

# The use of οἰκονομία in a missional reading of the Gospel of Luke-Acts

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The term οἰκονομία is important term the Gospel of Luke. The word οἰκονομία, in particular its meaning in Luke, is a perpetration and prerequisite for a missional reading of Luke-Acts. The dual motifs of creation and redemption are interdependently related from Genesis to Revelations. In the Gospel of Luke these motifs are unified in the sphere of the household as the most basic social structure through the οἰκονομος management of the οἶκος, the household.

**Die gebruik en betekenis van οἰκονομία as 'n handeling en voorvereiste vir 'n missionale lees van die Evangelie van Lukas-Handelinge.** Οἰκονομία is 'n belangrike term in die Evangelie van Lukas. Die woord οἰκονομία en veral die betekenis daarvan in Lukas is 'n handeling en voorvereiste vir 'n missionale lees van Lukas-Handelinge. Die twee motiewe van skepping en verlossing is interafhanklik aan mekaar verbind vanaf Genesis tot Openbaring. In die Evangelie van Lukas word hierdie motiewe saamgebind in die sfeer van die huishouding as die mees basiese sosiale struktuur deur die οἰκονομος bestuur van die οἶκος, die huishouding.

## Introduction

Missions are an integral part of the redemptive plan of God in Scripture. God's plan begins in Genesis with the command to multiply and be fruitful (Gn 1:28), the 'Cultural' or 'Creation Mandate', and responsibility for the care of creation has been given to all mankind on the basis of the creation motif (Gn 2:15). The proto-Gospel or proto-evangelium (Gn 3:15) 'represents the absolute beginning of the history of revelation as it relates to the divine redemptive initiative' (Berthoud 2015:70). The redemption motif has been given to the restored and renewed people of God to whom the οἰκονομία of the new creation has been committed. The task of οἰκονομία in Luke is based on the dual motifs of creation and redemption. In the working-out of God's plan in Luke and Acts the concept of οἰκονομία, has the meaning of the resources' stewardship in the book of Luke. In the Pauline epistles the term οἰκονομία is used by Paul for the missions' activity of God, the *missio Dei* (Eph 1:10; cf. Van Aarde 2015:45–62), his own mission activity and the proclamation of the gospel (Eph 3:2, 9). The term οἰκονομία is used in a different context by Luke than Paul in terms of the sphere of application of the term, which in Luke focuses on the temporary nature of the task of οἰκονομία as a delegated responsibility and is applied by Paul to his own and the proclamation of others (Van Aarde 2015:48; cf. 1 Cor 4:1; 1 Pt 4:10; Tt 1:7; cf. Foster 1995:15).

The broad theological use of the term will be established and an exegetical study of the use of οἰκονομία in Luke-Acts will be made.

## The priestly task of stewardship from creation to re-creation

The task of stewardship was given in Genesis 1:28 and the specific nature of the task is communicated as a responsibility given by God to mankind in Genesis 2:15. The task given to mankind by the Trinity has been minimalised to 'be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth' (Gn 1:28). The imperatives "Be fruitful", "increase", and "fill" are not to be understood as commands in this verse since the introductory statement identifies them as "blessings" (Gaebelein 1990:38). In Genesis 1:28 וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ can mean 'fill' or allude to mankind's task to be a blessing to creation – a priestly relation to God's creation. Mankind is blessed with the implication that mankind will be a blessing to creation. The meaning of וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ recounts the purpose that God 'put' man in the garden, which was more than simply 'to work it and take care of it'. (Gn 2:15, NIV). A more suitable translation of וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ in Genesis 2:15 is 'to serve and to guard' (Cassuto 1961:121), which indicates man's priestly role more concretely than 'work' and 'care'. Man is to consider his action as a service. 'The verb וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ (Gn 2:15) means "to serve" and even to serve ritually in the temple and

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by extension to worship God' (Berthoud 2015:64). Berthoud (2015:64) eclipses what is essential about 'priestly service' when he identifies the fulfilment of a service exclusively with man exercising dominion and rules over creation in the presence of God (cf. Gn 1:28).<sup>1</sup> One of the functions of the priests in Israel was to be stewards of the knowledge of God (cf. Hs 4:1–6; Ml 2:7; 2 Chr 15:3). Cassuto (1961) follows the rabbinic teaching (Bereshith Rabba, xvi 5):

which explains the term to refer to the sacrificial service, corresponds to an ancient tradition of the Orient, often mentioned in Mesopotamian inscriptions, according to which man was created for the express purpose of *servicing God*. (p. 122)

The Torah attributed to man not only the duty of *servicing*, but also that of *guarding* (cf. Cassuto 1961:123). A more suitable translation of לְעִבְדָהּ וּלְשָׂמְרָהּ would then be 'to worship and to obey'. Man was called as a priest, not merely a worker and keeper of the garden and is characterised by 'worship and obedience' rather than just 'working' and 'keeping' (cf. Gaebelin 1990:45).<sup>2</sup> The task of tilling the earth, as we are subsequently informed, was not imposed upon man till after his banishment from the Garden of Eden' (Gn 3:23; Cassuto 1961:122). The mandate to serve and guard covered the whole of human life. 'Creation includes the cultural and social endeavors of human existence and thus covers the whole of human life-personal, social, cultural' (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:39).<sup>3</sup> Man's original vocation was to serve as priest over God's creation (Gn 1:28; 2:15) with the task of blessing all of creation and bringing it into an intimate relationship of worship with God. Man was 'put' into the garden 'in God's presence' where he could have fellowship with God (Gn 3:8), to work the garden, to take care of it and to bring out the beauty of God's creation as an expression of worship. The original task given to man (Gn 1:28; 2:15) involved more than cultivation; it included cultural preservation and development, it 'intended that the historical developments of creation should continue in the human cultivation of the rich potentials of God's creation through the responsible cultural activity of human beings' (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:41).<sup>4</sup> The role of mankind as priests was to execute the task of caring for creation in a way that reflects our relationship with the Creator. The priestly task was to lead all of creation into God's 'rest' or 'safety', into the presence of the Lord (Ex 16:33–34; Lv 16:23–24; Nm 17:4; Dt 26:4, 10), which appears to be behind the author's use of 'put' in Genesis 2:15. The tasks of *servicing*, *guarding*, *worship* and *obedience* are part of the priestly act of worship and consecrating creation to God as an expression of the *imago Dei*. 'The starting point of mission must be the

1. In Genesis 2:15 'domination is qualified and compared to service', argues Berthoud (2015:64).

2. לְעִבְדָהּ וּלְשָׂמְרָהּ. 'The suffix pronoun in Hebrew rendered "it" in English as feminine, whereas the noun *garden*, which the pronoun refers to in English, is a masculine noun in Hebrew' (Gaebelin 1990:45) indicating that the task involved more than the cultivation of the earth.

3. For example, Scripture teaches that marriage, a cultural and social development, has been created by God to be received with thanksgiving (1 Tm. 4:3–4); political authority is similarly described as ordained by God (1 Pt. 2:13) (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:39–40).

4. 'Neither God, nor animal, man is an intendant, a steward, an assistant-governor to the Lord' (Berthoud 2015:64), and penultimate a priest.

unequivocal recognition of the *imago Dei* in each and every human person' (Nothwehr 2010:115–116).<sup>5</sup> Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:44) argue for the protection and caring for creation as participating in God's mission, but have eclipsed man's primary calling as priest. The role of mankind as priest over God's creation involves a dual mandate, cultural and redemptive, in God's re-direction of every aspect of creation to its healthy functioning intended goal. The cultural mandate involves ecological responsibility, economic activity, work, productivity, exchange and trade, politics, sports and competition, creativity and art, and all the aspects of culture. Mankind has a facilitating role in God's process of restoration after the Fall, which is described in terms of mission: Israel's mission in the Old Testament and the church's mission in Luke and Paul as part of God's unfolding redemptive and cultural mission. 'Although the whole earth is mine' (Ex 19:6),<sup>6</sup> God commits to Israel the task of exercising dominion or reign as priests (פְּהַיִּים מְמַלְכִים) over his creation (Ex 19:4–6). The task of Israel as priests over God's creation is bound up with guarding or keeping the covenant (Ex 19:5). The church is a spiritual οἶκος [house] (1 Pt 2:5–9) for the purpose of being a 'holy priesthood', grounded in mankind's priestly role in Genesis (1:28; 2:15). Israel was to be a nation of priests (Ex 19:4–6) and the church in the New Testament is a nation of priests (1 Pt 2:5–9) grounded in God's mission from Genesis (2:15) to the Gospels. It will climax with the full revelation and restoration of mankind as priests over God's creation and reign on earth (Rv 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). The stewardship committed to mankind (Gn 1:28; 2:15) is developed from the Old to the New Testament in which the term οἰκονομία could be translated as 'stewardship' (Lk 16:2, 4; Gl 4:2; Eph 3:2, 9; 1 Tm 1:4; Tt 1:7; 1 Pt 4:10), 'steward' (Lk 12:42; 16:1; 1 Cor 4:1; 9:17) and 'administration' (Eph 1:10).

## The relation of the stewardship motif in Old and New Testaments

The task of stewardship in the Old Testament is expressed in the priestly calling of the nation of Israel to be holy (Ex 19:4–6; Dt 7:6; 14:21; 26:19; 28:9; Is 62:12) and by οἰκονομία, used twice in the LXX. These two occurrences are found in Isaiah 22:21 in which the message is that it is God who commits authority and οἰκονομία to men (Is 22:21–22). The task of οἰκονομία involves a spiritual aspect and can be termed a spiritual or priestly stewardship or administration.<sup>7</sup>

The misconstrued concept of οἰκονομία calls for a rediscovery of the biblical concept *stewardship* – the concept that God

5. Mission that does not engage in resistance to the evils in society is not the *missio Dei* (cf. Bedford 2010:112). Bedford (2010:112) identifies the *missio Dei* as the restoration of the *imago Dei*.

6. The *missio Dei* is the mission of God from creation to consummation. It is *humanity with a mission* (Gn 1:28; 2:15), *Israel with a mission* (Gn 3–11; 12; Ex 19:4–6), *Jesus with a mission* (Is 42:1; Ps 2:7–8) and *the church with a mission* (Is 43:10–12; 49:6; Ac 1:8; 13:47; cf. Wright 2008:64–66).

7. The Vulgate 15c. reads '*praepositus temple qui habitat in tabernacle*', ['the one placed over the temple who dwells in the tabernacle'], and although Wildberger (1997:379, 386) explains it is a mistaken reading, 'the house of your master' (Is 22:18) is a reference to the Temple of the Lord. Wildberger (1997) neglects the fact that a sharp distinction between the secular and royal palace did not exist, and the position of the administrator was not simply a secular government office. The 'against' defines the nature of the mission of Isaiah 'to' the steward in 15b.

has entrusted to all men a priestly stewardship based on the cultural and redemptive mandates (Gn 1:28; 2:15). The stewardship motif in the Old Testament provides the background or context for the use of *oikovoμία* in New Testament and Luke. Stewardship is associated with the redemptive historical character of Luke-Acts in which *oikovoμία* is a concept in the overall nature of Luke. It is based on the 'responsible use of resources' or wise management of the resources at a person's disposal on the grounds of the 'creation' motif (cf. Reumann 1992:121). The identification of *oikovoμία* merely with a creation motif in Luke, however, is to detach it from its redemptive historical character and causes disunities with its Christocentric core and the Trinity. The grounding of *oikovoμία* on the creation or cultural mandate in isolation from the redemptive mandate places the focus on the human motivation and freedom to serve. It creates a dichotomy between the physical and spiritual in what essentially is a twofold aspect of the one task given in the original mandate to mankind (Gn 1:28; 2:15). All mankind possesses a responsibility on the bases of creation and the *imago Dei* [image of God] to take care of creation, but it is through the covenant of redemption that mankind serve as priests over creation. The *imago Dei* and the *missio Dei* are inseparably bound up together: the *missio Dei* will be fulfilled when the *imago Dei* is fully restored. The stewardship of creation, justice, wealth, and resources, grounded exclusively on the creation mandate motif in isolation from the redemptive motif, tends to self-interest, creaturely concerns, self-love and societal improvement. The *imago Dei* (Gn 1:26–27) is fully reflected in the dual nature of the task of stewardship grounded in the cultural and redemptive mandates. 'Humanity was given the task of exploring, discerning and developing the potential that God put in creation in loving communion with himself' (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:152). Mankind is involved in the priestly task through the proclamation of the gospel – a prophetic activity, which transforms society and is the basis for the restoration of creation.<sup>8</sup> 'Paul reflected on his calling to mission, seeing it as the priestly task of making God known' (Wright 2008:124). 'Integrating creation stewardship into missions can help us rediscover the beauty of holistic ministry that does not separate the spiritual from the physical' (Sorley 2011:140). Mission that includes agricultural stewardship restores dignity and eliminates the spiritual and emotional poverty that afflicts many who see cultivating the earth and farming as something without meaning and dignity – holistic missions (cf. Sorley 2011:140). Holistic missions are a 'tangible witness to the fact that we are committed to Christ' (Sorley 2011:140). When Christ's love is demonstrated in practical ways such as striving to deal with diminishing natural resources and food supplies through missionaries with expertise in forestry, fisheries and sustainable agriculture, improved opportunities are cultivated for presenting the gospel and people are much more receptive and open to it (cf. Sorley 2011:139). Taking

8. It is through the gospel and redemption that a person becomes part of the fulfilment of God's purposes for creation (2 Cor 5:17).

care of the earth and the proclamation of the gospel are part of the one purpose and plan of God.

## The purpose of Luke-Acts

The purpose of Luke was not to explain precisely and give a detailed account, but to compile an orderly account that communicates a different nuance from Mark when the sequence of events as compared. Luke demonstrates that there is a *oikovoμία* [strategic order], which he points out. The prologues designation is an 'orderly account' (Ac 1:1) or a 'narrative designed to lead through' a carefully orchestrated plot, 'step by step' (cf. Ac 11:4; cf. Green 1995:36). There are no historical inaccuracies in Luke in terms of promising a chronological order of events, but when examined more closely it is not a chronological order of events.<sup>9</sup> Luke's ordering of events is the identification of God's *oikovoμία* of events with continuing the historical development of creation and human beings as responsible agents for cultural development.<sup>10</sup> In Luke 4:38–39 and 5:10–11, in contrast to Mark 1:16–18, 30–31, the intention of the author is to point out that Jesus' healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law was more than a periodic and loose association, which became more a closely knit fellowship through the calling of the first disciples. The word *orderly* in Luke 1:3 is not to be taken to mean chronological, as Jesus' healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (Lk 4:38–39) does not take place before the first calling of Simon Peter and the disciples in Luke. The first call of the disciples is placed after this event (Lk 5:1–11). In the account of Mark 1:29–31, Jesus entered the house with Simon, Andrew, James and John and the event is placed after the first call of the disciples (Mk 1:16–20). It is God's *oikovoμία* of events that is revealed in Luke. Luke-Acts should therefore not be read as a chronological order of history, but as the historical development to the climax of the revelation of all cultures' fullness (Ac 2:5–12; 15:14–18; 28:28; Rv 5:9–10; 21:26). Human beings are responsible for cultivating cultural activity in the historical development of creation (cf. Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:41). According to Squires (1993), the purpose of Luke-Acts is to assure its readers that the events

were part of the plan of God and to provide them with the means of witnessing to the divine plan in such a way that it might be understood and appreciated in the Hellenistic world. (p. 194)

Luke-Acts was intended by Luke to be 'a missionary tool with the intention that they might use the story which he tells to further the Christian cause and make converts to Christianity' (Squires 1993:194). The two-key events, which are central to God's plan, are the passion of Jesus and the Gentile mission (cf. Squires 1993:186–187). The *missio Dei* is

9. The key turning point in the gospel is Luke 9:51 from which point Luke arranges his material according to the journey to the final destination of Jerusalem (Lk 9:51, 53; 13:22, 31–35; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28, 41; cf. Huffman 2008:65). 'Luke sets little store by exact indications of place and time, even where Mark in fact does so' (Du Plessis 1983:146; cf. Lk 8:22 with Mk 4:35).

10. Luke arranges his material according to the necessity of God's plan being fulfilled (Lk 4:42–44; 8:1; 16:16). 'It is improbable that Luke sets out to supply a chronological sequence – except in broad outline; his overriding intention is to indicate God's plan of salvation in the Christ-event' (Du Plessis 1983:147).



the interpretive key to the events of Luke, and the Gentile mission is the key in Acts (cf. Squires 1993:189).

## Exploring the usage of οἰκονομία in Luke

### The use of οἰκονομία in the context of the letter: The poor and missions

Salvation in Luke includes the economic dimensions. The use of οἰκονομία in Luke's Gospel is to be read against the strong emphasis on the social dimension of salvation. Missions are the mission of Jesus Christ in the gospel who comes to fulfil the calling of the Servant in Isaiah (49:3; 53:11) to set the captives free from spiritual bondage and oppression. In Acts God gives tasks to the church and sends her into the world to be a witness (Ac 1:8) and to be a transforming presence in society. Mission is the mission of the church, which is to fulfil the ministry of the Servant in Isaiah (41:8). Mission in Luke-Acts connects the mission of Jesus with that of the church. 'The connection between Luke and Acts shows that the church's mission flows from the ministry of Jesus' (Goheen 2005:243). In Luke it is about the role of the gospel in redemption and its influence on social consciousness. For Luke οἰκονομία is the management of household, the preservation of culture and the care for creation, which indirectly makes the spread of the gospel possible. Luke does not directly connect οἰκονομία with missions. It is connected through the role of οἰκονομία in the unfolding of God's plan, βουλή (Lk 7:30; Ac 2:23; 4:28; 13:36; 20:27).<sup>11</sup> The significance of οἰκονομία in Luke for missions is that the proper management of resources will benefit the poor and oppressed. Post (2013) comments that:

This calling requires of the church to be concerned with the modern-day widows, orphans, and aliens – the single mother raising her family without a husband and the kids on the street who are essentially alone with uninvolved parents. (p. 120)

### Isaiah 61 and the empowering of the poor for active mission

Mission in Luke-Acts is intrinsically linked to the Old Testament and mission in Isaiah. Bosch's missional reading of Luke (1991) begins in 4:16–30 with Jesus' ministry, which begins with him setting out the kingdom mandate of Isaiah 61:1–3. 'Jesus' contemporaries would have interpreted Isaiah 61:1–2 in terms of violent political liberation' (Goheen 2005:248). Jesus prophetic anointing (cf. Tuckett 1996:61–62) is revealed in his proclamation of the favourable year of the Lord, but he refuses to announce the day of vengeance. 'The kingdom mandate of Isaiah 61:1–3 shows how, in the space of three verses, the poor can be lifted from poverty to active mission' (Ring 2011:7). For Luke, social-responsibility and witness or mission go together. Jesus' announcement of what God is doing in salvation, are combined with challenges to join in what God is doing (cf. Wright 2005:53). According to Ring (2011), Isaiah 61 shows:

how God's heart for the poor is not just to improve their circumstances, but to lift them into fully functioning members of the body of Christ and have them involved in effective mission. (p. 21)

Luke's Gospel does not simply 'patch up' the lives of the poor by lifting them out of poverty to a better lifestyle, but enables them to recognise the resources God has given them, the unique gifting and to be involved in effective mission to the community. It was written 'to enable people to recognize God's activity in the world, and then fall in step with it' (Wright 2005:58). The good news to the poor and disadvantaged people results in them becoming oaks of righteousness (Is 61:4–9), fully functioning members of society (cf. Ring 2011:22). It is about the priests of the Lord (Lk 4:18–19) who will fulfil a role amongst the nations (Ex 19:5–6; 1 Pt 2:9) in the bringing of the gospel (Is 61:1). In Isaiah 61 the prophecy is given that they:

shall be called the priests of the Lord; and they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; and you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast. (v. 6)

### Οἰκονομία in Luke 12 and 16 and the poor

Mission in Luke is about releasing, resourcing and equipping the poor and the rich,<sup>12</sup> for world mission, the demon-possessed man is healed and sent on a mission to his native territory (Lk 8:39). Salvation for Luke is not limited to the relationship between God and his people, and the removal of sin. It includes the management of resources and people's gifting to make them agents of transformation in their communities.<sup>13</sup> Luke, more than any other of the Gospels, refers to the *oikoi* resources that need to be managed (cf. Dyck 2013:14).<sup>14</sup> Resources and personal gifts have been made available to all members of the household so that they are equipped to fulfil the calling and work of God. The vision communicated by Jesus in parable, miracle, and table fellowship is not merely of new persons, but of a new society. For Luke οἰκονομία is essentially about the task of management of resources and<sup>15</sup> gifts in a relationship of accountability that the members of the household shared with one another as members of Jesus' community. The οἰκονομος was entrusted with the responsibility of the household's management to ensure that every person fulfilled his or her task in the household. It is the effective management of the household in its function in society that brought about transformation, which was essentially the task of the οἰκονομος. The role of the οἰκονομος in the *missio Dei* was to participate in the restoration of individuals, communities, nations, the environment, the world and the cosmos. The misuse of the resources by the

12. Bosch's argument is holistic and includes the responsibility of the poor and the rich.

13. Luke emphasises management, *oikos*, and money. The *oikos* or *oikoin* is the primary organization producing goods and services in the 1st century world (cf. Dyck 2013:14).

14. In particular, of a simple list of fixed *oikos* assets-possessions, property, and goods – Luke accounts for 17 of 25 (68 percent) mentions in all four Gospels combined' (Dyck 2013:14).

15. The parables have been read and personally appropriate and the communal character of the parables has been eclipsed.

11. It is distinguished from θέλω 'to purpose, generally based upon a preference and desire' (Louw & Nida 1988:30.58).

manager in Luke 16:1–15 prohibited the members of the household to fulfil their tasks and mission.

### The use of *οἰκονομία* in the eschatological framework of Luke

The *οἰκονομία* passages (Lk 12:35–48 & 16:1–13) such as the eschatological passages in Luke (10:42; 17:20–37; 21:8–9; 12–19, 24), are to be read in the context of Luke-Acts as a whole (cf. Marshall 2005:176). The story Luke develops, is one of mission (Marshall 2005:173) even though it is only in Luke 24:47–49 that there is a clear summons to missions. Luke-Acts concentrates on the task of the mission (Marshall 2005:175). The repeated point in the passages concerned with the end, is ‘not yet’ (Lk 21:8, 9, 12, 24) and these eschatological discourses provide a window of opportunity to witness and testimony (Marshall 2005:176). The concept of *οἰκονομία* in the Gospel of Luke is to be read against the story of Jesus’ mission. In Acts the witness of Jesus is taken to the ends of the earth and it gives an account of how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Rome (cf. Marshall 2005:171). In Acts 20:27 Paul, in his speech to the elders of the church of Ephesus, says that he preached the βουλή [plan or counsel] of God to them. It is the ‘*οἰκονομία* of the grace of God’ (the gospel) given to Paul (Eph 3:2). The mission of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Luke is developed and continued in the task of the church’s mission in Acts and the Pauline epistles. The Holy Spirit enables the church to bear witness and testify to the gospel. The language and teaching of Acts is eschatological, and apocalyptic language of the gospel is absent from Acts (cf. Marshall 2005:174). It is the eschatological context that carries the mission of the church forward in Acts and the Pauline epistles. Eschatology, for Luke, functions to give hope and accountability (cf. Bock 2012:398). The expectation of the kingdom of Israel’s restoration in Luke-Acts is an eschatological expectation (Lk 1:70; 21:1–38; Ac 1:6; 3:21).<sup>16</sup> Jesus replaces the apocalyptic expectation of Israel with an eschatological expectation of the kingdom of God’s restoration (Lk 20:27–40).<sup>17</sup>

### The use of *οἰκονομία* in the context of social responsibility

The term *οἰκονομία* in Luke is used in a concrete sense in parables to indicate social responsibility and accountability as part of the task of stewardship given to mankind (Gn 1:28; 2:15). The Gospel of Luke is to be approached with a common stewardship given to all mankind, based upon the creation motif. The church is motivated by a second motif, namely redemption. The steward parable in Luke 16:1–13 is essentially about stewardship, redemption, restoration and transformation facilitated through a crisis. Redemption, restoration and the opportunity of transformation is presented in the crisis of the steward. The steward parables (Lk 12; 16) are misinterpreted when the socio-consciousness,

16.The attention of the disciples is directed away from the future and speculation about it to the need for missions, from apocalyptic expectation to eschatological prophecies that retain the fact of persecution.

17.The eschatological restoration of the kingdom is revealed in the exorcisms (cf. Lk 4:31–36; 8:26–39; 9:37–45; Ac 3:6; 16:18) and healing (Lk 5:12–16; 13:10–17; 17:11–19; 18:35–42) and sending out his disciples (Lk 9:1–9; 10:1–23).

which is inseparable from the gospel, is glossed over. The steward has the responsibility of giving to each person of the household their food allowance at ‘the proper time’ and ‘the proper amount of food’ (Lk 12:42). In doing so the steward releases, resources and equips the members of the household for mission. The *οἰκονομος* has two functions: a leadership and priestly function. Mankind’s relation to God’s creation was that he was to be priest over creation (Gn 1:28; 2:15), which has been restored through the gospel as the redeemed mankind serve as priests over God’s creation (Is 61:6; 1 Pt 2:5–9; Rv 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

### The task of *οἰκονομία* of the restored mankind

Luke uses a variety of terms, explicitly indicating stewardship such as *οἰκονομος* (3 times in Lk 16:1, 3, 8), *οἰκονομία* (three times in v. 2, 3, 4) and *οἰκονομέω* (v. 2). The frequency of Luke’s use of related terms in Luke 12 shows that Luke has a particular interest in this motif (Kim 1998:160). Luke uses *οἶκος* for the household as the fundamental unit of social organization consisting of husband, wife, children, servants and slaves. Creed (1950:177) correctly claims that Luke deviates from Matthew 24:49 by substituting δούλος with *οἰκονομος* in Luke 16 for the purpose of pointing out that the *οἰκονομος* is not an ordinary slave, but a chief slave in the household. Thus, it can be thought of as a technical term (cf. Kim 1998:159). The activity of the *οἰκονομος* and the task of *οἰκονομία* have been translated in a variety of ways in the New Testament. For Paul the administration of the universe or cosmos by God is a *οἰκονομία*, a management and ordering of the cosmos (Eph 1:10), which, in Luke’s thought and sense of the concept, it is in a narrower sense the management of the resources that have been entrusted by God for the well-being of creation. It is only in Luke 12:42 and 16:1–4 in the New Testament parables in which *οἰκονομος* is used in the sense of stewardship of possessions in a more secular sense (cf. Foster 1995:15). In these two parables *οἰκονομία* is the restoration of economical, religious, political, physical and social dimension of creation that is restored through *οἰκονομία* (cf. Foster 1995:15). ‘Restoration does not mean a return to the undeveloped state of creation as it was in Eden’ (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:134). The task of the *οἰκονομος* in Luke has a leadership and priestly dimension and has the connotation of caring for others.<sup>18</sup> Caring for others is a form of worship to God and fulfilment of the priestly task (cf. Bovon 2013:237). The stewardship parables in Luke, when interpreted through David Bosch’s proposed missional reading of Luke (1991:88, 104), calls God’s people to be priests over creation, to bring spiritual healing, restoration, wholeness and transformation of individuals and society.

### λειτουργία

The liturgical function of leading the household in worship Paul uses the term *λειτουργὸν* for the priestly duty of the head of the household and for proclaiming the gospel whereby the Gentiles are sanctified (cf. Rm 15:16). The sanctified mankind has been restored as a *λειτουργός*, which extends beyond

18.A slight medical connotation cannot be ruled out’ (Bovon 2013:237).

the liturgical responsibilities in the church to the household and through the household to all of creation for the task of the proclamation of the gospel. The head of the household, the *οικονομος* and the *λειτουργός*, leads the household in the recognition and exercise of its priestly duties.<sup>19</sup> The exercise of *οικονομία* and *λειτουργία* are part of the restoration of God's new creational order, which is in the present and future (cf. Heb 9:10; Rv. 21:4), and an involvement in the liberation of creation from its decay (cf. Rm 8:21) through the reconciliation of all of God's creation to him (2 Cor 5:17–19; Col 1:20). The leadership task of *λειτουργία* is part of the restoration of the original purpose of God for the restoration of all of creation to its intended function of the worship of God.

### The parables and mission

The lost and found parables in the Gospel of Luke have a missional function.<sup>20</sup> The parables of Luke 12–14 indicate a relation between the use of resources and salvation. Parables such as the parable of the rich fool (Lk 12:21), the great banquet (Lk 14:23) and the cost of being a disciple (Lk 14:33), which exhort the readers to use their resources for the poor have a missional function. The parables of Luke 15–16 indicate a relation between repentance and not using one's resources only for one's own benefit. The idea of stewardship is central in the parables in Luke 15–16 in the immediate context of the trilogy of lost and found parables, indicating God's mission to restore the lost (the lost sheep, the lost son) and what has been lost. The parables of the lost sheep and lost coin begin with a question as the steward parable does. The parables of the prodigal son and unjust steward are a pair and both begin with a character 'squandering' property that belongs to another. These parables associate redemption with finding what is lost and a realisation of the recklessness of waist in the steward parable indicates that redemption has an effect on the whole of life. In the parable of the shrewd steward (Lk 16:1–13) it is implied that there is a transformation in the thought and practice of the steward who begins to use the resources entrusted to him responsibly.

### Luke 16:1–13 and the crisis

In the steward parable in Luke 16:1–13 the *οικονομος* is appointed over the financial resources of the master to maximise his investments. The steward can be equated in the modern sense with an investment broker, 'much as a modern executive with a budget at his/her discretion' (Landry 2000:298).<sup>21</sup> The steward has 'the confidence of the landowner, who charges him with the double task of overseeing the servants and the finances' (Bovon 2013:237). He is accused by his master of misappropriation of funds or spending funds on personal items. The crisis in the parable is evident in the question, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking away the stewardship from me?' (Lk 16:3). It indicates

that the crisis is that, in his role as *οικονομος*, the steward is in a position of being demoted from his responsibility to the status of common drudge (cf. Beavis 1992:49). The crises of the steward's situation in Luke 16:3 and Jesus' exhortation to use worldly wealth to gain friends (Lk 16:8–9), has a missional application, because wealth is to be used to secure a social network that facilitates the spread of the kingdom. It is literally a 'visitation of his Lord' (Johnson 1991:247). The task of the *οικονομος* was to take care of the household and the administrative and missional element was that he was to distribute resources to meet the needs of the household servants acting on behalf of the master. The distribution of resources to meet the needs is essential to missions. Beavis (1992:49) suggests that the verb *σκάπτειν* (Lk 16:3) means that, as a slave, he is in danger of being sent off to hard labour in the quarries, a form of imprisonment – the worst fate imaginable for a slave. The steward is not to be directly equated with a slave,<sup>22</sup> but a manager who has fears, which are in connection with returning to subsistence farming or agricultural and gardening livelihood – 'to till the ground, to dig' (Louw & Nida 1996:43.3). This is what the steward is apprehensive about.<sup>23</sup> It is the fear of manual labour, the loss of status, position, privilege or transformation of motives that motivated the manager. The crisis provides an opportunity for every party to experience the redemption of God. The response of the manager to the crises resulted in him being 'praised for having the qualities of a manager' (Johnson 1991:245). Even though the steward squandered the master's property, the situation of crisis becomes an opportunity for redemption and restoration for his master's honour to be restored and his reputation as a good steward to be salvaged. Landry (2000) comments:

Luke 16:8–9 clearly shows Jesus urging his listeners to follow the example of the prudent steward, who has taken 'dishonest wealth' or 'ill-gotten gains' and used it shrewdly – restoring his reputation, earning his master a reputation for nobility and generosity, and relief to his master's debtors. (p. 308)

The parable is essentially about the possibility of redemption, restoration and transformation, facilitated through a crisis event. Redemption, restoration and the opportunity for transformation present in the crisis are elements of missions.

### Stewardship of the household by the Jewish religious institution

The parable of Jesus in Luke 16 is a comment directed at the Pharisees as a religious institution. Jesus makes the statement, 'I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings' (Lk 16:9). The use of wealth is related to eternal dwellings. The central verses are Luke 16:4 and 9. In v. 9b Jesus gives the purpose of or the reason for his exhortation in v. 9a' (Ireland 1992:99). A parallel exists between this clause and Luke 16:4b. 'In doing so Jesus sets up the analogy between the steward and the disciples' (Ireland

19.The relation between Luke and Paul is in terms of the function of leading the household. Luke uses *οικονομία* and Paul *λειτουργία* for the leadership task.

20.The lost sheep, lost coin and prodigal or son (Lk 15) are about God finding the lost person.

21.The master can reasonably surmise that the steward has been using his employer's funds for selfish and immoral purposes (cf. Landry 2000:298).

22.The *οικονομος* was not a slave (Bovon 2013:237) as suggested by Beavis.

23.Beavis bases her entire interpretation and claim that the steward is a slave, but for the interpretation to follow, it is not a decisive factor (cf. Landry 2000:296).



1992:100). The contrast is between the Pharisees who were dishonest managers of God's household. The Pharisees used their position for their own benefit and the disciples, who were to be wise and faithful stewards. The Pharisees in the discharge of *οικονομία*, entrusted to them by God, misused their authority and power as the steward has. There is an irony in the parable: the steward realises the threat of loss, but the Pharisees are oblivious thereof. We find in the writings of Luke 'pointers for Christians on how to come to terms with worldly power and not remain, sociologically, a sect of outsiders' (Reumann 1992:89). For Luke *οικονομία* is directed towards the well-being of the community or society and at the role assigned to human beings as stewards of God's resources. The use of *οικονομία* in the parable of Jesus is addressed to the corrupt religious structures, which were to be structures of transformation and renewal in society, but were identical to that of the world. In Luke 16:9 the steward's debt-reduction is interpreted positively: the steward realised his predicament and reduced people's debts to earn the favour of his master. The disciples and Pharisees are challenged to use their resources and relationships for the benefit of their master and to focus on the eternal habitation. The nuanced phrase *εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς* can be interpreted either as 'reception into heavenly dwellings' or 'reception into the consummated kingdom of God' (Ireland 1992:104). The interpretation of the consummated kingdom of God accords with God's kingdom and his wisdom in Luke as no hidden secrets (cf. Cheong 2001:54). A contrast is made between worldly stewardship in Luke 16:4 and the stewardship the disciples and readers have to exercise. The goal of biblical stewardship is to use wealth and possessions not merely for this world, but with the goal of securing entrance into future heavenly dwellings and kingdom. The missional application suggests how the audience and the reader can find favour with God. It is to use resources to 'win' people and serve their master.

## The stewardship parable in Luke 12:35–48

### The wisdom and faithfulness of the steward in Luke

A distinction exists between Luke and Paul's concept of *οικονομία*. In Luke the sense of *οικονομία* is used in the redemption and transfiguration of the present world and not in the sense of substituting another world for this one. In Luke the relation is between God's creation and redemption, whereas in Paul the sense of *οικονομία* is found in the relation between redemption and God's creation and the heavenly realm (Eph 1:3, 10; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). The Lucan concept of *οικονομία* has the sense of the 'responsible use of resources', 'the challenge is shocking, but simple and direct' (Cheong 2001:57). In Luke's sense the kingdom of God is revealed instead of concealing it as in Matthew specifically in the stewardship parables through the wise management of resources at one's disposal. The Lucan parables are missional as 'the Lucan kingdom is graciously and generously offered to those who are lost'<sup>24</sup> (Cheong 2001:53). The parable has a missional orientation, because it is about a fundamental

evaluation of possessions in light of the kingdom, which will lead the wise disciple to use his possessions in the service of the needy.

### Luke 12:40–48 and management of the socio-economic resources of the household

The management of the household was presided over by the 'master of the household' (*οικοδεσπότης*) (Lk 12:39; Mt 13:27, 52; 20:1; 21:33). The *οικονομος* was appointed over the household to manage the financial resources of it. The task of the *οικονομος* is understood on a Lucan level as directed at the day-to-day administration of the household matters. The meaning of *οικονομία* in Luke is set against the background of the social-economic management of the household or the *οικος*. The *οικος* had a hierarchical quality to it, connecting administration and management. The *οικονομος* or household manager was one of the servants, slaves or freedman appointed as a steward to manage the *οικος* on behalf of *οικοδεσπότης* and thus he had a vested interest. The faithful slave is rewarded with more responsibility (Lk 12:44; 19:17, 19; Mt 24:47; 25:21, 23). The term *οικονομος* is used for the person assigned with the task of the management of God's household on behalf of him, but the term *οικοδεσπότης* is not used for God in the parables. It is God who places a steward in charge of the household, who has been 'put in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time' (Lk 12:42, NIV). It is possible to interpret *στοιμέτριον* in Luke 12:42 as 'the proper amount of food'. The task of the steward was to distribute the daily food rations in expectation of his master's return and so he will be entrusted with a greater responsibility to manage all the master's property (Lk 12:42–44; cf. 16:10–12; cf. Carrol 2012:274). The steward who has demonstrated faithfulness in the earthly tasks 'now' assigned to him and has fulfilled these tasks faithfully will be given the greater responsibility of management in the 'not yet' kingdom of Jesus Christ. The steward was expected to demonstrate understanding resulting from insight and wisdom (cf. Mt 7:24), and the faithful discharge of his responsibilities. In Greco-Roman culture the *οικονομος* was given considerable responsibility and 'authority to command others' (Mt 24:45) 'that extended to instructing the wife on how to run the household and was more than 'good housekeeping' (Reumann 1992:12).

### The context of the imminent return of the Christ in Luke 12:35–39

In Luke 12:39 the exercise of stewardship is in the context of the imminent return of the 'master of the household', the Lord. The stewards, who have been appointed, are exhorted to be watchful, not to fall asleep and allow the house of their master to be broken into and his possessions stolen. Stewardship in Luke 12:39 is broader than the management of resources; it includes wealth and poverty, but it is essentially about the spiritual well-being of God's children entrusted to the steward. It is the divine mercy of God, which is demonstrated and made known through the management entrusted to the steward. The stewardship parable is a critique on the Jewish leadership in Jesus' days who were

24. The two debtors, the great supper, found sheep, found coin, found son, et cetera.

bad stewards over God's children and allowed the masters house to be broken into. The context is missional, because it addresses the members of the household who are to 'be ready for service' and to 'have your lamps lit or burning' and is connected to the *parousia* (Lk 12:35). The exhortation in Luke exhorts each member of the household to a social and missional responsibility. They are to use their possessions for the extension of God's kingdom. There is nothing to suggest that the early Christian spent their time passively waiting for the *parousia* (cf. Marshall 2005:176). Luke is misinterpreted when the socio-consciousness, which is inseparable from the gospel, is glossed over. The parable is not simply about the grace of God, but how the household deals with resources it has as evidence of having received the grace of God. The gospel of grace evokes a social-consciousness that is an essential element of missional involvement.

### Luke 12:35–39 and Christ as the final *οικονομος*

In Luke 12:35–39 it is God who is master of the household and the *οικονομος* is 'the faithful and wise steward, whom the master will set over his household' (Lk 12:42). The faithful servants are 'truly blessed' as the Lord will 'dress himself to serve, will have them recline at his table and will come and wait on them' (Lk 12:37). The *οικονομος* is an illusion to the faithful Jewish servants and finally Christ, 'the Lord over the servants, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion food at the proper time?' Christ is the final *οικονομος* whom God will set over his household, and in this sense there is a development of the *οικος* idea from Luke to Paul: Luke is concerned with the practical management of the *οικος* and Paul the metaphorical concept (Eph 2:21–22). Following La Verdere and Thompson (1976:582), Bosch (1991:85) believes that Luke wrote his gospel in the 80's during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian to Gentile communities in transition. 'Much water had passed under the bridge since the time of Jesus even since the time of the missionary journeys of Paul' (Goheen 2005:240–241). If this is so then Luke may have been influenced by Paul and not vice versa. In terms of a salvation historical line, 'according to Bosch, Luke is concerned primarily with ecclesial formation that is rooted in, consisted with, and an extension of Jesus' mission' (Goheen 2005:241). Luke's understanding of missions was most certainly influenced by Paul; yet, Paul's concept of mission is not the same as Luke's. Paul sets out the mission of the church and Luke the church-in-mission indicating a development from Paul to Luke in terms of practical application.

### Missional application

There is a diversity of understandings of mission amongst the first witness of the New Testament: 'the New Testament does not reflect a uniform view of mission, but rather, a variety of 'theologies of mission' (Bosch 1991:16; Goheen 2005:237). Luke writes two books in order to show the line of redemption and mission from Jesus, Paul and the church in Acts. 'Luke unites the time of Jesus and the time of the church in one era of the Spirit' (Bosch 1991:87; Goheen 2005:242). However, the dispensation of the Spirit in the Gospel of Luke

is not to be identified directly with the dispensation of the Spirit in Acts. The gospel spread through the institution of the household. In the Early Church Christian missionaries made a deliberate point of gaining whatever households they could as lighthouses, so to speak, from which the gospel could illuminate the surrounding darkness (cf. Green 2004:270). It was through the Christian household that Christianity began to make an impression on surrounding paganism (cf. Green 2004:260). 'In Luke-Acts the household emerges as the prominent sphere and symbol of the reception of the gospel, Christian identity and solidarity in the Spirit' (Neyer 1991:230). A missional reading of Luke-Acts and Paul renders God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world (cf. Wright 2010:103).

## Conclusion

The term *οικονομία* in Luke 12 and 16 is used in a concrete for the task of management of the resources God has given. The Gospel of Luke is to be approached with a common stewardship given to all mankind based upon the motif of creation. The church is motivated by a second motif: redemption. Luke uses *οικονομία* in the context of the growth of social consciousness and social responsibility of the household as foundational to the proclamation of the gospel. The role of the *οικονομος* is both a leadership and priestly function. Mankind's relation to God's creation was that he was to be priest over creation (Gn 1:28; 2:15) and through the gospel they have been restored as priests over God's creation (Is 61:6; 1 Pt 2:5–9; Rv 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). The steward parable in Luke 12:35–39 is misinterpreted when the socio-consciousness, which is inseparable from the gospel, is glossed over. The steward has the responsibility of giving to each person of the household their food allowance at 'the proper time' and 'the proper amount of food' (Lk 12:42). In doing so the steward releases, resources and equips the members of the household for mission. The steward parable in Luke 16:1–13 is essentially about the possibility of redemption, restoration and transformation facilitated through a crisis. Redemption, restoration and the opportunity for transformation present in the crisis are elements of missions.

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