laborer, or a free man could serve as a *διάκονος*. It could also be used in a more technical sense to describe the supervising of a meal which entailed the preparation and organization of the meal, a usage found in Acts 6:2 as well as Luke 10:40. The *διάκονος* was generally one of low social status who was consigned to service of another in contrast to the Roman elite who believed that serving someone else was distasteful, especially if personal sacrifice was involved.¹²⁵ The only apparent exception to this aversion was the expectation that a statesman serve as a servant of the city, not ruling according to his own desires but for the benefit of its citizens.¹²⁶

¹²³ Tuentje, “Slave,” 598.

¹²⁴ K. Hess, “Serve, Deacon, Worship,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 3:545.

¹²⁵ Beyer, “*διακονέω*,” 82. This dramatic difference of social status and aversion to service makes the *διακονέω* of the master to his slaves in Luke 12:37 that much more striking. Beyer observes, “At table there is a palpable distinction between the worthy man reclining on the couch and the girded servant or the attentive woman. It is thus a high honour for the vigilant servants when their returning lord rewards them by girding himself, setting them at table and coming to serve them.” *Ibid.*, 84.

¹²⁶ Beyer, “*διακονέω*,” 82. This is parallel to the ideal of the ancient Near Eastern king who rules on behalf of the god for the benefit of the people. However, the service of the statesman was often more ideological than practical and would not have involved personal sacrifice on behalf of others.

Alternative interpretation of διάκονος. The consensus that διάκονος and its cognates denoted lowly and humble service of another was first questioned by Georgi who argued that διάκονος described an empowered, authorized representative, an envoy sent out to serve a master.¹²⁷ John Collins, in his exhaustive study of διάκονος, further challenged the prevailing semantic paradigm by suggesting that this word group refers to an envoy or messenger carrying out his service for a master, effectively serving as a go-between.¹²⁸ While he acknowledges that the subjects are often slaves and their tasks may include household chores,¹²⁹ he argues that the root sense of διάκονος was agency or representation and thus it conveyed dignity and purpose and not necessarily menial service.¹³⁰ He therefore contends that the New Testament usage of the term primarily connotes authority as an agent or messenger of Christ rather than humility as a servant of others.¹³¹ “In this way, a διάκονος at the same time holds a position of subordination to the one whom he serves, and yet, as a representative of the one he serves, he carries the responsibility and authority that derives from the one he serves.”¹³²

While Collins offers a valuable semantic perspective by observing the significance of intermediary service in one’s concept of διάκονος, he certainly overextends his argument by divorcing the term from humble service of others, at

¹²⁷ Dieter Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians: A Study of Religious Propaganda in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

¹²⁸ John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 96-132.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 337.

¹³² Andrew D. Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 64.

times through menial service.¹³³ For instance, Christ's instruction to the disciples to act as a *διάκονος* in Mark 10:44 and Luke 22:26 frames the term as an expression of servile humility, not intermediate authority. Collins weakly argues that these two verses are unclear in their narrative context and then turns his attention to secular usage to make his point.¹³⁴ Even Collins reluctantly concedes that this word group "in the gospels mainly designates menial attendance of one kind or another."¹³⁵ Rather than conveying status as an authorized agent, Paul's identification of himself and Barnabas as *διάκονοι* in 1 Corinthians 3:5 presents them as lowly servants who refuse to boast in any status. Furthermore, the service of Christ (Mark 10:43-35) and the contrast between worldly authority and heavenly humility in Luke 22:27 charge the disciples with a model of ministry which entails humble service of others.¹³⁶ Collins' contribution helps clarify that the *διάκονος* can bear authority and serve on behalf of a master as a messenger or intermediary but the primary thrust of this word group is the humble and selfless nature of the service rendered to others on behalf of the master.¹³⁷

Slave of God and servant of others. It is notable that the *διάκονος* word group is almost completely absent from the LXX which Weiser suggests is due to the Hebrew emphasis on the primary orientation of service to God conveyed by *δοῦλος*

¹³³ Clarke, *Pauline Theology*, 66. Collins errs in much the same manner as Dale Martin in his work *Slavery as Salvation* in which he finds some instances of slaves who enjoyed upward mobility and builds his rhetorical paradigm on those few examples.

¹³⁴ Collins, *Diakonia*, 46-62.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹³⁶ Collins calls into question the authenticity of passages such as these that challenge his paradigm of *διάκονοι* primarily as authorized agents who possess status by virtue of their service. Collins, *Diakonia*, 247.

¹³⁷ Clarke, *Pauline Theology*, 66.

and its cognates.¹³⁸ Therefore, even service performed out of love for one's neighbor was considered less as a sacrifice for others and more as an act of obedience and devotion to God.¹³⁹ The introduction of *διάκονος* in the New Testament offers a nuanced term to refer specifically to service for others but such service should never be bifurcated from its orienting priority which is one's responsibility and accountability before God. "Jesus' view of service grows out of the OT command of love for one's neighbour, which He takes and links with the command of love for God to constitute the substance of the divinely willed ethical conduct of his followers."¹⁴⁰ While *διάκονος* occasionally occurs in the New Testament in its secular sense to describe menial service or waiting at tables (Luke 10:40, 12:37, 17:7-10, and Acts 6:1), it is most frequently used in a broader sense to describe loving service of others in a variety of ways including giving food or drink, providing shelter, or caring for the sick (Matt 25:42-44). Jesus imbues this secular Hellenistic term with new and deep religious significance, explaining that loving service (*διακονέω*) of others was ultimately a horizontal expression of their vertical service to God as their Lord.¹⁴¹ While worldly authorities acted as if they were the lords (*κυριεύω*) of those they led, Jesus called His disciples to greatness through loving and sacrificial service of others as an expression of obedience and devotion to the true *κύριος* (Luke 22:26-27). Beyer concludes, "All these different services were rendered to the one Lord. In each of them the believer serves not only his brother but also Christ."¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Alfons Weiser, "διακονέω," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 1:302.

¹³⁹ Beyer, "διακονέω," 83.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 87.

Jesus explained that the very purpose of His incarnation was to serve (διακονέω), ultimately by giving His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). However, Christ's sacrificial service and redemptive death for humankind is only properly understood in the context of Christ's obedience to and dependence on God the Father (Luke 22:42).¹⁴³ Luke's use of this word group in the example of Jesus, the pattern of the apostles, and the slave parables emphasizes that service of others is a privilege and responsibility, especially for leaders, as they demonstrate their submission to God by faithfully serving His people.¹⁴⁴ This paradigm of serving God by serving others was reflected in the ministry of the apostles as Luke uses the term διακονία, often translated "ministry," to describe their service of others on Christ's behalf which could include preaching (Acts 6:4; 20:24) and meeting physical needs (Acts 6:1; 11:29), or it may comprehensively describe the service of an individual or the church (Acts 1:25; 12:25).¹⁴⁵ In the early church this word group came to describe a commission to serve others given by God (Col 4:17; 2 Tim 4:5) and Paul declares his commitment to carry out the will of the Lord by faithfully discharging his responsibility to serve others through proclaiming the gospel (Acts 20:24). "Paul sees himself in a double relation of service with respect both to Christ and to the Church. In the exercise of his apostolic service Paul regards the proclamation of the gospel as the fundamental and central activity."¹⁴⁶ The office of deacon described in

¹⁴³ Collins, *Diakonia*, 251. Beyer asserts, "When Jesus served his disciples and men in general, it was a demonstration of the love of God, and of humanity as God willed it." Beyer, "διακονέω," 547.

¹⁴⁴ Weiser, "διακονέω," 304.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 303. The connection between διακονία and apostleship in Acts 1:25 seems significant in this paradigm because the ministry describes the responsibility they have been given to others and apostleship points to the authority by which they have been sent to carry out that ministry.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3 formally connects the responsibility of leadership in the church with the task of serving others, whether the deacon is serving physical or spiritual needs within the body.¹⁴⁷

Semantic relationship between δοῦλος and διάκονος. The lexical survey of δοῦλος and διάκονος suggests that these terms describe complementary spheres of service which are applied especially to Christian leaders.¹⁴⁸ Hess explains,

Doulos stresses almost exclusively the Christian's complete subjection to the Lord; *diakonos* is concerned with his service for the church . . . whether this is done by serving at table, with the word, or in some other way. The *diakonos* is always one who serves on Christ's behalf and continues Christ's service for the outer and inner man.¹⁴⁹

It is proposed that δοῦλος refers to the identity of the leader before God, denoting representative identity and delegated authority while διάκονος describes the resulting selfless exercise of said authority in relationship to the fellow image-bearers entrusted to his or her care.¹⁵⁰ This paradigm is congruent with the pattern found in creation in which humankind is designed to act as obedient son and servant king. This pattern is also reflected in the Great Commandment in which exclusive devotion to God cannot be separated from loving service of others (Luke 10:27).¹⁵¹ Paul follows this same model as he describes himself as a "slave of Christ" (Rom 1:1,

¹⁴⁷ Beyer, "διακονέω," 90.

¹⁴⁸ Luke 12:42-28; 17:7-10; 22:26-27; Acts 1:25; 20:24

¹⁴⁹ Hess, "Serve" 548.

¹⁵⁰ Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 14. "The *doulos* has offered the entire life to promote the welfare of one's Lord; the *diakonos*, in humility and love, expresses that surrender by pursuing the welfare of one's fellow servants."

¹⁵¹ Commenting on διάκονος Beyer contends, "Realisation of the service to be rendered to God carries with it a certain interrelationship with the totality of creation." Beyer, "διακονέω," 83.

Gal 1:10) who consequently has the freedom and responsibility to serve as a “slave of all” (1 Cor 9:19; 2 Cor 4:5) so that more people might be reconciled to Christ.

Although *διακονία* does not necessarily denote a slave’s service, it should not be assumed that the *διάκονος* is therefore autonomous and unaccountable for the nature and purpose of the service rendered to others. In the New Testament service of others is only properly understood as a demonstration of love and commitment to God and therefore God’s will is authoritative and His glory is the ultimate aim.¹⁵²

Beyer, commenting on Matthew 25:42-44, asserts, “What the Christian does to even the least of his fellowmen he does to the Lord Himself. Here it is plain that *diakonein* is one of those words which presuppose a Thou, and not a Thou towards whom I may order my relationship as I please, but a Thou under whom I have placed myself as a *diakonwn*.”¹⁵³ One cannot properly understand a leader’s responsibility to serve others without first orienting that service to one’s identity and responsibility in service to God.¹⁵⁴ Such a paradigm integrates Collin’s perspective of a *διάκονος* as an envoy in service of an authority while preserving the primary thrust of the word group, which is humble service to others, found throughout the New Testament.¹⁵⁵ It is proposed that, in the New Testament, service (*διακονία*) of others is necessarily oriented to and defined by one’s responsibility to serve (*δουλεύω*) the Lord.

¹⁵² Hess, “Serve,” 547.

¹⁵³ Beyer, “*διακονέω*,” 85.

¹⁵⁴ The servant leadership paradigms of Greenleaf and many mainstream Christian resources are similarly deficient in that they emphasize the importance using one’s authority to serve others without first acknowledging that the leader is under God’s authority to carry out His will in service to Him.

¹⁵⁵ Paula Gooder, “*Diakonia* in the New Testament: A Dialogue with John N. Collins” *Ecclesiology* 3 (2006): 42.

Literal and Rhetorical Denotation of κύριος

The noun κύριος was originally derived from an adjective meaning “having power, authoritative”¹⁵⁶ and in *Koine* the κύριος was the owner of slaves and property with an emphasis on his absolute power over his possessions.¹⁵⁷ Until the late Hellenistic period this term was used almost exclusively in this narrow, literal sense for the Greeks did not “regard their gods as lords and themselves as δοῦλοι.”¹⁵⁸ This was in contrast to the ancient Near East where the gods held absolute power and sovereignty over all of creation and humanity and even human leaders were subject to the god’s authority.¹⁵⁹ This Semitic paradigm, already discussed in the previous chapter, employed κύριος as an “expression of a personal relationship of man to the deity, whether in prayer, thanksgiving or vow, and as a correlate of δοῦλος inasmuch as the man concerned describes as κύριος the god under whose orders he stands.”¹⁶⁰ Thus κύριος preserved much of its literal sense when it was employed to convey a metaphorical concept foreign to the Hellenistic culture and cult. The first widespread metaphorical use of κύριος was in the LXX when it was used to translate יהוה and יהוה. As such it could sometimes refer to a man in authority, such as a commander or ruler, but the vast majority of the time it was used as a term to translate the name of God.¹⁶¹ By choosing κύριος as the divine name in the LXX the

¹⁵⁶ H. Bietenhard, “Lord,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 3:510.

¹⁵⁷ Werner Foerster, “κύριος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 3:1044.

¹⁵⁸ Bietenhard, “Lord,” 511.

¹⁵⁹ Foerster, “κύριος,” 1049.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1052.

¹⁶¹ Bietenhard, “Lord,” 512.

translators emphasized His sovereign power and absolute authority over all people which was rooted broadly in His position as Creator and more specifically in His redemption of Israel as His own possession from Egypt.¹⁶² This metaphorical use of *κύριος* as a title captured the Old Testament relationship between God and His people in a manner that preserved God's identity as sovereign while also conveying humanity's responsibility to Him as His *δοῦλοι*.

In the New Testament, *κύριος* can refer to a master of slaves (Luke 12:45), an owner of property (Matt 20:8), or more generally as a title of respect to one of superior status or authority (John 4:11; Luke 13:8). The metaphorical use of *κύριος* as a title of respect or politeness likewise reflects the Semitic backdrop as the use of *κύριος* to refer to authorities in Greco-Roman society was still fairly rare in the first-century.¹⁶³ The New Testament also refers to God as *κύριος*, the sovereign Ruler of creation (Luke 10:21) who possesses all power (Luke 10:2) with complete continuity from the LXX (Luke 20:37).¹⁶⁴ Jesus was called "*κύριος*" in the narration and direct discourse of Luke's gospel before He was ultimately and triumphantly declared as *κύριος* over all of creation as the resurrected and exalted King over all of creation (Phil 2:11). Christ's lordship means that He has authority over all people (1 Cor 4:19; Jas 4:15), He is the ultimate judge of humanity (Rom 14:4-9), and He grants authority and gifts to His people according to His will (2 Cor 10:8). The early church's theological confession of Christ as *κύριος* was both an affirmation of His

¹⁶² Ibid. See also Foerster, "*κύριος*," 1082.

¹⁶³ Bietenhard, "Lord," 513. Acts 25:26 is an example of how the metaphor had begun to permeate Greco-Roman discourse as Festus calls Nero "lord." Nero was one of the first Roman emperors to use this title. Foerster, "*κύριος*," 1055.

¹⁶⁴ "By addressing and acknowledging God as *kyrios* the NT expresses particularly his creatorship, his power revealed in history and his just dominion over the universe, and at the same time confesses the continuity of its belief with that of the OT." Bietenhard, "Lord," 514.

sovereign divinity and an expression of their humble dependence on and submission to Him.¹⁶⁵

Slave connotations of κύριος in the New Testament. The question remains whether the title κύριος, when used of Christ, was employed more generally to refer to His authority and status or whether this term preserved the nuances of a slave master in relationship to his slaves. Sometimes when Jesus is addressed as “Κύριε” by individuals it is simply a title of respect or a polite form of address with no real sense of submission or subservience implied (Mark 7:28; John 4:11; 4:49; 5:7). However, when Jesus describes Himself in direct and indirect discourse in the gospels as κύριος His disciples are regularly depicted as His slaves, a pattern which continued into the practice of the early church. In Matthew 10:24-25 Jesus describes Himself as a teacher and κύριος and the twelve are identified as disciples and slaves. John 13:16 likewise identifies Jesus as κύριος and His disciples are identified with the metaphors of slaves and messengers. Jesus instructs His disciples to eschew the pattern of worldly authority in which leaders act as lords (κυριεύω), calling them instead to act as a servant (διάκονος) and a slave (δοῦλος) (Matt. 20:26-28, cf. Luke 22:25-27). Therefore even leaders exercising Jesus’ authority were not “lords” but slaves carrying out the will of the divine κύριος.

This pattern, which occurs elsewhere in Jesus’ didactic discourse,¹⁶⁶ is even clearer in the parabolic discourse. In many parables the master clearly represents Jesus as the coming Son of Man who will hold His slaves, identified as His followers in general and His disciples in particular, accountable for their

¹⁶⁵ Foerster, “κύριος,” 1094.

¹⁶⁶ John 15:20 is another striking example in which Jesus uses the metaphor of slaves and their master in a one to one correspondence with his relationship with the disciples.

attentiveness and obedience to His will (Luke 12:35-38; 17:7-10; 19:11-27).¹⁶⁷ Luke 12:41-48 is perhaps the clearest example as Peter asks Jesus whether the preceding slave parable was intended specifically to address the disciples' responsibility to Christ. Jesus responds by telling yet another slave parable describing the leadership responsibilities entrusted to the overseeing slave. At times followers of Jesus will even address Him in the Semitic pattern of "Lord, Lord" (Κύριε, κύριε), apparently expressing at least superficial subservience to His authority. Jesus confronts them with the sobering reality that claims of Christ's lordship without exclusive and unconditional obedience to His will is worthless (Matt 7:21; Luke 6:46).¹⁶⁸ The early church preserved this understanding of Christ as Lord by recognizing slavery as the metaphorical pattern of discipleship and leadership under Christ's ultimate authority.¹⁶⁹ Paul writes, "We do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4:5). This pattern of correlation between Jesus as κύριος and disciples as His slaves in the gospels and beyond suggests that one cannot properly understand the title of the incarnated and resurrected Lord apart from the metaphor of slavery and its attendant associations.¹⁷⁰

Semantic parallel between κύριος and δεσπότης. This rhetorical emphasis is further demonstrated by observing the New Testament usage of δεσπότης, a parallel term to κύριος, which described a master of a household who possessed

¹⁶⁷ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 92.

¹⁶⁸ Foerster, "κύριος," 1093.

¹⁶⁹ Bietenhard, "Lord," 514.

¹⁷⁰ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 93.

absolute authority by right of his ownership of his slaves.¹⁷¹ This word group carried the connotation of a master's highhandedness or caprice which stemmed from his unlimited power over his slaves.¹⁷² It is therefore startling to observe that Simeon addresses God in his prayer as *δέσποτα* and Simeon identifies himself as *δοῦλόν σου* (Luke 2:29). The term *δεσπότης*, in part because of its negative undertones, was not used in any way other than the literal sense in the Hellenistic culture.¹⁷³ The fact that Simeon uses this term to address God as "Lord" or "Master" strongly suggests that the metaphor of slavery, as found in the Old Testament pattern, continued to preserve associations of the practice of slavery in first-century Jewish religious practice, albeit without the negative connotation of this specific term.¹⁷⁴ The early Christians demonstrate the same self-understanding in relationship to God when they address God as *δέσποτα* who possesses power over all of creation and humanity and they describe themselves as slaves who desire to faithfully carry out His will (Acts 4:24, 27). Christ is described as the *δεσπότης* who bought believers through redemption (2 Peter 2:1) and Jude 4 describes Christ as both *δεσπότης* and *κύριος* who has absolute authority in the lives of believers in contrast to those false teachers who refuse to submit to Christ as their Master. The power and authority of Christ as Lord is properly understood in the context of a believer's relationship to Him as His slave, purchased as His own possession and subject to His will.

¹⁷¹ Bietenhard, "Lord," 509.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Foerster, "κύριος," 1045.

¹⁷⁴ Bietenhard, "Lord," 509. Bietenhard observes that the LXX rarely used *δεσπότης*, preferring to use *κύριος* instead perhaps due to the negative associations of the former term. Therefore Simeon was not simply using colloquial language in addressing God but was intentionally choosing a term which emphasized God's complete sovereignty and Simeon's humble submission.

Rhetorical Significance of the Slave Metaphor

The historical and lexical background of slavery in the Greco Roman world provides the necessary foundation to examine the referent and potential rhetorical associations which may be conveyed by the metaphor of slavery as found in Luke-Acts. There are some who argue that the redemption secured by Christ brings only emancipation without any corresponding expectation that the believer would then be enslaved to Christ as his Master.¹⁷⁵ Others reinterpret the slave metaphor to describe a free servant who makes the choice to serve God as an expression of love without any sense of obligation or ownership.¹⁷⁶ The purpose of this section is to outline potential associations drawn from the Greco-Roman practice of slavery and compare these associations to those drawn in the previous chapter in order to discern the influence of Hebrew and Greco-Roman slavery on the symbolic universe of the metaphor in the New Testament. This analysis will provide a rhetorical grid by which to examine the instances of slave language and allusions in Luke-Acts and determine if associations with ancient slavery, whether Hebrew or Roman, are preserved. If the metaphor of slavery in Luke's writings consistently reflects many or most of the associations drawn from the actual practice of slavery in Greco-Roman society then the metaphor must properly be understood and interpreted with that referent.

Rhetorical Associations from Greco-Roman Slavery

The first association could be that the slave was a possession, owned by the master who had absolute power because he had purchased or redeemed the

¹⁷⁵ Patterson, *Slavery as Salvation*, 71.

¹⁷⁶ Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 13.

slave. In the Roman world the master possessed *potestas* and the slave was powerless to act independently of his master. Derived identity may be a second association based on the slave's natal alienation and integration into the *familia* of the master. Regardless of how one became a slave, his former identity died when he was enslaved and he now lived exclusively for the master, leaving behind any ties or allegiances that might have defined him previously. The fact that a slave was considered the extension of his master meant that slaves could carry out business with the status and authority of the master or endure abuse or mistreatment on behalf of the master. Slaves publically identified themselves with the title "slave of (master's name)," which demonstrates the extent of their derived identity.

Subjection to an alien will is a third association that stems from the fact that the slave finds his identity and purpose in the master. It was this very association with slavery that made the metaphor distasteful in Hellenistic society because autonomy and freedom of self-determination were so highly valued. A slave no longer belonged to himself and therefore he had no autonomy of will or action. The slave does not have the freedom to choose which of the master's commands he will obey for the master's will is binding on the slave. This association includes the expectation of work on behalf of the master, often carrying out unpleasant or menial household duties such as untying sandals, washing feet, or emptying chamber pots. Slaves lived to please the master without any expectation of compensation or reward. Romans highly prized slaves who had internalized the will of the master sufficiently so that they could carry out the will of the master and demonstrate the master's character. This was especially important on rural estates when the master was absent and a slave overseer was given stewardship of the master's resources. The most faithful slaves did not simply heed the master's will; they internalized it so that they could more effectively serve as an extension of the master.

Exclusive obedience is a fourth association of the metaphor for the slave was ultimately accountable only to the master for how faithfully he had carried out the master's will. The master could grant the slave greater responsibility within the *familia* on the basis of exemplary obedience and could inflict severe punishment for any act of disobedience. The exclusive nature of the master's authority precluded allegiance to or service of any competing master. The paradigm of a slave who serves (*δουλεύω*) his master by serving (*διακονέω*) his fellow slaves is instructive here for the service of others is a priority that must properly understood in the context of one's ultimate responsibility to the master. While not a separate association, if the identity of Christ as the sovereign and incarnate *κύριος* was rooted in the metaphor of slavery then one would expect that the title would entail power and authority which demands unconditional obedience and submission of His followers as slaves.¹⁷⁷ A fifth association is the slave's complete dependence upon the master for all forms of provision and protection. It was this obligation to provide for one's slaves that led some masters to manumit their slaves when they were no longer useful, thus freeing the master from having to provide their shelter and sustenance. The master gives the slaves authority to conduct his affairs, direction for how to carry out his will, and the necessary resources to accomplish their task.

¹⁷⁷ One objection that is commonly raised to the slave metaphor as a model of Christian discipleship and leadership is the statement in John 15:14-15 where Jesus tells his disciples "no longer do I call you 'slaves', because a slave does not understand what his master is doing. Rather I have given you the name of 'friends.'" It should be noted that in the context it is obedience that is the condition of being called a friend of Christ and the main point of the passage is that a slave's obedience is often carried out without understanding the purpose and intention of the master. Christ is not negating the significance of the slave metaphor, as indicated by his incarnation of the slave metaphor in the near context (John 13:13-16), but rather is recognizing its limitations given the cultural paradigm of slavery operative in Greco-Roman society. The fact that Christ regarded them as slaves and friends would have been foreign to a society in which slaves were regarded with suspicion as enemies. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 145. While Christ did regard his disciples as friends, Jesus still was a Lord to be obeyed as demonstrated by the very condition of friendship in the context.

A final potential association drawn from Greco-Roman slavery is the mistreatment, abuse, and harsh punishment which were prevalent in Roman society. While some masters treated their slaves humanely and even benevolently this was unfortunately the exception. Most masters freely whipped, molested, tortured, and even crucified slaves as an expression of their absolute power and their cruel caprice. This association may seem irrelevant to the New Testament because Jesus describes himself as a master who is “gentle and humble in heart” who offers a yoke of slavery that is “easy” and “light” (Matt 11:29-30). However, if Greco-Roman slavery does substantially serve as the referent for the slave metaphor one must carefully consider whether any of its cruelty is expressed alongside of its rhetorical richness.

Proposed Rhetorical Referent and Associations

Despite the fact that the actual practice of Hebrew and Greco-Roman slavery were significantly different in their scope and severity, the list of Greco-Roman associations above, when compared with the Hebrew associations detailed in the previous chapter, suggests an appreciable overlap in the associations of slavery in the metaphorical use of slave language. Rather than choosing whether the New Testament uses Hebrew or Greco-Roman slavery as the referent for the metaphor, it is proposed that both cultures and societies provide valuable and complementary associations. The Hebrew paradigm of God as Lord and Israel as His redeemed slaves provides an important religious backdrop to the New Testament usage. The concept of slavery to God and its corresponding implications are reflected in the prayers and declarations of devout Jewish worshippers (Luke 1:38, 2:29) and their messianic expectations (Acts 3:13, 26). The prevalence of slavery in Roman society offers an equally vital historical backdrop to the New Testament usage since the actual practice of slavery in Israel during the first-century A.D. would have

necessarily informed the rhetorical referent and nuance of the metaphor as Christ's parables make clear. While some scholars choose to interpret the slavery metaphor from either a Hebrew or Greco-Roman perspective, the New Testament represents an intersection of Hebrew culture and Roman society and therefore it is safe to assume that passages in Luke-Acts reflect this backdrop to varying degrees.¹⁷⁸ This study recognizes both the Hebrew and Hellenistic understanding of physical and metaphorical slavery as vital to proper interpretation and thus the two perspectives will be considered within the boundaries provided by the preceding historical, lexical, and rhetorical backgrounds.

An analysis of the slave language in Luke's writings requires clearly defined rhetorical categories of associations based upon the rhetorical assumptions and conclusions above. The strong correlation between the Hebrew and Greco-Roman associations make the formation of such categories fairly straightforward. First, slavery may indicate possession and, when describing one's relationship to God, either creation or redemption may be the basis. Second, the slave is natally alienated and takes on a new identity that is subsumed entirely in the identity of the master. Third, the slave surrenders autonomy of will and action, being subject completely to the will of the master. The Greco-Roman context suggests that sometimes the master's will may even be internalized by the slave. Fourth, the slave is accountable to the master for unconditional obedience and exclusive allegiance. Fifth, the slave is completely dependent on the master as his only source of provision and protection. Finally, the Greco-Roman background may include the associations of abuse or harsh punishment which displays the master's complete power over the slave. Using this rhetorical grid, each relevant text in Luke-Acts will be considered

¹⁷⁸ Tsang, *Slaves to Sons*, 31. Tsang provides an excellent discussion of rhetoric and the differing opinions of how the referent of slavery in the New Testament should be determined.

in its literary context with the historical and lexical background of slavery circumscribing the symbolic universe of the metaphor in the passage.

Conclusion

Luke-Acts was written in a Greco-Roman context in which slavery was a complex and integral part of Roman society and therefore this chapter began with a historical overview of the practice of Greco-Roman slavery. While slavery in Rome encompassed many different ethnicities, social roles, and vocations, all slaves were the property of the master, subject to his absolute power, and cut off from any ties to their former life. Different than in the ancient Near East, slaves had no rights or legal protections which allowed the master to use or abuse them however he saw fit. While a few slaves had power or authority in society by virtue of their identification with a powerful master, all slaves bore the social stigma of being subject to the will of another. In general, slaves in Roman society were treated with cruelty and contempt and their only hope of reprieve was to somehow purchase their own freedom through manumission. The lexical analysis concluded that the *δοῦλος* word group clearly describes the status or service of slave to his master while *διάκονος* and its cognates denote personal service rendered to another. This led to a proposed paradigm in which Christians are called to serve (*δουλεύω*) the Lord by serving (*διακονέω*) others according to the revealed will of their divine Master. The discussion of *κύριος* argued that both the Father and the Son were worshipped as Lord, a title that described God's sovereign power and complete authority over all of creation and over His people who are called His "slaves." The rhetorical analysis of potential associations from the Greco-Roman background contributed to the conclusion that both Hebrew and Greco-Roman cultures influenced the referent for the New Testament usage. The rhetorical grid of potential associations drawn from

these two cultural backgrounds provides a basic framework for the subsequent study through the Lukan literature in order to discern the significance of the metaphor for Christian leadership and discipleship.

CHAPTER 4

SLAVE IMAGERY IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke-Acts was written as two volumes of a single historical work which provided a historical and theological account from the birth of Christ to the establishment and growth of the early church.¹ Based upon internal and external evidence Luke is assumed to be the author who gathered his information from eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2) as well as from his personal ministry as a travelling companion of Paul (Acts 16:10).² Luke was likely a Gentile and a physician (Col 4:14) who carefully compiled historical information from various sources in order to construct a careful and complete historical account which also provided the reader with insight into the theological or prophetic significance of the recorded events.³ Luke's relationship with Paul and his personal knowledge of the corpus of Pauline epistles led Tertullian to call the book of Luke a digest of Paul's gospel.⁴ By the time Luke composed this two-volume work, probably between AD 62 and 70, he would have been familiar with Paul's use of the slave metaphor in his discourse (Acts 20:19)

¹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 2003), 35.

² Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 4. The internal evidence includes the "we" sections in Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18) and the stated dependence in the introduction on eyewitnesses, the author not being an eyewitness himself. The external evidence includes strong attestation of Luke's authorship as a companion of Paul.

³ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 35.

⁴ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 5.

and his epistles (Rom 1:1, 2 Cor 4:5, and Gal 1:10) as well as how the metaphor was used in the life and teachings of Christ.⁵ If the slave metaphor was deemed a significant image for discipleship and leadership in the teaching of Christ and the practice of the early church one would expect to find it well represented in Luke's historical account.

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the use of slave imagery and identify the associations of the metaphor in the narrative and teaching of Jesus as recorded in Luke's gospel. The Old Testament paradigm of a "slave of the Lord" is immediately evident in the introduction and infancy narrative, reflecting the continuity of the metaphor in first-century Jewish piety. Next, the emerging Christological pattern of lordship and obedience in Christ's early ministry reflects a Lukan understanding of the title "Lord" that goes beyond mere respect and reflects a continuity with the Old Testament theological use of the term. The study will then give focused attention to the substantial number of slave parables which provide the most detailed examples of the slave metaphor and its significance for leadership and discipleship. Finally, Christ presents a paradigm of leadership through service which is demonstrated through his humble ministry and his sacrificial death in the manner of a slave or criminal. Tracing the metaphor of slavery through Luke's gospel one can appreciate the richness and nuances of this image which can convey key associations in the context of Jewish piety, Christ's authority, and Christian responsibility. This unique survey of slave imagery in Luke will attempt to identify and interpret the significance and associations of the metaphor in its historical and literary context.

⁵ The date range assumes Luke-Acts was written after the final events of Acts 28 but prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Bock suggests it was likely in the early AD 60's. due to the abrupt ending of the book of Acts and this author is persuaded by his arguments while recognizing the difficulty of precision in establishing a date. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 18.

“Eyewitnesses and Servants” in Luke’s Introduction

Luke opens his gospel with an explicit statement of his dependence upon those who had been with Jesus from the beginning, described as “eyewitnesses and servants of the word” (Luke 1:2).⁶ Their presence “from the beginning” suggests that Luke is referring to Jesus’ disciples who became apostles in the early church and had given Luke first-hand testimony of what they had seen and experienced.⁷ While the concept of eyewitnesses (*αὐτόπται*) is fairly straightforward in its meaning, the identification of the apostles with a servile term at the very outset of the gospel requires a careful consideration of what Luke meant by “servants (*ὑπηρέται*) of the word.”

In its basic sense *ὑπηρέτης* describes “someone, whether man, god, or divine being, in terms of the fact that he stands and acts in the service of a higher will and is fully at the disposal of this will.”⁸ This term could be used in classical Greek to describe someone who served the will of the gods with the power and authority of the gods.⁹ While *δοῦλος* specifically describes the status or service of a slave, *ὑπηρέτης* refers to subordination and obedience to a higher will without specifying whether such service is obligatory or voluntary.¹⁰ Therefore *ὑπηρέτης*

⁶ It is assumed that these two descriptors refer to the same group based upon the single Greek article that governs them both. Stein, *Luke*, 64.

⁷ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 58. It is significant to note that being a witness from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry to the resurrection was considered a criterion for Judas’ replacement among the apostles (Acts 1:21-22).

⁸ Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “ὑπηρέτης,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 8:531.

⁹ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 30.

¹⁰ Rengstorff, “ὑπηρέτης,” 532.

could describe a government administrator, a king's attendant, or a military officer, all of whom were subordinate to the will of another.¹¹ While it certainly could denote voluntary service, the emphasis on subordination and obedience to an alien will make it a term that could also be readily employed to describe a δούλος and, in fact, the two terms are often very closely associated with one another.¹² Goodrich provides extensive primary source material which demonstrates that in some contexts δούλος and ὑπηρέτης could be used interchangeably because of their broad semantic overlap.¹³ For instance, ὑπηρέτης was often used as a category for household slaves and the best ὑπηρέτης was described as one which was purchased by the master (Plato, *Pol.* 189).¹⁴ This certainly does not mean that a ὑπηρέτης was always a δούλος but δούλος does seem to comprise a significant subset of the broader term ὑπηρέτης.¹⁵ The nuance of ὑπηρέτης is specifically the subordination and obedience of a servant to a higher will such that “the servant has no significance on his own; the work done is not his but his master’s.”¹⁶

¹¹ Ceslas Spicq, “ὑπηρέτης,” in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 3:398.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John Goodrich, “Paul, the Oikonomos of God: Paul’s Apostolic Metaphor in 1 Corinthians and its Graeco-Roman Context,” Ph.D. diss, Durham University, 2010, 153-55.

¹⁴ Ibid., 155. Spicq further supports this association by noting how ὑπηρέτης was used in contrast to δεσπότης in Philo and how common slaves in Athens were often called ὑπηρέται. Spicq, “ὑπηρέτης,” 398.

¹⁵ Goodrich, “Paul, the Oikonomos,” 154. Rengstorff’s treatment of ὑπηρέτης seems to overemphasize the voluntary nature of the service rendered, largely ignoring the fact that in many cases it was in fact compulsory. Rengstorff, “ὑπηρέτης,” 532. Byron builds on the foundation provided by Rengstorff and alleges that ὑπηρέτης connotes free and willing service and thus is to be clearly differentiated from any notion of slavery. John Byron, “Slave of Christ or Willing Servant? Paul’s Self-Description in 1 Corinthians 4: 1-2 and 9: 16-18,” *Neotestamentica* 37 (2003): 186-87. Both Rengstorff and Byron seem to ignore the clear semantic overlap clearly detailed by Goodrich.

¹⁶ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 99.

In the New Testament *ὑπηρέτης* is used in a variety of ways to describe one who is an “assistant to another as the instrument of his will.”¹⁷ It can describe an agent of the courts (Matt 5:25), a minister in the synagogue (Luke 4:20), officers in the temple (John 7:45), or servants of the high priest (Acts 5:22). John Mark is even called a *ὑπηρέτης* of Paul and Barnabas, serving as one who is under their authority and at their disposal to accomplish their will (Acts 13:5). The broad semantic scope of this term requires that the context specify the nature of the service being described and the relationship with the master who is obeyed.¹⁸ There are only three metaphorical uses of *ὑπηρέτης* in the New Testament, two of which occur in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:2; Acts 26:16; 1 Cor 4:1). Both Acts 26 and 1 Corinthians 4 use *ὑπηρέτης* to describe Paul’s own self-understanding as an authorized representative and obedient subordinate who has been commissioned by God as Master and who is accountable to the Master. In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul describes himself and other leaders in the Corinthian church as servants (*ὑπηρέται*) of Christ and stewards (*οἰκονόμοι*) which very likely is a reference to the metaphorical role of the slave overseer in Christ’s parable of the Wise and Unwise Steward in Luke 12:42-48.¹⁹ Goodrich suggests that Paul clarifies his metaphorical use of *ὑπηρέτης* by conjoining it with *οἰκονόμος* which semantically and contextually describes the responsibility and accountability of a slave to his master.²⁰ This collocation of servile terms, combined with Paul’s frequent use of the appellation “slave of Christ,” seems to suggest that

¹⁷ Rengstorf, “ὑπηρέτης,” 53.

¹⁸ Gerhard Schneider, “ὑπηρέτης,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 3:400.

¹⁹ Rengstorf, “ὑπηρέτης,” 542. A full discussion of the role of the slave overseer can be found in the exposition of Luke 12:42-48 in this chapter.

²⁰ Goodrich, “Paul, the Oikonomos,” 156.

Paul's use of *ὑπηρέτης* in Acts 26:16 and 1 Corinthians 4:1 intersects with his use of the metaphor of slavery, specifically denoting his subservience to the will of God who had called and commissioned him to obedient service.²¹

Luke's introductory use of *ὑπηρέτης* lacks any contextual clues concerning the nature or sphere of the apostles' service but Luke's later account of the apostles as *δούλοι* (Acts 4:29; 16:17) and Paul as a slave of his *κύριος* (Acts 20:19) suggests that Luke may also be highlighting a key association of the slave metaphor, namely obedient service in submission to the will of another.²² Rengstorf observes that the apostles described in Luke 1:2 "had unreservedly put their persons and work in the service of Jesus' cause."²³ It may be that Luke chooses a term other than *δοῦλος* because the object of their service is the impersonal *λόγος*, the message of the gospel, as opposed to the personal *κύριος*.²⁴ At minimum, *ὑπηρέτης* in Luke 1:2 describes the apostles as those who were subservient and obedient to God's will and word, subordinate to God's sovereign authority. But it is certainly defensible that Luke is in fact identifying the apostles with a title congruent with slave terminology because slavery had become a metaphor of Christian leadership from the nascent development of early church (Acts 4:29; Jas 1:1; Gal 1:10). This would also fit with a logical and chronological progression in the text from the apostles being eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry to then serving as *ὑπηρέτης* on his behalf in the

²¹ Paul's language in Acts 26 seems especially to highlight the task and commission he had been given by the *κύριος* (v.15) so that he is now completely subject to God's will and instruction.

²² The fact that the metaphorical use of *ὑπηρέτης* intersects with the slave metaphor in 1 Cor 4:1 seems to lend credence to this interpretation.

²³ Rengstorf, "*ὑπηρέτης*," 543.

²⁴ Luke uses this same pattern in Acts 6:4 to describe the apostles' commitment to the "*διακονία τοῦ λόγου*" which emphasizes their role as messengers with a priority on the message. What is assumed in these constructions is that such "service of the word" was ultimately in service of the Lord.

establishment of the church.²⁵ Based on the preceding discussion of ὑπηρέτης it can be concluded with confidence that Luke introduced the apostles, the authorized and commissioned leaders in the church, as those who were subject and obedient to the authority of God by faithfully proclaiming the message of the gospel. This emphasis is consistent with associations of obedience and submission which are more explicit in Luke's subsequent use of the slave metaphor. Therefore, terminology in Luke's introduction may serve to indirectly introduce a paradigm that would later be found explicitly in the teachings of Jesus and the practice of the early church.

The Slave Metaphor and Jewish Piety

Luke's unique presentation of the infancy narrative provides a glimpse of how the Jews understood and employed the metaphor of slavery in continuity with the pattern found in the Old Testament. I have argued that slavery was an important metaphor in early Hebrew worship as they understood God as their Redeemer and Lord who demanded exclusive obedience and extended His sovereign protection to His people who were His own possession. Luke's infancy narrative is rich in Old Testament allusions and therefore it is fitting that the first several chapters contain many instances of the slave metaphor and its associations to describe one's relationship with God.

Mary as a Slave of the Lord

When Gabriel appears to Mary and informs her that she is to bear the Messiah she initially responds with disbelief but then humbly submits herself to the Lord and His will declaring, "Behold, the bondslave (δούλη) of the Lord (κύριος); may it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Here Mary echoes the prayer

²⁵ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 58.

of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:11 in which Hannah addresses God as her Lord and twice describes herself as his δούλη. Mary's use of this metaphor conveys some of its richness as she presents herself before God as one whose will is completely submitted to His and therefore she is willing to obey whatever He may require of her.²⁶ Mary presents herself as an instrument of the Master and she acknowledges His prerogative to use her however He may see fit.²⁷ It should be noted that Mary's ease in identifying herself as a δούλη of the Lord suggests that slavery to God was not reserved exclusively for the leaders of God's people but rather was an important metaphor used to characterize the responsibilities and privileges of all of God's people.²⁸ When Mary identified herself as δούλη κυρίου it reflected the Hebrew "slave of Yahweh" pattern found throughout the Old Testament, especially highlighting the association of subjection and obedience to His will.²⁹

Mary's self-identification as God's δούλη is further reflected in her prayer in Luke 1:48 when she marvels, "He has had regard for the humble state of his bondslave (δούλη)." Again she juxtaposes God's glory as the κύριος and her humble submission as His δούλη, offering further insight into the metaphorical significance of addressing God as "Lord." Mary's words directly quote Hannah's prayer from 1 Samuel 1:11 in which God regarded (ἐπιβλέπω) the humble (ταπεινώσις) state of his δούλη. Mary recognizes that she has no status or rights that merit God's favor but

²⁶ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 126.

²⁷ David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 83.

²⁸ Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 133. Luke's infancy narrative highlights other examples of Jewish piety such as Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna.

²⁹ Robert D. Miller II, "Handmaid of the Lord; Slave of Yahweh," *Theoforum* 40 (2009): 210.

nevertheless He blessed her with the special privilege of serving Him in this privileged manner.³⁰ While Mary's first use of the metaphor emphasized the association of submission and obedience, her prayer expresses her identity as God's own possession who, in humility, recognizes her dependence upon God as her Master.

Israel and David as *παῖς* of God

In Luke 1:54 Mary exalts the Lord for “He has given help to Israel His servant (*παῖς*),” now highlighting the corporate identity of Israel as the redeemed slaves of the Lord who depend on Him for protection and provision. The term “*παῖς*” can either refer to children (Luke 2:43; 8:51, 54; 9:42) or slaves (Luke 7:7; 12:45; 15:26) but the LXX uses *παῖς* more than any other term to translate *עַבְד* and *παῖς* is often used interchangeably with *δοῦλος* in the Old Testament (Lev 25:44).³¹ Benjamin Wright suggests that *παῖς* may have been used more frequently to translate the concept of *עַבְד* because it suggests a greater familiarity between a slave and his master than *δοῦλος* might.³² The identification of Israel as the *παῖς θεοῦ* occurs throughout the Old Testament, especially in Isaiah, in which God calls Israel “my *παῖς*” whom He created (Isa 44:21), elected (Isa 41:8), and gathered (Isa 41:9). Isaiah 42:19 is noteworthy as *παῖς* is used in parallel with *δοῦλος* which indicates that both

³⁰ While some argue that *ταπεινώσις* describes barrenness, Mary is more likely referring to her low social status. This is made clear in Luke 1:52 in which the humble are contrasted with the rulers.

³¹ Walther Zimmerli and Joachim Jeremias, “*παῖς θεοῦ*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:654.

³² Benjamin G. Wright, “Eved/Doulos: Terms and Social Status in the Meeting of Hebrew Biblical and Hellenistic Roman Culture,” *Semeia* 83/83 (2003): 108. Jones offers a similar conclusion, suggesting that *παῖς* was used to avoid the menial connotations of *δοῦλος* while still employing servile terminology. Donald L. Jones, “The Title ‘Servant’ in Luke-Acts,” in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives From the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 152.

terms convey the metaphor of slavery to God to whom they owe submission, obedience, and loyalty on the basis of His redemption (Isa 44:22).³³ Israel's identity as the "slave of God" was already discussed and defended in chapter 2 of this study and therefore it may be noted that *παῖς*, when used metaphorically in Lukan literature, evokes the Old Testament metaphor of Israel corporately or righteous people individually as the dependent and subservient slaves of the Lord. This premise will be demonstrated in the discussion of the individual passages in their context. Mary's spontaneous praise in the *Magnificat* provides insight into Jewish piety as she identifies herself as God's slave (*δούλη*) in Luke 1:48 and she reflects on Israel collectively as the slave (*παῖς*) of God (Luke 1:54) in continuity with the corporate identity of the redeemed nation found in the Old Testament generally and Isaiah specifically.³⁴ While the context of Luke 1:54 provides few clues regarding the associations of the metaphor, the themes of possession, redemption, and dependence, found regularly in the Old Testament usage, seem to fit with the praise that Mary offers to God for His protection and provision.

The significance of the metaphor is further accentuated when Zechariah opens his prophecy in Luke 1:67-69 by praising the Lord (*κύριος*) God of Israel for His redemption (*λύτρωσις*) by raising up one from the house of David, His servant (*παῖς*). The term that Zechariah uses for redemption (*λύτρωσις*) is often used to refer to the exodus in the LXX (Exod 6:6; Deut 7:8; 9:26) and therefore the deliverance that Zechariah anticipates draws from the metaphor of slavery and redemption.³⁵ It

³³ Zimmerli and Jeremias, "παῖς θεοῦ," 678. Zimmerli and Jeremias argue persuasively that the meaning of *παῖς* in relationship to God is servant (or slave) of God as opposed to child or God which grammatically is possible but is more characteristic of later Hellenistic Judaism.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 679.

³⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 116.

was noted in chapter 2 of this study that David was the individual in the Old Testament most frequently referred to as God's עֶבֶד which defined his responsibility of leadership as one obedient to and dependent upon God. The language of Zechariah's prayer draws from God's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7 in which David is described as the עֶבֶד of the Lord and God promises to establish David's house (οἶκος) forever (2 Sam 7:16).³⁶ The arrival of the Messianic ruler who would be an obedient son and servant king in David's line was thus a fulfillment of the creation pattern and the covenant promise of God.³⁷ David's identification as the עֶבֶד of the Lord in the Old Testament highlighted his representative authority as a slave of God and his exemplary obedience in leadership of God's people. These themes were subsequently conveyed in the messianic expectations of the coming Davidic עֶבֶד as well (Ezek 34:23-31). This background indicates that at least complete obedience and representative identity and authority would have been associations of the slave metaphor in Luke 1:69.

Redeemed to Serve the Lord

Zechariah continues to reference the redemption of the exodus in Luke 1:74 by anticipating the Messiah's coming deliverance, described as being rescued (ῥύομαι), so that His people might serve (λατρεύω) Him. Lexically and conceptually this draws directly from the pattern and purpose of the exodus as God demanded that Pharaoh release the Hebrew slaves "so that they may serve (λατρεύω) me" (Exod 7:16; 8:16: 9:1). The verb λατρεύω means "to serve with no thought of reward and

³⁶ The fact that David is described more frequently as the δοῦλος of God rather than παῖς is insignificant given the interchangeability of δοῦλος and παῖς in the LXX. This same language is found in Ps 89:20-27.

³⁷ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 180.

irrespective of whether the one who serves is a slave or free.”³⁸ The humble and unconditional nature of the service described by λατρεύω made it a near synonym for δουλεύω in the LXX with λατρεύω being used most frequently when describing service to God.³⁹ Deuteronomy 10:12-20 provides a full paradigm of this service, describing Israel’s responsibility to serve (λατρεύω) God reverently, exclusively, and obediently because they had been redeemed from Egypt to become God’s own possession. Jesus highlights the exclusivity and obedience bound up in this term when he cites Deuteronomy 10:20 in Luke 4:8, reminding Satan that God is the only one who is worthy to be worshipped and served with one’s whole being. The literal sense of service denoted by λατρεύω is highlighted in Deuteronomy 28:47-48 when God warns that a refusal to serve (λατρεύω) the Lord faithfully would result in Israel serving (λατρεύω) their enemies instead.⁴⁰ True worship of God was not simply cultic ritual. It was serving Him in obedience as a result of His acts of salvation in history, with the Exodus serving as the central redemptive event for Israel’s identity and worship.⁴¹

While λατρεύω does not directly denote a slave’s service, its regular association with the exodus and corresponding slave terminology suggests that it would connote the role and responsibility of Israel as God’s slave from the Old Testament.⁴² In the New Testament λατρεύω can be used specifically to refer to

³⁸ Hermann Strathmann, “λατρεύω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:58.

³⁹ Ibid., 60. Both terms were used to translate the Hebrew עָבַד.

⁴⁰ There is a clear parallel to 2 Chronicles 12:8 where God uses δουλεύω to describe the service that Israel should have rendered to Him which they will now render to a foreign power.

⁴¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 117.

⁴² The use in the LXX is directly connected to the theme of redemption for service as God’s exclusive possession. See also: Exod 3:12; 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1,13; 10:3,7.

prayer (Luke 2:37; Acts 26:7) or generally to describe one's entire life of service (Acts 24:14; 27:23). In Luke 1:74 Zechariah draws a pattern from the exodus in which God's deliverance comes with a purpose, namely that His people would serve Him as Lord with exclusive and wholehearted obedience. This service was not limited to sacrifices or temple worship but extended to the unreserved dedication of one's entire life in service of God who was the only one worthy of such devotion.⁴³ In Luke 2:37 Anna is described as of one whose life was given completely to serving (λατρεύω) God in the temple precinct through her prayer and fasting. Although Anna's service has no contextual link to the exodus, it can reasonably be inferred that the Old Testament paradigm of service, rooted in redemption and outlined in Deuteronomy 10, provided the basic conceptual backdrop for Luke's description of her devotion. Acts 7:7 reflects this same redemptive responsibility as Stephen recounts God promise to Abraham that He would deliver Israel from slavery, not for autonomous freedom, but for the purpose of submissive service (λατρεύω). The paradigm of redemption from bondage for the purpose of serving God, explicit in Zechariah and Stephen's speeches and implicit in Anna's example, comes with the primary association of exclusive obedience as God's purchased possession.

Simeon as δοῦλος of the Lord

In Luke 2:25 Simeon is presented as a righteous and devout Jew who had been given a commission and a promise regarding the advent of the Messiah. When he had at last gazed upon the infant Messiah and had taken the baby into his arms, Simeon lifted his eyes to heaven and declared, "Now Lord (δεσπότης), you are releasing your bond-servant (δοῦλος) to depart in peace" (Luke 2:29). Simeon addresses God as δεσπότης which would have evoked the metaphor of slavery and the

⁴³ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 186.

associations of God's complete power and authority as the Sovereign over all things including Simeon as His slave.⁴⁴ The connotations of *δεσπότης* and the Hellenistic aversion to acknowledging a divine being as sovereign suggests that Simeon is drawing from the Jewish use of the metaphor which highlights God's sovereignty in provision as well as judgment (Isa 1:24; 3:1; 10:33).⁴⁵ Simeon explicitly employs the slave metaphor to convey his relationship with God and his responsibility before God. This is consistent with the metaphor as used in the Old Testament to describe the identity, dependence, and obedience that flow from one's relationship with God as the ultimate Master.⁴⁶

Simeon addresses the Lord as a slave (*δοῦλος*) who has completed the task which the Master had given him, having watched diligently and faithfully for the appearance of the Messiah.⁴⁷ When he had discharged his responsibility, Simeon observed that God was releasing him in peace. He was not anticipating manumission from his role as slave, but looking expectantly to the release from his earthly post, using dismissal as a euphemism for death.⁴⁸ Simeon employs the metaphor to capture God's sovereign power, Simeon's complete dependence, and his

⁴⁴ Marshall, *Luke*, 120. The use of *δεσπότης* goes beyond polite or literary convention as the term would have clearly denoted the master of slaves and his absolute power over them.

⁴⁵ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 242.

⁴⁶ Steven F. Plymale, "The Prayer of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32)," in *The Lord's Prayer and Other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 30. However, it is unnecessary to give this usage a technical sense and therefore infer that Simeon is describing himself as one of the Old Testament prophets as Plymale suggests. The metaphor was prevalent enough in Jewish piety that it easily could have simply been an expression of Simeon's identity and responsibility, similar to Mary's response in Luke 1:36.

⁴⁷ It is possible that Simeon is depicting himself as a slave who was a watchman who had been diligent in discharging his duty at his post. John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, v.35a (Dallas: Word, 1989), 119.

⁴⁸ Marshall, *Luke*, 120.

unreserved obedience to carry his Master's will to completion. The richness of Simeon's use of the slave metaphor in his prayer is reflected in the prayers and liturgy of the early church, sometimes directly citing the very pattern of Luke 2:29 in which God is addressed as *δέσποτα* and the people as his *δοῦλοι*.⁴⁹

The Unworthiness of John the Baptist

One example that extends beyond Luke's infancy narrative further demonstrates the power and prevalence of the slavery metaphor in expressions of Jewish piety in the first-century A.D. In Luke 3:16 John responds to the question of whether he is the Messiah by declaring his subservience to the messiah's superior power and authority and confessing, "I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals." John emphasizes his humble position and his unworthiness in relationship to the coming Redeemer by using a household image which is unfamiliar the modern reader. One regular duty of the household slave was to untie the sandals from the master's feet and this responsibility was considered so degrading that a Hebrew slave could not be compelled to perform it.⁵⁰ De Vaux observes that washing feet and untying sandals were jointly considered the exclusive domain of a Gentile slave because the task was so humiliating.⁵¹ While not as explicit as the declarations of Simeon or Mary, John uses slave language to declare his overwhelming humility. His Master is so mighty that John does not even deem himself worthy to perform the most menial task on His behalf. Rengstorf concludes "The office which John

⁴⁹ I. A. H. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 109.

⁵⁰ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 320.

⁵¹ Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel Social Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 86.

discharges is comparable with that of a slave who takes his master's shoes, or unties his shoelaces, and who thereby shows that he is a slave."⁵²

John was not an independent agent of Christ or His equal. John described his role as a slave of the coming Messiah who was under obligation to serve Christ willingly and humbly.⁵³ While he does not use the term κύριος to describe the coming Messiah, John's description of Christ's superior power, authority, and role as judge present Christ as the absolute Lord whom John serves. The sense of unworthiness conveyed by John is congruent with the unworthiness of the diligent slave in Luke 17:7-10 who faithfully carries out his task without fanfare or reward. The emphasis on humility and unworthiness as a slave before his master reminds the reader of the association of a slave's subservient identity and his responsibility to carry out even the most menial task for the sake of the master.⁵⁴ The usage of the metaphor of slavery in Luke's early chapters demonstrates a clear dependence on the Jewish usage from the Old Testament in which worshippers identify themselves, their nation, and their ancestors as slaves of the Lord, redeemed by His power for the purpose of service. As an expression of piety this often includes the associations of submission, obedience, humility, and dependence in accordance with the general pattern outlined in the chapter 2 of this study.

⁵² Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "ἵκανός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 3:294. Combes observes that the early church fathers did not bring out the metaphor of slavery in their exegesis of Luke 3:16 and parallel passages but they did emphasize the humility and unworthiness that it conveyed. This humility and unworthiness is consistent with the slave metaphor and the specific mention of a slave's task suggests it at least helps confirm some of the attendant associations employed by the metaphor. Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 129.

⁵³ Rengstorf, "ἵκανός," 294.

⁵⁴ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 321.

Emerging Christological Paradigm of Lordship and Obedience

A comprehensive examination of Luke's Christology and the titular use of *κύριος* in his writings is well beyond the scope of the present study. However, there is a strong correspondence between *κύριος* and the slave metaphor lexically and theologically, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Thus it is important to give some attention to how Luke presents Christ's lordship in his narration and how the characters in the gospel story realize His authority and respond accordingly. This section will focus specifically on the early development of Christ's lordship metaphor and the use of the title "Lord" in Luke's gospel which anticipates the post resurrection exaltation (Luke 24:34) and proclamation of Christ (Acts 2:36). Luke uses the term *κύριος* far more than any of the synoptics (101 times) which suggests that this term, along with its theological and practical implications, is central to Luke's presentation of Christ's identity and authority.

Declaration and Realization of Christ's Lordship

As early as Luke's first chapter there are hints of the Lordship of Christ before He is even born. In Luke 1:43 Elizabeth greets Mary as "the mother of my Lord" with both reverence and wonder which suggests that Elizabeth intended the term to reflect a messianic title, as opposed to a courtly convention, perhaps alluding to His divine nature.⁵⁵ Zechariah anticipates John's role as a forerunner who will "go on before the Lord to prepare his ways," although in the context it is unclear as to

⁵⁵ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 67. Bock argues that "Lord" is simply a title of respect in this context, observing that such a comprehensive understanding of Christ was unlikely prior to his resurrection. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 137. In response to Bock's argument, it should be noted that even Elizabeth's recognition of Mary's role in bearing the Messiah is the result of supernatural revelation and therefore it is at least plausible that Elizabeth describes the Messiah as Lord in a manner consistent with Ps 110:1.

whether he is referring to the coming of God or of Jesus (Luke 1:76).⁵⁶ It seems most likely that Zechariah is referring to the coming of God, given the reference to “His people” in the subsequent verse, but it is possible that Luke intends sufficient ambiguity for the early church to understand the Christological implications of this event after the fact.⁵⁷ Any ambiguity regarding Christ’s role as *κύριος* in the infancy narrative disappears when the angel proclaims the birth of “a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). This directly describes the Messiah as the Lord, or Yahweh, and therefore He is an incarnation of the sovereign God of Israel.⁵⁸ The angel’s declaration then serves as an introduction to Christ as “Lord,” a title which Luke will use extensively to describe the divine identity and authority of Christ (Luke 20:41-44; Acts 2:33-36). Bock observes that this serves as a literary foretaste of Christ’s absolute sovereignty and divine relationship which are associations derived from this term.⁵⁹ Here Luke discloses directly what the disciples will only realize progressively, that the Savior is the divine Lord with all the sovereign authority and power which that metaphorical title conveyed in the Old Testament.

Peter’s Declaration of Christ as Lord

The first hint of the progressive realization of Christ’s lordship is found in Luke 5:8 when Peter responds to the miraculous catch of fish by falling to his knees

⁵⁶ Marshall, *Luke*, 93.

⁵⁷ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 188. While Marshall recognizes the ambiguity in the context, he leans toward a messianic interpretation of “Lord” and aligns his understanding with his interpretation of Luke 1:43. Marshall, *Luke*, 93. Green also argues that Luke is referring to Jesus as Lord in this text. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 118.

⁵⁸ Marshall, *Luke*, 110. It is acknowledged that the grammar of the three titles can be variously interpreted but this author believes the titles to be in apposition to one another.

⁵⁹ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 218.

and insisting “Go away from me Lord for I am a sinful man, O Lord (κύριος)!”⁶⁰ Nolland observes that Peter’s recognition of his sinfulness, his prostration, and his addressing Christ as κύριος fit the pattern of a theophany (Isa 6:1-8; Ezek 1:1-2:3) and clearly communicates more than polite respect for Christ’s authority.⁶¹ While Peter’s understanding of Christ’s identity would certainly develop progressively during Jesus’ ministry, Luke’s account of this story suggests that Peter had an awareness that he was in God’s presence and felt a sense of overwhelming unworthiness as a result.⁶² While one could easily make too much of this ascription, imagining a fully developed Christology flowing from Peter’s nascent faith, many seem to make too little of this title by categorizing it as a statement of respect while ignoring the contextual clues that Peter recognizes the power and authority of God in Christ through His miracle. This use of κύριος, drawing broadly from the Old Testament slave paradigm in which God is the Lord and His people are subservient to Him, would be consistent with associations of submission, personal unworthiness, and the absolute power of the master.

Obedience to Christ as Lord

In Luke 6:46 Jesus highlights the necessity of obedience to His own authority asking, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’, and do not do what I say?” It is

⁶⁰ The NAS supplies the understood subject but κύριος is not used twice in the text.

⁶¹ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 222.

⁶² Ibid. Bock argues that the disciples’ amazement after the stilling of the storm in Luke 8:25 militates against an identification of Christ as divine, suggesting instead it was a statement of respect for Jesus’ great authority. However, Peter’s falling at Christ’s feet and confessing his sinfulness makes it clear that he is responding to the presence of God. One could argue that he was recognizing God’s power through an authorized agent, such as a prophet or angel. Green concludes that Peter at least recognizes the presence and power of God in Jesus but may not yet realize that Jesus himself is God. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 233. This declaration of Christ as Lord introduces a tension of understanding, not unlike Luke 1:76, and that tension is resolved as Luke’s narrative unfolds.

helpful to note that this passage is parallel to Matthew 7:21 in which Jesus warns, “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father will enter.”⁶³ Lordship is inseparably linked to obedience and thus acknowledging Christ as Lord demands obedience to His will as an expression of one’s submission to His authoritative word. The doubled vocative “Κύριε” reflects a Semitic pattern in which the doubling of a name strengthens the form of address or adds greater emphasis with the nature of the address determined by the context (Gen 22:11; Exod 3:4; 1 Sam 3:10).⁶⁴ In Luke’s account it is unclear whether those Jesus describes addressing Him as “Lord” are simply acknowledging Christ as a respected authority and learned Rabbi or whether the term is linked to the Old Testament denotation and connotation of Yahweh’s sovereign authority and humankind’s corresponding obedience. While Bock argues that κύριος only describes Jesus as a respected authority in this context,⁶⁵ Marshall observes that “the authority of Jesus over his disciples goes beyond that of a rabbinic teacher. He is for them, not the rabbi, διδάσκαλος, but their Lord.”⁶⁶ Jesus claims absolute authority for His teaching in a manner which suggests that it is Christ’s identity as divine Lord which is the basis for obedience to His revealed will as evidence of genuine submission. Matthew’s parallel makes this explicit by connecting Christ’s role as Lord with that of Judge who will examine their genuine obedience to His will and ultimately make the determination regarding who will enter the kingdom eschatologically (Matt

⁶³ Both of these passages are immediately followed by the parable of the houses built on the rock and on the sand in Matthew and Luke which, combined with their verbal and conceptual similarity, suggests they are parallel.

⁶⁴ Marshall, *Luke*, 274.

⁶⁵ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 618.

⁶⁶ Marshall, *Luke*, 274.

7:21).⁶⁷ It is not enough to simply declare that Jesus is Lord. One must know and do His will, recognizing His supreme authority and one's own subsequent responsibility.

Based upon this interpretation of *κύριος* in its context, it should be observed that this divine title seems to preserve the slave metaphor from which it originated. The slave was completely subject to his master's will and was expected to offer complete obedience to his *κύριος* without exception.⁶⁸ For him to recognize the master's authority but refuse to comply with his will would have constituted rebellion, resulting in judgment at the hand of the master. The associations of unconditional obedience and subsequent accountability are thus emphasized in this usage. It is possible that Green is correct in suggesting that this is a proleptic use of *κύριος* in which Christ is addressing the crowds who had an incomplete understanding of His identity while simultaneously speaking to those in the generations to come who might make the full Christian confession of Christ as Lord.⁶⁹ The authority of Christ as Lord is clearly central to this text and the expectation of obedience accords with the slave paradigm in which the slave is judged based upon his obedience to the will of the master.

The Centurion's Recognition of the Lord's Authority

The expectation of a slave's complete obedience to the authority of his master is also echoed in the following pericope when Jesus heals a centurion's slave

⁶⁷ While the two passages are not precisely parallel, they have sufficient overlap to suggest that if Christ is presented as the divine Lord in Matthew it likely has a similar force in Luke 6:46.

⁶⁸ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 95. Harris observes both in Luke 6:46 and Matt 7:21 there is a clear conceptual connection between lordship and obedience.

⁶⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 280.

(Luke 7:1-10). It is worth noting at the outset that the centurion cared enough about his slave to take the initiative to send emissaries to Jesus, apparently because of his personal concern for the welfare of his slave.⁷⁰ In Luke's account, the centurion first sends Jewish elders who cite the centurion's worthiness to receive this request and then he sends additional messengers to communicate the centurion's own sense of complete unworthiness. The friends report the exact words of the centurion in Luke 7:6-7 in which he begins with the vocative "Κύριε" and he then twice affirm his own unworthiness to approach Christ personally or have him enter his home. While the centurion likely used Κύριε as a respectful and humble form of address, Luke's readers would have begun to recognize the significance of the term in light of its usage, specifically in the near context.⁷¹ However, it is possible, given the centurion's remarkable recognition of Christ's unlimited authority and humble confession of his own unworthiness, that he is demonstrating an emerging recognition of Jesus as Lord.⁷² The collocation of Christ addressed as Lord and the speaker's recognition of his unworthiness is reminiscent of the proclamation of John (Luke 3:16) and the posture of Peter (Luke 5:8) which suggests that it is spiritual humility, not ritual uncleanness, that makes the centurion feel unworthy to be in Christ's presence.⁷³ The associations identified in these previous passages, namely submission on the part of the supplicant and absolute power on the part of the

⁷⁰ It is acknowledged that the slave represented a significant financial investment for the Centurion as well but his high regard for the slave and the personal commitment he demonstrated suggests that this is an example of a benevolent master-slave relationship.

⁷¹ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 640.

⁷² Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 317. Rengstorf goes so far as to suggest that the Centurion has in view the power and authority of Jesus which elevates him beyond any human sphere, thus serving as a declaration of Christ as the divine Messiah. Rengstorf, "ἱκανός," 294.

⁷³ Marshall, *Luke*, 281. John uses the same term (ἱκανός) in Luke 3:16.

master, seem to also fit naturally with this text in Luke 7:6-7, especially in light of the Centurion's recognition of Jesus' unreserved authority.

After addressing his own unworthiness, the centurion humbly asks that Christ would heal his slave simply through his spoken word, demonstrating the depth and breadth of his faith in Christ's power and authority even over invisible forces that might cause illness. His rationale is striking as the centurion explains that he is a soldier who is under authority and entrusted with authority, commanding those who serve under him because of the commission he has received from those over him. This picture aptly describes Jesus' own ministry as he was under the authority of the Father and entrusted with authority to serve the Father in His ministry of teaching and healing.⁷⁴ In the centurion's exercise of authority as a soldier he issues commands to his company and they respond with complete and unquestioned obedience. In his exercise of authority as a master he issues commands to his slaves and they similarly respond with obedience in submission to his authority. Again the image of slavery is employed to describe the obedience and submission to authority that were an integral part of a slave's relationship to his master.⁷⁵ Citing his own exercise of limited authority, the centurion argues from the lesser to the greater (*a minori ad maius*) when he affirms Christ's far greater authority over powers of sickness and trusts that Christ's command would yield immediate compliance on the basis of His supernatural power and authority. The Lord's amazement at the centurion's faith suggests that the centurion provides great insight into the scope of Christ's authority and His prerogative to exercise it as one who was also under authority. This pattern of one who is in authority and under

⁷⁴ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 641.

⁷⁵ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 96.

authority is consistent with the model of the Israelite kings and prophets and, in this passage, effectively captures Christ's own authority and prerogative to command and expect obedience.

Representative Authority "In Your Name"

In Luke 10:1 the Lord appoints seventy two disciples, outside of the original twelve, who would go ahead of Him with representative authority and ministry responsibility to proclaim the coming of the kingdom. These disciples are far more than messengers for Jesus explains that they actually represent Jesus so that "the one who listens to you listens to me and the one who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects the one who sent me" (Luke 10:16). These disciples represent Christ as Lord, bearing His authority as His commissioned representatives and enduring rejection as an extension of their Master.⁷⁶ So great was the identification of the disciples with their Master that the treatment they received, whether rejection or acceptance, was ultimately considered a response to the Lord. Jesus extrapolates this point one step further to explain that, in the same way, rejection of Christ's own authority was a rejection of the One He represented upon the earth. While the terminology of the slave metaphor is not used directly in this passage, the strong correlation with the representative authority and intermediary role of a slave to his master may suggest that this is an allusion to the implications of Christ's lordship.⁷⁷ In fact, the principle which Jesus describes didactically in Luke

⁷⁶ This pattern of rejecting God by rejecting His representative is found explicitly in 1 Sam 8:7 and Exod 16:8 and implicitly in Israel's treatment of all of God's prophets (Acts 7:52).

⁷⁷ It is acknowledged that a delegate or ambassador of a king or other authority could carry a similar identification with his master and bear his authority by carrying out his will (2 Sam 10:4). There are no conclusive indications to suggest what context in which to understand Christ's instruction and delegation and therefore it is suggested that it is at least consistent with the slave paradigm which is more explicit in the early church. The parallels with the parable of the vineyard tenants in Luke 20 may point in this direction as well.

10:16 He illustrates parabolically in Luke 20:9-16 when the tenants of the vineyard violently reject both the slaves and the son of their master.

When the seventy two return from carrying out Christ's commission they address Jesus as Lord and marvel at the fact that they had been privileged to exercise the authority which belonged to Christ as they served. They exclaim, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name" (Luke 10:17). Exercising authority or power "in Jesus' name" will be a key theme in the Apostles' ministry in Acts and therefore it deserves some consideration of its background and significance. The idea of doing something "in the name" of someone is complex and multifaceted but some general observations and categories are evident.⁷⁸ In the Old Testament it suggested a commission on behalf of an authority so that the one commissioned would bear the authority of his master in carrying out his task. Written decrees or representative messengers would thus declare the message "in the name" of the king to clearly indicate that it was by his commission and on his authority that the messenger was acting.⁷⁹ This pattern is illustrated in Deuteronomy 18:18-20 in which the prophet like Moses would be commissioned to speak God's word in God's name while others are condemned for presumptuously speaking "in My name," fraudulently attempting to invoke God's authority and commission. Similarly, in Rabbinic circles to speak "in the name" of a Rabbi was to appeal to his authority as the basis for one's own conclusions or actions.⁸⁰ In the Semitic world to do something "in the name" of someone therefore generally refers to a commission

⁷⁸ Hans Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:258.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 268.

from an authority to carry out his will as an authorized intermediary, exercising delegated authority on behalf of an absent master.

The New Testament usage follows this same Semitic pattern in which a person appeals to one whose name is invoked to claim his authority as one commissioned to carry out his will. In Luke's writings the disciples carry out many tasks in the name of Jesus including casting out demons (Luke 9:49), proclamation (Luke 24:47), teaching (Acts 4:18), and baptism (Acts 2:38).⁸¹ As they operate under Christ's commission the disciples invoke the name of Jesus as a declaration that they exercise His authority and demonstrate His power, not their own, for they are simply His intermediaries. The disciples had been commissioned with Christ's authority (Luke 9:1-6) which was why John objected to the fact that an unauthorized person was casting out demons in the name of Jesus without being commissioned to do so by Christ (Luke 9:49). However, Jesus explains that exercising the authority of Christ by carrying out His will was not exclusive to the Twelve but was a mark of all those who would follow after Him. While the pattern of representative authority is clear, it is not clear what type of relationship, whether slave or free, is being depicted between Christ and his disciples who act on his behalf.

Kings, administrators, or heads of households could all send out authorized representatives, but it was also common for slaves to act "in the name of" their master because of the cultural expectation that they be identified completely with the master, exercising his authority, and accomplishing his will. For instance, when a slave was given the responsibility of overseeing the master's estate, such as in

⁸¹ Related to baptism, Bietenhard observes that manumitted slaves would often take a ritual bath "in the name of a free man" to symbolically declare what forensically was true, that they were no longer subservient to their master's authority. Therefore baptism "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 2:38) suggests a symbolic action in which they come under the ultimate authority of Christ, not any human leader (1 Cor 1:13,15). Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," 275.

the parable found in Luke 12:42-28, he was also empowered to carry out business in the name of the master, that is on his behalf and with his authority.⁸² A third-century A.D. document describes a master who empowers his slave agent to “collect the rents and, if need be, to arrange new leases or to cultivate some land yourself, and to give receipts in my name.”⁸³ Even the slave’s management of the *peculium*, which was widely practiced, was done in the name of the master for the slave was conducting business on his master’s behalf.⁸⁴ While not conclusive, this may suggest that even the teaching and ministry that the disciples carried out in the name of Jesus reflected aspects of the slavery metaphor including the representative authority and ultimate accountability which motivated and empowered their obedience to the Master. The seventy two in Luke 10:17 recognize that they are exercising power and authority that belongs to Jesus and thus when they invoke the name of Jesus even the demons are subject to the authority of Christ at work through them. The demons are subject to the slave of God only because he is an authorized and empowered agent of God, sent to carry out the Master’s will by exercising the Master’s authority.

In the early ministry of Jesus, Luke provides Peter and the Centurion as examples of those who recognize to some extent the authority and power of Christ as Lord. This progressive recognition of Christ’s lordship in the initial ministry and teaching of Jesus gives way to Luke’s narrative description of Jesus as Lord beginning in Luke 7:13. Luke is unique among the synoptics in ascribing this title to Christ prior to the resurrection and the frequency with which he does so in his narration

⁸² Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 111.

⁸³ Quoted in Goodrich, “Paul, The Oikonomos of God,” 108.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

(Luke 7:19; 10:1, 39, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:5) highlights the importance of this term and its associations.⁸⁵ The representative identity and delegated authority of Christ's disciples found in His commission and their subsequent service also highlights the supreme authority of Jesus as Lord to whom even the demons are subject. Luke's frequent description of Christ as Lord suggests that this is a theological emphasis that Luke brings to his historical account in retrospect, highlighting the authority and deity of Christ which the church only fully realized after His resurrection and exaltation.⁸⁶

The Slave Metaphor in Christ's Parables

While many scholars have carefully studied the didactic discourse and personal example of Christ for their leadership and discipleship implications, Christ's parabolic discourse has been largely untapped as a source for patterns and principles of leadership. This is perhaps due to the difficulty of exegetically identifying the referent for details within the story and their allegorical or incidental significance for the narrative.⁸⁷ Luke records eight parables that involve, to some degree, the relationship of a master to his slaves, often employing the relationship of a slave to his master to depict the responsibilities of leadership or discipleship under the lordship of Christ.⁸⁸ While Luke has already employed the slave metaphor to

⁸⁵ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 650.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 14-15. While a full discussion of hermeneutical approaches to the parables is outside the scope of this work, this author is broadly in agreement with Blomberg in his thesis that the parables contain more allegorical elements than many modern scholars acknowledge. This will be demonstrated in the exegesis of the following parables.

⁸⁸ These parables are Luke 12:35-38, 41-48; 14:17-23; 15:11-32; 16:1-13; 17:7-10; 19:11-27; 20:9-16. While it may be that the parable of the barren fig tree in Luke 13:6-9 also includes a slave, given the vinedresser's agricultural duties and his address to his "lord," that parable will not be

convey Jewish piety in relationship to Christ and reveal an emerging understanding of the authority of Christ as Lord, it is in the parables that the slave metaphor is displayed most richly as Christ repeatedly highlights spiritual themes through stories of slaves who serve their master. This section will attempt to interpret these slave parables in their context by considering the role and responsibilities of first-century slaves and observing the qualities that Jesus praises in the slaves that are faithful or exemplary. If Jesus frequently used the metaphor of slavery in parables to convey the expectations and responsibilities placed on His disciples, then it is logical to surmise that this marks a significant development of the religious use of the metaphor which would be reflected in the early church.

The Watchful Slaves: Luke 12:35-38

The parable of the Watchful Slaves is set within a series of warnings and instructions for the disciples (Luke 12:1-13:9) and immediately follows Christ's admonition to seek the kingdom of God exclusively and sacrificially.⁸⁹ Christ then calls them to vigilance in service as they anticipate the return of Christ in the parousia. He does this through a parable portraying slaves who were serving the master in their watchfulness so that they might serve him further when he returned from a feast. In this parable, the waiting slaves correspond to Christ's disciples and Christ is depicted as the returning Lord.⁹⁰ Jesus instructs His disciples to be like

considered in the present study due to the lack of conclusive linguistic or cultural detail to confirm this supposition. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 47. J.D. Crossan observes that slaves play a significant role in at least nine of Jesus' parables in the synoptics and notes the theme that, "They all concern a master-servant relationship and a moment of critical reckoning therein." J.D. Crossan. *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 96.

⁸⁹ Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 268.

⁹⁰ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1174.

slaves who are waiting for their master to return from a wedding feast, explicitly introducing the paradigm of slavery as pattern for discipleship for the first time in Luke's gospel (Luke 12:36). Jesus metaphorically urges the disciples to be "dressed in readiness" and to "keep your lamps lit" which would imply faithfulness in their present service and watchfulness for the imminent return of their master (Luke 12:35; cf. Matt 25:1-13). The cultural expectation was that slaves would be faithfully serving in their role as watchmen for the master so that when he returned they could immediately serve as his personal attendants, opening the door when he knocked. Slaves who were watchful were not simply passively waiting to serve but were actively serving the master through their watchfulness. Whether the master was present or absent, the slaves were to be vigilant in carrying out the master's will without reservation. The absence of the master in this case reveals the character of the slaves, whether they are alert and serving or succumbing to the temptation to be distracted, lazy, or self-indulgent.⁹¹

The faithful slaves who are found serving and ready to serve are called "blessed" (*μακάριος*) (cf. Matt 24:46; Luke 12:43) by Jesus. This indicates that the favor of the master is directly connected to the faithfulness of the slaves. In a startling reversal, Jesus tells the disciples that the master will express his pleasure by taking up the role of the slave, girding his own loins and serving (*διακονέω*) the slaves as they recline at the table (Luke 12:37). This was a radical departure from cultural norms which dictated that slaves, no matter how weary they might be, would serve the master at the table (Luke 17:7-10). The fact that the master, here symbolizing Jesus, would condescend to the role of the slave and serve (*διακονέω*) those who were His own slaves carries an immense amount of theological freight

⁹¹ Marshall, *Luke*, 536.

with possible allusions to the purpose of Christ's incarnation (Mark 10:45) and the pattern of Christ's humble service (Luke 22:27; John 13:2-4).⁹² The parable of the Watchful Slaves highlights a slave's exclusive obedience and submission to the master's will and alludes to the accountability that the return of the master entails, though in this parable the emphasis is on the promise of unexpected reward rather than the threat of impending judgment.⁹³ Jesus concludes the parable in Luke 12:38 by reinforcing the blessing that comes to the faithful slaves who are diligent to carry out their responsibility, even if the master is delayed or their task becomes difficult. This short parable introduces the slave metaphor as a rhetorical tool in Jesus' teaching to define the responsibility and accountability of the disciples to Christ as their Lord.

The Wise and Unwise Steward: Luke 12:41-48

Christ's parable of the Wise and Unwise Steward recorded in Luke 12:42-48 is the clearest example of a parable that is addressed directly to Christian leaders and it outlines the Lord's expectations of leaders as managerial slaves. Jesus' rhetorical question in Luke 12:42, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?" clearly uses the language of slavery to outline the characteristics and responsibilities of the disciples and, by implication, future Christian leaders. This parable directly follows the story of the Watchful Slaves in Luke 12:35-40 and

⁹² Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 269. It may be noted here that the examples of Jesus serving (διακονέω) were the result of His ultimate submission to the Father thus illustrating the δοῦλος of God and διάκονος of others paradigm outlined in the previous chapter. The disciples do not become the master, but Christ is the willing servant who attends to their needs with personal care. However, Green is unwarranted in his conclusion that the master's service indicates that they are no longer slaves, thus eliminating their servile status before the Lord. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 501.

⁹³ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 270.

similarly employs the metaphor of slavery to convey the priority of faithfulness and accountability to an absent lord. Luke's account underscores the leadership emphasis of the second parable with Peter's clarifying question, "Lord, are you addressing us or everyone else as well?" (Luke 12:41)⁹⁴ Luke 12:22 identifies the audience as the disciples and there are no contextual clues that suggest the audience has changed during the discourse.⁹⁵ Peter's inquiry identifies the inherent ambiguity in the parable of the Watchful Slave and thus he presses Jesus for specificity in his intended audience. Is Jesus addressing "us," apparently referring to the disciples as leaders among Jesus' followers, or is he addressing "all," encompassing all who claim to be followers of Christ? While Jesus does not directly answer Peter's question, Ellis contends that the centrality of the steward, or slave manager, in the subsequent parable is a strong indicator that Jesus is applying this teaching specifically to leaders who must be faithful to the Lord to whom they will give an account.⁹⁶ Hultgren concurs, suggesting that Jesus was "pressing upon them the necessity of caring for the people of Israel – a ministry of proclaiming the kingdom, healing, and casting out demons – in the time before the end, when an accounting before God will inevitably take place."⁹⁷ The eschatological nature of the parable certainly makes it broadly applicable to all believers but the clear emphasis is on responsibility and accountability for Christian leaders.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ While there is debate among exegetes as to whether Luke created the saying or whether Matthew omitted it, its authenticity is strongly defended by Darrell Bock. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1178.

⁹⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke 10-24*, Anchor Bible, vol.28a (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 989.

⁹⁶ E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 181.

⁹⁷ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 160. Marshall, *Luke*, 540.

⁹⁸ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1178.

The slave manager in Roman society. The parable of the Wise and Unwise Stewards employs the familiar theme in the parables of the responsibility of rural slaves, in this case a slave manager (*οἰκονόμος*), to carry out the will of the master in his absence. Hultgren observes that five parables of Jesus share this common storyline which highlights the importance of clearly understanding the historical backdrop of slavery and slave managers in the first-century A.D. in order to accurately interpret the parable.⁹⁹ While first-century slaves were extremely diverse in their social and vocational roles, they can be broadly divided into two groups: rural, agricultural slaves and urban, attendant slaves.¹⁰⁰ The urban slaves, while still owned by another, often had the opportunity to work alongside of the master and shared in his status and authority.¹⁰¹ The rural slave was a much more menial position characterized by grueling work in mines or galleys, generally under the supervision of a fellow-slave who had been appointed as the supervisor in the master's absence.¹⁰²

Spicq explains that the exemplary steward is “hard-working, zealous, competent, and circumspect” as he faithfully exercises authority over his fellow slaves while recognizing his responsibility and accountability under the authority of the Master.¹⁰³ The contrast between a faithful and unfaithful slave was a familiar

⁹⁹ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 160.

¹⁰⁰ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 35.

¹⁰¹ Keith Bradley points out that even the more prestigious slaves were servile in nature and were possessed by the master. This is an important corrective to the overemphasis of Dale B. Martin on the upward social mobility of urban managerial slaves. Keith Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 17-18.

¹⁰² Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 35.

¹⁰³ Ceslas Spicq, “παῖς θεοῦ,” in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 2:569.

theme in the ancient comedies which used the absence of the master as a foil for exposing the true character of the slave (Plautus, *Persae* 28-31).¹⁰⁴ The slave manager never knew when the master would return and thus was responsible to be faithfully exercising his authority in accordance with the will of the master or face the consequences when the master arrived (Plautus, *Mena.* 966-989).¹⁰⁵ Jesus uses the metaphor of the slave manager to underscore the kingdom characteristics of those who exercise authority over fellow slaves and oversee the master's estate in his absence.

The lexical background of οἰκονόμος. While Matthew 24:45 describes this supervisor as a “wise and sensible slave (δοῦλος) whom his master put in charge of his household,” Luke identifies him as a “faithful and sensible steward (οἰκονόμος)” in Luke 12:42. Marshall observes that Luke’s more specific language “makes it all the more clear that it is the leaders of the church who are being addressed.”¹⁰⁶ The term οἰκονόμος was used by Paul, Titus, and Peter to refer to leaders in the early church and thus a brief lexical examination of this term and its implications is necessary.¹⁰⁷ The οἰκονόμος was generally a chief slave who was placed over the household and property of the master with the responsibility of managing it in accordance with the master’s wishes.¹⁰⁸ While it was possible for the overseer to be a freedman, the vast

¹⁰⁴ J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 25.

¹⁰⁵ Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 115. Glancy observes that the Patron-Client relationship which many posit as the backdrop of these parables is inconsistent with the level of accountability and the severity of the punishment for the slave who fails to carry out the master’s will.

¹⁰⁶ Marshall, *Luke*, 540.

¹⁰⁷ 1 Cor 4:1, Titus 1:7, 1 Pet 4:10

¹⁰⁸ O. Michel, “οἰκονόμος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:149.

majority were slaves who were owned by and accountable to the master.¹⁰⁹ Luke uses ‘slave’ and ‘overseer’ interchangeably in Luke 12:42-45 to make it explicit that the overseer was a slave placed over his fellow slaves. The LXX uses this same imagery in Numbers 12:7 when it describes the world as God’s household and Moses as His overseer.¹¹⁰ These overseers were granted significant authority in the master’s household and effectively served as the master’s representatives in business transactions, management decisions, and the supervision of fellow slaves.¹¹¹ It has already been noted that *οικονόμος* became a term for leadership in the New Testament which is seen explicitly in its apparent interchangeability with *ἐπίσκοπος* in Titus 1:7. It may be that *οικονόμος* was used of Christian leaders because they exercised derived authority, represented the master in their work, and cared for the other ‘slaves’ in the household.¹¹² The slave manager is an important metaphor for Christian leadership because he is both in authority and under authority, free to act on behalf of the Master and yet entirely dependent upon and accountable to the Master.¹¹³

The wise steward’s faithfulness. Given the socio-historical and lexical background of this parable, this study now turns to the exegesis of the details of the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 150.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 149. Michel points out the commonality of the *οικονόμος* and the *ben bayit* in rabbinical and Old Testament writings.

¹¹¹ Spicq, “παῖς θεοῦ” 570. Spicq provides extensive primary source evidence of the secular understanding of the role of the *οικονόμος* in Greco-Roman society.

¹¹² Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 55. Though Martin seems far too optimistic concerning the upward mobility of slaves in Greco-Roman society, there is still validity in his thesis that the terminology of slavery referred in a special way to leaders in the New Testament and beyond.

¹¹³ Spicq, “παῖς θεοῦ” 574.

parable to discern the overall message of the story and the significance of the details the evangelist includes. The Lord's hypothetical question at the outset of the parable suggests that the following story will clearly demonstrate the master's criteria for the faithful and wise slave overseer.¹¹⁴ It has been noted that exemplary Roman slaves did not merely follow orders but rather they knew the master personally and internalized his will sufficiently so as to anticipate what the master desired, even in his absence.¹¹⁵ Jesus employs this same pattern of a faithful and sensible slave to emphasize that the overseer is responsible to know the master first and this knowledge entails a responsibility to faithfully carry out his will regardless of whether the master is present (Luke 12:47). In the parable, the overseer's primary responsibility was to provide care for his fellow slaves by distributing their food in a fair and timely manner while the master was away. It is important to note that Christ addresses leaders as members of the community which they are called to serve. The role of overseer is not fundamentally characterized by power but by personal ministry with special attention to the needs of the members of the community entrusted to one's care.¹¹⁶

The beatitude recorded in Luke 12:43 demonstrates that the faithful overseer is the one who was faithfully exercising his delegated authority, specifically in relationship to his fellow slaves, when the master returned. It is an unexpected rhetorical development that that the reward for the slave's faithful service is not

¹¹⁴ Luke refers to Jesus as "the Lord," in 12:42 and Jesus then asks the disciples a question about the slave steward whom a lord or master might entrust with his estate. The juxtaposition of the title and metaphor of lordship further reinforce the view that Christ's lordship conveyed aspects of the slave metaphor.

¹¹⁵ Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 23. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 115. Glancy makes a similar argument that the slave's ability to act as authoritative agent rather than automaton depended upon the internalization of the master's interests.

¹¹⁶ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1179.

manumission but greater and more permanent authority within the master's household (Matt 24:47; Luke 12:44).¹¹⁷ Bock cautiously speculates that Jesus is promising eschatological reward which includes continued administration on behalf of Christ in the eschaton following His return.¹¹⁸ This implies what the parable of the talents makes explicit, namely that faithfulness in exercising leadership results in greater authority and responsibility as the slave leader exemplifies the will and character of the master in his stewardship of what has been entrusted.

The unwise steward's folly. After describing the character and fate of the faithful steward, Jesus describes an alternative scenario in which the supervising slave serves his own interests rather than the interests of the master. Implicit in these hypothetical scenarios is the choice the disciples will face as leaders acting on behalf of Jesus: whether to faithfully fulfill their obligation to serve the community in the pattern of Christ or to abuse their power and position to fulfill their own desires. In Matthew's parallel parable, Jesus describes as "evil" the slave who uses the master's absence as an occasion to mistreat his fellow slaves and act as if he were the master rather than a fellow slave (Matt. 24:48).¹¹⁹ An arresting element of the story is the internal monologue of the slave who imagines that he can abuse his authority without accountability because "my master will be a long time in coming" (Luke 12:45).¹²⁰ The slave weighs how much he can misuse his authority without fear of

¹¹⁷ Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 71.

¹¹⁸ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1180. Marshall, *Luke*, 542.

¹¹⁹ Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 595. Keener concludes, "Remembering that leaders are not lords but 'fellow slaves' keeps their duty in perspective."

¹²⁰ While some argue that the delay is a later addition of the early church once they realized the parousia would not quickly follow the resurrection of Christ, this is hardly necessary. As

reprisal from the master and seems to behave as if he thought the master may never show up. He begins to beat his fellow slaves in a blatant abuse of his power and he acts self-indulgently by eating and drinking with other drunkards (Luke 12:45). The overseer's abuse and indulgence clearly placed his own desires above the needs of the slaves entrusted to his care and though he should have exercised his leadership under the master's authority, he usurped the role of the master.¹²¹

The leader's selfish exercise of power and abdication of the responsibility to faithfully care for the community calls to mind the excoriation of the hypocritical shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel 34:1-10.¹²² Although they were merely the Lord's servants entrusted with the care of the flock, they acted as if they were autonomous shepherds who could do as they pleased with the sheep. Jeremias suggests that the parable was both a charge to the disciples and a strong "warning to the leaders of the people, especially the scribes, that the day of reckoning was at hand."¹²³ Just as the faithful exercise of leadership had eschatological implications, Jesus explains that there will be final accountability for those who use their position to advance their own agenda rather than the Lord's. When the master returns unexpectedly the slave is caught completely by surprise in the midst of his abusive exercise of power and the punishment is severe. Jennifer Glancy contends that the severity of the

Bock notes, the emphasis of the parable is absence, not delay which serves as a reminder to be faithful and vigilant in the master's absence, whatever the duration might be. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1181.

¹²¹ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 999. Nolland identifies the slave's actions as usurping the role of the master by irresponsibly exercising the master's power through injustice and indulgence.

¹²² Keener, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 594. Keener observes that the hypocrisy of the religious leaders denounced in Matt 23 is a salient warning to the leaders in the church at the second coming.

¹²³ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 58.

punishment is precisely because the slave betrayed the trust of the master, serving as a sobering reminder that the manager was still a slave, accountable to the judgment or reward of the master.¹²⁴

The punishment in the story is that the slave is dismembered or literally cut in half because of his crimes. While this was certainly possible in the cruelty of Greco-Roman slavery, it seems better to understand this language figuratively since the servant is subsequently placed among another group of people.¹²⁵ What is clear is that the unfaithful steward has no part in the reward of the righteous and no membership in the kingdom.¹²⁶ The theme of accountability is unmistakable in Christ's use of the slave metaphor. The slave belongs to another and is responsible to carry out the master's will for which he will give an account. A slave who knows the master's will but lacks vigilance or diligence in carrying it out will face severe punishment, described in Luke 12:47 as receiving "many lashes." Luke makes the slave's responsibility and accountability explicit in his concluding phrase when he explains that greater knowledge entails greater responsibility (Luke 12:47-48).

Marshall observes that this saying could be "appropriately directed to the Twelve and

¹²⁴ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 112.

¹²⁵ C.H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (London: James Nisbet, 1961), 126. However, Dodd bases his interpretation on the assumption that "dismembered" is a mistranslation of the Aramaic. Marshall provides an excellent overview of the interpretive options and he concludes that it describes the servant being cut off from the fellowship of the faithful. In either case it is not necessary to assume a gruesome end to this story though it is consistent with the brutality of ancient slavery as Beavis observes. Mary Ann Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 42.

¹²⁶ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1183. "Outer darkness does not mean being on the edge of the kingdom or on the edge of light, excluded only from participating in kingdom administration. It means totally outside. . . The totally unfaithful slave is rejected by the master for being an utterly irresponsible steward."

to church leaders who may be presumed to have greater knowledge.”¹²⁷ The assumption is that leaders should have a close, personal knowledge of their Lord and, as a result, are responsible to exemplify His character in the way they lead.

The sobering reality of this parable is that there are apparently some who exercise leadership in the name of the Lord who are not even Christians. They are merely using the power they can gain within the church to serve their own interests with no regard for their ultimate accountability to Christ. There were certainly examples of teachers in the early church who gave the appearance of godliness but perverted or denied the gospel which revealed their true spiritual condition (1 Tim 1:19-20, 1 John 2:17-18). Bock suggests that the parable is alluding to the errant teaching and double life of false teachers who drive people away from Christ rather than draw them to Him.¹²⁸ Ironically, the metaphorical description of the overseer becoming drunk and abusing others was literally experienced and sharply confronted in the early church.¹²⁹

The metaphor of the slave placed over other slaves is rich with practical and theological significance. Its primary thrust seems to be the responsibility of the leader to faithfully exercise authority as a fellow slave who is in authority and under authority, striving to serve others according to the will and character of the Master. This usage includes the associations of derived identity, representative authority, submission to the Master’s will and accountability to the Master. The harshness of the Master’s judgment suggests that the susceptibility of the slave to abuse is also an association in this parable. Although interpreters might prefer to blunt the brutality

¹²⁷ Marshall, *Luke*, 544.

¹²⁸ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1183.

¹²⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, 542.

described in the parable, in this context it conveys the Master's prerogative to administer judgment because of His absolute power over the slaves. Hultgren captures the essence of this parable when he states,

By portraying a slave in charge of other slaves within a household, and stressing the importance of his caring for the others while the master is away, the parable thereby signifies that leaders within the church are to care for the community properly between the ascension of Jesus Christ and his parousia. That proper care – feeding the household – will consist of a ministry of proclamation and teaching.¹³⁰

The Great Supper: Luke 14:16-24

While dining in the home of a Pharisee, one of the guests exclaimed “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” (Luke 14:15). This prompted Jesus to share a parable concerning the eschatological banquet, pictured as a great supper. In the story, a certain man had already invited guests to his supper and, once preparations were complete, he sent (*ἀποστέλλω*) his slave (*δοῦλος*) as his authorized representative to call the guests to come to the banquet.¹³¹ When the original guests refuse the slave's invitation on behalf of the master, the slave is told to invite the outcasts and afflicted to come in to the banquet. After the slave has again fulfilled the master's orders and some guests have come, there is still room at the banquet table and so the slave is commanded to go outside of the city and invite travelers and beggars to also attend. The parable has some clear allegorical

¹³⁰ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 162.

¹³¹ John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary, v.35b (Dallas: Word, 1989), 755. The verb *ἀποστέλλω* and its well-known corresponding noun *ἀπόστολος* carries the idea of delegated authority as one sent, often with a message or a mission. This raises the intriguing possibility that the slave metaphor may even intersect with the term “apostles” as those authorized and sent by the master to carry out his will. In John 13:16 Jesus seems to recognize a conceptual connection as he places slave in parallel to the one sent and master in parallel to the one who sends. The lack of clear attestation of a connection between the two beyond the passage in John 13 and the absence of any other scholarly recognition of the potential overlap led this author to exclude this discussion from the body of this study.

components in which the banquet host is God himself and the invitation corresponds to the call to salvation.¹³² Most also agree that the first group invited is the Jewish leaders, the second group is the needy and marginalized in Israel, and the third group likely refers to the Gentile mission.¹³³ But what is the significance, if any, of the slave and with whom is he to be identified?

Blomberg argues that the slaves in the story are “incidental figures, natural props to execute the master’s will, though derivatively they could be taken to mirror any who preach God’s word.”¹³⁴ While the slave does not figure prominently in the story, his role is nonetheless significant as the master’s emissary. The rhetorical figure of the slave draws attention to the master and his message rather than the significance of the slave. Origen taught that the slave referred to the rejected prophets¹³⁵ while Gregory the Great and others in the Middle Ages suggested it described anyone who proclaimed divine truth, especially those who preached.¹³⁶ It would appear that the first invitation refers to the proclamation of the Old Testament prophets¹³⁷ while the disciples and possibly Jesus Himself are to be collectively identified with the slave who issues the second and third invitations to

¹³² Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 755.

¹³³ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1277.

¹³⁴ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 304. Blomberg refers to slaves in the plural due to Matthew’s parallel account in which there are several slaves sent.

¹³⁵ Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 308.

¹³⁶ Stephen L. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus’ Parables: An Introduction* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1987), 162.

¹³⁷ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 337. This interpretation would certainly be supported by Matthew’s version of the parable in which the slaves issuing the first invitation are killed (Matt 22:6). See also Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 308.

the banquet.¹³⁸ While the allegorical identity of the slave may be debated, the function of the slave in the story is apparent. The slave is an emissary from God who represents the Master in his proclamation of the invitation and therefore to refuse the slave was to refuse the Master himself.¹³⁹ The slave's representative identity, delegated authority, and complete obedience (Luke 14:22) could easily escape the reader's notice but these key associations of the slave metaphor give insight into the nature of the slave's proclamation.

The host, introduced as a "certain man" at the outset of the story, is subsequently described as the lord (κύριος) and master (οικοδεσπότης) which highlights the power and authority of the host with obvious allegorical significance. The parallel between κύριος and οικοδεσπότης in referring to the divine host and His relationship with His slave further underscores the slave connotations of the title "Lord" and the expectations of obedience and submission it entails.¹⁴⁰ If it is accepted that the slave issuing the invitations to the outcasts is the disciples, one could argue that the slave image conveys the commission and authority of the apostles in the early church to extend the gospel even to the Gentiles. In the parable, the master entrusts his slave with the responsibility to bring the invitation to every geographical and social sphere with urgency, conveying the master's own eagerness for those invited to come and enjoy the banquet (Luke 14:23). Bock observes that the slaves are required to demonstrate initiative in their own obedience

¹³⁸ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1273. However, if Jesus is understood as the host then it is the disciples alone who are understood as the slave. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 315.

¹³⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 315.

¹⁴⁰ Marshall, *Luke*, 591.

by searching, calling, and urging the guests to accept the invitation.¹⁴¹ The slave may not play a prominent role in this story but his obedient action to proclaim the master's invitation, even to the outcasts, in accordance with the master's will provides further insight into how the slave metaphor depicts the role and responsibility of Christ's disciples.

The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32

The slaves in the story of the Prodigal Son surely play a very minor role and should not be allegorized as describing anything beyond fictional characters within the story. However, their role and obedience as slaves does shed further light on how Christ describes slaves and their function in His teaching. When the prodigal son returns to his father in humility and repentance, the father receives him with joy and orders the slaves (*δοῦλοι*) to attend to the son by dressing him with a robe, ring, and sandals to honor him and to begin making preparations for a celebration (Luke 15:22).¹⁴² The text does not even record the slaves' response since the obedience of the slave was assumed. The fact that the slaves placed sandals on the son's feet was an act of humility and submission on their part and a sign of freedom for the son since slaves did not wear shoes.¹⁴³ The slaves in the parable are depicted simply an extension of their master, diligently carrying out his will in the background of the narrative without any attention given to their character or significance.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1276. There seems to be a conceptual parallel with the command of the master and Christ's own Great Commission prior to His ascension (Matt. 28:18-20).

¹⁴² The slaves are also referred to as *παῖς* in Luke 15:26 when the prodigal asks a slave about the preparations being made for a celebration.

¹⁴³ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 79.

¹⁴⁴ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 205.

The older brother immediately objects when he learns that his father has welcomed home the prodigal with a joyful celebration and banquet. He grumbles, “For so many years I have been serving (δουλεύω) you and I have never neglected a command of yours” (Luke 15:29). Here the son compares his service to that of a slave, specifically noting that he had scrupulously obeyed all of his father’s commands.¹⁴⁵ The fact that his diligent service had gone unrewarded may have further drawn from the imagery of a slave’s service.¹⁴⁶ One need not press his use of slave language beyond the obvious for, in the context, a slave’s service is specifically identified as complete and unreserved obedience. The son is not saying that he actually was a slave, but rather that he had worked like a slave to do everything his father asked with unconditional submission and yet he had never received a reward. This use of the metaphor of slavery reveals some of the social stigma associated with slavery while highlighting the strong connection between slavery and obedience.

The Unjust Steward: Luke 16:1-13

Following the story of the Prodigal Son, Jesus specifically addresses His disciples with the perplexing parable of the Unjust Steward. In order to determine the influence of the slave metaphor in this parable, it must first be determined if the steward or manager (οἰκονόμος) was a slave or a hired servant. The οἰκονόμος in Greco-Roman society was often a slave, but it could also refer to someone who was not necessarily servile such as a public official (Rom 16:23) or a military general.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 209.

¹⁴⁶ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1317.

¹⁴⁷ Rene A. Baergen, “Servant, Manager or Slave? Reading the Parable of the Rich Man and His Steward (Luke 16:1-8a) Through the Lens of Ancient Slavery,” *Studies in Religion* 35 (2006): 29. Baergen presents many primary sources which suggest that even the public office might be held by someone of servile status with some epigraphic evidence suggesting that the official was a “public slave.” He suggests that the οἰκονόμος was “often, if not always” a slave. Ibid., 30.

However, the most common use of *οἰκονόμος* denoted a slave manager who managed the master's property as his agent, especially on rural estates.¹⁴⁸ The pattern of a slave set in authority over his master's affairs and his fellow slaves, already evident in the parable of the Wise and Unwise Steward, was well known in Greco-Roman society and was broadly considered the means by which the social elite managed their agricultural estates.¹⁴⁹ Scholars who have broadly considered the literary and epigraphic evidence are generally in agreement that an *οἰκονόμος* was almost without exception servile and most often was a slave rather than a freedmen.¹⁵⁰ Beavis concludes that the Greco-Roman reader of this parable of Christ would have assumed that he was a slave entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the master's business affairs.¹⁵¹

The argument for the steward's slave identity. The imagery and allusions in the parable itself further support the conclusion that the steward was a slave of the master. This parable shows clear parallels with the story of the Wise and Unwise Steward (Luke 12:42-48) and the Minas/Pounds (Luke 19:11-32) in which a slave is entrusted with his lord's estate in his absence and is then held accountable by the

¹⁴⁸ Fabian E. Udoh, "The Tale of the Unrighteous Slave (Luke 16:1-8 [13])," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009): 313-14.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 321. Martin observes that there were two categories of slaves, common slaves who did menial work and managerial slaves who did the work of free men although they were still owned by the master. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 19.

¹⁵⁰ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 17. Martin also provides a helpful chart of the primary sources and the identity of the *οἰκονόμος*. Ibid., 174-77. Oesterly was one of the first to draw this conclusion in regard to the present parable concluding that the manager would "almost invariably be a slave." W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Gospel Parables in the Light of Their Jewish Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 193. See also Baergen, "Servant, Manager, or Slave?," 31.

¹⁵¹ Beavis, "Ancient Slavery," 45.

master for his stewardship.¹⁵² These three slave parables all involve agricultural estate management and exalt certain virtues of the idealized slave, most notably faithfulness (*πιστός*) to the master's will (Luke 12:42; 16:10; 19:17).¹⁵³ The teaching of Jesus in the context following the parable of the Unjust Steward also uses language associated with slavery including the virtue of faithfulness (*πιστός*) and the exclusive service (*δουλεύω*) a slave (*οικέτης*) must render to his master (*κύριος*). These interpretive verses following the steward parable suggest that slave imagery is intended in the parable itself.

The role and responsibilities of the steward in the story also point to his status as a slave. The slave manager in Roman society served as the master's business agent and therefore he acted as a mediator between the master and his debtors.¹⁵⁴ He was permitted to make sales and loans, collect or forgive debts, and oversee his fellow slaves.¹⁵⁵ This mediation of the master's authority was possible because the slave was considered an extension of the master,¹⁵⁶ an agent whose identity was subsumed in the master's for "a man's agent is himself."¹⁵⁷ As the master's representative, a slave's faithful administration of his master's affairs would bring greater wealth and honor to the master and likewise his misconduct would

¹⁵² Udoh, "Unrighteous Slave," 325. Udoh also observes the parallel use of *κύριος* in these parables to describe the slave's accountability to the master, anticipating the ultimate day of judgment.

¹⁵³ While the story of the Unjust Steward does not explicitly highlight the faithfulness of the slave, Christ's subsequent teaching in Luke 16:10 uses the slave image to remind them of the importance of faithfulness in one's task.

¹⁵⁴ Baergen, "Servant, Manger or Slave?," 28.

¹⁵⁵ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 148.

¹⁵⁶ Udoh, "Unrighteous Slave," 328.

¹⁵⁷ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 406.

defame the master's name in society.¹⁵⁸ For this reason the master exercised his absolute control over the slave manager, demanding that the slave conform his will to that of the master. This created a reciprocal relationship in which the slave depended on the master for delegated authority, physical provisions, and social protection while the master depended on his slave for faithful administration of his affairs.¹⁵⁹ A steward was, above all, required to be faithful to the master (1 Cor 4:2), devoting his energy to properly representing the master in his business dealings and diligently pursuing only that which conformed to the master's will.¹⁶⁰ The slave remained entrusted with the master's authority only as long as he was serving the master's interests, a reality already vividly described in Luke 12:45-48. The associations of a slave's derived identity, representative authority, complete dependence, and ultimate accountability fit naturally with the steward's freedom to act on behalf of the master and his consequences for exercising his stewardship according to his own will or for his own selfish interests. There is good evidence historically and contextually to conclude that the steward in the parable of the Unjust Steward was a slave who was authorized and accountable to oversee the master's agricultural affairs.¹⁶¹

The argument against the steward's slave identity. Those who argue that the steward is instead a hired servant of the master base their argument primarily on the fact that the steward is simply dismissed from his role rather than being severely

¹⁵⁸ Baergen, "Servant, Manager or Slave?," 32.

¹⁵⁹ Udoh, "Unrighteous Slave," 329.

¹⁶⁰ Baergen, "Servant, Manager or Slave?," 28.

¹⁶¹ This is the conclusion of many scholars as well. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1327. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 17. Baergen, "Servant, Manager or Slave?," 31. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 328. Udoh, "Unrighteous Slave," 334.

punished or consigned to menial labor as might be expected for a slave.¹⁶² It is true that the master strips the steward of his authority so that he “can no longer be manager” (Luke 16:2) but to read this as a firing of the manager from his employment is to interpret the silence of the text in light of a capitalist ideology.¹⁶³ In actuality, the text does not speak to how the master will deal with his steward beyond his removal from his privileged status as *οἰκονόμος*.¹⁶⁴ The steward’s internal monologue suggests he anticipates two possible outcomes as the result of his dismissal: reduction to menial digging or humble begging (Luke 16:3). It is ironic that some scholars argue that the manager cannot be a slave for a slave “would not have been dismissed but reduced to another form of work.”¹⁶⁵ The slave manager directly states his fear that he will have to “dig,” which was one of the most undesirable tasks a slave could perform, especially if it referred to digging in the mines or the quarries.¹⁶⁶ The prospect of begging is admittedly less clear. If the master were to choose to dismiss the incompetent slave for betraying his trust rather than punishing him with grueling labor the slave would no longer have the master’s protection or provision. A slave manager who suddenly lost his status would have no occupation or security and would become a social parasite, begging for each meal in constant fear of starvation.¹⁶⁷ Rather than arguing against the steward’s slave identity, the prospect of back-breaking labor or destitution reflects the great

¹⁶² Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 149.

¹⁶³ Udoh, “Unrighteous Slave,” 332.

¹⁶⁴ Baergen, “Servant, Manger or Slave?,” 32.

¹⁶⁵ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 149.

¹⁶⁶ Beavis, “Ancient Slavery,” 49.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

dependence of the slave on his master for his status and provision. It is granted that in real life the slave would have endured further punishments which may have included menial labor and physical abuse.¹⁶⁸ However, the parable is focused specifically on the steward's removal from his role because that creates the narrative tension of the story as the steward acts as the master's agent when he is no longer authorized to do so.

The unjust steward as a slave manager. Since the evidence suggests that the steward was a slave manager, the parable must now be studied to see how the practice of slavery and its associations might be used by Jesus to convey spiritual principles. Jesus begins the story by introducing the *οικονόμος* who administered the business affairs of his rich master, perhaps in the absence of that master.¹⁶⁹ A managerial slave was expected to faithfully carry out his duties (1 Cor 4:2) and if the master were to have any reason to lose confidence in him then the slave agent would be stripped of any derived status or rights that he had through the master.¹⁷⁰ The master in the story receives a report that the slave has been squandering (*διασκορπίζω*) the master's possessions which, in light of the parallel usage of *διασκορπίζω* in Luke 15:13, may have meant that the slave manager had spent the money self-indulgently.¹⁷¹ Regardless of whether the slave's fault was mismanagement or misappropriation, the text assumes that the accusations are true

¹⁶⁸ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 414.

¹⁶⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Story of the Dishonest Manager (Lk 16:1-13)," *Theological Studies* 25 (1964): 33.

¹⁷⁰ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 21.

¹⁷¹ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 149. Marshall argues it could not have been spent self-indulgently because the master would have required repayment from the slave. Marshall, *Luke*, 617. However, if the steward was a slave, as has been proposed, severe punishment would have been the more likely outcome (Luke 12:45-48).

and the master immediately calls the slave to account.¹⁷² The master concludes that the slave is no longer serving the interests of the master and removes him from his role as manager, demanding that the slave provide him with the records of his business accounts and transactions.¹⁷³ The fact that the master does not even wait for evidence to confirm the truth of the allegations may suggest that the slave's guilt was clear or it may reflect the vulnerability of slaves to punishment, regardless of whether there were grounds.¹⁷⁴

The slave's interior monologue gives the reader a glimpse of the slave's fear of harsh labor or abject poverty as result of losing his role as οἰκονόμος. The slave's impending crisis prompts him to shrewdly consider how he might use his master's wealth to offer some measure of protection and provision for himself in the future. Even though he had been divested of the master's authority, the slave continues to act in the master's name and with his authority by granting his master's debtors a dramatic reduction in what was owed. This was not simply a reduction of usurious interest or a forfeiture of the slave's own commission.¹⁷⁵ The slave is described in the story as "unjust" and thus it should not surprise the reader that the slave "was as unscrupulous in his last actions as in his first."¹⁷⁶ The master ultimately praises the steward for acting "shrewdly" (φρονίμως) and thus the

¹⁷² The truth of the accusations is indicated primarily by the shrewd dishonesty the slave exercises in response to the master's decision. The master's removal of the slave also suggests the slave's guilt although a slave could be punished without cause.

¹⁷³ Baergen, "Servant, Manager or Slave?," 34.

¹⁷⁴ Beavis, "Ancient Slavery," 48.

¹⁷⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1130.

¹⁷⁶ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 323. There are many different perspectives on this point which attempt to clarify how Christ could use this steward as an example when he appears to be stealing from his master. Ultimately, one's position on this point does not significantly affect one's understanding of the slave metaphor.

interpreter need not assume that the master is approving of the steward's behavior in total which would include injustice.¹⁷⁷ Luke also uses the φρονίμ- root to highlight the virtuous slave manager in Luke 12:42 who was faithful (πιστός) and wise (φρόνιμος) which underscores the fact that the primary point of the parable was the wisdom and resourcefulness of the slave in light of an impending crisis.¹⁷⁸ Beavis observes that the clever slave who was admired by the master is similar to picaresque slave character found in Roman comedies in which the slave is admired for his cunning rather than punished for his disobedience.¹⁷⁹ The story of the slave manager is consistent with the delegated authority and ultimate accountability of a slave οἰκονόμος in relationship to his master. Although the slave subverted his master's authority, he was admired for his prudence, a characteristic valued in Greco-Roman society and in the biblical metaphor of slavery in relationship to God.

Different than many of the parables that Jesus told, there is no clear allegorical sense to this parable as a divine κύριος would never approve of a dishonest slave nor are the disciples to be identified with the renegade slave.¹⁸⁰ Instead, the parable draws from the social expectations of everyday life and provides helpful insight into the role and responsibilities of the slave οἰκονόμος.¹⁸¹ Some interpreters in the Middle Ages allegorically identified the steward with a church leader who was

¹⁷⁷ Although debated, it is best to understand the master in the parable as the speaker in Luke 16:8a who praises the cunning of the slave. Attempts to suggest that Jesus is the κύριος fail contextually and leave the story without the resolution provided by the master's reaction. Fitzmyer, "Dishonest Manager," 27.

¹⁷⁸ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1332.

¹⁷⁹ Beavis, "Ancient Slavery," 48. Beavis notes that this rhetoric does not reflect how the slave would actually have been treated had such trickery actually occurred, subverting the will of the master.

¹⁸⁰ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 410.

¹⁸¹ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 589.

derelict in overseeing the church which, although not the original meaning of the parable, further underscores the connection between the slave metaphor and the exercise of leadership in the history of the church.¹⁸² It is probably best to view this story more broadly as a metaphor of the coming judgment in which all people will be accountable to the Lord for their faithful and wise use their resources in service of the Kingdom.¹⁸³ The disciples were to demonstrate the same shrewdness of the steward but in a manner that served the master exclusively, in contrast to the selfish purposes of the slave. This interpretation is supported by Christ's subsequent exhortation to faithfulness and exclusive devotion in the context of eschatological reward in Luke 16:9.

Faithful stewardship and singular devotion. Christ's teaching in Luke 16:10-13 highlights two motifs found in the parable of the Unjust Steward: the priority of faithfulness in stewardship and the danger of devotion to riches rather than the master.¹⁸⁴ In Luke 16:10 Jesus explains that one's faithfulness in "a very little thing" indicates his trustworthiness to steward greater responsibilities while unrighteous behavior in one's present service is a harbinger of how that person would exercise greater authority. Faithfulness (*πιστός*) was a foundational characteristic required of an *οικονόμος* which is evident even from a cursory consideration of the term in relationship to the slave metaphor (Luke 12:42; 19:17; 1 Cor 4:2). There was no allowance for the slave to manage according to self-interest or self-indulgence for the property and possessions he managed did not belong to him but rather to the master, an aspect explicit in the present context (Luke 16:12).

¹⁸² Wailes, *Medieval Allegories*, 247.

¹⁸³ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 323.

¹⁸⁴ Marshall, *Luke*, 622.

A slave's faithfulness with what had been entrusted to him demonstrated his readiness to serve the master with an expanded scope of responsibility and leadership. This principle is illustrated in Luke 19:17 in which the master praises his slave for being faithful (πιστός) in a "very little thing" and rewards him by giving him authority to manage ten cities on his behalf. Although the steward in Luke 16 was praised as being shrewd, Jesus reminds them that a slave must also be trustworthy in his service of the master.

Jesus concludes His teaching in Luke 16:13 by calling the disciples to serve God exclusively as their Lord and warning them against the danger of living in service of wealth as their master. While the slave in the parable is lifted up as a positive example of shrewdness, Christ warns the disciples that devotion to accumulating wealth will compromise exclusive devotion to the Master, as was the case in the example of the steward. Jesus is categorical that a slave (οἰκέτης) cannot divide his loyalty by attempting to serve (δουλεύω) more than one master (κύριος).¹⁸⁵ Again Jesus employs the metaphor of slavery to describe the relationship of a disciple to God, in this case highlighting the exclusive service a slave owes his master. Green contends that Jesus draws from the slave metaphor in the Old Testament in which God is the Lord over all of creation who entrusts humanity with responsibility to serve as His stewards. They are then accountable to God for their responsibilities on the earth.¹⁸⁶ The slave imagery is perfectly clear; slavery to God is incompatible with slavery to anyone or anything else.¹⁸⁷ This does not mean that there was never a

¹⁸⁵ The noun οἰκέτης refers to a domestic slave which is its consistent meaning in Scripture (Acts 10:7; Rom 14:4; 1 Pet 2:18). Further lexical exploration does not seem necessary to prove that it refers to a slave in this context, especially given the use of the verb δουλεύω. Marshall, *Luke*, 624.

¹⁸⁶ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 597.

¹⁸⁷ Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 128.

case in which a Greco-Roman slave was owned by two masters for there is evidence that slaves could belong to two or more different masters (*P. Oxy.* 1030, 5-6).¹⁸⁸

Jesus is teaching that a man “cannot render the exclusive loyalty and service which is inherent in the concept of δουλεία to more than one master. God requires exclusive loyalty and submission. Nothing else will do.”¹⁸⁹ The associations of exclusive allegiance and unconditional obedience come to the fore with these sayings of Jesus as He concludes his discourse on the responsibility of stewardship. In Luke 16:13 all of Jesus’ followers are described as stewards and slaves and Jesus warns them that their faithfulness and devotion to God as Lord will have eternal implications.

The Unworthy Slave: Luke 17:7-10

The parable of the Unworthy Slave in Luke 17:7-10 is unique to Luke’s gospel and the metaphor of slavery serves an important theological and rhetorical function in this text to describe Christ’s expectations of His disciples. The parable is found in the context of a pericope on faith as the source of appropriate obedience, demonstrated in forgiveness and prayer (Luke 17:1-10). The context indicates that, at least in Luke 17:5-10, Jesus is directly addressing the apostles with a focus on their present and future roles as leaders among God’s people.¹⁹⁰ The inclusion of the apostles’ exclamation in 17:4 is parallel to Peter’s question in Luke 12:41 which serves to delimit the audience and make the leadership focus of the parable explicit. Marshall observes, “The parable is addressed to the disciples, more specifically the

¹⁸⁸ Marshall, *Luke*, 624.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Jacques Dupont, “The Master and His Servant (Lk 17:7-10),” *Theology Digest* 33 (1986): 344. There is a strong scholarly consensus that this parable was not only directed to the apostles but that it contains specific leadership instruction regarding their role as leaders who are in authority while under God’s ultimate authority.

apostles, and it may well be understood as a warning against the attitude of church leaders who think that their service in the church entitles them to some reward and that they can be proud of what they have done.”¹⁹¹ While some scholars suggest that Jesus actually addressed this parable to the self-righteous Pharisees¹⁹² or more generally to His followers,¹⁹³ Luke’s presentation of this parable connects Christ’s teaching explicitly to the apostles and their duty before God. This is consistent with Christ’s use of the slave metaphor in Luke 12:25-48 and later in Luke 19:13-22.

Jesus begins with the rhetorical question “Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep will say to him when he comes in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’” (Luke 17:7). Christ’s introductory question assumes the ubiquity of slavery in the first-century and draws upon a socio-cultural and historical background of the relational dynamic between a master and his slave in Greco-Roman slavery. One need not presume that the apostles had been slaves or owned slaves. Instead, this story was rooted in the common cultural practice of slavery and the societal expectations imposed on slaves in service of their master.¹⁹⁴ Slaves existed to serve their master and not to be served and thus the obvious expected response to Jesus’ question would be, “No one!” The parable pictures the master as the owner of a small farm who has one slave who serves both in the fields and in the home.¹⁹⁵ Minear makes the observation that the three activities of the slave, plowing, shepherding, and serving, bear a striking resemblance to the duties

¹⁹¹ Marshall, *Luke*, 645.

¹⁹² Stein, *Luke*, 429.

¹⁹³ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 53.

¹⁹⁴ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1392.

¹⁹⁵ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 248.

of the apostles within the early church.¹⁹⁶ Shepherding was used to describe the tender care of the flock (1 Cor. 9:7, Eph 4:11, 1 Pet. 5:2-3), plowing was used as a metaphor for evangelism (1 Cor. 9:10), and serving (*διακονέω*) was a frequent task of the apostles as they served the master by attending to the physical needs of the church (Rom 15:25). Minear likely goes too far when he suggests that the parable indicates a rift between travelling evangelists who did work in the field and faithful servants carrying out ministry within the church.¹⁹⁷ However, his application of the parable to the unique responsibilities of early Christian leaders is exegetically sound and significant in the application of the central principle of this parable.

Christ's initial rhetorical question expects a negative reply because it is incongruous with the normal relationship between a slave and his master. However, his second rhetorical question in verse 8 expects ready affirmation because it fits the cultural expectation of a slave's responsibility to his master. Jesus asks "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'" (Luke 17:8). The clear expectation is that the slave gives unquestioned priority and unconditional obedience to the will of the master, offering devotion that eschews personal comfort in service of the master. The slave in Christ's story makes the will of the master paramount, regardless of his own desire to sit and rest after a long day's labor. The spiritual principle implicit in Christ's question is apparent: those who belong to Christ are to live exclusively for Christ, placing their lives at His disposal and for His

¹⁹⁶ Minear, "A Note on Luke 17:7-10," 84.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

benefit.¹⁹⁸ The slave in the story “existed to do his [the master’s] will without regard to his own desires or hope of reward.”¹⁹⁹

The priority of the will of the master is inseparable from the expectation of obedience, demonstrating outwardly the inward submission of the slave to the master. A slave in Greco-Roman society was expected to attend to the master’s needs without question or complaint, demonstrating faithful service of the master through obedience to his will.²⁰⁰ In verse 9 Jesus explains that a faithful slave would carry out all that was commanded for “a servant cannot pick and choose what to obey.”²⁰¹ The slave expected no commendation or reward for faithful service was his duty. A slave’s obedience was compulsory, not meritorious, and this is the central thrust of Christ’s parable. Elsewhere Jesus explicitly connects this pattern of humble obedience to Christian discipleship when he asks “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord’, yet do not do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46). The slave in Luke 17:8 was expected to do what the master commanded, when he commanded, and in the manner that pleased him without question or delay. In this narrative Christ employs the metaphor of slavery to remind the apostles that complete obedience to the Lord is a fulfillment of duty to please the master rather than to accrue merit or in any way place the master in obligation to reciprocate the slave’s service.

Jesus speaks a third rhetorical question that further draws upon cultural expectations regarding the relationship between slaves and masters in verse 9 when he asks, “He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were

¹⁹⁸ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 95.

¹⁹⁹ A. Marcus Ward, “Uncomfortable Words: IV. Unprofitable Servants,” *Expository Times* 81 (1970): 201.

²⁰⁰ Beavis, “Ancient Slavery,” 41.

²⁰¹ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1393.

commanded does he?” (Luke 17:9). This question also assumes a negative answer because a slave’s obedience does not merit thanks or recognition for the slave has a proper understanding of both his role and his duty in service of the master. Minear contends that the slave language in this parable addresses the specialized work of the apostles “who would be judged by their faithfulness and by their self-forgetfulness in fulfilling these assignments.”²⁰² Self-denial on the part of the slave extends not only to the doing of the master’s commands but to one’s expectation of reward or praise as a result of doing so. The apostles, like slaves, should not imagine that their service was an indication of self-sufficiency or an occasion for self-confidence. Because the slave is dependent upon the master and expected to carry out his will, faithful service does not exalt the worthiness of the slave but rather the supreme authority and worthiness of the master. Luke 12:35-37 provides an important supplementary truth to this passage as the master in that parable responds to the faithfulness of his slaves by inviting them to recline at the table and the master serves the slaves in a striking reversal of roles. Thus God does treat his slaves with both gratitude and reward but the clear teaching of Luke 17:9 is that such reward and gratitude is born out of grace and not obligation.²⁰³ The slave must demonstrate self-denial that is properly oriented to his dependence upon the master which produces humble obedience in recognition of his master’s worthiness and his own insignificance.

The parable shifts attention from the expectations of the master to the response of the slaves in verse 10, making explicit the primary point of the parable. “The relationship of God and man is not a matter of earning and deserving, still less

²⁰² Minear, “A Note on Luke 17:7-10,” 85.

²⁰³ Marshall, *Luke*, 645.

of bargaining, but all of grace.”²⁰⁴ Christ concludes, “So you too, when you have done all the things which are commanded you, say ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done’” (Luke 17:10). The first step in interpreting this key conclusion is to discern the meaning of ἀχρεῖος (“unworthy”) in its context since this adjective defines the appropriate self-perception of the slave. While older translations render this term “worthless,” most scholars agree that this term refers to “those to whom something is not due, owed.”²⁰⁵ This is clearly an expression of humility as the slave willingly affirms that he has no basis for boasting or any claim of merit before the master. Bock explains that “the servants are unworthy in the sense of not having the authority to command themselves” and thus their service should prompt greater humility in the exercise of authority that had been entrusted to them.²⁰⁶ A near parallel found in the rabbinic literature teaches, “If you have labored greatly in the Torah claim no credit for yourself, for to this end you were created.”²⁰⁷ The apostles were not to view their leadership as a sign of status, power, or prestige, but rather as a reminder of their indebtedness to the grace of the Master who allowed them the privilege of serving Him through obedience to His will.

Christ warns the disciples not to become puffed up by their service or its results for their complete obedience to Christ as Master was simply a response to His grace, not a self-righteous service that merited either praise or rewards. Paul exemplifies this mentality in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 and 4:1-7, denouncing the status

²⁰⁴ Ward, “Uncomfortable Words,” 201.

²⁰⁵ John Kilgallen, “What Kind of Servants are We? (Luke 17,10),” *Biblica Roma* 63 (1982): 551.

²⁰⁶ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1394.

²⁰⁷ Quoted in Ward, “Uncomfortable Words,” 201

seeking in the Corinthian church by humbly recognizing that his gifts and his ministry were grace gifts from God to be stewarded for God's glory and for the increase of His church. Christian service of God is not focused upon the importance of the slave but the worthiness of the master and therefore good works are not aimed at glory for the slave but rather glory for the Master. Given this understanding of Christ's concluding remarks, the connection to the preceding context regarding the centrality of faith becomes apparent. Dependent faith upon God rests in the sufficiency and authority of the Master so that even the obedience that flows from that faith strengthens the believer's confidence in God, not in him or herself.

The parable of the Unworthy Slave contains many important leadership principles for the apostles and for contemporary Christian leaders. First, a leader must place the will of God above any personal ambition or desire for comfort. Titus 1:7 warns that leaders must not be self-willed and therefore a leader must be devoted to the study of God's word and to prayer so that his or her leadership is oriented exclusively to the will of the master. Secondly, God demands wholehearted and complete obedience as leaders honor Christ as Lord through obedience to His commands. A leader is not free to choose which commands he or she will heed for God will hold all people accountable for the extent of their submission to His lordship. Third, leadership demands self-denial as the leader carries out his responsibilities for the glory of God and the good of others, not to garner praise or reward. This corresponds to the associations of dependence and derived identity. Finally, a proper sense of one's own unworthiness before God should prompt leaders to humility and fidelity as they give glory to God for His grace in their lives. While leaders are entrusted with greater responsibility by the master, they are still humble sinners who are entirely dependent upon the Master and totally devoted to His glory.

This short parable contains rich implications for Christian leadership and discipleship which should prompt obedience, humility, and selflessness.

The Minas: Luke 19:11-27

The parable of the Minas employs the familiar theme in the parables of the responsibility of rural slaves to carry out the will of the master in his absence. The parable of the Minas has many parallels to Matthew's parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, leading many to speculate regarding which account is most likely original and which has been redacted to fit the author's theology regarding the delay in the parousia.²⁰⁸ However, some scholars suggest that Jesus used this basic storyline on multiple occasions to teach the same basic principle and therefore "there is no reason whatsoever to insist that either Matthew's or Luke's version was 'derived' from the other, or both from a single original."²⁰⁹ While Matthew's parable of the Talents concludes an extensive eschatological discourse, Luke's parable of the Minas concludes the travel discourse begun in 9:51 as Christ journeyed to Jerusalem in anticipation of His death, resurrection, and departure from the earth.²¹⁰ Luke's introduction in 19:11 makes it clear that Jesus' audience expected the advent of the kingdom immediately and therefore Christ recounts a story in which a king, in contrast to a businessman in Matthew's account, goes away for an extended period of time and he expects his slaves to labor faithfully in his absence. Theologically, the journey of the throne claimant is generally understood as an allegorical description

²⁰⁸ Lane C. McGaughey, "The Fear of Yahweh and the Mission of Judaism: A Postexilic Maxim and its Early Christian Expansion in the Parable of the Talents," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975): 236.

²⁰⁹ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 633. Bock also comes to this conclusion. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1534.

²¹⁰ Stein, *Luke*, 451.

of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ in which He received all authority (Matt 28:18), anticipating a delay between the first and second coming of Christ.²¹¹ The theme of the throne claimant has clear historical parallels with Herod Archelaus who journeyed to Rome in order to be crowned king but was opposed by a delegation of Jews who denounced his character and resisted his rule.²¹² The context and distinctive features of Luke's parable of the Minas indicate that Christ uses this parable as a rhetorical tool to correct the disciples' faulty assumptions regarding the kingdom and instruct His hearers regarding the proper response to the King and their responsibilities in His absence. Johnson concludes that the parable describes "God's rule by the Prophet-Messiah, the division within the people Israel caused by this proclamation, and the formation of a new leadership for the restored portion of the people."²¹³

The intended audience of this parable is unclear contextually because Luke enigmatically states "while they were listening . . . they supposed," (Luke 19:11) suggesting that the audience was specified contextually in the story of Zaccheus in 19:1-10. It is possible that "they" refers to Christ's opponents (Luke 19:7), the crowd (18:36, 43), or the twelve disciples (18:31-34). The emphasis of this parable on fidelity and obedience to the master seems to suggest that Christ is addressing His followers rather than His opponents, although there are clear warnings for those

²¹¹ Marshall, *Luke*, 703. In contrast, Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Lucan Kingship Parable (Lk. 19:11-27)," *Novum Testamentum* 24 (1982):143. Johnson argues that Christ is actually confirming the expectation expressed in Luke 19:11 and no delay in the parousia is expressed. This is a minority view.

²¹² Brian Schultz, "Jesus as Archelaus in the Parable of the Pounds (Lk. 19:11-27)," *Novum Testamentum* 49 (2007): 109. Schultz speculates that Jesus and the crowd were passing the palace of Archelaus on their way out of Jerusalem which prompted Christ to use this historical figure in his story despite the negative connotations.

²¹³ Johnson, *The Lukan Kingship Parable* 153.

who rebel against the rule of the king. Both Bock and Green suggest that the parable was addressed to disciples in general and specifically the crowd of people gathered around Christ in Jericho.²¹⁴ However, the nearness to Jerusalem and the expectation of the imminence of the kingdom in 19:11 seem to point the reader to Christ's nearest companions, the Twelve, who had journeyed with Christ to Jerusalem full of eschatological hope in spite of Christ's explicit anticipation of his crucifixion and exaltation (Luke 18:31-34).²¹⁵ Keener observes that the managerial roles of the slaves in the parable may apply the general expectation of faithfulness in a pointed way to the leaders of the early church.²¹⁶ Perhaps Johnson is correct when he speculates that Christ addresses a diverse crowd as they depart from Jerusalem so that the parable speaks to the various groups, the opponents, the faithless, and disciples, with each segment confronted by some component of the larger narrative.²¹⁷ Such an interpretation would suggest that the rebellious citizens are to be equated with the opponents, the faithful slaves with disciples in general and perhaps the apostles in particular, and the evil slave describes the hypocritical disciples whose attitude and behavior reveal that they never knew Christ in the first place.

The parable opens with a nobleman departing to be appointed king in order to exercise even greater authority upon his return. He entrusts ten of his

²¹⁴ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1533. Green, *Luke*, 677.

²¹⁵ Green, *Luke*, 678.

²¹⁶ Keener, *Matthew*, 358. While Keener's observation relates directly to the parable of the talents in Matthew, the basic principle holds true for both stories. Similarly, Meier observes, "The parable has a special bite if Matthew intends a particular reference to church leaders." John P. Meier, *Matthew*, New Testament Message, vol. 3 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980), 300. Bock argues that the identification of 10 slaves precludes a clear reference to the twelve disciples. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1533.

²¹⁷ Johnson, "The Lukan Kingship Parable," 145.

slaves (δούλους) with the responsibility to manage a portion of the master's resources, each being given a single mina, worth approximately four months wages.²¹⁸ While some suggest that a patron/client structure better fits the level of responsibility given to these ten, the clear semantic intent of δοῦλος and the responsibility given to managerial slaves already observed in Luke 12:42-48 and 16:1-8 indicate that slavery does form the appropriate backdrop for the story.²¹⁹ Bock suggests that "the nobleman expects his servants to make money in his absence, as a preparation for their being given greater responsibilities later."²²⁰ In Luke's account, the master gives explicit instructions to the slaves prior to his departure, expecting their complete obedience in his absence with his imminent return as an additional motivating factor. Assuming that this parable refers to the responsibility of disciples between the first and second coming of Christ, the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 would seem to be the historical corollary to the master's instructions in the story.

The citizen delegation opposed to the king provides a brief indictment of the opponents of Christ before the story turns to the accountability of the slaves to the master in verse 15. The master holds the slaves accountable for their stewardship of the resources which he had entrusted them, judging them based upon their obedience to the master's commands and their understanding of his character.²²¹ Contextually, this accountability seems to depict the final judgment following the second coming of Christ in which each one will be evaluated based on

²¹⁸ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1533.

²¹⁹ J.D. M Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970), 18.

²²⁰ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1533.

²²¹ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 286.

his or her faithfulness in service of Christ.²²² The first slave called to account has returned a 1000% profit on what had been entrusted to him, a realistic possibility in the first-century world.²²³ The master's clear approval is demonstrated by his commendation "well-done" and his description of the slave as both good (*ἀγαθός*) and faithful (*πιστός*). This slave is commended because his obedience went beyond mere slavish duty, apparently demonstrating exemplary effort and ingenuity in his service of the master. The slave's reward for his faithful administration of his delegated authority was the responsibility to rule over ten cities, being entrusted with a significant role of authority by the newly reigning king. Combes observes the unexpected rhetorical development that the reward for faithful service is not manumission but greater and more permanent authority within the master's household.²²⁴ Bock concludes that Jesus, in parallel to Luke 12:42-45, is promising eschatological reward which includes continued administration on behalf of Christ following His return.²²⁵ This conveys to the reader that faithfulness in exercising discipleship and leadership results in greater authority and responsibility as one exemplifies the will and character of the Master in his stewardship of what has been entrusted.

Greater authority as a reward for faithful administration emerges as a Lukan theme since both here and in Luke 12:35-48 the managers entrusted with responsibility prove faithful and are rewarded with greater responsibility.²²⁶ This

²²² Marshall, *Luke*, 702.

²²³ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1535.

²²⁴ Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 71.

²²⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1536. Marshall, *Luke*, 542. Bock cites a Jewish saying, "The reward of duty done is a duty to be done."

²²⁶ Green, *Luke*, 679

abstract principle is made concrete in Christ's leadership discourse in Luke 22:24-30 as Christ calls the disciples to faithful service in their administration of spiritual authority. He concludes, "Just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30). Johnson argues that the faithful slaves in this parable depict the installment of new leadership over Israel, the twelve disciples who exercise authority in accordance with the will of the master in his absence.²²⁷ The second slave is similarly rewarded with responsibility in accordance with his faithfulness in his initial administration. The slaves that carried out their responsibilities in obedience to the master were blessed with greater opportunities in service of the master.

The third slave is simply called the other one (*ἕτερος*), perhaps denoting that he was a completely different type of slave in his character than the previous two cited.²²⁸ This slave returns the original mina without any additional profit for the master, explaining that he was afraid because of the harsh and dishonest character of the master (19:20-21). The slave's dilemma was that he felt "if I earn money, you will take it; if I lose it, you will hold me responsible."²²⁹ In his reasoning the slave was apparently focused more on his own safety than the benefit accrued to the master. The master calls the slave "wicked" (*πονηρός*) indicating that he was not merely unprofitable but disobedient to the clear command of the master.²³⁰ The slave was not willing to take even the smallest risk in service of the master and

²²⁷ Johnson, "The Lukan Kingship Parable," 157-58.

²²⁸ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1537.

²²⁹ Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1896), 440.

²³⁰ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 290.

placed his own desires over the expressed will of the master. The master's absence had revealed the true nature of this wicked slave.

Many commentators wrestle with the fact that the master does not refute the slave's characterization of the master as harsh and dishonest, suggesting that the king could not represent the returning Christ if he exploits his slaves.²³¹ However, the slave's negative characterization of the master has already been proven false in the magnanimous behavior of the master toward the previous two slaves.²³² The master does not accept the slave's assessment of his character but instead employs the slave's faulty assumptions to expose the slave's own deceit and laziness in his administration of the trust that had been given to him by the master. It is clear from the story that the third slave simply did not know the king. For this reason, Bock concludes that the third slave describes one who had responsibility in the community of faith but ultimately demonstrated that he or she is not a genuine believer.²³³ Judas is a clear example of such a character. The parable concludes with the mina of the wicked slave being given to the one who had earned ten minas already for he had proven himself worthy of this additional responsibility.

The central point of this parable is that Jesus entrusts each one with gifts during His absence and genuine disciples will use those gifts in obedience to the Lord to carry out His will in accordance with His character. Implicit in this parable are several key principles of leadership and exercising authority under the ultimate authority of Christ. First, the gifts that Jesus gives to each person are gifts of His grace to be exercised faithfully in service of Him out of gratitude for His generous

²³¹ Green, *Luke*, 676.

²³² Stein, *Luke*, 474.

²³³ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1542.

character.²³⁴ While believers are privileged to steward these gifts on behalf of the Master, it must always be remembered that those gifts belong to the Him and are used for His glory. Similar to the story of the unworthy slaves in Luke 17, believers are called to a right perspective on their gifts and service by being properly related to the Master. Second, service of Christ entails accountability as believers live ultimately to please Him. Service of Christ implies a singular devotion to doing His will that refuses to prioritize personal comfort or public opinion over the expressed commands of the Lord. Third, obedience to Christ must spring from a genuine relationship with Christ so that the will of the master is not merely imposed but internalized. Jesus explains in John 14:15 that if believers love Him they will follow Him in obedience, underscoring the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ that makes obedience a delight rather than merely a duty (Ezek 36:26). It is a sobering reality that being unfaithful in one's service of Christ may not simply disqualify one for leadership but may reveal an unregenerate spiritual condition.

The Wicked Tenants: Luke 20:9-16

In Luke 20, Jesus is teaching in the Temple when He is confronted by the religious leaders who challenge the legitimacy of His authority, asking who gave Him the authority to teach and heal. Rather than answer their question directly, Jesus asks them about the legitimacy of John the Baptist's authority as a prophet and they could not answer Him. The wickedness of the religious leaders prompted Jesus to address their hardheartedness in rejecting His authority and, by implication, the Father who sent Him. Jesus proceeds to tell a parable about a certain man who planted a vineyard and then rented the vineyard to tenants, entrusting its care to them in his absence. It was common in the first-century for a land owner to

²³⁴ Ibid., 1544.

formalize a lease arrangement with tenant farmers by stipulating the rent expected, the work to be completed, and the portion of the profits allocated to the tenants.²³⁵ Under such agreements the absence of the landlord frequently resulted in the tenants' underhanded attempts to usurp his authority or take for themselves more than the contract allowed.²³⁶

The parable of the Wicked Tenants is similar in its intent and structure to the pattern found in the parable of the Great Supper in Luke 14. Both stories describe an authoritative figure who sends his slaves three times as emissaries. The slaves are rejected by their master's subordinates and the offending characters are replaced by others who will yield to the master's authority.²³⁷ In both stories the rude treatment of the slaves as envoys of their master is considered a rejection of the master himself and is the basis of the Master's rejection of his disrespectful subordinates. Although the tenants are not slaves, the parable uses the absence of the master as a foil to reveal their true character and they are accountable to the master for their response to his slave agents.²³⁸ The consideration of this parable will therefore focus on the role and identity of the slaves in Jesus' parabolic framework.

This parable is rich in allegorical detail with the vineyard owner corresponding to God and the tenants referring to the leaders of God's people who

²³⁵ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 284. Snodgrass cites several different papyri that provide helpful cultural and historical background on this point.

²³⁶ Marshall, *Luke*, 727.

²³⁷ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 329.

²³⁸ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 361.

are entrusted with caring for the people who are God's own possession.²³⁹ The reference to the vineyard planted by the owner almost certainly refers to Israel, drawing from the common Old Testament metaphor of Israel being a vineyard planted, cultivated, and nurtured by God for the purpose of fruitfulness (Isa 5:1-5; 27:2-3; Jer 2:21; Ezek 19:10; Hos 10:1).²⁴⁰ The new tenants refer to new leaders who are appointed over God's people but this does not necessarily refer to the inclusion of Gentiles as some have suggested.²⁴¹ The slaves who are sent refer to the prophets and messengers who were sent by God with His authority to proclaim truth and pronounce judgment when the nation and its leaders were faithless or fruitless.²⁴² Snodgrass asserts that the slaves "would surely have been recognized as an allusion to the prophets, messengers on God's behalf."²⁴³ The prophets in the Old Testament were described as God's slaves (1 Kgs 14:19 15:29; 2 Kgs 9:7; 14:24; Isa 20:3; 44:26) who were sent by God to proclaim His message and they were regularly rejected and abused by God's people who refused to submit to His commands.

In the parable, the master sends three different slaves to collect the rent from the tenants who were only authorized to tend the vineyard if they operated in submission to the owner and in accordance with the terms that had been stipulated. The tenants in the story refused to give the slaves any fruit from the vineyard,

²³⁹ Ibid., 359. This is generally the scholarly consensus although Bock argues that the tenants refer to the nation as the whole while the vineyard refers to the promise of what the nation might become. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1596.

²⁴⁰ R. Alan Culpepper, "Parable as Commentary: The Twice-Given Vineyard (Luke 20:9-16)," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 26 (1999): 156. Matthew and Mark include language that specifically is reminiscent of the Song of the Vineyard in Isa 5 which makes this correspondence even clearer.

²⁴¹ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 331.

²⁴² Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1598.

²⁴³ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 293.

essentially acting as if they were the owners of the vineyard rather than its caretakers.²⁴⁴ In the context of the religious leaders' challenge of Jesus' own authority, the parable condemns the leaders who had refused any accountability for their delegated authority and attempted to usurp God's ultimate authority.²⁴⁵ This subversive pattern is parallel to the condemnation of Israel's leaders in Ezekiel 34 who were guilty of greed and neglect in their care for God's flock, consuming the sheep out of selfishness rather than caring for them in obedience to God's design. The tenants reject each of the three slaves with escalating hostility and abuse which mirrored Israel's treatment of the prophets and heightened the drama of the story.²⁴⁶ The slaves' representative authority and derived identity are especially important associations in this regard for they were an extension of the master and thus to abuse and reject the slave was to dishonor and disregard the master.²⁴⁷ The abuse of the slaves in the story demonstrates the extent of the slave's identification with the master as he might exercise the master's authority or suffer the mistreatment that was intended ultimately for the master. Jesus may also be alluding to the failure of the religious leaders to recognize the divine authority and commission of John, whom Jesus cites in the context as a prophet who spoke with authority (Luke 20:4-7).

The owner of the vineyard has been defied by his tenants three times and yet he graciously chooses to send his "beloved son" to deal with the matter, demonstrating the lengths he is willing to go to in order to allow the tenants the

²⁴⁴ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 706.

²⁴⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1600.

²⁴⁶ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 375.

²⁴⁷ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 706.

opportunity to respond with faithfulness.²⁴⁸ While the slaves were legally authorized as the agents of the master, the son would have had all the status and legal powers of the master to lodge a formal protest and ultimately bring the matter to resolution.²⁴⁹ The reference to the sending of the owner's "beloved son" clearly refers to Jesus who is described with the same phrase at His baptism (Luke 3:22) in a manner reminiscent of Abraham's love for Isaac (Gen 22:2).²⁵⁰ In the parable the son acts as a messenger, essentially serving in the same function as the slaves who were sent beforehand in hopes that the tenants will yield to the owner's authority which the slaves possessed only derivatively while the son possessed it in his very nature. However, the tenants reason that removing the heir might allow the vineyard to become their possession by default, a realistic possibility given the laws of property and possession in the first-century.²⁵¹ The tenants' greed drives them to murder the son, a culmination of the pattern of abuse toward the master's slaves in rebellion against the master and his authority over them. The master's violent judgment of the tenants represents the familiar theme of accountability, although in this case it is not the slaves who are judged but the tenants.

The slaves in this parable highlight the associations of representative authority and derived identity as they carry out the master's will even when it results in opposition or abuse. The fact that the son carries out the same function as the slaves and endures the same mistreatment highlights the solidarity of Christ with those who serve God and suffer for His sake. This parable highlights the

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 707.

²⁴⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, 730.

²⁵⁰ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 707.

²⁵¹ Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 362.

faithfulness of the son and condemns the rebellion of the tenants who attempted to usurp the master's authority rather than submit to it. Those who have rejected the Master will also reject His slaves who exercise the Master's authority according to the Master's will. Jesus reminded His disciples of this very reality in John 15:20. "A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours." The association of a slave's vulnerability to abuse and mistreatment, in this case at the hands of his master's debtors, is also a valid association in this instance. Luke's slave parables highlight the themes of delegated authority in the absence of the master, complete obedience to the will of the master, representative identity doing the work of the master, and ultimate accountability to the judgment of the master. While some of the parables reveal these associations more subtly, a surprising number of the parables highlight these very aspects of the slave metaphor as key components of discipleship, especially for those entrusted with leadership over God's people.

Christ's Pattern of Leadership and Service

Christ's use of the slave metaphor in His parables and teaching culminates in Luke 22 with a new paradigm for leadership that is contradistinct from the world's pattern of exercising authority. This paradigm is rooted in Christ's own example of service and He employs servile imagery to describe the responsibilities of leaders in particular. Christ's instruction weaves together themes from several of the slave parables including the master who serves (Luke 12:37), faithfulness resulting in greater responsibility (Luke 12:44; 19:15), and the absence of the king who confers authority on his faithful slaves (Luke 19:17). The fact that this paradigm of leadership and service is presented in all four gospels (Matt 20:26-28; Mark 10:41-45; John 13), albeit in several different contexts, suggests that it was central to Jesus'

teaching on leadership and foundational for the apostles' exercise of His delegated authority in the early church. This final section of the chapter will examine Christ's paradigm of leadership in Luke 22:24-30 to discern how Christ used His own example of servanthood and servile imagery to define greatness among leaders in His kingdom.

The Pattern of Worldy Authority

Christ's clearest teaching on leadership in the book of Luke is offered as a corrective to the disciples' dispute over power and prominence in a way that reflected the world's paradigm of greatness and status. In Luke 22:21-23 Christ informs His disciples that one of them will betray Him which immediately leads to an intense discussion as to who among them would be most likely to forsake Him. It seems that the prospect of one of them being disloyal prompted several of them to assert themselves as the most loyal and most trusted of Jesus' disciples which resulted in a dispute as to which of them was the greatest.²⁵² The disciples had argued previously about who was the greatest in Luke 9:46-48 and Matthew and Mark record a similar dispute regarding status when James and John desired positions of prominence in the kingdom (Matt 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45).

The present study will not speculate regarding which authors borrowed and redacted from other evangelists or how many times Christ may have had to address the topic of leadership and greatness with His disciples. It is sufficient to observe that the question of greatness in the kingdom came up on multiple occasions among the disciples and the text of Luke 22:24-30 closely resembles the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 20:20-26 and Mark 10:35-45 which provide helpful

²⁵² Peter K. Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship: A Study of Luke 22:24-30*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 138 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 141.

parallels to understand Christ's teaching in Luke 22. Matthew and Mark both describe disputes that occurred prior to the triumphal entry but Luke includes this teaching in a different context at the Last Supper. Although some allege that Luke has simply relocated Markan material, the topic of leadership through service was vividly illustrated in John 13:3-16 when Christ washed His disciples feet so a teaching on greatness through service fits naturally in that setting.²⁵³ Bock argues persuasively that Jesus addressed this theme on several occasions and therefore the Lucan version should be considered original in its context, stating didactically what the foot washing conveyed pictorially.²⁵⁴ The disciples' dispute was not fundamentally over who was actually the greatest or who would be the greatest in the kingdom but rather who seemed to be (δοκεῖν) the greatest. They were concerned about status, appearances, and the perceptions of others which reveals the source and standard of greatness in their eyes.²⁵⁵

Jesus does not actually answer the disciples' question because the question itself reflected self-importance rather than self-sacrifice.²⁵⁶ Instead, He challenges their paradigm of greatness by revealing the worldly attitudes that underlie their dispute. First, He reminds them that Gentile rulers "lord (κυριεύω) it over them" (Luke 22:25), imposing their political power over their subjects.²⁵⁷ The verb κυριεύω can be negative, neutral, or positive depending on its context but the word itself does not connote harsh or oppressive rule which may be conveyed by the English idiom

²⁵³ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1736.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1737.

²⁵⁵ Marshall, *Luke*, 813.

²⁵⁶ Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 145.

²⁵⁷ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary, v.35c (Dallas: Word, 1989), 1064.

“lord it over.”²⁵⁸ However, κυριεύω often carries negative connotations in the New Testament when referring to any expression of rule outside the sphere of God’s sovereign rule. Christian leaders are cautioned not to rule (κυριεύω) over others (2 Cor 1:24; 1 Pet 5:3) and Christ’s death means that neither sin nor death can legitimately act as masters (κυριεύω) over believers for God is their rightful Master and ruler in both cases.²⁵⁹ The only times the New Testament uses the verb κυριεύω positively it refers to God who rules over all as the rightful and authoritative Lord. In Romans 14:9 Christ is authorized to rule as Lord and in 1 Timothy 6:15 Christ is the King over earthly kings and the Lord over earthly lords.

The verb κυριεύω has as its most basic meaning “to act as lord” with the legal status and authority it implies.²⁶⁰ It would appear that Jesus is not referring to the rulers’ misuse of power per se but is simply describing the normal pattern of kings who exercise authority as if they were the lord over their subjects which is the exclusive prerogative of God.²⁶¹ God’s pattern in the Old Testament from creation to kingship was that those who ruled with authority did so on behalf of God and not as if they were God.²⁶² Therefore, to rule in authority without recognizing that one

²⁵⁸ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 90.

²⁵⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, 812.

²⁶⁰ Werner Foerster, “κύριος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* v.3 trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 1097.

²⁶¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 767.

²⁶² King Nebuchadnezzar is a prime example of God’s design as Daniel explains to the king that God has allowed him to rule (κυριεύω) in Dan 2:38. But when King Nebuchadnezzar imagines that he is an independent lord God humbles him until “he recognized that the Most High God is ruler (κυριεύει) over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.” In the LXX κυριεύω is regularly used to describe someone exercising illegitimate authority or acting as lord in a negative manner. In Gen 3:16 the woman was told that her husband would rule (κυριεύω) over her. Many times the judgment of Israel is described as coming under the rule (κυριεύω) of those who had no right to rule over them such as women, slaves, and foreigners (Judg 9:2; 14:4; 15:11; Ps

is under God's ultimate authority leads to a self-sufficient and self-serving paradigm of leadership which Christ rejects. In 2 Corinthians 1:24 Paul provides the antithesis of the worldly paradigm when he clarifies that he is not ruling as lord but rather is laboring for the Lord in service of their faith. In describing the gentile rulers who act as lords, Christ is not criticizing their abuse of power but rather their pretense of acting as if they were something more than they actually were. In reality they were subordinate rulers subservient to God's ultimate authority and accountable to His final judgment.

In parallel to the kings who operate on the pretense of self-sufficiency, Jesus also cites worldly authorities who claim status for magnanimity. Jesus explains, "Those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors'" (Luke 22:25). Being called a benefactor in a society which emphasized honor and shame was the "pinnacle of prestige" and gave the leader status in society as one who had a reputation for kindness and generosity.²⁶³ Because the title of 'benefactor' was so desirable, some unjust and despotic rulers would still expect that their subjects would grant them the honorific title in spite of the fact that they were in no way benevolent.²⁶⁴ In His observation, Jesus is not criticizing the exercise of authority for the benefit of others. Instead, He is noting the preoccupation of many leaders with social status and public honor and the sense of social superiority it conveys, even when it is undeserved. Pagan leaders are preoccupied with their own reputation and status rather than genuinely exercising authority for the benefit of those they lead. The disciples had been arguing about positions of authority and perceptions of

105:41; Isa 3:4, 12; Lam 5:8). When it is used positively it generally describes God who is the rightful ruler over all of the earth (2 Chr 20:6; Isa 19:4)

²⁶³ Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 152.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

superiority. Jesus explains to them that earthly rulers act like sovereigns when in reality they are stewards and earthly authorities are preoccupied with status when they have been commissioned to serve. The disciples were falling into these very traps in their quest for honor and positions in the kingdom. Darrell Bock pithily summarizes the point of verse 25 observing, “Leaders are not to be something they are not, but to lead without the pretense of being more than they are.”²⁶⁵ Jesus does not rebuke them for desiring to be great, but He warns them that the path to greatness requires a radically different understanding of the nature of authority and the significance of status than what the world offers.

The Pattern of Godly Authority

In Luke 22:26 Jesus offers a corrective to the disciples’ worldly perspective. He explains that their assumptions about significance and their striving for status reflected the world’s priorities rather than God’s. In response to their quarrel Jesus does not argue for the elimination of leadership but rather its transformation, using His own example as a pattern for them to emulate.²⁶⁶ Jesus remained the leader who possessed all authority but His exercise of leadership was marked by humility, obedience, and service in clear contrast to the attitudes of the disciples and the patterns of worldly rulers. Although Christ specifically is addressing the disciples in this context, His instruction has direct bearing on all who exercise leadership within the church.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1738.

²⁶⁶ Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 147.

²⁶⁷ Marshall, *Luke*, 813.

The greatest as the youngest. Drawing from the language of their original dispute, Jesus explains that the one who is the greatest (μείζων) must become like the youngest and the leader like the servant (ὁ διακονῶν). Rather than abolish distinctions of greatness or roles of leadership, Jesus defines true greatness with certain characteristics drawn from the example of youth and servants.²⁶⁸ The call to become like the youngest (ὁ νεώτερος) draws from the cultural reality that the youngest were socially held in low regard and were generally given more menial tasks to perform (Acts 5:6).²⁶⁹ The elders in society were granted great respect and status but becoming like a child meant the disciples had to renounce their high estimation of their importance and adopt a posture of humility and service instead (Matt 19:1-4; Mark 10:15; Luke 9:48; 18:17). The disciples were not to distinguish themselves by their perceived status or exercise of authority as an elder might in that society. The disciples were to lead in humility and service as a young child, emphasizing their equality with those they lead rather than their elite superiority.²⁷⁰

The leader as slave of God. In contrast to the rulers and authorities of the world, Jesus explains that the one who leads (ὁ ἡγούμενος) must be like one who serves (ὁ διακονῶν). In Matthew 20:27 and Mark 10:44 the leader who desires to be first is called to be a δοῦλος but in this context Jesus may have used διακονέω instead to provide a direct link to the following verse regarding Christ's own role as ὁ διακονῶν in providing table service.²⁷¹ It has already been demonstrated that a slave

²⁶⁸ Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 156.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 157.

²⁷⁰ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1738.

²⁷¹ Marshall, *Luke*, 813. It is also possible that Luke was uneasy with explicitly calling Jesus a δοῦλος which would be the logical corollary in Luke 22:27. Biblical writers seem to avoid

is often the subject of *διακονέω*, referring to the personal service a slave renders to another in obedience to the will of the master (Luke 12:35-38; 17:7-10).²⁷² The link to the *δοῦλος* metaphor in this context is strengthened by the correspondence lexically and conceptually between Christ's status as one who serves in Luke 22:27 and the parable of Luke 12:35-38. In Luke 12:37 the master serves (*διακονέω*) his slaves by humbly rendering to them the table service which they would normally provide for him.

Lexically, by the first-century the *διακ-* stem had taken on many of the associations of the *δοῦλ-* stem and thus sometimes *διακονέω* could be used in place of *δουλεύω* without any substantial difference in meaning.²⁷³ Nelson initially argues for a clear distinction between *δοῦλος* and *διάκονος* and he suggests that "servant" describes an employee who renders service to his employer through domestic duties.²⁷⁴ However, Nelson then concludes that servanthood in Luke 22:26 conveys the associations of "low status, the loss of rights and full subjection to one's master . . . bound to devote his energies and abilities to meeting the wishes of another," all of which are associations of slavery in contrast to a paid laborer.²⁷⁵ In a seemingly contradictory turn in his argument, Nelson ultimately concedes that there is

δοῦλος as a direct descriptor of Christ, being only willing to describe His service as a slave (John 13) and His existence in the form of a slave (Phil 2:7). Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 102.

²⁷² The use of *δοῦλος* in Mark 10 and Matt 20 would also suggest that Jesus is referring to the disciples as slaves of God in their leadership roles. Harrill notes that Mark 10:43 is one passage that supports the hypothesis that *δοῦλος* functioned as a title of leadership because of the slave imagery Christ employs. ²⁷² J. Albert Harrill, "The Slave Still Appears: A Historiographical Response to Jennifer Glancy," *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007): 216.

²⁷³ Rikki E. Watts, "Jesus' Death, Isaiah 53, and Mark 10:45: A Crucifixion Revisited" in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, ed. William H. Bellinger and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 138.

²⁷⁴ Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 40.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

significant overlap between servanthood and slavery. He concludes that ὁ διακονῶν in Luke 22:26 should be understood with the backdrop of slavery because Christ is describing one with the lowest status in society in contrast to leaders who claim the highest status in society.²⁷⁶ Therefore, διακονέω as used in Luke 22:26-27 is consistent with the slave paradigm, using the image of a lowly slave who serves others in contrast to secular leaders who leverage their authority in service of self.

Christ used the image of slavery at the last supper visibly when He washed the disciples' feet (John 13) and didactically when He portrayed himself as the master fulfilling a slave's role in the household. Why then does he describe His own exemplary service as διακονέω rather than δουλεύω in Luke 22:26-27? The paradigm proposed in chapter 3 suggested that δουλεύω referred to one's service to God as a faithful slave while διακονέω described the personal service the slave renders to others in obedience to the Master. If this paradigm is tenable, then διακονέω in this context would refer to Jesus' service of others with the implicit or explicit understanding that He is doing so as a slave who is ultimately serving God. Such a connection is found in the immediate context of the dialogue of the Last Supper. In Luke 22:37 Jesus cites Isaiah 53:12, explicitly identifying himself as the suffering עֶבֶד of Isaiah 53 who would be the exemplary slave and substitutionary sacrifice in obedience to God to redeem humanity. Isaiah 53:11 describes the Messiah as "my servant" (δουλεύοντα) who submits himself to the Father in service of His will, being obedient even to the point of death. His service of God entails serving all of humanity, bearing their iniquities resulting in the justification of many (Isa 53:11b). Christ fulfilled the pattern outlined in creation and kingship by perfectly serving God as a faithful slave and serving others as God's representative. Christ's self-

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 43.

identification as the suffering slave in Luke 22:37 supports the thesis that slave language describes one's service and obedience to God. Christ's sacrificial death was supremely oriented toward the Father's will in accordance with the Father's plan as vividly expressed in Christ's prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42).

The leader as servant of others. The preceding discussion clarifies that Christ's service (*διακονέω*) in Luke 22:26-27 and parallel passages (Matt 20:28, Mark 10:45) refers to the horizontal expression of His vertical obedience to God as His supreme authority.²⁷⁷ This is consistent with the pattern already observed in the parables in which the slave serves the master by attending to the needs of his fellow slaves (Luke 12:42), extending invitations to undeserving guests (Luke 14:21), and calling debtors to give the master his due (Luke 20:10). Serving the master as a slave entails serving others according to the master's will. This is most clearly expressed in Mark 10:45 in which Jesus explained that the purpose of His incarnation was to serve (*διακονέω*) by offering His own life as a ransom for many. Christ's service of others was in submission to the Father's will and Christ's compassionate ministry and sacrificial death were expressions of His faithful obedience to the Father.

This orients the reader's perspective on Luke 22:26 when Jesus explains that a leader is called to humbly attend to the needs of others. Although the leader is a servant, the follower does not therefore become the master. The leader's exclusive commitment to serving God compels and defines his or her service of others. The apostles act as stewards "standing both under and in authority, and as bearing a responsibility to set aside self-important concepts of authority, meet the needs of followers and thereby please their master."²⁷⁸ Paul captures this dynamic in

²⁷⁷ Watts, "Jesus' Death," 138.

²⁷⁸ Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 48.

2 Corinthians 4:5 when he reminds the Corinthians “We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your bond-slaves (δοῦλος) for Jesus’ sake.”²⁷⁹

Secular paradigms of leadership lack the foundation of God’s ultimate authority therefore the leader may either presumptuously act as if he were the master or passively treat the follower as the master, attending to the felt needs of the individual. Christ’s point in Luke 22:26 is that leaders are called to use the authority entrusted to them to benefit and serve others in humble submission to God, resisting the temptation to seek status or praise for themselves. This stands in clear contrast to worldly authorities who are superficially called benefactors but use their authority to enhance their social status and garner public praise.

The Lord as servant. Jesus illustrates the counterintuitive paradigm of slave leadership in Luke 22:27 by reminding the disciples of His own example of service among them. Christ asks “Who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table?” The answer to Jesus’ question is self-evident.²⁸⁰ In that culture, the one who is served a meal was considered greater than the one waiting the tables, especially because the one serving was thought to have low status and menial tasks.²⁸¹ This expectation played a central role in the parable of the Unworthy Slave in Luke 17:7-10 and was the basis for the shocking reversal in Luke 12:37 when the master invited his slaves to recline while he served them. Jesus once again highlights the contrast between the world’s

²⁷⁹ Paul similarly describes he and Apollos those who served the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:5) but were ultimately to be regarded as Christ’s stewards (1 Cor 4:1-2). In Acts 20:24 Paul reminds the Ephesians that Paul has served others through evangelistic preaching as an expression of his ultimate service of God as Lord. His commission from Christ governed his service of others.

²⁸⁰ The particle οὐχί anticipates a positive reply to Christ’s second rhetorical question. Marshall, *Luke*, 814.

²⁸¹ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1738.

paradigm of greatness and God's, this time offering His own example as the counterpoint. Jesus reminds the disciples, "But I am among you as one who serves (ὁ διακονῶν)." This powerful conclusion confronts the disciples with their wrong attitudes and leaves them with a decision: whether they will pursue greatness through status in the pattern of the world or greatness through service in the pattern of Christ.²⁸²

Christ's example of service raises the key interpretive question: in what sense was Jesus a servant or how was He marked by certain characteristics of a servant? Was Jesus referring to some concrete act of service He had performed or was He using the term διακονέω metaphorically to refer to His ministry more broadly? Many commentators suggest that the service Jesus describes is the footwashing of John 13, noting that this act of service also occurred at the Last Supper and was a powerful illustration of Christ's own example of humility through service.²⁸³ This interpretation is further supported by the fact that in John 13 Jesus performs a domestic duty at the banquet while the disciples reclined and in both texts Jesus refers to His service as a pattern that the disciples should imitate.²⁸⁴ The two texts are clearly complementary and most interpreters would agree that Christ illustrates in John 13 what he has instructed in Luke 22:26-27. However, to interpret Christ's service in Luke 22:27 as referring specifically to the footwashing is to unnecessarily narrow Christ's service without contextual warrant. There is nothing in Luke 22:24-30 that even hints at the footwashing and one would expect that Luke would have not left Christ's service so ambiguous if he intended to point back to a

²⁸² Ibid., 1739.

²⁸³ Fitzmyer, *Luke 10-24*, 1415; Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1739.

²⁸⁴ Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 162.

specific act of service.²⁸⁵ Furthermore, Luke 22 is also conceptually parallel to Mark 10:41-45 in which Christ's *διακονέω* is specifically identified as giving His life as a ransom for many. While John 13 provides an important complementary illustration of the principles Christ espoused in Luke 22:27, there is not adequate evidence to suggest that Christ was describing His service as narrowly as a single act of footwashing.

In light of the setting of the Last Supper and Christ's contrast between one who serves at the table and one who reclines, it is possible that Christ was literally acting as the table servant while they were eating the Passover meal. This interpretation takes a very straightforward approach to Christ's contrast between the diner and servant and it is supported by the fact that Luke 12:37 describes a master who serves his slaves through literal table service. However, Luke 22 describes Jesus as the one who dines (22:14) and presides over the Passover, not the one who waits tables.²⁸⁶ Furthermore, if Christ intended His service to be narrowly interpreted as literally waiting tables then the apostles' resistance to serving tables (*διακονεῖν*) in Acts 6 would represent an act of disobedience to Christ's clear command. While it is possible that some concrete acts such as table service or footwashing comprise some aspects of Christ's service in Luke 22:27, the context and biblical parallels suggest that service should be interpreted more broadly to describe Christ's entire life as an act of service. This does not preclude the possibility that Christ performed a concrete act of service at the Last Supper, but suggests that such an action would be representative of Christ's customary pattern of selfless service.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 163.

²⁸⁶ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1065.

The best understanding of Christ's service in Luke 22:27 is also the broadest, suggesting that Christ's incarnation, ministry, suffering, and death are collectively understood as Christ's selfless service to His disciples and humankind.²⁸⁷ This is consistent with Mark 10:45 and Matthew 20:28 in which Christ's service describes His sinless life and sacrificial death in the pattern of the Isaianic suffering servant. Christ's giving of His body and blood in the near context (Luke 22:19-20) and the lowliness associated with Christ's death on the cross suggest that Jesus may be primarily referring to His death as the supreme act of service.²⁸⁸ However, since Christ's death was still future in Luke 22, the interpreter should readily affirm that Christ's life of service which included teaching, healing, and correcting should also be kept in view. When the disciples heard Jesus refer to His own service among them in Luke 22:27, it is most likely that their minds would have been flooded with numerous examples of Christ's care for them and for others during His ministry. When Jesus characterized Himself as one who served He offered the disciples the past pattern of His life and the future purpose of His death as an example of humility, selflessness, and sacrifice. Paul similarly uses Christ's incarnation and death as a pattern of humility and sacrifice in Philippians 2:5-8 where Christ's incarnation is depicted as being in the form of a slave (δοῦλος) and His death was the death of a slave on the cross. Christ's humble service (διακονέω) of others was an expression of His ultimate submission to the Father and He enjoins the disciples in Luke 22:27 to carefully observe and imitate His example.

Although the slave paradigm is not explicit in Luke 22:26-27, Christ's call for the disciples to humble themselves in service according to the pattern of Christ

²⁸⁷ Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 167.

²⁸⁸ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1065.

uses servile language (*διακονέω*) which draws from the slave metaphor. The emphasis of Christ's teaching is the leader's responsibility to selflessly serve others but such teaching can only properly understood within the larger framework of Christ's example as the suffering slave of Isaiah 53 (Luke 22:37). A paradigm of leadership drawn from Luke 22:24-30 must present the leader's responsibility to serve others as a outworking of the ultimate responsibility to serve God. Christ places leaders in authority so that they will use that authority to serve others in obedience to God as their ultimate Master. They are both in authority and under authority. Jesus is not offering a pandering model of leadership in which the leader caters to the whim of the follower. Instead, He uses His own life as an example of how one who is rightly related to God will faithfully serve God by serving others.

The Reward of Future Authority

After instructing the disciples on their role in service, Jesus reminds them that faithful service of the Lord will be rewarded with expanded responsibility in His Kingdom. Jesus begins by acknowledging the disciples' faithful service alongside of Him in spite of the suffering and opposition He faced. Christ's service entailed suffering and sacrifice (Luke 22:27) and the disciples' constancy revealed their fidelity. Christ commends them for their faithfulness in a manner reminiscent of the master's evaluation of his slaves who sacrificed personal comfort (Luke 12:37), selfish ambition (Luke 12:45-46), and fearful complacency (Luke 19:20-21) in their service of the master. Luke 22:28-30 reflects Christ's judgment of His slaves and they are judged based only on their faithfulness to serve Christ as their Master. The faithfulness of the disciples is rewarded with greater responsibility which was the pattern of reward in the parables (Luke 12:44; 19:15,17) and in His teaching (Luke 16:10-13). In the Kingdom, stewards who are faithful in exercising their delegated

authority in obedience to the Master and in service to others are given expanded responsibility rather than manumission and autonomy. The disciples were preoccupied with exaltation and authority (Luke 22:24). Jesus explains to them that submission to God through service of others is ultimately the path to exaltation and authority. Christ provides the paradigm of humble service leading to exaltation (Luke 22:29; Phil 2:5-11) which is a pattern reinforced throughout Scripture (Jas 4:10, 1 Pet 4:6). The suffering of the cross leads to the glory of the crown.

Jesus knows that royal rule awaits Him after His suffering and these verses are strongly parallel to the parable of the Minas in which a nobleman departs to receive a kingdom and rewards his faithful slaves upon his return. Christ's royal rule described in Luke 22:29 emphasizes the supreme authority conferred on Christ as Lord who will ultimately reign as the Davidic king, perfectly related to God and justly ruling God's people forever (Ezek 34:23-31). In the context, Christ had already taught the disciples that His suffering was necessary for the inauguration of the New Covenant (Luke 22:20) and now He explains that His rule is an integral part of its manifestation. Once Christ as the suffering Slave has completed His service, He will be enthroned as the Davidic King ruling over the restored kingdom.²⁸⁹ The exemplary Slave will rule as the exalted Lord. This rule of Christ perfectly fulfills God's pattern of humanity as obedient son and servant king and fully realizes the messianic expectation of the Old Testament prophets.

Jesus makes a direct link between faithful stewardship and future reward as He promises the disciples' that they will have the privilege of participating with Jesus in exercising authority in the kingdom. The apostles were trusted to mediate God's authority and extend Christ's mission on the earth through their service. Jesus

²⁸⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, 815.

promises that they will be rewarded with a new commission and delegated authority in the eschatological kingdom as agents of Christ's rule.²⁹⁰ This mirrors the actions of the master in Luke 19:16-19 who rewards his faithful slaves with expanded authority, ruling over cities as his representatives in submission to his ultimate rule. The disciples are promised blessings at the eschatological banquet table and responsibility in Christ's eschatological administration as they sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel (Luke 22:30). There can be no doubt in Luke 22:29-30 that Christ is the ruling King and the disciples steward Christ's delegated authority as faithful slaves rather than as independent rulers. Christian authority is subordinate authority as leaders place themselves in submission to the King of Kings and then humbly exercise His authority through service of others as His royal representative. In the parables the master removes and punishes those who are unfaithful in serving him (Luke 12:47-48; 16:1; 19:24-27; 20:15), appointing faithful slaves in their place to exercise authority over his people on his behalf. The disciples are presented in Luke 22:30 as the faithful slaves who would be commissioned to rule over the renewed Israel on God's behalf. The associations of derived identity and ultimate accountability come to the fore as Christ calls the disciples to faithful service in their present leadership in anticipation of eschatological reward.

Conclusion

The development of the slave metaphor in Luke's writings provides a glimpse into the progression of the slave metaphor from a humble expression of Jewish piety to a pattern of Christian leadership and discipleship. In the infancy narrative, Mary and Simeon both humbly submit themselves to God as His slaves and the songs of Mary and Zechariah recall Israel and David's identity as slaves of

²⁹⁰ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1740.

the Lord. The associations of humility, submission, dependence, and obedience were observed as key aspects of the Jewish metaphor preserved from its Old Testament usage. Christ's identity as Lord was also considered and it was concluded that Christ was recognized and worshipped as Lord, drawing from the metaphor of slavery the associations of obedience and dependence. The title of Christ as Lord is a key theme in Luke-Acts as Christ's Lordship was declared at His birth (Luke 2:11) and recognized by some (Luke 5:8) leading to worship while ignored by others (Luke 6:46) resulting in disobedience.

The parables of Jesus were explored at length for the metaphor of slavery was used frequently by Jesus to describe the responsibilities of disciples generally and leaders particularly in relationship to God as Master. Luke's slave parables highlight the themes of delegated authority in the absence of the master, representative identity doing the work of the master, complete obedience to the will of the master, and ultimate accountability to the judgment of the master. Several of the slave parables were addressed directly to the disciples (Luke 12:42-48; 16:1-13; 17:7-10; 19:11-27) and Jesus illustrates a rich paradigm of slave leadership using the image of a slave who is entrusted with authority by the master for the express purpose of serving the master's will faithfully and completely. Finally, Christ's instruction to His disciples that greatness comes through service was determined to be consistent with the slave paradigm in which the slave serves the master by serving others on his behalf. Christ's example as a servant in His life and death provide the template for leaders to follow as they humbly deny themselves and serve others as an expression of their faithful stewardship before God.

Luke's gospel is rich with instances of the slave metaphor ranging from expressions of worship to instructions on leadership. The associations outlined in the previous chapter were all found regularly in Luke's use of the metaphor with the

exception of harsh mistreatment which is only alluded to as a possibility in two parables. The slave metaphor in Luke is rooted in the Old Testament usage of the image and developed by Christ as an explicit pattern for discipleship and leadership in submission to Christ as Lord. To determine how the slave paradigm taught by Christ was preserved and practiced in the early church this study must consider the second volume of Luke's historical work, the book of Acts.

CHAPTER 5

SLAVE IMAGERY IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts is Luke's chronicle of the transition from Christ's earthly ministry to the birth and growth of the early church. As a companion of Paul, Luke was an eyewitness to some of the events that took place in the book of Acts (Acts 16:10-17; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16), but he was also dependent on many sources (Luke 1:2) for information about the departure of Christ and the formation of the early church.¹ As the second volume of Luke's historical work, Acts provides a unique glimpse into the theology, preaching, and worship of the early church. The purpose of this chapter is to determine to what extent the slave imagery used by Christ during His earthly ministry informed the theology and practice of the early church. Therefore, this chapter will trace the metaphor of slavery and its associations in the book of Acts to determine how the early church employed the slave paradigm to describe Christ's ministry and their own responsibility before God.

Christ's identity as the *παῖς* of God emerges very early in the life of the church in Peter's proclamation (Acts 3:13,26) and the church's public prayers (Acts 4:27,30). This chapter will first examine the church's earliest Christology in which Christ is presented as the paradigmatic *דָּבָר* of the Lord (Acts 3:13; 8:32-35; 26:23) in fulfillment of the Old Testament pattern and the New Testament messianic expectation. Next, the church paradoxically understood Christ as both the faithful

¹ It is assumed that the "we sections" in Acts are sufficient evidence to describe Luke as an eyewitness. Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 15.

slave of God and the exalted Lord over all. Christ is proclaimed as Lord by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:36), it is in the name of Christ that Christians are baptized (Acts 2:38), and it is by His authority that lame are made well (Acts 3:6). Finally, this chapter will consider the passages in which believers generally and leaders specifically are identified as the slaves of the Lord. If the slave paradigm already outlined in the teaching and ministry of Christ is preserved in the Christology and ecclesiology of the early church then it stands to reason that it should inform the practice of leadership and discipleship in the church today. Following a similar pattern as the previous chapter, this survey of slave imagery in Acts will consider the significance of each instance of the slave metaphor in its historical and literary context.

Christ as the *παῖς* of God

In the book of Luke Jesus is explicitly identified with the Isaianic עֶבֶד of the Lord in His faithful ministry (Luke 2:32; 4:18) and His vicarious suffering (Luke 22:37). In the book of Acts Christ's identity as God's chosen עֶבֶד is even clearer as Christ is proclaimed as the *παῖς* of God (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30) who is the fulfillment of God's righteous pattern for His people and their leaders (Acts 4:25). Peter (Acts 3:13), Philip (Acts 8:32-35), and Paul (Acts 26:23) proclaim Christ as the fulfillment of the ideal עֶבֶד of the Lord by specifically citing passages from Isaiah that describe the coming Messiah as God's commissioned slave who is faithful in His ministry and blameless in His death.² The origin and significance of the church's identification of Christ as the עֶבֶד of the Lord from the Old Testament are complex

² Based on the treatment of עֶבֶד in chap. 2 of this study, this chapter will assume that עֶבֶד carried the connotations of slavery. References to the "Servant of the Lord" or "Isaianic Servant" are simply in keeping with the scholarly language most often associated with this term and its messianic expectations.

and often debated. Therefore this section will first consider why the church would have called Christ the *παῖς* of God and what significance they might have attached to this servile term. With this theological foundation laid, the section will consider the relevant passages in which Christ is explicitly or implicitly identified as the *παῖς* of God in connection with the Old Testament pattern of the *עֶבֶד* of the Lord.

Theological Significance of *παῖς* as a Messianic Title

The *עֶבֶד* of God in the Old Testament described one who belonged to God and had the duty to serve Him unconditionally, trusting the Lord for protection and provision.³ The *עֶבֶד* word group provided a slave paradigm for the human relationship to God that was rooted in creation and made explicit at the exodus. It has already been shown in chapter 2 that *עֶבֶד* denoted slavery, as opposed to mere servanthood, based on its connotations and the interchangeability of *παῖς* and *δοῦλος* in the LXX translation of *עֶבֶד* in both literal and metaphorical usage.⁴ The title “*παῖς θεοῦ*” was used to describe Moses (Exod 14:31; Deut 34:5), David (2 Sam 7:5), Isaiah (Isa 20:3), and Job (Job 1:8), employing the metaphor of slavery to capture their faithful service, unreserved loyalty, and complete obedience. Mary’s description of Israel as God’s *παῖς* (Luke 1:54) and Zechariah’s identification of David as God’s *παῖς* (Luke 1:69) reflect the prevalence of this slave paradigm even in first-century Jewish worship. This paradigm was also employed in Isaiah’s messianic expectations, anticipating the arrival of God’s exemplary slave using both *παῖς* (Isa 42:1; 52:13) and *δοῦλος* (Isa 49:6, 53:11). The fact that the coming one was described only by this

³ O. Michel, “Son,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 3:608.

⁴ Walther Zimmerli and Joachim Jeremias, “*παῖς θεοῦ*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:674.

servile designation indicated that the Messiah belonged to God and was yielded to His will.⁵ Although *παῖς* can also be interpreted as “child,” when used metaphorically in the Old and New Testament it should generally be understood as “slave” because it is used in parallel with *δοῦλος* to describe one who is humble before God and submissive to His will.⁶ Hellenistic Jews who felt uncomfortable with the lowly associations of the slave paradigm were prone to interpret *παῖς θεοῦ* as “child” or “son” of God rather than slave, departing from the Hebrew understanding of the term.⁷ The title *παῖς θεοῦ* carried rich theological and rhetorical significance from the Old Testament, describing one who belonged to God and was devoted to faithfully serving God in obedience to His will.

The title *παῖς θεοῦ* is very rare in the New Testament with all but one occurrence found in Luke-Acts.⁸ In Acts 3-4 Christ is declared to be God’s chosen *παῖς* four times which suggests that one of the earliest Christological titles was *παῖς θεοῦ*.⁹ Jones objects that such a rich Christology which reflects continuity with the Old Testament *עֶבֶד* in fulfillment of the messianic prophecies must be the result of Luke’s theological imagination rather than the actual practice of the early church.¹⁰ However, the antiquity of this title is supported by the congregation’s parallel citation of David as the Lord’s *παῖς* (Acts 4:25) who anticipated the coming of Jesus,

⁵ Ibid., 668.

⁶ Michel, “Son,” 609.

⁷ Donald L. Jones, “The Title ‘Servant’ in Luke-Acts” in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives From the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar*, Charles H. Talbert, ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 150.

⁸ It is used only in Matt 12:18, Luke 1:54, 69; Acts 3:13, 26; 4:25, 27, 30. Zimmerli and Jeremias, “*παῖς θεοῦ*,” 700.

⁹ Ibid., 702.

¹⁰ Jones, “Title ‘Servant,’” 149.

also addressed as *παῖς θεοῦ* (Acts 4:27, 30).¹¹ Cullman concludes, “The Acts of the Apostles offers us the strongest proof of the fact that in the most ancient period of early Christianity there existed an explanation of the person and work of Jesus which we could characterize somewhat inaccurately as an *ebed Yahweh* Christology – or more exactly as a ‘Paidology.’”¹² The primitive Christological title *παῖς θεοῦ* is notably absent from any of the epistles and later writings.¹³ However, the paradigm of Christ as the exemplary slave of God is reflected throughout the New Testament with parallel language (Phil 2:7), imagery (Luke 22:27; John 13:5-15), and Old Testament allusions (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 9:28) to *παῖς θεοῦ*.¹⁴ It may be that the Gentile church resisted the servile connotations of the title *παῖς θεοῦ* and opted for other descriptors for Christ because *παῖς* seemed too humble and lowly a designation for the exalted Lord.¹⁵

The concept of Christ as the fulfillment of the messianic *מָשִׁיחַ* clearly played a significant role in the nascent Christology of the early church. This raises the question: was the identification of Jesus with the *מָשִׁיחַ* of the Lord a theological invention of the early church or was it rooted in Christ’s identification of Himself as the messianic *מָשִׁיחַ*? Donald Jones argues that Luke’s presentation of Christ as the *παῖς* reveals a much later understanding of Christ and His messianic mission, arguing specifically that Jesus never understood Himself as the Isaianic servant and

¹¹ Zimmerli and Jeremias, “*παῖς θεοῦ*,” 703.

¹² Oscar Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A.M. Hall, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 73.

¹³ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 97.

¹⁴ Michel, “Son,” 612.

¹⁵ Zimmerli and Jeremias, “*παῖς θεοῦ*,” 703.

that the servant songs only became a proof text for Christ's suffering much later in the church's history.¹⁶ However, Jesus describes Himself in Luke 4:18-19 as the fulfillment of the Isaianic slave of God (Isa 61:1-3) and in Luke 22:37 Jesus cites Isaiah 53:12 in connection to His imminent betrayal. When you add Christ's allusions to the His role as the עֶבֶד in Mark 10:45 and 14:24 it becomes difficult to deny that Christ presented Himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah's exemplary slave of God.¹⁷ Mudge asserts, "Repeatedly, we find that the messiahship of Jesus is expressed so naturally and integrally in servant language that the servant motif itself is made to express the full implications of divine Lordship."¹⁸ The church recognized Christ as the fulfillment of Isaiah's messianic prophecies because Christ repeatedly and explicitly described Himself using language and allusions from Isaiah's servant songs.

While Jesus identified Himself as the Isaianic עֶבֶד, this does not mean that the messianic title *παῖς θεοῦ* always or even often conveys the sense of vicarious suffering which is found specifically in Isaiah 53: 4-6, 10, and 12. Zimmerli and Jeremias provide a comprehensive resource on *παῖς θεοῦ* but they seem to overemphasize the allusions to redemptive suffering in their treatment of the phrase, sometimes tying the concept of Christ as *παῖς* back to Isaiah 53 where there is no contextual warrant to do so.¹⁹ In contrast, Hooker systematically makes the case that none of the allusions to Isaiah's "servant" convey the notion of vicarious

¹⁶ Jones, "The Title 'Servant,'" 152.

¹⁷ Michel, "Son," 612.

¹⁸ Lewis S. Mudge, "The Servant Lord and His Servant People," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 12 (1959): 118.

¹⁹ Zimmerli and Jeremias, *παῖς θεοῦ*," 712-14. Jones, "The Title 'Servant,'" 153.

suffering, which swings the pendulum too far in the opposite direction.²⁰ If it is granted that Jesus is the slave described by Isaiah in his messianic prophecies, then what sense does *παῖς* convey when used of Jesus in the New Testament context? The *עֶבֶד* which Isaiah anticipated was a figure who would minister to the brokenhearted (Isa 42:3), administer justice (Isa 42:1), endure opposition (Isa 50:6), and yet remain perfectly obedient to God (Isa 50:5). While Christ recognized that being a faithful *παῖς* of God required Him to bear the sins of the world (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32-35), His suffering was only one aspect of His broader service.

Christ's role as the *παῖς* of God encompassed every aspect of His life and death as He demonstrated exemplary service of God, obediently carrying out the Father's will. This is parallel to the scope of Christ's service which he presents as a model for His disciples in Luke 22:27. Therefore *παῖς* was not simply a term to convey suffering and humiliation, but was a title that captured the very essence of Christ's messiahship, presenting His service to God as a slave who obediently and willingly carried out the will of his Lord in all things.²¹ The Messiah accomplished what no other human slave of God ever could: perfect obedience, complete submission, and unreserved dependence. The sense of Christ as *παῖς θεοῦ* need not be restricted exclusively to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 or even the servant songs of Isaiah for Christ fulfilled the slave paradigm found throughout the Old Testament. The *עֶבֶד* prophecies of Isaiah are the articulation of the messianic expectation that is rooted in God's creation intention as humanity relates to God as their sovereign Lord. This understanding of Christ as the paradigmatic *עֶבֶד* makes the use of *παῖς* consistent with the pattern of Old Testament figures such as David

²⁰ Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1959).

²¹ Mudge, "Servant Lord," 118.

(Acts 4:25) who could properly be understood as God's *παῖς* even though there was no sense of vicarious suffering in his service.²²

The emphasis of *παῖς* Christology then is not His vicarious death but on the fact that God has chosen and commissioned Christ to carry out the Father's will with unreserved obedience resulting in final exaltation.²³ Kilgallen concludes that the *παῖς* metaphor, whether used of Christ or other historical figures (i.e. David in Acts 4:25), emphasizes the associations of being chosen by God to serve Him and being fully obedient to God in that service.²⁴ This understanding of *παῖς* is especially important when one considers that believers are called to imitate the servile pattern of Christ (Luke 22:26-27) as they continue His work, serving God as His *δούλοι* (Acts 4:29) with obedience and dependence.²⁵ Thus the slave of God paradigm conveyed by *παῖς* does not merely look back at Christ's messianic qualifications but also presents a strong connection between Christ as the ideal slave of God and Christians who are called to live out the slave paradigm in the course of following Christ.²⁶ It is concluded that the presentation of Christ as the *παῖς θεοῦ* in Acts draws from the slave paradigm in the Old Testament and reflects a very early articulation of Christology which understood Christ as the paradigmatic slave of the Lord. His life and His death demonstrated submission and obedience to the Father and His

²² Jones, "The Title 'Servant,'" 155.

²³ John B. Polhill, *Acts: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 131.

²⁴ John J. Kilgallen, "Your Servant Jesus Whom You Anointed (Acts 4,27)," *Revue Biblique* 105 (1998): 193.

²⁵ J.A. Buhner, "*παῖς*," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 3:6.

²⁶ Mudge, "Servant Lord," 122.

example provides the church with a model by which to pattern their own Christian lives.

Christ as *παῖς* in Acts 3:13-26

Peter's second sermon in the book of Acts opens with his assertion that God has glorified "His servant (*παῖς*) Jesus" (Acts 3:13) and closes with the explanation that God raised up and sent Jesus as "His servant (*παῖς*)" (Acts 3:26) for the purpose of blessing. His *παῖς* Christology bookends this early sermon and conveys key aspects of Christ's identity and mission. In Acts 3:13 Peter announces Christ's identity and exaltation by referencing Isaiah 52:13 in which the *παῖς θεοῦ* is exalted (*δοξάζομαι*) by God in spite of facing harsh opposition in service of God. While Peter goes on to describe the suffering of Christ at the hands of the Jews in the subsequent context with some possible allusions to Isaiah 53,²⁷ the use of *παῖς* in Acts 3:13 does not connote suffering but rather exaltation and therefore serves as an honorific title for Christ.²⁸ Peter seems to be addressing the question of how Christ could be the Messiah if He had been crucified as a common slave or criminal. Peter makes the point that while Israel opposed Christ, God exalted and vindicated Him as His faithful Slave who endured suffering and persecution in carrying out the Father's will.²⁹ This is conceptually parallel to Philippians 2:6-11 in which Paul describes the humiliation and suffering of Christ in the form of a slave prior to being exalted by God to the highest place. In the context of the healing in Acts 3, Peter is making the

²⁷ Jesus is described as the "Righteous One" (Isa 53:11; Acts 3:14) who suffered in a fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 3:18) and was handed over (Isa 53:12; Acts 3:13) in order that He might "blot out sins" (Acts 3:19). Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 180.

²⁸ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraebel, and Donald H. Juel, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 28.

²⁹ Marshall, *Acts*, 97.

point that the exalted Christ is alive and still at work, doing miracles through His disciples though He is not physically present.

The use of *παῖς* as a title in Acts 3:13 describes one “commissioned by God who serves God”³⁰ and who is placed completely at God’s disposal in suffering as well as exaltation.³¹ While Peter does draw from Isaiah 52:13 in his use of this title, he does so primarily to convey Christ’s relationship with the Father leading to exaltation, not His vicarious suffering. This supports the thesis that Christ’s identification with the *παῖς* frames His entire life and not simply His redemptive death. Polhill observes that a broad understanding of *παῖς* as a messianic title connects the concept of *אֲדֹנָי* of the Lord in the Old Testament to the paradigm of *δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ* in the New Testament.³² Peter warns his audience that if they reject and deny God’s chosen *παῖς* (Acts 3:15) then they have rejected God who appointed, sent, and exalted Him (Acts 2:20-23). Here the associations of representative authority and derived identity are especially significant for to reject Christ is to reject the Father who sent Him (Luke 10:16).

After Peter recounts Christ’s identity as Messiah, His suffering at the hands of the Jews, and His exaltation by God, *παῖς* Christology is the final thing left echoing in the ears of his hearers. Peter concludes his sermon with the declaration that God raised up His *παῖς* and sent Him to bless the Jews by turning them from their wicked ways (Acts 3:26). In Acts 3:22 Peter reminds the Jews of God’s promise to “raise up a prophet” like Moses (Deut 18:15) and in Acts 3:25 he cites the Abrahamic promise of a blessing for the nations from his “seed (Gen 22:18). When

³⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 169.

³¹ Polhill, *Acts*, 149.

³² *Ibid.*, 149 n. 68.

Peter concludes that God has “raised up” Jesus as His *παῖς* it summarily presents Christ as the culmination of God’s unfolding plan, coming on to the scene of history to be the faithful *דָּבָר* of the Lord, the commissioned Prophet, and the Abrahamic blessing. The lexical parallel between Acts 3:22 and 3:26 suggests that “raised up” (*ἀνίσταμαι*) in this context refers to the incarnation and historical ministry of Christ rather than to Christ’s resurrection from the dead.³³ However, Bock suggests that there may possibly be some wordplay which allows both meanings to be conveyed in the term. If this is the case then Peter’s sermon begins and ends with the exaltation of Christ as God’s chosen *παῖς*. The use of *παῖς* in this early sermon of Peter supports the thesis that *παῖς* connoted more than just sacrificial suffering and reflects the centrality of the slave paradigm in the Christology of the early church in fulfillment of the Old Testament *דָּבָר* of the Lord paradigm.

Christ as *παῖς* in Acts 4:24-30

After Peter and John were threatened by the Sanhedrin and released (Acts 4:13-23) they reported all these things to the gathered congregation and then the believers called out to God in humble and dependent prayer (Acts 4:24-30). While Peter’s sermon in Acts 3 provides a glimpse of the *παῖς* Christology in the proclamation of the early church, Acts 4 offers a unique sampling of how the church used the title *παῖς* of God in their worship. In their prayer, the believers affirm that Jesus was God’s holy Slave (*παῖς*) who was anointed as Messiah but rejected by the Jewish people (Acts 4:27). The meaning of *παῖς* in this context is clarified by their reference to David in Acts 4:25 as “your *παῖς*” through whom God spoke the

³³ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 88. While Fitzmyer and others argue that it would have been a declaration of the risen Christ, this seems less likely given the strong parallel in the context. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Anchor Bible, vol. 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 285.

prophecy of Psalm 2:1-2.³⁴ The combination of *παῖς* and “anointed” (*χρίω*) suggests that Christ is the anointed Messiah who reigns as the Davidic King. He is the model slave who obeyed God fully and was fully at His disposal.³⁵ Christ rules with authority as God’s anointed King while also modeling what it is to be under authority, perfectly fulfilling the expectations of the *παῖς θεοῦ*.³⁶ David was called God’s *παῖς* in the context of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:5) and this title seemed to be preserved in Jewish messianic expectation as Zechariah anticipates salvation from the house of David, God’s *παῖς* (Luke 1:69). The parallel between David and Christ in this context suggests that the meaning of *παῖς* is the same in both instances. Kilgallen concludes from this passage that *παῖς* refers primarily to one who was chosen by God and obediently carried out His will. Therefore *παῖς* emphasizes the unique relationship of submission and service between God and Jesus, His *παῖς*.³⁷

The two-fold identification of Christ as *παῖς* in the community’s prayer does not seem to draw from any of the servant songs of Isaiah, which suggests a broad understanding of the sense of *παῖς*. The repetition of the title and lack of any further explanatory clauses or Old Testament allusions argues for the possibility that *παῖς* as a title for Christ had already become an important part of the early church’s worship. In fact, the phrase “your holy Servant (*παῖς*) Jesus” is well attested in the writings of the early church (*Did.* 9:2, 10:2; *1 Clem.* 59:2-4; *Barn.* 6:1; 9:2; *Mart. Pol.* 14:1, 20:2) which further underscores the antiquity and theological significance of

³⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, 149.

³⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 207.

³⁶ Kilgallen, “Your Servant,” 195.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

Christ as the *παῖς θεοῦ*.³⁸ Their entreaty concludes with the early believers identifying themselves as God's *δούλοι* (Acts 4:29) who ask and expect that God will empower them for their task and would continue to accomplish His work on the earth through His holy servant (*παῖς*) Jesus (Acts 4:30). This prayer makes a direct connection between the example of David as God's chosen slave, the pattern of Christ as God's faithful slave, and the identity of God's people who are called to offer God obedience and submission based on the model of slavery to God as Lord. Therefore, to proclaim Christ as the faithful and righteous *παῖς* of the Lord was to identify in Him the pattern for His people as well. The church assumed that Christ was continuing to function in the role of *παῖς* (Acts 4:30) even after His ascension which indicates that *παῖς* was not restricted to Christ's service of vicarious suffering but encompassed His very identity, whether on earth or exalted in heaven.³⁹ The prayer of the church in Acts 4 understands Christ as the *παῖς* of God in the same manner as David, chosen by God to exclusively serve God. Their worship of Christ as the exemplary slave provides them with a pattern for their own lives as they submit to God as His slaves. Their worship juxtaposes Christ as the anointed Messiah who rules in authority and the obedient Slave of God who serves under authority.

Jesus as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53

Although the concept of Christ as the fulfillment of the *עֶבֶד* of the Lord in the New Testament conveys a broader paradigm than the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, it is readily apparent that the service of Christ as the anticipated *παῖς*

³⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 67.

³⁹ Mudge, "Servant Lord," 119.

included redemptive suffering in fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah 53. In Acts 8:26-35 Philip encounters an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading from Isaiah 53:7b-8a which describes a servant figure who was unjustly killed as if he were a sacrificial lamb.⁴⁰ The eunuch's is perplexed by whom the passage is describing (Acts 8:35) and Philip immediately takes the opportunity to show him from the Scriptures that Jesus is the one who was humiliated and submissive in suffering and yet was ultimately vindicated.⁴¹ The portion of Scripture read by the eunuch does not include the verses on vicarious suffering in the immediate context of Isaiah 53 which seems to indicate that the focus is on Christ's identity as the promised עֶבֶד rather than the substitutionary nature of His atonement.⁴² Philip begins with an explanation of the innocent sufferer of Isaiah 53:7-8 and proceeds to proclaim the gospel of Christ to him, which certainly would have included the necessity of Jesus' vicarious suffering.⁴³

The question of the servant's identity was one that puzzled first-century Jews as well and there is no evidence that anyone prior to Christ's ministry had identified the "suffering servant" of Isaiah 53 with the Davidic Messiah who would rule with justice and might.⁴⁴ Philip's identification of Jesus as the עֶבֶד who must suffer was not the result of his own ingenuity or exposition but was rooted in

⁴⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 343.

⁴¹ Witherington, *Acts*, 298.

⁴² Bruce, *Acts*, 176. Furthermore, this seems to be an argument against those who imagine that references to Christ as the Isaianic servant are simply the product of the early church's theological invention. If the church intended to provide a rationale for Christ's innocent death it would seem careless for them to omit the verses that most clearly anticipate the atonement.

⁴³ Jones, "The Title 'Servant,'" 153. Jones observes that the text from Isa 53:7-8 emphasizes the necessity of Christ's passion but does not, by itself, expound on its meaning.

⁴⁴ Bruce, *Acts*, 176.

Christ's self-understanding and interpretation of His ministry.⁴⁵ There is strong evidence that Jesus understood His own life and imminent death as the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 as He cites Isaiah 53:12 on the eve of His death (Luke 22:37), identifies His service as giving His life as the ransom for many (Mark 10:45, cf. Luke 9:22), and connects the shedding of His blood with the inauguration of the New Covenant (Luke 22:20).⁴⁶ It was from Jesus that the early church interpreted His sacrificial death in light of Isaiah 53 and there are echoes of Isaiah 53 throughout the New Testament (John 12:38; 1 Pet 2:21-25; Rom 10:16).⁴⁷ The submission of Christ to the will of the Lord as the עֶבֶד of God means that He willingly endures opposition and mistreatment by those who oppose the one who sent Him. The vulnerability of the slave to mistreatment and the unreserved obedience of the slave are fused seamlessly in Christ's example in a manner reminiscent of the abuse of both slaves and son in the parable of the Wicked Tenants (Luke 20:14-15). Even the innocent suffering of Christ is consistent with the slave paradigm and its corresponding associations of submission and obedience no matter what the cost. Christ is the consummate slave of God who perfectly fulfills God's mission by giving His life in service of others.

⁴⁵ Jones, "The Title 'Servant,'" 152. Jones argues that any connection between Christ and the suffering servant was the result of the church's theological reflection, perhaps to reconcile the concept of a suffering messiah.

⁴⁶ For a detailed defense of Christ's self-understanding as the suffering servant see R. T. France, "The Servant of the Lord in the Teaching of Jesus," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 26-52. Of particular interest is France's argument that the establishment of the New Covenant was one of the primary functions of Messiah as well as of the Servant (Isa 42:6; 49:8). *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁷ Bock, *Acts*, 344.

Christ as the Model of Humility

It is significant that in Acts 8:33 humility (*ταπείνωσις*) is presented as a defining characteristic of the divinely commissioned *עֲבָד* as He carried out God's will. The word *ταπεινός* originally meant low socially and powerless. As a result, it was equated with a slave's status and perspective, "a synonym of 'not free.'"⁴⁸ To humble someone was thus to make them subservient and obedient, almost always with a derogatory sense.⁴⁹ The Greeks used the adjective *ταπεινός* disparagingly to refer to one who was servile, required to "display the lowly and submissive disposition which befits a slave."⁵⁰ Greco-Roman society highly prized autonomy and self-determination so any concept of being submissive to another in humble obsequiousness was detestable to the Greeks, even in the religious sphere.⁵¹ The fact that the characteristic of humility was specifically associated with the status and submission of a slave made *ταπεινός* a virtue in the Old Testament as the worshipper rightly recognized his or her subservience to God and dependence upon God as Lord (Isa 54:10; 66:2). A right relationship with God is marked by humility because it orients the Israelites to who God is (Sovereign Lord), who they are (redeemed slaves of God) and how they should live as a result. The divergent Hellenistic and Hebrew perspectives on humility reflect the divergent anthropologies of the two societies and their worldviews. The Hellenists viewed themselves as free and autonomous individuals who refused to submit to the will of another or deny themselves any

⁴⁸ H. Esser, "Humility," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 2:259.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Walter Grundmann, "*ταπεινός*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 2:2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3

freedom in service of another. While the Hebrews recognized that humanity was created by God and for God and therefore they must submit to and obey Him.⁵² When the eunuch reads from Isaiah 53:8 that the suffering servant was humble in His suffering, he touches on a key characteristic of the divine עֲבָדָה, humility which leads to submission to God even when mistreated.

Jesus describes himself as *ταπεινός* in heart before God in Matthew 11:29, describing the fact that He is yielded to the Father completely and obedient to God as His humble slave.⁵³ “Jesus was submissive before God, completely dependent on him, and devoted to him, and at the same time humble before men whose servant helper he had become.”⁵⁴ In the context, Jesus is calling the weary to take on His yoke of slavery for He is a master who is humble, completely submitted to God and therefore demonstrating God’s character through service of others. The connection between humility and the slave paradigm is explicit in Mary’s prayer in which she recognizes that God has had “regard for the humble (*ταπεινώσις*) state of your slave (*δούλη*)” (Luke 1:48). Humility is properly understood as “slave-mindedness” in which one recognizes God’s exalted position and the submission, dependence, and service which is the proper response to His Lordship.⁵⁵ In Philippians 2:5-8 Paul uses the humility of Christ as an ethical framework for the early church, pointing to Christ’s incarnation in the form of a slave (*δοῦλος*) and His humbling of Himself (*ταπεινώ*) before God by being obedient, even when it meant dying a slave’s death on the cross. The early church is called to humility of mind (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*) modeled

⁵² Ibid., 11.

⁵³ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁴ Esser, “Humility,” 262.

⁵⁵ Johnson, *Acts*, 360.

on the example of Christ as they submit themselves to God's service by selflessly serving one another (Phil 2:3-4). This understanding of humility as slave-mindedness which rightly accounts for God's sovereignty and humanity's submission is modeled in the example of Christ and is rich with theological and practical significance.

Jesus as the Divine Lord

In Luke's gospel Jesus' identity as Lord was announced by the angels (Luke 2:11), acknowledged by a select few during His ministry (Luke 1:43; 5:8; 7:6-7), and demonstrated in His resurrection (Luke 24:34). The previous chapter outlined how the title "Lord" identified Christ as the incarnation of God and carried the associations of supreme authority and power with the expectation of submission and obedience. God's role as Lord over His people in the Old Testament and Christ's exaltation as Lord in the New Testament preserve many associations of a master's relationship to his slaves as discussed in the lexical section of chapter 2. A comprehensive treatment of the function of *κύριος* in the primitive Christology of the church is beyond the scope of this study. However, this section will consider a few representative passages that illustrate the theological and practical significance of the church's recognition of Christ as Lord.

Jesus as Lord and Christ

Peter's sermon at Pentecost reaches a crescendo in Acts 2:36 as he declares "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified." In the context of his message, Peter had cited Joel 2:32, announcing that salvation came through calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21). In the immediate context of Peter's climactic statement (Acts 2:34-35), Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 to proclaim that Christ's

resurrection from the dead proves that Jesus shares God's unique glory and has been seated at God's right hand as Lord over all. Christ had cited this same verse in Luke 20:42-43 to make the point that the supreme lordship of the Messiah made Him David's Lord as well as David's son.⁵⁶ Peter announces to the crowd that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of these Scriptures as the Lord to be called upon and the Davidic Son who is Lord over all (Acts 10:36). Byron asserts, "Similar to the ideology of the Israelite monarchy, Christ is God's representative on earth and directs those under his authority toward obedience of God. Those who obey Christ are his slaves as well as the slaves of God."⁵⁷ The fact that God has "made" Jesus Lord and Christ does not suggest adoptionism, as if Jesus had not been Lord or Messiah prior to His death and resurrection. The verb *ποιέω* indicates that God has shown or established Christ's deity and messianic identity through His resurrection and exaltation.⁵⁸ Jesus was proclaimed as Christ the Lord at His birth by the angel (Luke 2:11) and therefore "the resurrection only confirmed and vindicated Him in that role."⁵⁹

Peter places the title "Lord" in the emphatic position in Acts 2:36, making the unequivocal statement that Christ is the Lord of salvation (Acts 2:21) who rules as sovereign (Acts 2:36-37). Peter equates Jesus with the God of the Old Testament and it is on His name they must call (Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; 22:16) and in His name they must be baptized (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5).⁶⁰ The resurrection proves

⁵⁶ Bock, *Acts*, 133.

⁵⁷ John Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press), 86.

⁵⁸ Witherington, *Acts*, 149.

⁵⁹ Donald L. Jones, "The Title *Kyrios* in Luke-Acts," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 74 (1974): 93.

⁶⁰ Bruce, *Acts*, 68.

that Jesus shares God’s divinity and therefore also His sovereign authority. It has been argued that God’s position as Lord in the Old Testament conveyed the slave metaphor in His relationship with His people. Christ’s use of *κύριος* in His teaching and parables only strengthen the connection between the title “Lord” and its associations from the metaphor of slavery. In Acts and the epistles Jesus is repeatedly called “Lord” (Acts 1:21; 4:33; 8:16; 16:31) but one might wonder whether the term preserved any associations with the metaphor of slavery or if it had simply become a divine title, divorced from its sociocultural origins. In Acts 20:19 Paul explains that his ministry had been like a slave serving (*δουλεύω*) his Lord, faithfully carrying out the commission that had been given to him by the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:24). Paul echoes this pattern in 2 Corinthians 4:5, proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and himself as a slave for the sake of Christ. Paul explains that free believers are properly understood as slaves of the Lord (1 Cor 7:22) and Romans 14:18 urges believers to offer Christ a slave’s service. While these passages do not prove the correlation between slavery to Christ and the title “Lord,” they do strongly suggest that Christ’s identity and authority as Lord requires the same obedient service from His people as was found in the slave paradigm in the Old Testament.

Baptized in the Name of Jesus

Immediately following Peter’s declaration of Christ as Lord in Acts 2:36 he calls the crowd to repent and “be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38). Baptism “in the name of Christ” was practiced from the very beginning of the early church and continued throughout the New Testament period (Acts 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 1 Cor 1:13,15; Rom 6:3).⁶¹ In Greco-Roman society the phrase *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* was

⁶¹ For the purpose of this section the phrases *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, *ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι*, and *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι* will all be considered parallel concepts which describe a common practice of the early church. Polhill, *Acts*, 117.

used in commerce when there was a transfer of ownership, such as when money is credited “into the name of” someone.⁶² If this is the imagery that lies behind being baptized in the name of Christ then baptism would mark the transfer of ownership to the heavenly *κύριος*, being placed under His protection and control.⁶³ However, many scholars are skeptical of a commercial background for the baptismal formula because it is conceptually so far removed from the practice of baptism.⁶⁴ Bietenhard observes that in Jewish tradition manumitted slaves would often take a ritual bath “into the name of a free man” to symbolically declare what was forensically true, that they were no longer subservient to their master’s authority.⁶⁵ In such cases the ritual bath was done in the name of what the person was to become so that the bath was understood to put them into that position. It is possible then that baptism was a symbolic declaration of the believer’s new identity as one who was subservient to Christ, no longer a slave to sin.⁶⁶ In either case there is sufficient evidence to propose that baptism marked the believer’s submission to Christ as Lord, being placed under God’s authority and secured as His possession (1 Cor 3:23; 1 Pet 2:9).⁶⁷ The explanation and practice of baptism in the early church supports the interpretation of baptism as a ritual marking the transition from slavery to sin to slavery to God. John Chrysostom repeatedly describes baptism as one’s submission

⁶² Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 266.

⁶³ Lars Hartman, “Into the Name of Jesus,” *New Testament Studies* 20 (1974): 432.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 433.

⁶⁵ Hans Bietenhard, “*ἄνομα*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:276.

⁶⁶ Bietenhard also observes that Gentile slaves would take a ritual bath “in the name of a slave” which publically placed them into the position of a slave. *Ibid.*, 268.

⁶⁷ Marshall, *Acts*, 86.

to Christ as their new master, committing to serve Him with faithfulness and obedience.⁶⁸

Paul makes a direct connection between baptism and becoming one's possession in 1 Corinthians 1:12-15 when he counters the Corinthians' claim of belonging to Paul (1 Cor 1:12) by asking if they had been baptized in the name of Paul. The implication is that because they were baptized in the name of Christ they belong to Christ, united as God's people in service of Christ alone (1 Cor 1:13). The early believers customarily confessed Jesus as "Lord" at their baptism (Rom 10:9, 1 Cor 12:3), declaring publically their submission to Christ and their identification with Him. In this act they simultaneously announced their freedom from slavery to sin (Rom 6:6) and their allegiance to Christ as their Lord. Harris concludes, "In baptism there is a signified transference of believers into the permanent possession and safe keeping of the omnipotent Trinity . . . And in response the believer says to God, 'I belong to you. I will be your willing slave forever.'"⁶⁹

Ministry in the Name of Jesus

When Peter and John encounter the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, Peter exclaims, "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!" (Acts 3:6). The apostles and others in the book of Acts are often described as healing, preaching, and serving "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:10, 17-18, 30; 5:40; 9:27; 16:18). It was proposed in the previous chapter that performing service "in the name" of someone was to appeal to his authority as one commissioned to carry out his will, sometimes

⁶⁸ I. A. H. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 119.

⁶⁹ Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 110.

used when a slave was carrying out his masters orders. If this understanding is correct, it would be logical that, in the absence of the Lord after His ascension, the disciples would more frequently use this authorization formula to declare the basis of their authority and power as they carry out His commission. There was nothing magical about the “in the name” formula which is humorously illustrated by the futile attempts of the seven sons of Sceva to cast out demons in Jesus’ name (Acts 19:13-16).⁷⁰ Instead, works done “in the name of Jesus” invoke the authority and power of Jesus, their absent Lord.⁷¹ Peter’s declaration in Acts 3:6 demonstrates that he is only mediating Christ’s authority for he had been commissioned by Christ and it was through Christ’s power, not Peter’s ability, that the man would be healed. The Sanhedrin’s question in Acts 4:7, “By what power or in what name have you done this?” recognizes a connection between actions “in the name” of someone and the power which that commission entails. The risen Christ had authorized and empowered the disciples to act in His name and to perform the same miraculous works as Jesus had done in His earthly ministry.⁷² Paul uses this same formula to admonish believers, speaking as one who had been commissioned and authorized to speak on behalf of Christ as His representative (1 Cor 1:10; 5:4; 2 Thess 3:6).⁷³ While it is unlikely that the name “is a full periphrasis for the personal presence of Jesus,” it is certainly reasonable that Christ’s presence was mediated by the apostles as His representatives.⁷⁴ This reflects the same associations of derived identity and

⁷⁰ Witherington, *Acts*, 175.

⁷¹ Polhill, *Acts*, 128.

⁷² Bruce, *Acts*, 80.

⁷³ Bietenhard, “ὄνομα,” 278.

⁷⁴ Witherington, *Acts*, 175.

representative authority which were observed in Luke 10:16. When believers invoke the name of Jesus in the book of Acts they are claiming His authority and power for the work they are about to do, recognizing that they are commissioned agents of the their Master who are called to carry out His work on the earth.

The early church recognized Jesus' identity as Lord as early as Peter's sermon at Pentecost and this title conveyed the deity and authority of Christ. Christ's position as Lord entailed submission and service from His people which provides key conceptual links to the slave metaphor. In the book of Acts baptism and ministry were done "in the name of Jesus" which further highlights Christ's exalted position and supreme authority along with humanity's dependence on His power and obedience in His service.

Christians as the Slaves of Christ

As the church proclaimed Jesus as God's chosen slave there is significant evidence in the book of Acts that they acknowledged in Christ's service a pattern for their own. Because Jesus' service represented all of His life and ministry and not merely His vicarious suffering, the early church could emulate the example of Christ by yielding to God as their Lord and serving others in submission to His will. The usage of the slave metaphor to describe believers generally and leaders specifically reflects the slave paradigm found in Christ's didactic and parabolic discourse. This section will examine the usage of the slave metaphor in the theology and practice of the early church to discern how and why the metaphor was used to describe their relationship with God.

Slavery as a General Designation of Discipleship in Acts

Just as the Israelites were collectively described as the slaves of God (Lev 25:42; Isa 41:8-10), believers in the book of Acts are sometimes described as His δούλοι which conveys their dependence on God and their submission to God. While this usage is not found extensively in the book of Acts, the two clear instances of slave language applied to believers are sufficient to demonstrate continuity with the Old Testament and Christological pattern.

“My male and female slaves” in Acts 2:18. In Acts 2:17-21 Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32 in which God promises to pour out His Spirit on all of humanity. Joel predicted that the ministry of the Spirit would reach to “your sons and your daughters” and “your old men . . . and your young men,” suggesting that the Spirit would be given to all people irrespective of age or gender. But when Peter reaches Joel’s final pairing “even on the male and female slaves” (Joel 2:29) he instead describes them as “my slaves, both men and women” (Acts 2:18). The sudden shift from “your” sons, daughters, and men to the amended quotation “my slaves” raises the interpretive questions of why Peter would add this descriptor and who he understood the slaves to be. Some interpreters preserve the original structure of Joel’s passage and conclude that Peter is describing literal slaves who would also be given the Spirit, a third grouping that represents the removal of social class in parallel to the diversity of gender and age in the preceding context.⁷⁵ Bock asserts that the inclusion of “my” reflects God’s special relationship and care for those who tend to be marginalized and forgotten in society.⁷⁶ While a literal interpretation is

⁷⁵ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 74. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 253.

⁷⁶ Bock, *Acts*, 115.

certainly defensible based on the flow of the original prophecy, it seems to ignore the significance of the fact that Peter calls them “my slaves,” a phrase that echoes the Old Testament slave paradigm.

An alternative interpretation of the passage argues that “my slaves, men and women” is not a separate pairing but rather an inclusive group which provides a collective spiritual designation for the diverse social groups listed in the context.⁷⁷ This would shift the emphasis from broad social inclusion to the fact that all believers, male and female, young and old, are properly understood as slaves of God.⁷⁸ In this case, the social distinctions are not just insignificant as criteria for receiving the Spirit but through the gift of the Spirit such distinctions are subsumed in their new identity as slaves of God.⁷⁹ This elimination of previous social distinctions by becoming slaves of God is reminiscent of the pattern of natal alienation in which a slave’s previous status, whether poverty or prominence, is left behind and his identity is determined by his new relationship to his master. Ringgren supports this interpretation, asserting that the addition of “my” makes slaves a spiritual category while in Joel it describes one’s social status.⁸⁰ Although the church is never spoken of collectively as the *δοῦλος* of God as Israel was (Ps 79:5 LXX), this description of all believers as the *δοῦλοι* of God reflects a similar understanding of their relationship and responsibility before God. If this interpretation is correct, it would seem rather significant that the first descriptor of

⁷⁷ Daniel C. Arichea, “Some Notes on Acts 2.17-21” *The Bible Translator* 35 (1984): 442.

⁷⁸ Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2008), 79.

⁷⁹ Arichea, “Some Notes,” 442.

⁸⁰ Helmer Ringgren, “Luke’s Use of the Old Testament,” *Harvard Theological Review* 79 (1986): 233. There are many other scholars who come to the same conclusion. Polhill, *Acts*, 109; Witherington, *Acts*, 142; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 20.

Spirit-empowered believers after Pentecost is “my slaves” which draws from the Old Testament metaphor and expands its significance in light of the advent of the Spirit.

Believers as “your slaves” in Acts 4:29. After Peter and John were arrested, threatened, and released by the Sanhedrin, the church responded with the corporate prayer recorded in Acts 4:24-30, one of the only corporate prayers recorded in the book of Acts. In the face of danger and uncertainty the believers express their dependence on God in prayer, addressing God as “Master” (Δέσποτα). This title is directly rooted in the slave metaphor, describing a master who has complete power and control over his slaves and their circumstances.⁸¹ Although δεσπότης generally described a lord who was arbitrary and despotic in his exercise of his authority, its use in reference to God emphasized His sovereign control over all things and His unchallengeable power in the face of the Sanhedrin’s threats.⁸² God is addressed as Master and Creator of the universe, ruling with power and authority as Lord by virtue of His creation of the world and everything in it.⁸³ This ties the slave metaphor back to God’s pattern in creation in which humanity was created to be an obedient son and servant king in submission to the Lord whom they represented in their rule upon the earth. Peter and John had insisted that they were compelled to obey their Lord’s commands rather than heed the Sanhedrin’s prohibition from speaking “in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18-20). Now the congregation addresses God as their Master in humble dependence. Having committed themselves to unconditional obedience to the Master’s will, they now submit themselves under His

⁸¹ Witherington, *Acts*, 201.

⁸² Marshall, *Acts*, 111.

⁸³ Bock, *Acts*, 205.

sovereign authority and protection, trusting that He possesses control over every facet of the world and their lives.

The Jews sometimes addressed God as Δέσποτα in the LXX (Job 5:8; Isa 1:23, 3:1; Jer 4:10) in their prayers, appealing to God's sovereign power to protect His people and judge their enemies.⁸⁴ In Luke 2:29 Simeon addresses God as Δέσποτα to express his humble submission to God's authority and his willing obedience to God's will. In the New Testament God (Rev. 6:10) and Jesus (2 Tim 2:1; 2 Pet 2:1; Jude 4) are called δεσπότης in contexts that describe God's sovereign rule and humanity's ultimate accountability to His judgment.⁸⁵ It became common in the liturgy of the church as early as the end of the first-century for them use the title "δεσπότης" in reference to God in prayer (*Did.* 10.3; *1 Clem.* 59.4; 60.3; 61.1,2).⁸⁶ The fact that the early church often referred to God using a term which conveyed a master's authority over his slaves suggests that the slave metaphor provided a central paradigm for the believer's relationship with God. The counterpart of δεσπότης was not servant or son, but rather slave.⁸⁷

In their prayer the believers recognize that they are experiencing the same futile opposition to God's purposes as Christ, the παῖς of God, endured when He was serving God's sovereign purpose (Acts 4:25-27). Following in the pattern of Christ as παῖς, the believers identify themselves as God's δοῦλοι and petition their Lord (κύριος) to grant protection and provision to His faithful slaves. Mudge argues

⁸⁴ God is described as δεσπότης 25 times in the LXX. Polhill, *Acts*, 148.

⁸⁵ In Jude 4 δεσπότης and κύριος are used in parallel which further strengthens the argument that κύριος preserved aspects of the slave metaphor in the theology of the early church.

⁸⁶ Charles K. Barrett, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 243. Polhill, *Acts*, 148.

⁸⁷ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 34.

that this prayer marks the establishment of the slave paradigm in the early church as the believers employ slave language to describe key aspects of their Christian life.⁸⁸ It may be that the church used *παῖς* to refer to Christ and *δοῦλος* to describe themselves in an effort to communicate parallel denotations of the metaphor while distinguishing between the role of Christians and Christ himself.⁸⁹ As slaves of God they ask that the Lord take note of the threats against them and act on behalf of His people who are completely dependent on Him.⁹⁰ They trust that God will exercise justice and extend protection according to His will for their adversaries are actually opposing God. This request would be consistent with the representative identity and complete dependence of a slave in his relationship with his master.

For their second request the believers do not ask to be spared opposition or for an easier task. Instead, they pray for sufficient boldness to carry out their Master's will, being willing to endure the persecution and suffering that may result from their obedience. The believers rightly recognized that they were responsible for obedience through proclamation and they trusted that their Master would be responsible for provision and protection as they served Him faithfully.⁹¹ While the believers served God as willing *δοῦλοι* they prayed that God would continue to work "through the name of your holy servant (*παῖς*) Jesus" (Acts 4:30). There is an unmistakable connection in their prayer between Christ's ongoing work as the divine *παῖς* and the believers' complementary work as God's slaves. The pattern of Christ as

⁸⁸ Mudge, "Servant Lord," 122.

⁸⁹ Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 249. This pattern would be similar to the tendency of the LXX to use *παῖς* which still describe a slave relationship but without some of the derogatory connotations of *δοῦλος*. It has already been observed that Jesus is never directly referred to as *δοῦλος*, perhaps because of the menial sense of the term.

⁹⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 208.

⁹¹ Witherington, *Acts*, 203.

the slave of God becomes the purpose of His people as they humbly continue His work. This paradigm of discipleship as slavery to God is reflected elsewhere in the New Testament where believers are described as slaves of the Lord which compels them to submit to God's rule (1 Pet 2:16), heed His revelation (Rev 1:1), and live out their identity as God's commissioned slaves (Rev 2:20).⁹² In Peter's proclamation and the church's prayer believers are described as the slaves of God who depend on God completely and obey His will as they follow the example of Christ. This metaphorical slave pattern, established in the earliest practice of the church, continued to be a paradigm of discipleship throughout the New Testament and beyond.

Slavery as a Specific Designation of Leadership in Acts

Many of the parables of Christ employ the metaphor of slavery to remind the apostles and others that leadership is properly exercised under God's authority, with appropriate humility, and with the expectation of ultimate accountability to the Master (Luke 12:35-38, 42-48; 17:7-10; 19:11-27). The leader was still a slave, entrusted with responsibility and authority by the Master to care for one's fellow slaves in sacrificial service (Luke 22:25-27). This section will investigate whether there is any evidence that a paradigm of slave leadership was recognized or practiced by the early church.

David as the *παῖς* of God in Acts 4:25. The first instance of slavery as a designation of leadership draws from the Old Testament usage when the early church cites Psalm 2:1-2 as God's word of revelation through "your servant (*παῖς*) David" (Acts 2:25). In the Old Testament David is repeatedly described as God's

⁹² Other references include: 1 Cor 7:22; Rev 6:11; 7:3; 19:5; 22:3.

slave in his own prayers (1 Sam 23:10; 25:39), in God’s description of him (1 Sam 7:5; Ps 78:70) and even in ascriptions for psalms he composed (Ps 35:1). As the ruling king and God’s humble slave David was a prime example of how the title “slave of God” was used in an honorific sense as one who was chosen and commissioned by God to exercise authority and accomplish God’s work. And yet in the church’s prayer they recognized that David was ultimately God’s intermediary, the human instrument by which God revealed His word.⁹³ In this way, slavery to God could simultaneously convey honor and humility as the leader found in the Master a unique delegated responsibility as well as the source of his sufficiency. The fact that Christ and all believers are also described as God’s slave in the context of the prayer shows the flexibility of the metaphor as well as its centrality in the theology of the early church.

Apostles who serve in Acts 6:1-4. In Luke 22:25-27 Jesus instructs the disciples that they must become like a servant (*διάκονος*), selflessly serving others according to the will of the Master just as Christ had done. Acts 6:1-4 provides a practical picture of how the apostles navigated the demands of the people and the commission they had received from Christ. In Acts 6:1 a complaint arose from some Hellenistic Jews because they felt that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The Twelve gathered the congregation and insisted that it would be wrong for the apostles to forsake the service (*διακονία* in Acts 6:4) of preaching the word in order to take up serving (*διακονέω*) food to the widows. Both proclamation and food distribution are presented as *διακονία*, selfless ways to serve others in offering a slave’s service of God.⁹⁴ Yet the disciples recognized that they

⁹³ Marshall, *Acts*, 112.

⁹⁴ Witherington, *Acts*, 250.

could not meet every need in service of others and so they prioritized the specific commission they had received from Christ (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) and appointed others to serve by meeting the practical needs of food distribution. The apostles served others by obeying the expressed will of the Master, making their priority the stewardship of the responsibility given to them by God.⁹⁵ Although there is no indication that *διάκονος* was used as a title or office in the church at this point, the fact that *διάκονος* became an office within the early church (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13) underscores the connection between the exercise of authority in leadership and selfless service of others.⁹⁶ The very fact that the apostles would delegate one form of *διακονία* so that they could focus their attention on a different aspect of *διακονία* demonstrates that their service of others was governed by the commission of the Master and not the urgency of the demands of the people.

Paul and Barnabas as the “light to the Gentiles.” After being rejected by the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas announced that they would be preaching to the Gentiles for, “The Lord has commanded us, ‘I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles that you might bring salvation to the ends of the earth’” (Acts 13:47). Paul cites the servant’s role in Isaiah 49:6 as the basis of his own ministry, echoing his own commission from God which is described in Acts 9:15 and reinforced in Acts 26:18. Luke had previously identified Jesus as the Isaianic slave who would shine as a light to the Gentiles (Luke 2:29-32), bringing light to those in darkness (Luke 1:78-79), and suffering as the innocent one (Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32-35). What is startling is that Paul and Barnabas now present themselves in the role of the Isaianic slave of the Lord, a role that had explicitly been tied to Jesus up to this

⁹⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 259.

⁹⁶ Johnson, *Acts*, 106.

point. “Paul and Barnabas are now seen as an extension of the work of the Servant of the Lord, who was Jesus.”⁹⁷ Christ is the exemplary slave of the Lord, the fulfillment of Old Testament expectation and prophecy. Therefore, Paul and Barnabas are following in Christ’s footsteps and striving for the same mission because the mission of the Master is the responsibility of all of His slaves.⁹⁸ In Acts 26:18 Paul demonstrates a similar pattern as he presents his own ministry in the model of the Isaianic servant (Isa 42:7) and then identifies Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Acts 26:23 (Isa 42:6). The fact that both Christ and Paul are described as the Isaianic *παῖς* who would bring light and salvation underscores the centrality of Christ’s identity as the *παῖς* of God and the solidarity between Jesus and believers as they carry out the will of God. While no explicit slave language is used in this passage, the fact that Paul and Barnabas cast themselves in the same pattern as Christ communicates their commission with God’s authority and obedience to His commands.

“Slaves of the Most High God” in Acts 16:17. During his ministry in Philippi, Paul encountered a slave girl who was possessed by a demon and who earned great profit for her masters through fortune telling and divination (Acts 16:16). This slave girl began to follow after Paul and Silas crying out, “These men are bond servants (*δοῦλοι*) of the Most High God who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17). There is a striking irony in this text as the slave girl who is compelled to serve her own masters announces the presence of men who serve as slaves of a divine Master.⁹⁹ Commentators are divided as to whether the demon

⁹⁷ Bock, *Acts*, 464.

⁹⁸ Marshall, *Acts*, 245.

⁹⁹ Johnson, *Acts*, 294.

possessed slave is proclaiming their true Christian mission or falsely identifying Paul and his companions as agents of a pagan deity. Trebilco argues that “Most High God” (θεός ὑψιστος) in Hellenistic thought would not have been a reference to Yahweh but rather to the highest god of the Greek pantheon, Zeus.¹⁰⁰ In contrast, F. F. Bruce suggests that the reference to the “Most High God” would have provided a common denominator so that both Jews and pagans would understand that Paul and Barnabas were serving the one true God.¹⁰¹ However, Bruce ignores the different ways that phrase would have been interpreted by her Hellenistic hearers. Although Jews would have assumed that ὑψιστος referred to the God of the Old Testament (Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35; Acts 7:48), the pagans of Philippi would not have thought of the Jewish God as “most high” and therefore may have thought that Paul and Silas were prophets of Zeus.¹⁰² The fact that she announced that Paul and Silas were proclaiming “a way of salvation” (ὁδὸν σωτηρίας) is cited as further evidence that the demon was proclaiming falsehood, as if there were multiple ways by which one could be saved.¹⁰³

The case marshaled for the falsehood of the slave-girl’s claim tends to focus on the interpretation of ὑψιστος without any attention to the significance of δοῦλοι. This study has contended that Hellenists did not use the metaphor of slavery in any positive sense, not even in their religious spheres, because of its distasteful associations of submission and service. However, the Jews often described themselves as God’s δοῦλοι, those who had been redeemed by God and called to

¹⁰⁰ Paul R. Trebilco, “Paul and Silas – ‘Servants of the Most High God’ (Acts 16:16-18)” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (1989): 60.

¹⁰¹ Bruce, *Acts*, 312.

¹⁰² Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 586.

¹⁰³ Witherington, *Acts*, 494.

serve Him exclusively. This would seem to suggest that the girl was announcing objective truth using Jewish language and imagery, although it may not have readily been understood by Hellenistic listeners. The strongest evidence for the truthfulness of her proclamation comes from an examination of similar accounts in the gospels when Jesus encounters a demon possessed person who accurately and descriptively proclaims the identity of Christ. During Jesus' ministry demons address Him as "The Holy One of God" (Luke 4:30), "The Son of God" (Luke 4:41)" and "Jesus, Son of the Most High (ὑψιστος) God" (Luke 8:28). The fact that these demons proclaimed the objective identity of Christ using the same language for God found in Acts 16:17 seems to strongly suggest that the girl was accurately proclaiming that Paul and Silas were slaves of God. Pervo suggests that this is analogous to Balaam (Num 22-25) who unwittingly proclaimed God's truth in support of a rival deity.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, if the girl was announcing falsehood to the people of Philippi it would seem impossible that Paul would allow her to go on spreading lies "for many days" (Acts 16:18) before casting out the demon. When the people of Lystra mistook Paul and Barnabas for Hermes and Zeus, Paul and Barnabas immediately and strenuously objected and began to correct their misunderstanding (Acts 14:12-15)

It seems most likely that the slave's description of Paul and Silas was a true statement of their identity and mission but was subject to misinterpretation because of her ambiguous reference to the highest God and the announcement of a "way of salvation."¹⁰⁵ Therefore Paul does cast out the demon, not because the slave girl speaks falsehood, but because her declaration of their identity and mission was

¹⁰⁴ Pervo, *Acts*, 405.

¹⁰⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 536.

open to syncretistic misunderstanding, thus hindering his own proclamation.¹⁰⁶ If the description of Paul and Silas is accepted as objective truth it is truly remarkable that the slave metaphor would be used by the demonic realm as a description of Paul and Silas' ministry. Just as the demons identified Jesus as the "Holy One" and "Son of God," the demon in Acts 16:17 identifies these church leaders as slaves who were serving the "Most High God." Barrett suggests that this use of *δοῦλος* highlights their own humility in contrast to God's exalted majesty, continuing the slave pattern already observed in Acts 2:18 and 4:29.¹⁰⁷ Not only was the slave metaphor used broadly of the church congregation but in some instances it was used to designate those who exercised leadership within the church, carrying out Christ's commission even in the face of demonic opposition.

Paul's slavery to Christ in Acts 20:18-24. In Paul's farewell speech at Miletus, he recalls that ever since arriving in Asia had been "serving (*δουλεύω*) the Lord (*κύριος*) with all humility (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*) and with tears and with trials" (Acts 20:19). Summarizing his ministry, Paul depicts himself as a slave who has faithfully served his Master with humility in spite of suffering and difficulty.¹⁰⁸ Paul uses this same language (*δουλεύω*) in his epistles to urge all believers to serve the Lord as a slave seeking to please the Master alone (Rom 12:11; 14:18; Eph 6:7; Col 3:24). In Romans 16:18 Paul observes that those who are not slaves of Christ are slaves of sin, serving their own appetites rather than the Lord (Rom 6:17). Paul also describes himself in his epistles with the title "slave of Christ" (Rom 1:1, Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1).

¹⁰⁶ Trebilco, "Paul and Silas," 62.

¹⁰⁷ Barrett, *Acts*, 786.

¹⁰⁸ Pervo, *Acts*, 519.

In Acts 20:19 Paul provides a glimpse of his self-identity in relationship to his Lord that is firmly rooted in the slave paradigm and well represented in his letters.¹⁰⁹

Paul explains that his service of Christ was first of all marked by humility (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*), which was the same virtue displayed by Christ as the fulfillment of the Isaianic slave in Acts 8:32-35. This “slave-mindedness” came from Paul’s recognition that even in his apostolic ministry he was lowly and God was exalted as the supreme Lord, the source of his authority and the object of his service. This concept of humility “is thoroughly Pauline and shows the way he tries to re-envision models of leadership in light of his servant position in relationship to the real Lord, Christ.”¹¹⁰ Paul’s understanding of his derived identity kept him from becoming arrogant as if he were the master but it also helped him guard against people pleasing, as if those he served were the master (Acts 20:20, cf. Gal 1:10). Paul recalls that his service also entailed tears and trials as he suffered mistreatment on behalf of Christ, faithfully enduring the opposition which was ultimately rebellion against his Lord. It is even possible that the bonds of the Spirit in Acts 20:22 have a servile connotation as if Paul was one taken captive by Christ (Phil 3:12) and compelled to carry out His will.¹¹¹ A slave’s susceptibility to abuse is a relevant association in this case, not because of the harshness of the master, but because of the treachery of those who oppose Him.¹¹²

In Acts 20:24 Paul explains that he does not consider his own life of any account but is striving only to fulfill the commission given to him by Christ through

¹⁰⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, 424.

¹¹⁰ Witherington, *Acts*, 616 n.232.

¹¹¹ Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 75.

¹¹² Bock, *Acts*, 627.

service (διακονία) of others. Paul's exclusive to commitment to serving Christ without regard for his own fate is consistent with the slave metaphor and was modeled by Christ himself. Paul understands "his vocation as the willing surrender of himself as a ministry to his Lord, who also freely surrendered himself."¹¹³ Paul's passion to complete the ministry (διακονία) entrusted to him once again presents a paradigm in which a slave serves the master (δουλεύω) by serving others (διακονέω). In Acts 9:15 God describes Paul as his "chosen instrument (σκεῦος)" who would bear the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and it is this commission which Paul seeks to fulfill.¹¹⁴ It may be significant that σκεῦος was sometimes used to refer to slaves in Greco-Roman society for they were considered tools to be used by the master.¹¹⁵ While there are no clues in the context of Acts 9:15 that would suggest the slave paradigm, it is possible that even in Paul's commission from Christ he is identified as a slave commissioned to do the work of the master. Paul's concept of his διακονία in the context of Acts 20 could be as narrow as the collection he had taken up for the saints, but the broad scope of his speech makes it more likely that he is referring to the διακονία of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18) as he preached the gospel to those who were lost.¹¹⁶ In Paul's farewell speech he presents himself as the humble slave of his Lord who will strive to serve the Lord by serving others until his task is finished and his commission complete.

¹¹³ Pervo, *Acts*, 522.

¹¹⁴ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 677.

¹¹⁵ Christian Maurer, "σκεῦος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 7:358. Jennifer Glancy suggests that understanding σκεῦος description of a slave is the key to interpreting 1 Thess 4:4. Although her hermeneutic is suspect on that point, her premise that σκεῦος was a word used of slaves is helpful. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 70.

¹¹⁶ Witherington, *Acts*, 621.

Paul as ὑπηρέτης of the Lord. As Paul presents his defense before King Agrippa in Acts 26 he describes his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus and the commission he had received. “I have appointed you as a minister (ὑπηρέτης) and witness (μάρτυς) . . . to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light” (Acts 26:16-18). The description of Paul as a “servant and witness” uses similar language as Luke 1:2 in which Luke describes his dependence on “eyewitnesses and servants” as sources for his historical work. In this study’s treatment of Luke 1:2 it was concluded that ὑπηρέτης conveyed subservience to the will of the master with obedient service which was consistent with metaphor of slavery to God. Paul’s use of ὑπηρέτης in parallel with οἰκονόμος in 1 Corinthians 4:1 further strengthened the case for ὑπηρέτης being considered a slave term in some contexts. Based on Paul’s usage of ὑπηρέτης in 1 Corinthians 4:1, it seems likely that he uses this term with slave connotations to convey the expectations of subordination and faithful obedience which his commission from the Lord entailed.¹¹⁷ Mudge argues that ὑπηρέτης is used analogously with the slave terms παῖς and δοῦλος with an emphasis on a slave’s calling to serve the Master in some special task.¹¹⁸ Two clues in the immediate context further support the likelihood of ὑπηρέτης conveying the slave metaphor. In Acts 26:18 Paul describes his own commission with language that is directly tied to the slave of the Lord in Isaiah 42:1-7 as Paul continues the work which Christ began as the fulfillment of the Isaianic עֶבֶד.¹¹⁹ This is consistent with Paul’s identification with the Isaianic slave in Acts 13:47 and Paul’s description of his own ministry as a slave who faithfully serves his

¹¹⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, 503.

¹¹⁸ Mudge, “Servant Lord,” 123.

¹¹⁹ Bruce, *Acts*, 467.

Master (Acts 20:19). Secondly, Paul solemnly asserts that he was not disobedient to his divine commission (Acts 26:19) which draws from the expectations of submission and obedience associated with ὑπηρέτης. Therefore it is likely that even in his defense before King Agrippa Paul employs slave language to convey his relationship to the Lord and his responsibility to the Lord. From Peter's Pentecost sermon to Paul's final defense, the metaphor of slavery is used within the early church to describe the proper relationship of believers to the Lord and the special responsibility of leaders before the Lord as they exercise His authority in service of His commission.

Conclusion

Luke's use of the slave metaphor in the book of Acts demonstrates continuity with the Old Testament pattern of slavery to God and Christ's own example as the Messianic Slave who called His followers to imitate His service. The Christology of the early church used *παῖς θεοῦ* as a title for Christ which linked Him to the Isaianic עֶבֶד who obeyed the Father's will through His life and death. Jesus had explicitly and implicitly described Himself as the slave whom Isaiah had predicted and the church used this slave title in their proclamation and prayers. Jesus is also called "Lord" with full divine authority and it is "in the name of Jesus" that the apostles are authorized to teach and heal. Finally, Christians identified themselves as God's slaves who had been called to continue the work of the divine *παῖς* who humbly submitted to God and served others. Slave language was also used to describe Christian leaders as those specially commissioned with authority and responsibility to carry out their Master's will. The preceding exegetical survey demonstrates that the slave paradigm in the early church is consistent with the Old Testament use of the metaphor and rooted in Christ's teaching and example.

Therefore other instances of the slave metaphor in the New Testament epistles and early church fathers should be understood as a reflection of the pattern which Christ had provided.

CHAPTER 6

PROPOSED PARADIGM OF SLAVE LEADERSHIP

This study began by arguing for the need for an alternative to popular models of servant leadership because of their secular worldview and their misinterpretation of the biblical language of servanthood. The preceding chapters have examined the biblical image of slavery in its cultural, lexical, and Lukan context in order to propose a model of leadership that is rooted in the slave image as used by Christ and the early church. The exegesis of Luke's use of the image of slavery and its corresponding associations forms the requisite foundation for constructing an initial paradigm of leadership in which the leader is regarded as a slave of Christ and a servant of all. The analysis of the slave metaphor argued that all believers are properly understood as slaves of God who have the responsibility to serve God exclusively and selflessly as result of their redemption (Luke 1:38; 2:29; Acts 2:18; 4:29). Geoffrey Turner concludes that slavery to God "is at the heart of what it is to be a Christian."¹ Therefore, a model of slave leadership is simply the application of the gospel to the role and responsibilities of leadership.² Slave leadership is far more than a set of behaviors or a social-scientific model of authority; it is applied theology that is rooted in redemption, modeled after the example of Christ, and oriented to God as the supreme authority. There are no status distinctions between the

¹ Geoffrey Turner, "The Christian Life as Slavery: Paul's Subversive Metaphor," *Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010): 11.

² Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Your Slaves – On Account of Jesus" Servant Leadership in the New Testament," in *Servant Leadership*, ed. James R. Hawkinson and Robert K. Johnston (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1993), 7.

Christian leader and those he leads for both are slaves of the Master and coworkers in the same task.³ The slave leader is entrusted with the responsibility to lead his fellow slaves according to the expressed will of the Master, orienting them to their common mission in service of the Lord.

Figure 1. Seven Principles for a Pattern of Slave Leadership



³ Ibid., 10.

This chapter will use the associations of the slave metaphor outlined in chapter 3 as the structural outline of the proposed paradigm of slave leadership, drawing patterns and principles of leadership and discipleship from the Lukan slave passages specifically and Scripture more generally. The diagram of these seven principles (Chart 1) illustrates the centrality of redemption for the slave paradigm and the corresponding associations that flow from this foundational relationship. This chapter will explore these principles as an application of the slave metaphor to Christian leadership. Where applicable, the model of slave leadership will be contrasted with Greenleaf's model of servant leadership to highlight its distinctiveness from prevailing theories of servant leadership. This chapter concludes by proposing areas for further research in the development and application of the slave leadership paradigm.

Owned by the Master

When a slave was purchased in Greco-Roman society the master possessed absolute power of ownership over that slave because the slave belonged to him.⁴ The slave forfeited any freedom of self-determination or autonomy and was powerless to act independently of the master.⁵ A model of slave leadership begins with an understanding of the slave's redemption, the Lord's authority, and the surrender of one's autonomy in submission to the Master. This provides a distinctively Christian spiritual foundation upon which to build a gospel-centered model of leadership. Greenleaf's model of servant leadership was rooted in a

⁴ I. A. H. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 35.

⁵ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 4.

humanistic anthropology in which a person first altruistically wanted to serve others and then assumed a leadership role to fulfill his inner need to serve.⁶ Greenleaf identified the greatest enemy of society as “fuzzy thinking” and a refusal to pursue healing and wholeness by serving others.⁷ This humanistic foundation has rightly been criticized as inward-directed Pelagianism which is devoid of the transforming power of Christ.⁸ In contrast, slave leadership begins with humanity enslaved to sin and powerless to overcome its penalty and power. In order for leadership to be distinctively Christian, the leader must first be God’s purchased possession, redeemed by God and under His absolute authority.

Redeemed to Serve

A slave leader is not defined by the position he holds or the tasks he accomplishes. His life and identity are rooted in redemption, that moment when he was purchased from slavery to sin and made a slave to God as his Lord. When the Hebrews were enslaved in Egypt, God demanded that Pharaoh let them go “that they might serve me” (Exod 7:16; 8:1). The Exodus marked a defining moment in Israel’s history as God redeemed His people to become His own possession (Exod 19:5) who would now serve as His slaves (Lev 25:42). Redemption did not provide the Israelites freedom of self-determination. Instead, they were now the exclusive possession of the Lord and that relationship and its responsibilities oriented every

⁶ Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (Westfield, IN: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 1970), 11.

⁷ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 44.

⁸ Jack Niewold, “Beyond Servant Leadership,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 1 (2007): 126.

other aspect of their lives.⁹ Although the association of redemption and possession is less frequent in Luke-Acts, Zechariah anticipates that God will bring deliverance through the Messiah so that His people will serve Him faithfully and exclusively (Luke 1:74). In Acts 2:18 Peter describes all believers as slaves who belong to God and in Acts 4:29 the congregation addresses God with the understanding that He is their master and they are His willing slaves. Implicit in Luke's use of the slave metaphor is the understanding that believers now belong to God, although he does not explore the nature of that redemption.

Paul highlights redemption and the resulting possession by God more explicitly in 1 Corinthians 7:23 when he warns, "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men." Jesus Christ paid the price of redemption with His own blood (1 Pet 1:18-19) so that believers would become God's own possession (Eph 1:14; Titus 2:14) and serve Him exclusively. The Christian leader does not belong to himself and therefore he must not live for himself. The gospel entails freedom from slavery to sin and unreserved loyalty to God so that the slave leader devotes his entire life to service of God alone on the basis of his redemption. Paul offers a fitting summary of this principle in Romans 14:7-8, "For not one of us lives for himself and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."

It is apparent that a leader must first of all be rightly related to God through confession of sin, faith in Christ's sacrifice, and submission to Christ as Master. In His parables, Christ repeatedly warns of those who claim to know or serve Christ but ultimately reveal that they are serving themselves, using their leadership or even their service as a means of self-indulgence and self-glorification.

⁹ David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 42-46.

Christian leadership is built on the foundation of redemption and unless a person has experienced new birth there is nothing Christian about his leadership, regardless of how altruistic his actions might be. The leader is not simply a servant, voluntarily choosing to serve God as a matter of personal choice. The leader is a slave who is no longer under obligation to the flesh but now is obligated to serve the Lord because he has been redeemed (Rom 8:12-14). The leader's choice to serve God is a demonstration of his humble submission to the Lord which is necessarily rooted in God's providence and provision of redemption. Although discordant with models of leadership which prize self-determination, Paul highlights that his service of the Lord is not based on free choice but is a response to his obligation as a slave who must serve his Master unreservedly (1 Cor 9:16). This is not to imply that a leader's service is merely a duty or drudgery, but rather that redemption entails relational responsibilities which are humbly accepted on God's terms rather than freely chosen by the leader.

The Lord's Absolute Authority

Because the leader belongs to God as His slave, he is compelled to acknowledge God's absolute authority over every aspect of his life. The master has unreserved and exclusive rights to everything the leader has and is including his will, desires, and energy.¹⁰ One's relationship with the Lord supersedes any other allegiance or affection and submission to His authority orients every other aspect of a leader's character and function. The leader's relationship with God is not one aspect of his leadership; it is the basis, the pattern, and the purpose of his exercise of leadership. In contrast, popular models of servant leadership make self-

¹⁰ Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 143.

determination a vital component of servant leadership so that the individual initiates and regulates his or her own actions.¹¹ Acknowledging God as “Lord” is more than courtly convention, recognizing His exalted position and power. It is a declaration of His sovereign authority and complete control over one’s life and an expression of submission as His willing slave.¹² The Lordship of Christ requires that the slave offer Him complete surrender, not casual commitment. This acknowledgement of God’s absolute authority is most clearly displayed in Luke 2:29 and Acts 4:24 when Simeon as well as the early church address God as *δεσπότης*, a title which conveyed His supreme authority over their lives and all of creation. Luke also regularly used “Lord” as a title for Jesus in Luke-Acts, an image that was rooted in a slave’s relationship of submission and obedience to his master (Luke 5:8; 6:46; 24:34; Acts 2:36). Jesus warned His disciples that no slave could serve two masters for serving God as their master required exclusive loyalty and complete devotion (Luke 16:13). The slave has no power or purpose apart from the Master and therefore the slave leader is focused on the Master’s character, submissive to His will, and consequently empowered for His service.¹³ The relationship with the Master is both personal and absolute so that every other idolatrous and insignificant pursuit is laid aside in submission to God’s ultimate authority.¹⁴ Slave leadership is rooted in the gospel for it is God’s redemption that initiates the slave relationship and God’s authority which orient’s the slave’s life.

¹¹ Dirk van Dierendonck, “Servant Leadership: A Review and Synthesis,” *Journal of Management* 37 (2011): 1245.

¹² John MacArthur, *Slave: The Hidden Truth about Your Identity in Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 76.

¹³ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 306.

¹⁴ Snodgrass, “You Slaves,” 13.

Derived Identity

Greenleaf argues that in servant leadership one's self-concept is rooted in his servant nature, which he describes as the "real man, not bestowed, not assumed, and not to be taken away. He is servant first."¹⁵ Greenleaf's model of servant leadership suggests that servant behaviors flow from one's servant identity, a natural altruistic and moral state that is exercised through personal volition.¹⁶ Slave leadership, on the other hand, roots one's identity entirely in the Master he serves. Once a slave was purchased by a master he was forced to leave behind any ties or allegiances that might have defined him previously for he now had no identity apart from his relationship to the master.¹⁷ The slave's former self died when he was enslaved and his identity was now subsumed by the master for everything the slave was and did was defined by that central relationship. For this reason, slaves would identify themselves simply as the "slave of (master's name)," acknowledging that they belonged to the master.¹⁸ "The nature of any slavery is determined by the nature of the master. Who and what the master is, determines the status of the slave, the attitude of the slave, and the significance of the slave's work."¹⁹ According to this pattern, a slave leader finds his identity in his privileged relationship with his Lord, not in his past success or present position. This requires the leader to leave

¹⁵ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 7.

¹⁶ Sen Sendjaya, James C. Sarros, and Joseph C. Santora, "Defining and Measuring Servant Leadership Behaviour in Organizations," *Journal of Management Studies* 45 (2008): 406.

¹⁷ Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 1.

¹⁸ Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 47.

¹⁹ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 135.

behind any status that had previously defined his identity so that he can live out his new identity as Christ's representative. The slave is defined by the master he serves.

Natal Alientation

When a person became a slave he or she gave up any status indicators he had held previously and was then defined simply as a slave of the master. This is powerfully illustrated by the example of Christ who is presented as the exemplary Isaianic slave (Luke 22:37; Acts 3:13; 4:27; 8:32-34). Christ possessed equality with God in His very nature but was still willing to take on the form of a slave, leaving heaven's glory in submission to the Father and suffering as He faithfully carried out the Father's will (Phil 2:5-8). In the preaching of the early church it was the title *παῖς* which was repeatedly used to describe Christ (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30) as an obedient slave who accomplished the will of the Master. For the Christian leader, Christ is the model of leaving behind any sense of status or entitlement as a result of one's identity as a slave of God. Along with status distinctions, social distinctions are laid aside in light of the gospel. In Acts 2:18 Peter describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on people irrespective of their social status or gender, describing all believers summarily as the male and female slaves of God. Throughout his epistles Paul instructs believers that regardless of their social roles and responsibilities they are all slaves of God who are called to serve Him (1 Cor 7:22; Eph 6:6). Distinctions that were once a source of prejudice or pride are deemed insignificant because of a common identity as slaves of God.

Paul's own example follows the example of Christ as Paul lays aside his human accomplishments and national identity in order to humbly and obediently

live out his identity as Christ's slave (Phil 3:4-14).²⁰ In addition to leaving behind any former status or privileges, slaves forsook any allegiances that had once controlled them, including to previous masters. Paul explains in Romans 6:16-19 that believers are no longer enslaved to sin and therefore they are to abandon allegiance and obedience to sin and live according to their new identity as slaves of God (Rom 6:22). The slave leader must therefore willingly place every other source of identity or object of allegiance within the context of one's slavery to Christ and the new identity and responsibility that entails. This highlights the priority of spiritual formation as the slave leader lives in light of his freedom from sin with continued awareness of the spiritual foundation of the gospel which unites him with his fellow slaves.

Representative of the Master

Slaves that were purchased were brought into the *familia* of the master and were given a new identity, status, and obligations in light of the master whom they now served.²¹ Their close identification with the master meant that they were his representatives in society and commerce, acting as an extension of the master himself.²² The Israelites used the imagery of slavery to God to convey their national and religious identity which was rooted in their redemption from physical slavery and oriented toward serving God as their exclusive Master (Ps 86:2; Ezra 5:11). In the opening chapters of Luke, Mary (Luke 1:38, 48), Israel (Luke 1:54), David (Luke

²⁰ Annang Asumang, "Captured by Christ Jesus: Paul as Christ's Trophy Slave in Philippians 3:12c," *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 12 (2011): 14.

²¹ Brenda Colijn, *Images of Salvation in the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2010), 147.

²² Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 43.

1:69), and Simeon (Luke 2:29) are all identified as the slaves of God, suggesting that this metaphor encompassed their identity before God and resulting responsibility to God. The use of *παῖς* to describe Christ in Acts 3 and 4 conveys the derived identity associated with slavery as Jesus, who was also described as “Lord” and “Christ” in the early speeches of Acts (Acts 2:36), is consistently identified as the slave of God who was obedient in carrying out the Master’s will. The slave girl’s declaration that Paul and Silas were “Slaves of the Most High God” (Acts 16:17) is further evidence that the identity of believers generally and Christian leaders specifically is properly rooted in their slavery to God.

The slave leader’s derived identity means that his significance is not found in tasks accomplished or positions gained. As a slave of Christ, the Christian leader satisfies his need for significance by humbly recognizing that he has been graciously redeemed and called into a privileged relationship with his Lord. The leader’s status as a slave should both humble and amaze him for his identity is now derived from his relationship with God and his singular aim is to serve God faithfully. In Luke 17:10 the obedient and faithful slaves illustrate this humble self-understanding when they demur, “We are unworthy slaves. We have only done that which we ought to have done.”

A slave’s identification with the master required that he faithfully represent the master in his service for the slave was privileged to represent the master in doing his work. This is illustrated in several of Christ’s parables in which a slave was called to steward the master’s estate in his absence and he was judged based on whether he faithfully represented the master’s character and will in his service (Luke 12:43-48; 16:1-8; 19:11-27). Just as humanity was called as God’s relational representatives in carrying out His creation mandate, slaves of Christ are responsible to demonstrate God’s character as they do His work. A sobering theme in Christ’s

parables is that a slave who fails to orient his leadership to the character and will of the master demonstrates that he has no relationship with the master and is cast out or severely punished. Both the slave who presumptuously indulged himself (Luke 12:45) and the slave who wrongfully accused the master of harshness (Luke 19:21) revealed that they were not serving their true master but had instead chosen slavery to a different master. As a redeemed and commissioned slave of Christ, the slave leader seeks to know the Master personally so that he can represent Him faithfully, as if the Master himself were present. The leadership qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 focus on the spiritual character of the Christian leader because it is expected that the faithful slave will be conformed to the character of the Master. This suggests that when a candidate for leadership is being examined his Christ-like character and yieldedness to the Master should carry greater weight than his resume or charisma. Slave leadership focuses all the attention on Christ and His work so that the people who follow the leader are ultimately following Christ, not the slave leader.²³

The use of the title “slave of Christ” in epistolary greetings in the New Testament reflects this derived identity as Paul (Rom 1:1, Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1), James (Jas 1:1), Peter (2 Pet 1:1), Jude (Jude 1), and John (Rev 1:1) all open their letters with this self designation. Michael Brown explains, “Since a δούλος is without meaningful legal relationship with anyone but his master, he did not and could not speak on behalf of himself . . . he could only speak on behalf of his master.”²⁴ The apostles and other Scripture writers open their correspondence by declaring their identification with Christ as His slaves: His representatives in their service and His

²³ Snodgrass, “Your Slaves,” 15.

²⁴ Michael Brown, “Paul’s Use of δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in Romans 1:1,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 (2001): 733.

messengers in their instruction. In his comprehensive study of Paul's relationship to Christ, David Wenham ultimately concludes that in spite of Paul's influence and authority in the early church, "Paul saw himself as the slave of Jesus Christ, not the founder of Christianity."²⁵ Spicq agrees, noting that Paul "defines himself, his existence, his mission, all his activities in terms of Christ, his master."²⁶ In Revelation 1:1 John explains that this book was the message given to John, Christ's slave, which he was to communicate to the church, collectively described as the slaves of God. This highlights the slave leader's complete identification with the Master as well as his common identity with his fellow slaves. While one could imagine that such a derived identity might simply be temporary, confined to one's earthly service of God, Scripture repeatedly describes believers as slaves who faithfully represent their divine Lord for all of eternity (Luke 19:15; 22:28-30; Rev 22:3,5). Christian leaders belong to Christ and therefore their relationship with Christ defines their identity and the character of Christ is the pattern for their service. They have the great responsibility of representing their Lord in what they do and how they do it so that those they lead will follow Christ faithfully and fully.

Representative Authority

A logical corollary of the leader's derived identity as an extension of the Master is his representative authority as he exercises the Master's authority in carrying out His will. In Greenleaf's model of leadership, he rejected any notion of a leader exercising authorized authority over those who are led, arguing instead for a collaborative model in which the leader relies on persuasion and consensus building.

²⁵ David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 410.

²⁶ Ceslas Spicq, "δοῦλος," in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:382.

Greenleaf asserts, “Such a collegial group will have a leader, but that leader is empowered to lead by one’s colleagues, not by a superior power.”²⁷ For Greenleaf, any exercise of power not voluntarily granted by followers is coercive power which dominates and manipulates.²⁸ Even if it is good for the follower, the leader must not impose any absolute expectations that might violate an individual’s autonomy and self-determination. Greenleaf criticizes Jesus on this point contending, “When Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple, he quickly purified the temple, by his standards. But he did more than that. He provided theological justification for coercion, for those who want or need it.”²⁹ Ironically, Greenleaf argues that someone who exercises external authority over the group, such as Moses leading over the Israelites or Christ driving out the money changers, is susceptible to the illusion that he is God.³⁰ While Greenleaf appropriately recognizes the danger of a leader’s exercise of authority, his solution is to root the leader’s authority in community consensus rather than the Master’s commission.

In slave leadership the leader’s authority is a representative authority as the leader is called to carry out God’s will with His authorization. This position of being in authority and under authority empowers the leader to act decisively and humbles the leader to serve one’s fellow slaves sacrificially. The authority to lead is a stewardship that is entrusted to leaders and they will be held accountable for how they represent the Master in their exercise of that authority.

²⁷ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant: Reflections on Religious Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 58.

²⁸ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 40.

²⁹ Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 59.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

In the practice of physical slavery, a slave was recognized as an extension of the master and therefore slaves could exercise the master's authority in society to the degree they were authorized to do so.³¹ The slave *οἰκονόμος* was especially entrusted with authority from the master to oversee the lord's estate in his absence. Martin observes that, in the case of a powerful master, the slave enjoyed a privileged role with power and authority as a result of his derived identity and representative association with the master.³² For the slave leader, any prerogative to exercise authority is similarly rooted in his relationship with the Lord. Greenleaf objects to traditional pyramid-shaped leadership in which one individual possesses all the power at the top of the organization.³³ However, he fails to understand that it is God, not the leader, who stands at the top of the hierarchy and possesses all the power. A leader's exercise of power is a stewardship of God's authority with clearly delineated responsibilities.

At creation God commissioned humankind to be his relational representatives on the earth, ruling over creation while submitting to God's ultimate authority. In the Old Testament this pattern of representative authority is evident in the use of the title "slave of Yahweh" to describe men who had been commissioned by God as His authorized representatives to lead or speak on His behalf (Josh 24:29; 2 Sam 7:8; Ps 105:25, 42). Kings were God's representative regents (1 Kgs 14:8) and prophets were His commissioned agents of revelation and proclamation (Amos 3:7; Jer 7:25) so that they submitted to God's will as they exercised the authority God had entrusted to them. In Luke 1:69 and Acts 4:25 David is acknowledged as the slave of

³¹ David Daube, "Neglected Nuances of Exposition in Luke-Acts," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 25 (1985): 233.

³² Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 48.

³³ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 74.

God who was divinely commissioned as God's king and messenger whose authority was rooted in his relationship with the Lord.

In His parables, Jesus often describes leaders as slaves who have been entrusted with authority corresponding to their responsibility whether they are overseeing fellow slaves (Luke 12:42-48), declaring a message (Luke 14:17-23; 20:9-18), or conducting business affairs (Luke 16:1-8; 19:11-27). The *οικονόμος* figure in the parables especially highlights the leader's position of being in authority and under authority as he is responsible to properly represent the Master and obediently execute His will. Martin argues that use of the title "slave of Christ" in the early church draws from the representative authority associated with slave agents for the leaders were recognized as representatives of Christ, ultimately "deriving their authority from a source outside of themselves."³⁴ The term *οικονόμος* came to be regarded as a title of leadership which acknowledged the source and nature of the leader's authority as God's representative in the New Testament (1 Cor 4:1; Titus 1:7) and the early church (Ignatius, *Eph.* 6; Hippolytus, *Holy Theo.* 3:18; Basil, *Reg. Brev.* 149; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 42.13).³⁵ During the earthly ministry of Jesus and the establishment of the early church, the disciples would regularly preach, heal, and cast out demons "in the name of Jesus," an authorization formula that highlighted the source of their commission and authority (Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6). Christian leaders are not autonomous or authoritative based on their position or abilities. Their authority and sufficiency for the task is delegated by the Master and they must humbly acknowledge His Lordship in order to faithfully exercise representative leadership.

³⁴ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 58.

³⁵ For further discussion of these texts, see Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 138-49.

A paradigm of slave leadership frames the leader's authority as a stewardship entrusted by the Master and therefore the leader does not possess authority, he exercises the Lord's authority for the benefit of those he leads.³⁶ Greenleaf objected that leaders who exercised external authority were subject to the illusion that they were God but he failed to realize that the leader's identity as a slave of God empowered him to act on God's behalf while also reminding him of his dependence on and accountability to the Master.³⁷ While servant leadership will often use the language of stewardship, the leader is cast as a steward of the organization³⁸ or of society as a whole rather than of a Divine Master.³⁹ As an extension of the Master a leader can act with the Master's authority without presuming to be the Lord himself. A Christian leader is in authority and under authority, an authorized agent of God who humbly recognizes that he fundamentally is the redeemed slave of God.

Practically speaking, when an ordination council is considering a candidate or an organization is interviewing a prospective leader the council or committee should first look for signs of God's calling and equipping of the leader. This may include spiritual gifting, congregational affirmation, and spiritual fruit from one's ministry. A man must be a good follower before he can be a good leader. A leader's submission and commission combine to guard him from becoming self-promoting or self-deprecating. His proper understanding of the source of his authority and sufficiency leads him to conclude that it is not his church, his people, or his

³⁶ Snodgrass, "Your Slaves," 11.

³⁷ Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 57.

³⁸ Robert F. Russell and A. Gregory Stone, "A Review of Servant Leadership Attributes: Developing a Practical Model," *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 23 (2002): 149.

³⁹ van Dierendonck, "Servant Leadership," 1234.

authority. Martin argues that the slave metaphor was used for leaders to highlight the derived nature of their authority and their power by affiliation with a heavenly Master.⁴⁰ Therefore, when Paul and others open their epistles with the title “slave of Christ” they are humbly bowing before their Master and boldly claiming His authority as the basis for their leadership and instruction.

Paul orients the Corinthians to a proper perspective on authority in 1 Corinthians when he objects to the Corinthians’ preoccupation with personalities (1 Cor 3:1-4) and insists that he and other leaders should simply be regarded as servants and stewards of the Lord to whom they will give an account (1 Cor 4:1-2). Paul’s sentiment is reminiscent of Luke 17:10 in which the slaves insist that they are “unworthy slaves” who deserve no recognition or reward for they were simply fulfilling their Lord’s commission. The foundational recognition of the Lord’s absolute authority orients one’s leadership because the leader is not the ultimate authority and therefore any exercise of leadership should orient people to the Lord and their responsibility to Him. For pastors this entails faithful proclamation of God’s Word even when the subject is controversial or unpopular in the church or society. A pastor’s authoritative declaration of truth, inasmuch as it is faithful to the Scriptures, is rooted in God’s authority rather than an individual’s opinion and thus is binding for the preacher and the congregation. Consequently, those who reject the leader’s faithful exercise of the Lord’s authority are ultimately rejecting the Lord and will be accountable to Him for their response (Luke 14:17-23; 20:9-18).⁴¹

A leader who faithfully exercises the Lord’s authority is rewarded by being entrusted with greater authority for he has demonstrated that he can be trusted as

⁴⁰ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 53.

⁴¹ Brian J. Dodd, “Christ’s Slave, People Pleasers and Galatians 1.10,” *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996): 98.

the Master's representative to do the Master's will (Luke 16:10-13; 19:11-27). Jesus promises that this pattern will extend even into the eschaton as the disciples who faithfully served with Jesus on the earth would be entrusted with leadership responsibility as His authorized agents in the Kingdom. A slave leader is an extension of the Master, exercising the Master's authority for the Master's glory. This association of representative authority presents the leader as an authorized intermediary who claims no power and authority of his own but serves "in the name of Jesus" to carry out the will of the Lord.

Subjection to an Alien Will

The essence of slavery is the submission of the slave's will to the will of another so that the slave no longer is autonomous but his will is yielded to the master.⁴² The slave lives solely for the benefit of the master and he is preoccupied with what the master wants and how the master wants his will to be carried out. A model of slave leadership requires that the leader surrender self-interest and personal prerogatives in order to devote all of his energy to pleasing the Master by faithfully doing his will. This defines the goal of leadership as well as the attendant means for securing the goal.

For Greenleaf, the goal of leadership was followers who are "healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous"⁴³ which ultimately leads to a sinless and just utopian society.⁴⁴ This clear leadership goal leads Greenleaf to propose that a leader should determine his course based upon the self-identified needs of the

⁴² Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 95.

⁴³ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

followers, for the leader exists to serve their highest priority needs.⁴⁵ In addition to being directed by the follower's needs, Greenleaf suggests that leaders must have insight and inspiration from within which allows him to propose a unifying purpose for the group.⁴⁶ The servant leader relies on intuition and an unconscious awareness of the unknowable which Greenleaf calls "extraordinary prophetic insight of the kind we all have to some degree."⁴⁷ For Greenleaf, leadership direction is based on intuition rather than revelation, the self-perception of both the leader and the follower rather than any objective divine authority. Conversely, a slave paradigm looks to the will of the Master as determinative for the end and means of Christian leadership.⁴⁸ Snodgrass contends that slave leadership "requires a genuine exchange of self-interest for interest in God's purposes and consequently an interest in people."⁴⁹ There is no place for a self-willed slave for a slave who follows his own will is no longer serving the Master but himself. The slave was preoccupied with pleasing the master for no amount of social or material success held any value for the slave apart from the master's ultimate approval.

Pleasing the Master by Doing His Will

In Greenleaf's servant leadership, the leader is called to listen to the follower first because follower satisfaction and development is the highest goal.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁸ Greenleaf, *Servant as Leader*, 15.

⁴⁹ Snodgrass, "Your Slaves, 13.

⁵⁰ John E. Barbuto and Daniel W. Wheeler, "Scale Development and construct Clarification of Servant Leadership," *Group and Organization Management* 31 (2006): 305.

The slave leader is first oriented to pleasing the Master by doing His will and only then engages in serving the follower in light of the Master's priorities. In Luke 1:38 and 2:29 both Mary and Simeon demonstrate complete submission to God's will, even when they are uncertain what that may entail for their future. Their identity as God's slaves meant that they willingly accepted His will as their own. In the story of the Centurion's slave in Luke 7:2-10 the Centurion used the image of a slave who obeys the commands of the master to illustrate Christ's authority and nature's submission to His will. The underlying assumption in the story was that a slave would not contemplate opposing or ignoring the will of the master. In Luke 16:13 Jesus explains that a slave can only serve one master for the slave must be devoted and submissive to the master with singularity of focus.

In the conclusion of the parable of the unworthy slaves Jesus explains that a slave is focused only on pleasing the master without thought of reward beyond the Master's approval (Luke 17:10). The unworthy slaves were not motivated to serve because of a fear of punishment or a prospect of reward, but simply because they desired to please the Master.⁵¹ In Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders Paul describes his entire life as a slave's service of his Master, considering his own life of no account in his effort to fulfill the Lord's commission (Acts 20:19-24). In the parable of the Minas the master rewards his faithful slaves with the simple affirmation, "Well done, good slave." (Luke 19:17). The slave of God is compelled and controlled by the will of the Master, living to please Him exclusively by pursuing His purposes faithfully. Mary, Zechariah, Paul, and the slave characters in the parables all illustrate the pattern of sacrificing self interest in submission to the will of the Master.

⁵¹ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 97.

In the epistles, Paul reinforces the priority of the Master's will when he explains that his sole ambition was to please Christ whether in his temporal or eternal service because he recognized that he was ultimately accountable to Christ for the object and nature of his service (2 Cor 5:9). Paul instructs believers that, because they have been redeemed, they no longer live for themselves but for Christ who died and was raised for them (2 Cor 5:15). In Ephesians 6:6 Paul specifically links slavery to God with the responsibility of "doing the will of God from the heart." Paul commends Timothy's example of selfless, yielded leadership in Phil 2:21-22 for while others pursued their own interests, Timothy was consumed with the will of Christ in his service (*δουλεύω*). Self-seeking leadership is not Christian leadership for the leader can only yield to one master. The Christian leader is consumed with knowing the Master and pleasing Him, freely sacrificing comfort, popularity, or profit so that he might hear the words "Well done, good slave" when his service is complete. A Christian leader who thinks that reward to be insufficient holds too high a view of his own ambition and too low a view of the Lord's authority. The slave leader places himself completely at the Master's disposal to serve for the Master's benefit. His service, whether small or great, ultimately has supreme value because it is done for the Lord.

Internalizing the Will of the Master

In Greco-Roman slavery the slave was not only expected to yield to the expressed will of the master but also to internalize the will of the master sufficiently so as to act in accordance with his will even in the absence of explicit commands.⁵² While servant leaders depend on their intuition and vision when they reach a gap in information, slave leaders depend on their knowledge of the Master and His revealed

⁵² J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 21.

will.⁵³ In Luke 12:42-48 the faithful steward was the one who faithfully imitated the master as he carried out the master's will in his absence. In contrast, the unfaithful steward was the one who eagerly fulfilled his own desires without regard for the Master's expressed or implied will. Similarly, in Luke 19:11-27 the master entrusted his slaves with his resources and told them simply to "do business" with his resources until he returned (Luke 19:13). The slaves who took the initiative to faithfully and proactively carry out his will were rewarded with greater authority while the slave who hid his mina was rebuked. The grounds for the master's condemnation were the slave's own words for he claimed to know the master's character and will but his actions revealed that he had no relationship with the master and no regard for the master's will.⁵⁴

This supplemental association of the slave metaphor suggests that the slave leader must first of all know the Master personally and sufficiently so that even in the absence of the Master's specific commands the slave is able to faithfully represent the Master and carry out His will. This requires that Christian leaders study the Scriptures to comprehend God's character and purposes in addition to yielding to the instructions and commands of the Lord. In the Old Testament the king was responsible to copy and learn the law of God so that he would remain humble and obedient before God in the exercise of his leadership (Deut 17:19-20). The wise Christian leader will resolve to study and obey God's word and teach others to do the same (Ezra 7:10). Furthermore, Christian leaders must be sensitive to the leading and illumining ministry of the Holy Spirit which allows him to literally internalize the Master's will. The early church recognized that Christ was the model

⁵³ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 24.

⁵⁴ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1542.

παῖς who demonstrated perfectly how to internalize and submit to God's will (Acts 4:27, 30). As a result they sought to imitate Christ's example and continue His work, laboring faithfully as His slaves who looked to the Master for protection and provision in their task (Acts 4:29). A slave leader follows the example of Christ, the humble, obedient slave, by eagerly pursuing God's priorities rather than slavishly complying with God's commands.

Humility in Serving the Master

Another corresponding association of subjection to the Master's will is the humble willingness to do whatever the Master asks without objection or expectation of reward.⁵⁵ A slave leader recognizes his unworthiness before the Lord and therefore claims no status or rights of his own. In Luke 1:48 Mary expressed the humility of a slave when she marvels at God's attentiveness in spite of her own unworthiness. John orients himself to the Messiah's majesty in Luke 3:16 by humbly insisting that he would not be worthy even to untie the sandals of one as great as Christ. A slave's identity and submission to the Lord is demonstrated in humility, literally "slave-mindedness," which recognizes God's supreme authority and the slave's corresponding submission and service. Christ is the exemplary slave in this regard as He demonstrated humility in the face of great opposition in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering slave (Acts 8:33).⁵⁶ Paul, following after the example of Christ, describes his own service as Christ's slave with humility as its defining characteristic (Acts 20:19).

⁵⁵ Walter Grundmann, "ταπεινός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 2:2.

⁵⁶ H. Esser, "Humility," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 2:262.

Although servant leadership presents humility as a virtue, it defines humility as an accurate self-understanding based on the perceptions of others and a willing subordination of oneself to others.⁵⁷ True humility is rooted in one's identity as a slave of God and an expression of one's submission to His will no matter what that may be. While the leader's representative authority empowers him to serve God as privileged agent of his absent Master, the leader's derived identity in submission to the Master humbles him to serve others without regard for his own comfort or rights (Phil 2:3-8). A slave leader cannot object that a task is too menial or a responsibility too undesirable when his Lord washed the feet of His disciples, walked the road to Golgotha, and died a slave's death on a splintered beam in obedience to the Father. Humility is not timidity or feigned inferiority. Humility is the unreserved submission of one's entire self in service of God for the Lord possesses our very lives and therefore we willingly devote our energy to whatever he calls us to do without objection or complaint.

Unconditional Obedience

A literal slave's recognition of the master's absolute power and submission to the master's will was expressed in unconditional and exclusive obedience to the master.⁵⁸ Harris observes, "Obedience to commands was not simply required of slaves, it was assumed to be their principal role."⁵⁹ Slaves were responsible to know the will of the master and carry it out without exception because the slave

⁵⁷ Robert S. Dennis and Mihai Bocarnea, "Development of the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument," *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 26 (2005): 602.

⁵⁸ Mary Ann Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 41.

⁵⁹ Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 96.

represented the master and existed to serve the master. He was not permitted to pick and choose which commands to obey. Slave leadership moves naturally from submission to the Master's will to exclusive obedience to His will. While a slave leader might claim to be subservient to Christ's lordship, his actions of obedience will demonstrate what master he is truly serving. A genuine recognition of God's ultimate authority and a subsequent acknowledgement of one's humble position as His slave will invariably result in obedience to His precepts, commands, and example. Models of servant leadership which fail to identify any external, absolute authority to whom the leader is accountable will be prone to make either the leader or the follower the master who must be obeyed. Slave leaders faithfully demonstrate their derived identity and representative authority by conforming their lives to the pattern and purposes of God as Master.

From the moment of creation, humanity was called to obey God's commands as His vice-regents on the earth who serve Him faithfully and exclusively (Gen 1:26-28).⁶⁰ When God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt, He warned them that they must keep His commandments because divided allegiance or idolatry was a rejection of God's sovereign authority and humanity's resulting responsibility to serve Him alone (Exod 19:5). The worshippers' prayer in Psalm 119 repeatedly asks God to teach them His law, commands, and statutes so that they might know God's will and obey it (Ps 119: 18, 124-25, 135). Lindhagen summarizes, "As Yahweh's servant, Israel is no longer entitled to go her own way. Her *telos* from then onwards

⁶⁰ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: IL: Crossway, 2012), 194-95.

is to perform the will of another, under obligation to obey her master in everything.”⁶¹

The association of obedience is found in Christ’s teaching and parables as a foundational expectation God as Master has for His slaves. Both Mary and Simeon present themselves as obedient slaves who will do whatever the Lord commands (Luke 1:38; 2:29). Jesus asks the crowd why they would address Him as Lord but not do what he commands, underscoring the fact that Christ’s lordship requires volitional, not merely verbal, acknowledgement (Luke 6:46). The Lord’s authority requires obedience to His will and submission to His word in a manner that goes beyond superficial subservience. In Luke 12:35-38 Jesus commends the slaves who remain obedient to the master, even in the master’s absence, actively serving with watchfulness in anticipation of his imminent return. Christ specifically warns against slaves who know God’s will but refuse to act in accordance with it (Luke 12:47) for by their disobedience they reveal that they don’t belong to the Master in the first place.⁶²

In many parables the slave’s obedience is such an obvious association it could easily be overlooked as slaves in the background of the narrative carry out the master’s will immediately and completely (Luke 14:17; 15:22; 20:9-18). When the other brother objects to the father’s treatment of the prodigal he objects that he had served like a slave for his father, never neglecting a single command (Luke 15:29). Finally, in Acts 4:29 the congregation asks that God as Master would enable them to obey Him completely as they carried out the commission they had been given. Throughout Luke’s writings the truest test of one’s slavery to God is one’s obedience

⁶¹ Curt Lindhagen, *The Servant Motif in the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1950), 154.

⁶² Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1183.

to God as the metaphor preserves a strong association of unconditional obedience to the Lord's authority. Paul extrapolates this association of the metaphor in Romans 6 when he explains that one's obedience reveals a person's true master, whether one is serving sin or God (Rom 6:16). God has redeemed His people to serve Him exclusively and completely and divided allegiance is ultimately idolatry.

Individual Accountability

A slave is focused on pleasing the master because ultimately it is only the master's assessment of the slave that has any significance.⁶³ Slaves constantly anticipated the moment when they would give an account to the master and if their service was unacceptable they knew that severe punishment awaited them.⁶⁴ If the leader is under the Lord's authority it stands to reason that he is accountable to Him, empowered to serve the Lord and responsible for the care of the people and resources entrusted to his care. For Greenleaf, accountability comes through personal intuition and reflection along with collegial accountability to keep the leader in check.⁶⁵ One of the criticisms often leveled against Greenleaf's servant leadership is that submission to the self-identified needs of the followers is often untenable and leads to destructive patterns in an organization.⁶⁶ Employing the secular model of servant leadership in the church congregation, David Steele argues that "authentic authority" comes by accepting and meeting the congregation's

⁶³ David J. Williams, *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 114.

⁶⁴ Richard A. Horsley, "The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and Their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars," *Semeia* 83/84 (2003): 43. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 42.

⁶⁵ Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant*, 58.

⁶⁶ Yvonne Bradley, "Servant Leadership: A Critique of Robert Greenleaf's Concept of Leadership," *Journal of Christian Education* 42 (1999): 51.

expectations.⁶⁷ In a model of slave leadership the leader roots his identity and responsibility in his slavery to Christ and therefore he guards himself from becoming enslaved to the opinions and desires of others. He is ultimately accountable only to his Lord.

The parables highlight this accountability by the critical reckoning that takes place when the Master arrives to evaluate the faithfulness of His slaves during his absence. The faithful slaves are commended in Luke 12:38 and rewarded by having the master unexpectedly serve them. In Luke 12:46 the unfaithful steward is condemned by the master for his self-indulgent service and he is consigned to severe judgment because he knew the Master's will but refused to obey it. The unjust steward in Luke 16 faces the master's evaluation at the very beginning of the parable and his unfaithfulness was the basis of the master's judgment. Finally, in Luke 19:11-27 the slaves entrusted with the minas were individually called to give an account for their obedience and initiative in carrying out the master's commands. The master's will was the only standard of judgment therefore it did not matter that the third slave had kept his mina safe or that he returned it without loss.⁶⁸ While the faithful slaves were evaluated and approved by the master, the wicked and lazy slave was rejected and condemned.

The Christian leader is regularly subjected to evaluation and criticism as people decide whether he is a good or bad leader based on their own opinions and standards. However, the slave belongs to the Master, exclusively serves the Master, and lives for the approval of the Master in the final judgment. This entails great

⁶⁷ David Steele, *Images of Leadership and Authority for the Church: Biblical Principles and Secular Models* (New York: University Press of America, 1986), 161.

⁶⁸ Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 290.

responsibility as the leader seeks to serve in the present that he might be commended by God in the future for faithful and obedient service. This also entails great freedom from the expectations and criticisms of others for the leader is living to please the Lord above all and therefore is not compelled to cater to the preferences of others. Paul highlights the subjective nature of human opinion in Romans 14:4 asking, “Who are you to judge the servant (οἰκέτης) of another? To his own master he stands or falls.” In 1 Corinthians 4:2-4 Paul explains to the Corinthians that his sole ambition is to be found faithful as God’s steward, not based on their evaluation or even his own, but the Lord’s.

Snodgrass proposes, “Leadership, like any Christian service is directed and motivated by Christ and his concerns, not by the whims of people. Any service to them must fit under the lordship of Christ, his justice, and the concerns of his kingdom.”⁶⁹ A slave’s identity in Christ and ambition to please Christ orients and safeguards his leadership. However, the slave’s ultimate accountability to the Master does not preclude intermediate accountability from the Christian community. The leader’s recognition of his stewardship and its responsibilities should make him even more receptive to accountability from fellow believers who are using standards of evaluation that are rooted in Scripture. The wise leader will regularly be examining his life based on the Master’s will and inviting others to do the same so that someday he might hear “Well done, good and faithful slave!”

A slave can only serve one master because that relationship requires complete obedience and exclusive allegiance (Luke 16:13). The slave leader must place every expectation or standard of evaluation under the lordship of Christ for it is His will which must be obeyed and His judgment which should be feared. Paul

⁶⁹ Snodgrass, “Your Slaves,” 14.

explains in Galatians 1:10 that slavery to Christ frees one from being a people pleaser because “If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant (δοῦλος) of Christ.” Dunn summarizes, “Paul implies, clearly, that his commitment to Christ as his Lord was so complete, his obligations to Christ so absolute, that his actions as an apostle of Christ were directed by him alone, and that any other course would be unthinkable for him.”⁷⁰ Paul illustrates this principle in his own life when he confronts Peter because of his withdrawal of table fellowship from the Gentiles on account of Peter’s fear of the Jews (Gal 2:10-14). Paul refused to cater to the opinions or prejudices of others because he knew what God required and he held himself and others to that standard. In Romans 14:18 Paul explains that when Christians serve (δουλεύω) God with righteousness, joy, and peace they will be pleasing to their Lord and consequently will be approved people. The Christian leader has been called and commissioned by God and therefore he must lead in accordance with God’s will in anticipation of God’s evaluation. Slave leadership maintains a Christological and, therefore, eschatological focus as the leader faithfully fulfills his responsibility before God with a focus on God’s pleasure and profit. This precludes any preoccupation with garnering praise or approval from men.

Slave of Christ and Servant of All

While the slave is ultimately and exclusively accountable for his service of God, this does not allow a Christian leader to shirk his horizontal responsibility to humbly and attentively care for the needs of others. Beginning with creation and reinforced throughout Scripture (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18; Luke 10:27) God makes it

⁷⁰ James Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: A&C Black, 1993), 51.

clear that service of Him entails service of others.⁷¹ The slave paradigm helps the Christian leader put service into the proper perspective for the slave's service of others is guided and guarded by his service of Christ. This allows the leader to lovingly and boldly tell others "I am your servant but you are not my master."⁷² This axiom forms the basis of leadership that is flexible enough to meet the needs of others in their given context but bounded by one's foundational commitment to obey Christ.

Greenleaf repeatedly emphasized the importance of serving others with acceptance and empathy, even suggesting that the leader extend grace to his followers when they don't deserve it.⁷³ He urges the leader to create a culture of empowerment in which the leader helps followers become more autonomous and self-directed so that the organization will multiply servant leaders.⁷⁴ In this Greenleaf advocates anthropological service without a theological basis, urging leaders to engage in actions of service for others but lacking a theological *telos* to orient those actions or a biblical grid to guide them. Snodgrass warns, "Servant actions without servant Christology leads to pandering. Without Christ orienting our service we will move to self-interest, either in abusing power or in adopting passivity."⁷⁵ Service of others must be properly understood in the context of slavery to Christ. While Greenleaf advocates multiplying servant leaders by encouraging greater independence, Scripture calls the leader to multiply disciples of Christ by

⁷¹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 197.

⁷² Brian J. Dodd, *Empowered Church Leadership: Ministry in the Spirit According to Paul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 57.

⁷³ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 22.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁵ Snodgrass, "Your Slaves," 14.

encouraging others toward greater dependence on the Master. The slave leader and his fellow slaves are already empowered by the Holy Spirit therefore the leader does not empower but equips and deploys others to carry out the Master's commission through His provision (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). The slave leader is called to serve and care for his fellow slaves in obedience to the Master and in conformity with His character.

The parable of the wise steward in Luke 12:42-28 provides an excellent picture of this vertical and horizontal responsibility as the slave is called by the master to provide care for the other slaves while the master is gone. This highlights the steward's own identity as a fellow slave and the master's priority of care for his slaves. In Luke 22:24-20 Christ models the pattern of service anticipated in Luke 12:38 when he depicts himself as a slave who serves others in obedience to the Master. Christ's example of humble service was not an abdication of His authority but an expression of it as He submitted himself fully to the Father which led Him to give himself sacrificially in service of others. Acts 3:13,26 and 4:27 reinforce Christ's exemplary pattern as an obedient slave of God and a selfless servant of others as He faithfully completed all that God had commanded. In Acts 6:1-4 the disciples apply this pattern of service to others by delegating some pressing aspects of service so that they might give attention to the commission Christ had given them, to devote their energy to preaching and prayer, also described as *διακονία*. Paul provides another case study in Acts 20:19-24 when he describes his humble service (*δουλεύω*) of Christ and his faithful service (*διακονία*) of others as Christ's representative. The Christian leader is not free to withdraw from serving others because Christ's model of service and commission to serve compel all believers to minister to others in service of the Lord. Slave leaders follow the example of Christ by placing the needs

of others above their own while ultimately placing the priorities of the Master above all.

Paul instructs all believers to observe this pattern in Galatians 5:13 where he warns them not to abuse their freedom in Christ but to express their new identity by serving (*δουλεύω*) one another. 2 Corinthians 4:5 provides the clearest collocation of Paul's slavery to God and service of others as Paul explains, "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake." Paul makes it clear that he belongs to Christ and therefore his service of others is Christological in its focus. "For Paul, it is not open to abuse; it does not imply some fawning subservience that acquiesces to whatever people ask. Being a slave of Jesus is protected and defined by 'on account of Jesus.'" ⁷⁶ In 1 Corinthians 9:16-18 Paul makes it clear that he is not free for he is a slave of Christ, compelled to do the will of the Master. But then in the subsequent paragraph Paul explains that his slavery to God allows him to be a "slave of all" who devotes his energy to serving others without concern for social or superficial distinctions because he was carrying out the will of the Master (1 Cor 9:19-22) Chamblin asserts, "First Corinthians 9:22 is the testimony of a man who has found security in bondage to Christ, and who is consequently free to relate to all kinds of people and to tolerate all sorts of differences within the context of a common commitment to the gospel." ⁷⁷ The Christian leader is a servant of the slaves of God, devoting his life to serving others according the priorities and mission of Christ. Without the foundational element of the leader's slavery to Christ, "servant leadership" is inane for it amounts to isolated acts of service horizontally without any theological orientation vertically.

⁷⁶ Snodgrass, "Your Slaves," 14.

⁷⁷ J.K. Chamblin, *Paul and the Self: Apostolic Teaching for Personal Wholeness* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 138.

Complete Dependence

Slaves in society relied on their master for protection and provision because their entire existence depended on the master, having no independent identity apart from him.⁷⁸ All of their resources, authority, and direction came from the master because the slave was not qualified or equipped to do the master's will apart from his provision. In a reciprocal relationship, the slave was responsible to serve the master and the master was responsible to provide for his slaves because they were his own possession. Slave leadership entails complete dependence on God as Master who cares for His people and provides everything they need to carry out His will. This dependence reflects the slave's humility and the Lord's sufficiency and helps guard the leader against the lie of self-sufficiency or personal autonomy. While the slave leader lives in dependence on the Lord, the model of servant leadership encourages the leader toward greater autonomy and self-direction which becomes the model for followers as well.⁷⁹ The servant leader relies on his own intuition, perception, and volition to effectively lead others which, in spite of its orientation toward the needs of others, is a humanistic leadership paradigm which exalts the sufficiency of the leader.

In the Old Testament, worshippers would pray to God and describe themselves as "your slaves" with the understanding that they were responsible to offer God wholehearted service and, in turn, God was responsible to protect and provide for His people (Ps 86:2). The basis of their petition was their own humble submission and God's sovereign position as their Lord. Whether the worshipper was petitioning for direction (Ps 119:38), mercy (Ps 123:2), or deliverance, the use of

⁷⁸ Spicq, "δοῦλος," 382.

⁷⁹ van Dierendonck, "Servant Leadership," 1245.

“your slave” was a declaration that the worshipper was trusting in God to provide what he or she lacked.⁸⁰

The association of dependence in Luke-Acts is clearest in Acts 4:29-30, fittingly in the context of the congregation’s prayer to the Lord. The people address God as their Lord and ask that He would take note of the threats against them and grant them boldness to act as His messengers. The believers acknowledged their responsibility to faithfully obey but they unabashedly placed their confidence in God’s protection, provision, and supernatural work (Acts 4:30).⁸¹ In Luke 12:42 and 19:13 the master entrusts his stewards with authority and material resources which allowed them to serve him more effectively. However, the authority and resources were still the master’s, a temporary stewardship graciously granted to his slaves. In Luke 14:20-22 the slave messengers repeatedly return to their master, having obeyed his commands, to inquire as to what the master wanted them to do next. The slaves were not permitted to act as independent agents but instead were in constant communication with the master, seeking direction and instruction.

The unjust steward in Luke 16 demonstrates the extent of a slave’s dependence on the master for when he was stripped of his role as a slave steward he immediately began to worry about what he would do without his master’s provision and delegated authority in his life.⁸² Finally, the repeated use of “in the name of Jesus” in Acts (3:6; 4:10, 17-18, 30; 5:40; 9:27; 16:18) was a declaration of Christ’s sufficiency and supremacy lest anyone think that the apostles were healing or

⁸⁰ Richard Schultz, “Servant, Slave,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997), 4:1190.

⁸¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 208.

⁸² Fabian E. Udoh, “The Tale of the Unrighteous Slave (Luke 16:1-8 [13])” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009): 329.

teaching in their own power. The familiar refrain of “in the name” declared their dependence upon God for their authority, commission, and power as they carried out His will. The slave leader must be in constant communication with the Master, humbly petitioning Him for protection, provision, direction, and resources to enable the slave to serve more effectively. Prayer is perhaps the clearest barometer of the leader’s faith and dependence on the Lord and the leader who lacks prayer reveals a latent self-sufficiency that has begun to creep in.

As the Master, God will equip His slaves with everything they need in order to do His will (Heb 13:21). There is great comfort and security for the leader who recognizes his individual responsibility in the context of God’s sovereign authority, allowing him to labor faithfully and trust God with the results. Any notion of the slave leader’s autonomy or self-sufficiency must be humbly laid at the foot of the cross where Christ secured redemption and provided everything that is needed for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3).

Vulnerable to Mistreatment

A final association of slavery, especially as practiced in Greco-Roman society, was the slave’s susceptibility to abuse or mistreatment.⁸³ Because the master had absolute power over the slave and slaves had very few, if any, rights in society, they regularly endured harsh treatment at the hands of their masters.⁸⁴ Greco-Roman slaves endured severe punishment, from beatings to crucifixion, as a demonstration of the master’s power and the slave’s powerlessness.⁸⁵ Upon

⁸³ Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 121.

⁸⁴ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 1-14.

⁸⁵ Horsley, “Slave Systems,” 43.

investigation of the Lukan literature, this association was found only twice in the context of God's relationship to humanity and in both cases eschatological judgment was the implied referent (Luke 12:46; 16:3). All people are ultimately accountable to God as Master and Judge and if they have chosen to serve themselves rather than God then Scripture explains that their punishment will be severe. However, abuse by the Master should not be considered an association of the metaphor of slavery in a Christian's relationship with God because such judgment is reserved for those who were never actually serving the Master in the first place. Christ describes himself as a Master who is "gentle and humble in heart" and therefore those who have a genuine relationship with Him will experience His grace and kindness rather than His judgment (Matt 11:29). However, the sobering descriptions of God's judgment on the leaders who presumed to represent Him without truly knowing Him should prompt self-examination for every Christian leader to ensure that he has a genuine relationship with Christ, demonstrated in faithful obedience.

Although slave leadership does not connote the fear of abuse from the Master, the metaphor does preserve the association of vulnerability to mistreatment when Christ's slaves endure opposition as His representatives. Because physical slaves were considered an extension of their master, they could conduct business with the master's authority. However, in that role they could also endure abuse or mistreatment on the master's behalf.⁸⁶ Slave leadership often entails suffering and sacrifice as the leader faithfully carries out the Master's will in spite of persecution at the hands of those who refuse to acknowledge the Master's authority. Jesus explains to His disciples in Luke 10:16 that those who have rejected the Master will also reject His authorized agents. In Luke 14:16-20 the messengers in the parable extended the

⁸⁶ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 12.

master's invitation to the great banquet, calling people to come and enjoy his blessings. The first group who were invited, however refused the messengers and their invitations, making excuses as to why they could not attend. The messengers were rejected ultimately because the master was rejected.⁸⁷

In a more vivid example, the slaves in the parable of the Wicked Tenants were met with escalating hostility and abuse, being beaten and shamed by the tenants (Luke 20:9-12). The slaves represent the Old Testament prophets in this story and remind the reader of the rejection and abuse the prophets endured even as they continued to faithfully proclaim the Lord's message. In the upper room, Christ challenged His disciples to follow His own pattern of service which encompassed His compassionate ministry and His sacrificial suffering (Luke 22:25-27). In Acts 3 Peter presents Christ as the suffering slave whose obedience to the Father entailed great sacrifice and in Acts 4:27-30 the early believers resolve to imitate Christ's example even in the face of the Sanhedrin's threats. Christ had warned the disciples in John 15:20 that the slaves of Christ should expect to be treated as their Lord was, enduring mistreatment and abuse as His representatives. Paul further illustrates this pattern in Acts 20:19 when he identifies himself as Christ's slave and describes his service as marked by "tears and trials" from the plots of the Jews. The slave's identification with and representation of the Master means that he will be opposed by those who oppose the Master, which requires the slave to patiently endure suffering.⁸⁸

Slave leadership does not promise comfort or prominence for the leader is following the example of Christ who surrendered His rights and suffered sacrificially

⁸⁷ Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 315.

⁸⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 627.

in His service. Peter makes a direct connection between a slave's suffering and Christ's example in 1 Peter 2:18-23. He urges literal slaves to patiently endure unjust suffering at the hands of their earthly master, citing Christ as the example of submission in spite of suffering which believers are to emulate. Paul considered suffering an inevitable part of his service of the Lord, citing afflictions and hardships, beatings and imprisonments, sleeplessness and hunger as proof of the genuineness of his service (2 Cor 6:4-5). A slave leader must not crave comfort or popularity for conflict and opposition are an inevitable part of being an agent of God, as the example of the prophets and apostles demonstrate. While overt persecution is not prevalent in twenty-first century America, an increasingly intolerant culture of tolerance seeks to silence Christians from speaking the truth. Leaders may endure ridicule, public pressure, or even legal action for following the Lord but this is the cost of discipleship. If the leader is faithfully representing the Master then there is strength and peace that comes from knowing that opponents are actually resisting the person and plan of the Master.

In Galatians 6:17 Paul references the brand marks or slave tattoos that were on his body, which probably refers to the scars that remained as evidence of the suffering he had endured in service of Christ.⁸⁹ For Paul those marks of suffering uniquely identified him as belonging to Christ, having endured the same pain and abuse as his Master. "He believes that the story of Jesus' death is legible in the scar tissue that has formed over welts and lacerations inflicted by rod and whip."⁹⁰ Whether in life or in death the slave leader belongs to the Lord and offers himself unreservedly in service of the Lord. Suffering is to be expected as the slave carries

⁸⁹ Dodd, *Empowered Church Leadership*, 161.

⁹⁰ Jennifer Glancy, "Boasting of Beatings (2 Corinthians 11:23-25)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004): 135.

out the Master's will, not because the Master is capricious, but because the people the Master has called him to serve are calloused and rebellious.

Table 1. Comparing Servant Leadership and Slave Leadership Theories

	Servant Leadership	Slave Leadership
Fundamental Qualification	Innate desire to serve/altruism	Redemption
Basis of the Leader's Identity	Personal choice to be an altruistic and moral person. Possesses a natural inclination to serve others.	Master who is served is the sole source of identity. His character and will are paramount.
Source of the Leader's Authority	Authority granted by followers on the basis of the leader's servant qualifications. Authority exercised through persuasion.	Authority granted by the Master on the basis of the leader's obedient submission. Authority exercised through proclamation.
Leadership Goal	To make followers wiser, freer, and more autonomous leading to a utopian society.	To faithfully obey the Master's will by serving His people so that God's Kingdom will advance in their hearts and in the world.
Authoritative Source of Direction	Directed by follower's highest priority needs and by the leader's own intuition.	Directed by God's Word and character.
Moral Qualifications of Leader	Empathy, humility, integrity, and selfless to serve others.	Humility, obedience, selflessness, and faithful to God by serving others.

Table 1 (continued)

	Servant Leadership	Slave Leadership
Source of Accountability	Leader accountable to himself and those he serves.	Leader ultimately accountable to the Lord and secondarily to those he serves.
Relationship to Follower	Demonstrates empathy and acceptance to make the follower autonomous and self-directed.	Demonstrates Christ-like character and sacrifice to make the follower more like Christ. Slave of Christ, servant of all.
Leader's Individual Goal	Autonomously serve others and lead them to do the same.	Dependently serve Christ and lead others to do the same.
Personal Cost of Leadership	Unspecified	Persecution and mistreatment by those who oppose Christ.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that secular servant leadership paradigms are based on a humanistic paradigm of anthropology and teleology. Rather than rooting the leadership paradigm in the language of servanthood, which implies independent volition and identity, it was proposed that leaders should properly be understood as slaves of Christ and servants of others based on the biblical use of slave language. The analysis of the metaphor in its Hebrew and Greco-Roman context employed historical, lexical, and rhetorical evidence to propose key associations of the metaphor which are preserved in Luke's use of slave language. The model of slave leadership was rooted in creation with humanity as God's relational representatives

on the earth, carrying out His will in relationships and society. God's redemption and humanity's responsibility to Him further developed the metaphor of slavery to God in which Israel and her leaders were responsible to serve God exclusively and faithfully. An important finding of the study of Luke-Acts was how widely and consistently the slave metaphor was employed by Christ and the early church to convey key aspects of a Christian's relationship with Christ. Especially in Christ's parables and the practice of the early Church, slavery was used as an image and title of leadership as the slave leader was entrusted with authority by the Master and was accountable for that stewardship to the Master.

The proposed slave leadership paradigm attempts to faithfully construct a model of leadership that is integrated into the metanarrative of Scripture, rooted in the teaching and example of Christ, and is theologically and practically robust. Slave leadership must begin with theology and anthropology, a proper understanding of God and His sovereign power and humanity and their need for redemption. It is the application of the gospel to the task of leadership. Humanity is not brimming with self-actualizing potential nor are leaders deemed as such based on the appointment or approval of other people. The slave leader is owned by God as His possession and therefore his life is no longer his own. He is not free and autonomous; he is subservient to Christ as his new Master and his identity and activity have meaning only in the context of that relationship. The slave leader is entrusted with authority as a representative of the Master and therefore the leader exercises authority not because of who he is but because of whom He serves. Teleologically, the slave leader has a singular pursuit, to do the will of the Master in order to please Him. He knows the Master personally and internalizes the Master's will sufficiently so that the leader faithfully carries out the Master's commands without exception or reservation. The prospect of future accountability to the Master humbles and compels the slave

leader to serve his Lord exclusively rather than adopting any other measures of success which might be rooted in self-interest or the pursuit of human approval.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this study is the way that one's slavery to Christ motivates and directs one's service of others. Servant leadership advocates service of others without providing an orienting goal or limiting principles to avoid making the follower the de facto leader. A slave leader's relationship with the Master forms the pattern and purpose for his service of others. This horizontal service is modeled after the example of Christ who freely served others as an expression of His ultimate service of God. Every secular model of servant leadership lacks the vertical relationship with God which gives the horizontal service of others meaning. The slave model also provides a foundation for leadership ethics since leaders are called to humility in light of their redemption, integrity in light of the Master they represent, and perseverance in spite of opposition or abuse. A slave leader is one completely and exclusively devoted to the Lord and that central relationship defines the slave's character, will, actions, and exercise of authority. There is no place for a self-willed, disobedient, or authoritarian slave leader. Slave leadership is rooted in a relationship with Christ as a result of redemption and conscious of the responsibility and accountability which that relationship entails.

Future Research

There are three areas of further research that would deepen and broaden the scholarly discussion of the metaphor of slavery and its theological and practical implications for Christian leadership. The first area of study would be to compare the use of the slave metaphor in Paul's writings with the paradigm drawn from Luke-Acts to determine what associations were preserved or modified in Paul's teaching and example. There are far more existing resources on the slave metaphor in Paul

than there are on the image in the gospels, however none of the extant works have attempted to develop a paradigm of leadership from Paul's use of the metaphor and its associations. Such a study could provide important support or correctives for the proposed paradigm of slave leadership and investigate with sufficient depth the use of the metaphor in the epistles. Since Paul's self-understanding as a slave of Christ is presented by Luke in Acts 20:19-24, an examination of Paul's letters could compare and contrast Paul's use of the metaphor with Luke's historical account which could corroborate Luke's presentation of Paul. The scope of the current study was necessarily limited and therefore further research is required in the rest of the canon before one could suggest that the proposed paradigm of slave leadership is a comprehensively biblical model.

Second, there is a need for an examination of the slavery metaphor, specifically as a designator of leadership, in the writings of the early Church. I. A. H. Combes provides the only current resource that considers the use of the slave metaphor in the patristic fathers but she devotes most of her study to the development and use of the metaphor in the New Testament and then offers a few examples in patristic doctrine and exegesis.⁹¹ Using Combes' work as a resource for occurrences of the slave metaphor in the writings of the early church, a researcher could examine the rhetorical and theological significance of the slave metaphor after the close of the canon. Patristic exegesis would particularly be of interest to see how the church fathers interpreted New Testament passages in which the metaphor of slavery is used to describe leadership or discipleship. The current study has proposed that the metaphor was used regularly in the book of Acts to describe the believer's relationship to God. An examination of the metaphor in the church

⁹¹ Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*.

fathers could trace the way the slave metaphor was used and how it changed over time. If the metaphor became less frequent over time the reason for its disuse would also be important.

A third area for future study would be the development of an empirically verifiable model of slave leadership which objectifies the principles drawn in the current study and provides a measure for slave leadership praxis. Such a study would want to compare slave leadership behaviors and beliefs with leadership outcomes to test the validity of slave leadership theory. Careful attention would need to be devoted to the evaluative metrics as well as the idealized outcomes because many instruments that test leadership effectiveness consider only the horizontal dimensions of performance or personnel satisfaction without consideration of a biblical standard of leadership success. Furthermore, because this model is designed to be distinctively Christian, the researcher would need to focus on instances of leadership in which the leader and, ideally, the followers are believers. Such objective data would allow Christian scholars to better dialogue with secular leadership theorists, offering a gospel-centered alternative to leadership models that place humanity at the center and make personal fulfillment the ultimate goal.

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ABSTRACT

FOUNDATIONS FOR A BIBLICAL MODEL OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN THE SLAVE IMAGERY OF LUKE-ACTS

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This dissertation proposes that secular paradigms of servant leadership, rooted in the writings of Robert Greenleaf, are deficient theologically based on their humanistic presuppositions and deficient biblically based on their misunderstanding of the biblical language of service. This study proposes a model of slave leadership articulated in seven principles which are rooted in the slave language employed in Luke-Acts.

First, the slave leader becomes God's own possession through redemption and therefore the leader belongs to God and is placed under the Lord's absolute authority. Second, the leader's identity is found exclusively in his relationship to the Master which entails great responsibility as the leader represents God in his service. Third, a slave leader exercises delegated authority from the Master, therefore his words and actions carry weight, not because of who he is, but because of whom he serves. The leader is both in authority and under authority, accountable to the master and responsible for the people he serves.

Fourth, the slave leader focuses on pleasing the Master by subordinating his own will to that of the Master. The slave leader is expected to internalize the will of the Master so that he demonstrates the character and priorities of the Master in

every leadership situation, even in the absence of explicit commands. Fifth, the leader as slave is compelled to give complete and unconditional obedience to God as Master. The leader may not pick and choose which of the master's commands to obey. The faithful slave carries out the will of the master, calling Him Lord and living it out. Sixth, just as a slave was entirely dependent upon the master for provision and direction, so a slave leader is constantly dependent upon the Lord and His indwelling presence for empowerment and discernment. Finally, the slave may be susceptible to abuse or mistreatment as a result of his unconditional obedience to the Master's will.

Keywords: leader, slave, stewardship, master, servant leadership, Greenleaf, service, redemption, metaphor, Lord

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