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THE DRAMA OF THE CITY OF GOD

JERUSALEM IN ST LUKE'S GOSPEL

On the holy mount stands the city he founded ;
the Lord loves the gates of Zion
more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.
Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God (Ps. 87:1-3).

How strange and wonderful is the history of Jerusalem ! The political capital of David's kingdom, it represented in the Old Testament the national unity of God's people. Chosen by God as a dwelling-place for His holy name, it was Israel's spiritual centre and it was destined to become the spiritual centre of the world. These were two vocations which were meant to coincide but which, in fact, were the source of a growing tension ; incapable of fulfilling her spiritual mission the political Jerusalem lost her prestige little by little : in 931 B.C. a schism between the Northern and the Southern tribes reduced her to the state of capital of the Southern Kingdom ; some three centuries later, in 597 and 587, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it, and in those days of affliction and bitterness Jerusalem could only remember ' all the precious things that were hers from days of old ' (Lam. 1:7). But God had not abandoned His city ; from the ruins of 587 a new Jerusalem was born ; no longer the capital of a kingdom, for there was no longer any kingdom of Israel or Juda ; but the religious centre of the Israelite community purified by the exile. It looked as if at last the city of God was about to become what God meant her to be : ' the city of righteousness, the faithful city ' (Is. 1:26). But as time went on, the reality betrayed more and more hopes and dreams ; after a moment of glory at the time of the Maccabees, Jerusalem fell again into the hands of strangers. In the year 63 B.C., after a three-months' siege, Pompey entered the town, and Jerusalem was reduced to the level of a small provincial city in the Roman empire. The political Jerusalem was dead.

Had God forgotten His promises ? Or rather had not the time come when He would carry out His plans and fashion after His own heart the Jerusalem described by the prophets ?—' All the promises of God find their Yes in Christ ' (2 Cor. 1:20). It belonged to Christ to

build the new city ; and the New Testament, the gospels in particular, show us God's architect at work. From Mark to John, Jerusalem occupies a more and more important place in the gospels. But it is in Luke that her role is best underlined. In the pages that follow we shall try to decipher the message which Luke intends the theme of Jerusalem to convey.

At the dawn of the New Testament : Luke's infancy narrative : ch. 1-2

Luke is said to have represented all the events of the life of Christ as ' driven by some mystical force towards Jerusalem.'¹ This is noticeable from the very first pages of his gospel : the opening and the closing scene of the infancy narrative are staged at Jerusalem, in the temple (1:5-23 and 2:41-50) ; so is one of the central episodes, the Presentation (2:22-38). These first two chapters, permeated as they are with an Old Testament atmosphere, betray Luke's intention of showing the continuity of God's plan of salvation : the good tidings are proclaimed within the framework of the Mosaic dispensation. In this sense, the annunciation of John the Baptist's birth is typical : just as in the Old Testament, an angel appears bringing a message from God to a Levitical priest at Jerusalem in the temple, during the offering of the daily sacrifice of the lamb. Jerusalem is still truly the city ' chosen by God to make his name dwell there ' and therefore Israel's spiritual centre.

And yet, somewhat hidden perhaps under this calm fidelity to traditional values but none the less alive, a sense of expectation fills the hearts of many, from Simeon ' looking for the consolation of Israel ' (2:25) to Anna ' looking for the redemption of Jerusalem ' (2:38). In fact the fullness of time has come : John the Baptist is ' to make ready for the Lord a people prepared ' (1:17) and above all, he who is to sit on the throne of David has already been conceived in the womb (1:32).

Jerusalem does not seem to be affected by these great events. Life goes on as usual within her walls, and no notice is taken of Mary and Joseph going up to the temple to present their child to the Lord (2:22f.). Yet on this child rests the fate of the city of God, for he is the Servant of Yahweh spoken of by Isaias, and he will offer salvation to the Gentiles as well as to Israel, but also and perhaps first of all to Jerusalem (2:30-2).² The Servant however had been described by the prophet as the ' suffering Servant ' who would meet with fierce opposition (Is. 50:4-7) and finally suffer a shameful death for the transgression of

¹ E. Osty in *Bible de Jérusalem, Saint Luc*, p. 19

² Simeon's canticle is inspired by Is. 42:6 ; 46:13 ; 49:6 ; 52:10.

his people (Is. 53:8). Simeon's mysterious words to Mary (Lk. 2:34-5) echo this prophecy and already suggest at what price the redemption of Jerusalem will be paid.

Thus in the first pages of his gospel Luke outlines for our benefit the drama which he is about to describe: the time has come for Jerusalem to make a decisive choice: God is going to 'visit' her. Will she consent to rejoice because her king comes to her, even if he is 'humble and riding on an ass' (Zach. 9:9, quoted in Lk. 19:30f.) or will she refuse the message of peace offered to her (Lk. 19:42)? On her choice will depend her very existence as the city of God.

Jerusalem, the city of the greatest temptation (4:1-13)

The beginning of the drama is ominous: Jerusalem appears immediately as the place where Jesus meets with Satan's strongest challenge.

Christ's temptations in the desert are mentioned or narrated by the three synoptic gospels¹ and all three place them in the same context: Jesus goes down to the Jordan to receive John's baptism,² he also receives from God his messianic investiture³ and is thus ready to begin his public ministry. But led by the Spirit, he first goes into the wilderness where he is tempted by the devil. Luke seems to follow the same source as Matthew, but his narrative differs from that of the first gospel by some additions and above all in the order in which he presents the temptations. Whereas according to Matthew the second temptation is staged on the pinnacle of the temple in the holy city, and the third on a very high mountain, in Luke's narrative the temptation at Jerusalem comes third. To Jesus exhausted by a long fast (4:2) Satan has already suggested: 'rely on yourself, on the power you possess' (4:3); then, showing him 'all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time' (4:5) he has told him 'rely on me and it will all be yours'. But the first two temptations having failed, Satan makes a final attempt, an attempt which for Luke will constitute the climax of the trial imposed upon Jesus: 'rely on God' says Satan. Jesus is the messiah, and therefore by right king of Jerusalem; why should he not show it immediately by throwing himself down from the pinnacle of the temple? Surely God will protect him, and the Kedron valley, already so rich in memories, will become the scene of the first great triumph by which the messiah conquers the hearts of his people.

This then is the choice offered to Jesus: either the easy way suggested by Satan, of propaganda-miracles which would give Jerusalem

¹ Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12; Lk. 4:1-13 ² Mk. 1:1-11; Mt. 3:13-17; Lk. 3:1-22

³ Mk. 1:11; Mt. 3:17; Lk. 3:22

a messiah after her own heart ; or the humble and hard way of the cross winding through the streets of the city and leading up to Calvary. But the Father's will is clear : Jerusalem will witness the triumph of her king, but not the sort of triumph she expects ; to save her from utter ruin, to make her the centre of the world, Jesus will have to die ; Jerusalem will be the scene of his Passion.

But the hour of the Passion is still far away ; and Jesus must now begin his mission in Galilee. Satan, having ' ended every temptation ' (4:13), can only withdraw from the field ; he already knows however that Jerusalem will offer him one day another and better opportunity : ' he departed from him until an opportune time ' (Lk. 4:13 ; cf. Lk. 22:3).

Jerusalem the city of Christ's ' exodus ' : 9:28-36

While describing Jesus' Galilean ministry, Luke seems to forget Jerusalem : between 4:14 and 9:28 the name of the city appears only once : in 5:27.

Jesus' fame has already spread far and wide (5:15) and it seems to disturb the authorities ; the Pharisees side with the teachers of the law to watch him ; not only the Pharisees and teachers of Galilee, but also, as Luke points out, those of Judea and Jerusalem (5:17).¹ This is perhaps only a detail which by itself does not mean much ; but it certainly suggests that Jerusalem is not particularly well disposed towards the young rabbi. More important however is the way Luke, throughout the Galilean section of his gospel, simplifies Jesus' itinerary : his narrative follows closely that of Mark, but he leaves out Jesus' journey to Tyre and Sidon (Mk. 6:45-8:26) ; he also leaves out the names of Caesarea Philippi in 9:18-21 (see Mk. 8:27) and Galilee in 9:43-4 (see Mk. 9:30). It looks as if he intentionally omitted any topographical indication which might unduly distract our attention from Jerusalem. And when his description of the Galilean ministry comes to an end, he takes advantage of an important event, the transfiguration, to remind us of the place which Jerusalem is to have in the mission of Christ.

The narrative of the transfiguration appears in Luke in the same context as in Matthew and Mark : Christ who has told his disciples about his coming passion,² and has invited them to follow him carrying their cross³ takes with him Peter, John and James and goes up to the mountain to pray (9:28). While praying he is transfigured before them, and they catch a glimpse of his glory. We can assume that for Luke, just as for Matthew and Mark, the transfiguration is meant as a

¹ See Mt. 9:3 and Mk. 2:6

² Lk. 9:22 ; Mt. 16:21-3 ; Mk. 8:31-3

³ Lk. 9:23-7 ; Mt. 16:24-8 ; Mk. 8:34-9:1

promise and foretaste of Christ's glorious resurrection, and as such it brings comfort to the disciples whom the first prophecy of the passion has disheartened.

But Luke's narrative contains a special message, for whereas Matthew and Mark are content with mentioning the presence of Moses and Elias talking with Jesus,¹ Luke explains :

They spoke of his departure which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem (9:31).

There is, in this sentence, one word particularly worth noticing, the word 'departure' which translates the Greek noun *exodos*. Rare in the New Testament,² this term occurs fairly frequently in the Old Testament where it often means a 'going out' in general,³ but where it also refers especially to the 'exodus' from Egypt. Now in Luke 9:31 this same term could be understood in the sense of death, without any other precision : 'They spoke of his death which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.'⁴ But the context seems to suggest a more pregnant meaning : the presence of Moses at Jesus' side, the mountain (9:28), the glory (9:32), the cloud (9:34), the voice coming from the cloud (9:35), remind us forcibly of the theophany of Mount Sinai,⁵ that is of the central event in Israel's journey from Egypt to the promised land, in a word, of *the Exodus*. The theme of the exodus was already underlying the narrative of the temptations in the desert : just as Israel, after having been chosen by Yahweh as His son, had been led into the desert by a column of fire, that is, according to a consecrated interpretation in Israel, by the holy spirit of Yahweh, in order to be tempted for forty years, so too was Jesus, the well-beloved Son of God, impelled into the desert by the Spirit in order to undergo his temptations.⁶ Matthew, Mark and Luke have this same theme in mind when describing the transfiguration, but Luke brings it out more clearly by using the very word 'exodus' : Jesus is about to go up to Jerusalem ; his journey will not be an ordinary pilgrimage ; he will remake, on his own account, Israel's spiritual journey, and just as the first exodus had brought Israel to the promised land, so Jesus' exodus will end at Jerusalem where he will 'pass over' from this world to the Father, thus fulfilling his mission of Saviour of the world, and Jerusalem will be for him, in some mysterious way, what the promised land had been for Israel.

¹ Mt. 17:3 ; Mk. 9:4

² In the NT the term *exodos* appears only twice beside our text : in Heb. 11:22 (where it means exodus) and in 2 Pet. 1:15 (where it means death).

³ Going out of a territory, of a house : Ex. 23:16 ; Num. 35:26

⁴ This is the translation adopted by Knox ; see also Lagrange : *Évangile selon St. Luc*, p. 272.

⁵ see Ex. 24:15f.

⁶ see J. Guillet : *Themes of the Bible*, p. 15

Thus, in one sentence, Luke gives us the deep meaning of the events that lie ahead, and in particular, of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem : 9:51-19:27

To this journey, Luke consecrates the central section of his gospel ; a section which is all the more interesting and important for our purpose as it is, for the greater part, proper to the third gospel.

What are Luke's sources for this section ? From 9:51 to 18:14 Luke abandons Mark, his usual guide, and within the framework given him by Mark (Mk. 10:1) of a journey to Jerusalem, he assembles materials gathered from a tradition also used by Matthew, and from other sources to which he alone has access.¹ Luke had probably at his disposal a number of elements which no historical or thematic thread linked together, and he gave them the unity they lacked by inserting them into the narrative of a journey taking Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. In 18:15, however, Luke picks up Mark's narrative where he had left it (see Mk. 10:13) and follows it closely, though some divergences bring him here and there nearer to Matthew.

But what is the exact historical value of Luke's narrative ? Is this journey he describes a real journey ? Jesus, no doubt, did leave Galilee for Jerusalem where he was to die, and Luke, just as Matthew and Mark, makes this clear. Luke, however, is not so much concerned with geography as with theology, and Jesus' itinerary does not interest him as such ; shading off therefore all topographical notations except those of Jerusalem, he shows Jesus heading with great decision towards the holy city. We thus find scattered through his narrative texts which he uses as signposts destined to remind us of Jesus' goal. These texts are purely redactional, in the sense that they allow him to unify his sources ; but at the same time, they give us indications of his theological intentions.

En route towards a hostile city : 9:51

Going up to Jerusalem was always for the Jews a great event ; and many psalms echo the joy of the pilgrims making their way over the steep hills of Judaea and finally discovering from afar the city and the house of their God :

How lovely is thy dwelling-place, O Lord of hosts !
My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord ;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God . . .
Blessed are they whose strength is in thee,
in whose heart are the highways to Sion (Ps. 84:1-5).

¹ The whole section counts 24 pericopes common to Matthew and Luke, 22 proper to Luke, and 4 belonging to the 3 synoptic gospels.

Jesus too looks forward to going to Jerusalem once again,¹ but he knows that Satan is waiting for him there, and that the joy of the first hours in the city will be followed by a fierce and lonely struggle against the powers of darkness. Indeed, as Luke seems to suggest, the struggle begins at the very moment Jesus leaves Galilee :

When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go up to Jerusalem (9:51).

The very tone of the evangelist is solemn : ' a verse full of majesty, written in Old Testament style.' ² The expression ' to be received up ' refers to Christ's death, but also, and perhaps first of all, to his ascension.³ But the glory to come is overshadowed by the sufferings of the passion, and Jesus appears as the Suffering Servant who, under persecution ' set his face like a flint ' (Is. 50:7) and held on, knowing that he ' who vindicated him was near '. Jesus starts on his journey, to face the agony of Gethsemane and the passion.

Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets : 13:31-5

The following chapters show Jesus on his way to Jerusalem ; he presses on, hardly finding time to stop and speak to those who would like to join the group of his disciples (9:57-61). Many episodes, it is true, give us a completely different impression, and his ministry resembles very closely that of the Galilean period when he travelled from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing the sick. And yet, Luke does not want us to forget that it is ' journeying toward Jerusalem ' that Jesus goes through towns and villages, teaching (13:22).

He thus reaches Herod's territory, probably Perea (13:31-3). But he is not given much time to rest there, for the Pharisees, as if they were anxious about his security, come and tell him : ' Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you ' (13:31). Is it likely that Herod bothered at all about Jesus ? Did he really intend to kill him ? Perhaps he had heard about Jesus and simply meant to keep him away from his territory so as to forget more easily about John the Baptist (see 9:7-9). Hence his intervention through the Pharisees ! Or perhaps the Pharisees themselves invented this trick so as to oblige Jesus to go to Judaea and Jerusalem, their stronghold, where they would find it easier to hold him in check ?

¹ see Lk. 12:50 ; 22:15

² E. Osty, op. cit. p. 87, note c

³ The verb from which the word used by Luke derives, is applied in the OT to Elias' assumption : 2 Kg. 2:9-11 ; and in the NT to Christ's ascension : Mk. 16:19 ; Ac. 2:1, 11, 22.

But whatever be the facts, Jesus' answer plays an important part in Luke's narrative :

Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course (13:32).

The expression 'today and tomorrow' should not be taken literally ; it simply means a short and determined space of time. Whatever be Herod's plans, it is true that Jesus has nearly reached the end of his mission : the day approaches when he 'finishes his course,' or literally, 'when he is achieved,' the word chosen by Luke suggesting both the idea of 'end' and the idea of 'achievement, fulfilment' ; and in fact, Jesus' passion and death will not only put an end to his earthly mission, but will also 'make him perfect' (Heb. 2:10 ; 5:9). The third day has not yet come, however, and in the meantime Jesus must, for such is the Father's will, be on his way casting out demons and performing cures, and it will be in Jerusalem and nowhere else that he will finish his course, for :

it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem (13:33).

These are ironic words partly explained by Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, which Luke links up with the episode in Herod's territory.

The text of this lamentation is common to Matthew and Luke,¹ but whereas in Matthew it concludes a long section dealing with the imminent coming of the kingdom (Mt. ch. 19-23) and introduces the long eschatological discourse of ch. 24-5, Luke inserts it in his journey narrative, thus giving the journey itself a specific meaning. Jesus' lament is addressed to Jerusalem, and to Jerusalem considered not only as the symbol of Israel as a whole, but also and above all as the city entrusted with a special mission in which she has hopelessly failed, in spite of the efforts made by the prophets in her favour. For God did send in time past many prophets to remind her of her divine vocation ; relentlessly, they denounced her sins and invited her to conversion,² but to no avail : far from listening to their call, she persecuted them : 'This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city' (Jer. 26:11). And it was actually in Jerusalem, in the court of the house of the Lord, that King Joash had Zechariah stoned to death (2 Chron. 24:20f.), just as it was probably also in Jerusalem that King Jehoiakim slew Uriah (Jer. 26:20f.). As to King Manasseh's cruelties, they struck, according to Josephus,³ the prophets above all,

¹ Mt. 23:37-9 ; Lk. 13:34-5

³ *Antiq.* X, III, 1

² see Ez. ch. 8-11

and their blood flooded the city (2 Kg. 21:16). Many other similar crimes, not mentioned in the Bible, may have given rise to the tradition echoed by the New Testament¹ and earned the city of God the lament of Christ himself :

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you !
(13:34)

But it was precisely Christ's task to make a final attempt to save Jerusalem :

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not ! (13:34)

Christ's call has hitherto remained unanswered, just like the call of the prophets ; and the catastrophe is now at hand :

Behold, your house is forsaken (13:35).

And yet, all hope is not forbidden : Jesus' threat ends with a mysterious promise of salvation :

I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ' Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord ! ' (13:35)

Jerusalem's refusal of her divine vocation will be her ruin, but her Lord will come back, and this time, his reception will be a triumph lasting for ever.

Jerusalem, the city that rejects her King : 19:11-27

From Herod's territory Jesus must have headed towards Jerusalem, though Luke does not say so. The mention of a dinner offered to Jesus by a Pharisee allows the evangelist to group together several sayings to which the theme of the meal gives unity (14:1-24) ; and again, abruptly, the theme of the journey reappears : ' Now great multitudes accompanied him . . . ' (14:25), as if the whole people of Israel took part in Jesus' pilgrimage. On two other occasions, Luke reminds us of Jesus' journey. In 17:11, ' On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was passing between Samaria and Galilee.' This is a purely redactional element : since 9:51, Jesus, starting from Galilee, has been on his way to the city ; but in 17:11 he has not yet left the border between the two Northern provinces. In 18:15, Luke catches up the Markan narrative which he had left in 9:50 ; and in 18:31, following Mark

¹ see Ac. 7:51f. ; Heb. 11:37f.

(Mk. 10:32-4), he gives us the third prophecy of the passion ; but so as not to repeat himself he simplifies Mark's text, and the third prophecy of the passion becomes in his gospel one more signpost making it clear that Jesus *is* going to Jerusalem.

Finally the journey-narrative comes to an end, and summing it all up, so to speak, we find the parable of the pounds (19:11-22). In spite of important divergences this parable is probably to be identified with that of the slothful servant in Matthew (25:14-30), each evangelist having modified and developed in his own way an initial theme. Matthew's parable belongs to the eschatological discourse made by Christ just before his passion (Mt. ch. 24-5) : after having foretold in one and the same perspective both the ruin of Jerusalem and the Parousia, Jesus presents several parables destined to show the repercussions of these two events in the life of men : men are servants to whom their master has entrusted a task in the making of the kingdom and who, one day, will have to present their accounts.

In Luke, the setting of the parable of the pounds is different : as already pointed out, it brings to an end the section consecrated to Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, and even if in itself, it is only loosely connected with the preceding texts, it is certainly meant to play an important role where it is.

Luke seems to have grouped together two parables : the parable of the pretender to the throne (19:12, 14, 27) and the parable of the pounds (19:13, 15-26). The first constitutes a severe prophetic warning to all those who within a few days will reject Christ the king and proclaim : ' We have no king but Caesar ' (Jn. 19:15). In the background we sense the drama of the passion, the conflict between Jewish messianism and divine messianism, between the political city of Jerusalem and the city of God. The second parable, just as the parable of the slothful servant in Matthew, is an invitation to a vigilant activity.

But what has Jerusalem to do with these parables ? Luke makes it quite clear :

As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, *because he was near to Jerusalem*, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately (19:11).

We may conclude that Jesus *is* the pretender who is coming to his city to be crowned king ; but not the king which the city expects : ' We do not want this man to reign over us ! ' (19:14)

Jerusalem, the blind city : 19:28-44

And when he had said these parables, Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem (19:28).

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is told by the four gospels, but the structure of Luke's entire gospel gives it a special relief: it is in Jerusalem that Jesus is going to achieve his mission (see 13:32). Moreover, whereas in Matthew and Mark, Jesus travels constantly, after his solemn entry, between Jerusalem and Bethany, and even, according to Matthew and John, goes as far as Galilee after his resurrection, in Luke he never leaves the city. Of Mark's dramatic introduction to the entry into Jerusalem (Mk. 11:1) Luke keeps only the essential: 'Jesus went on ahead.' Since the day he left Galilee (9:51), Jesus has always taken the lead¹ as if he wanted to be the first to meet the danger.

And yet, just now, there is anything but danger ahead: Jerusalem seems to be all joy to receive her king. Luke stresses this note of joy, and instinctively as it were, it reminds him of the first reception ever granted in this world to the Son of God made man: the reception of Bethlehem: 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest' (19:38; see 2:14). But the triumph of this first 'Palm Sunday' is only a timid rehearsal of what is to come later, much later, at the wedding-feast of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem. And the enthusiasm of the crowd cannot make Jesus forget the drama the immediate future keeps in store both for himself and his city: 'When he drew near and saw the city he wept over it' (19:41). The second lament of Jesus over Jerusalem, which these words introduce (see 13:34-5), is proper to Luke and therefore particularly worth our attention. Only once elsewhere in the gospels is it said that Jesus wept: when he arrived at the tomb of his friend Lazarus (Jn. 11:35). Jesus loved Jerusalem. But it will take more than a word to rescue Jerusalem from the jaws of death, for she refuses the peace which her king brings to her:

Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes (19:42).

Instead of peace, therefore, there will be war, and utter destruction:

For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation (19:43-4).

Thus will finally be fulfilled the threats already uttered by the prophets against the rebellious city.²

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem gives us the impression that once more, but for the last time, the political and the spiritual Jerusalem are

¹ see 9:55; 10:23; 14:25

² see Is. 29:3; Jer. 52:4-5; Ez. 4:1-3

identified : in God's name, the Messiah takes possession of his city, the glorious city which he loves ; Jerusalem, the city of David, rejoices in the presence of the Lord ; her ambitions are fulfilled, she is the royal city, the centre of the world, and her name is 'The Lord is there' (Ez. 48:35). But this identification is only provisional ; or rather, it is but the last attempt made by the Messiah to gather the children of Jerusalem. Today, just as yesterday, this attempt will fail ; Jesus knows it and the rejection of God's last visitation moves him to tears because it will bring about her final rejection.

The ruin of Jerusalem : 21:5-36

Jesus' second lament over Jerusalem (19:41-4) contained a concrete but brief description of the ruin with which the city was threatened. But Jesus takes up and develops the same theme in a long discourse given us by Luke in 21:5-36. Luke depends here on a catechetical and literary tradition which considered in the same perspective both the ruin of Jerusalem and the glorious return of Christ at the end of time.¹ But as he has already dealt with this second aspect of Christ's Parousia (17:22-37), he only devotes to it a few verses at the end of the discourse (21:25-8, 29-33), and focuses all his attention on the ruin of Jerusalem : the destruction of the city will mark the end of a world, a world chosen by God and called to a very high destiny, but finally rejected because it has not been faithful.

The passion : Satan's last chance at Jerusalem

The crucial moment has now come. While every day Jesus spends his time teaching in the temple (21:37), the chief priests and the scribes are seeking how to put him to death (22:1). This is the opportune time for Satan (see 4:13), he enters into Judas (22:3) and is ready to tempt Simon (22:31). The passion begins, the hour and the power of darkness (22:53). Luke, just as the three other evangelists, follows scene by scene the development of the drama which takes Jesus from the Mount of Olives to Golgotha. But behind Jesus' passion, the shadow of another passion stands out : the passion of Jerusalem. Jesus himself cannot but see it : to the women who bewail and lament for him while he is led away to be crucified, he says :

Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck !' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us', and to the hills, 'Cover us'. For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry ? (23:27-31).

¹ see Mt. ch. 24-5 ; Mk. ch. 13

There is no longer any hope for the political Jerusalem ; she has condemned her king to death ; she too will die.

Jerusalem, a small provincial city in the Roman empire

We might expect not to find even the name of the decide city in the pages which Luke consecrates to the appearances of the risen Christ. In fact, Jerusalem is everywhere present in these pages. On the day of the resurrection, two disciples disheartened by Jesus' death, decide to leave the town, but while they are making their way to Emmaus, Jesus himself joins them and as soon as they have recognised him 'at the breaking of the bread,' they return to Jerusalem (24:13-35). Meanwhile Jesus has already appeared to Simon in Jerusalem (24:35) ; and while the disciples of Emmaus are telling the eleven what has happened to them on the road, Jesus himself stands among them (24:36). This is his last appearance before he goes back to the Father, and in his final message, he entrusts his disciples with a mission :

Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, *beginning from Jerusalem* (24:47).

The Acts will explain further :

You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Ac. 1:8).

Thus the evangelisation of the world will proceed by stages, and whereas up to the death of Christ, Jerusalem had been the focal point towards which all nations were invited to converge, the day is now near when the apostles 'clothed with power from on high' (24:49), will leave Jerusalem and spread the good news to the four corners of the earth ; the political Jerusalem will no longer be the spiritual centre of the world.

Then Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, blessing God (24:50-2).

Luke's gospel ends as it has begun : in the temple of Jerusalem. As if nothing had happened ; as if Jerusalem did not understand, or even did not know that she was now, in all truth, only a small provincial city in the Roman empire.

Towards the New Jerusalem

Of the four evangelists Luke is the only one to present the life of Christ as a unique, resolute and decisive 'going up' to Jerusalem.

When Jesus, the Son of God made man, enters the world, Jerusalem is far from having lost her prerogatives : she is still God's city. The life of the Israelites is focused on her and on her temple, and the main feasts of the Jewish calendar bring throngs of pilgrims to her. She is not simply a political, but a religious capital whose hegemony is undisputed. God himself considers her as His city : in preference to all other cities in Palestine, He chooses her as the stage where the messianic times open. It is at Jerusalem, in the temple, that the birth of the precursor is announced in whom Old and New Testament meet. As to Christ himself, he loves Jerusalem because she is God's chosen city and her temple his Father's house (2:49 ; 19:45-6) ; even after his resurrection he wants her to enjoy special rights (24:52). There is therefore perfect continuity between Old and New Testament : Jerusalem the political centre of Israel is also the city of God.

But Jesus is also entrusted with a mission on which the very existence of the city depends. He himself calls this mission a ' visitation ' (19:44), an Old Testament term, already used by Zechariah singing the intervention of the Lord who has ' visited and redeemed his people ' (1:68). It will be his task to resume the efforts of the prophets and to make a final attempt to gather the children of Jerusalem (13:34). To this mission Christ consecrates himself wholeheartedly : his first visit to the city already provokes a timid but real gathering : Simeon and Anna, led by the Spirit, are the first fruits of the gathering of Pentecost (Ac. 2:5-11). On his great journey to Jerusalem he is accompanied by a group of people, a group which increases steadily : the twelve and some disciples (9:51f.), a crowd of people (11:14), increasing crowds (11:29), many thousands (12:1) ; and when he enters Jerusalem, one might think that his mission is over : unity has been achieved. After his resurrection he wants his disciples to stay in Jerusalem and he specifies that their work of evangelisation will have to start from Jerusalem. The Apostles obey him : after the Ascension, they return to the city, and on the day of Pentecost, Jerusalem becomes the scene of an immense gathering, the description of which (Ac. 2:5-12) suggests the final gathering of the heavenly Jerusalem (Apoc. 7:9-12). It is as if Christ's mission had sanctioned for ever the religious role of the earthly Jerusalem.

Christ's mission, the final attempt, met with the absolute refusal of the city. God's city and his city, was a battlefield first for him, and after him for his disciples (Ac. 4:1-22 ; 7:55-8 ; 12:2). The many motives which explain the attitude of Jerusalem all spring from the same source : her messianic dreams ; she expected a political messiah who would make her the political centre of the world. She did not therefore and she could not understand the attitude of Christ, the

friend of the poor, the enemy of the rich and the powerful ; in her eyes, he was mistaken, and dangerously so. Her disappointment changed little by little into open hostility, and finally led her to condemn him to the fate she had already meted out to so many prophets. And as a consequence, he whom God had chosen to be the cornerstone of His city, was for Jerusalem who rejected him the stone on which she fell and was broken into pieces (30:17-18).

Christ's last discourse foretold the utter ruin of Jerusalem. Did this mean that God had altered His plan of salvation ? If, after his resurrection, Christ did ask his apostles to remain in the city until the Spirit was sent to them, he also told them to go, after Pentecost, and preach the good news to the whole world. There was no hint, in his parting message, of a future gathering of all nations in the city. And in fact, the history of primitive Christianity shows how little by little the Church severed the ties which held her bound to Jerusalem and Judaism : the first Christians gathered frequently in Solomon's portico (Ac. 5:12), and the apostles may have at first hesitated to start on their missionary journeys ; but persecution soon obliged them to go abroad (Ac. 8:1), and the Lord lent them a helping hand. He commissioned Philip, one of the deacons, to go and baptise a pagan ' on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza ' (Ac. 8:26), and invited Peter himself to go and baptise a Roman centurion at Cesarea (Ac. ch. 10). A Christian community developed in Syria, and Antioch became an active Christian centre which rapidly took precedence over Jerusalem (Ac. 11:19f.). And above all Saul of Tarsus, chosen by Christ to carry his name ' before the Gentiles and Kings ' (Ac. 9:15) began his missionary expeditions which took him through Asia Minor and Greece to Rome, the capital of the world. Thus when Luke brought to an end his history of the primitive Church, not only had Jerusalem ceased to be the city of God, but she was approaching her last hour, and the churches of God were scattered throughout the Roman empire. The image of unity so clearly brought out by the third gospel was replaced in the Acts by an image of dispersion.

' The gifts and the call of God, however, are irrevocable ' (Rom. 11:29). There was no longer, it is true, any earthly, political city which could lay claim to the title of ' city of God.' But God was nevertheless building a new city which would inherit the privileges of the ancient Jerusalem. Luke's message must be completed here by that of Paul and John. Paul was the first to stress that the ancient Jerusalem ' in slavery with her children ' was being superseded by a new Jerusalem from above (Gal. 4:24-31). The Letter to the Hebrews resumes the same image and speaks of Mount Sion and of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem to which Christians have already

come through baptism (Heb. 12:21f.). But it belonged to the Johanne tradition to offer us the description of this New Jerusalem, the Church, the Spouse of the Lamb. For the Apocalypse, the Church here on earth is already this city, trampled, it is true, by the nations (Apoc. 11:2). But the day will come when God manifests her full glory :

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . , having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. . . . And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall all the nations walk, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it . . . (Apoc. 21:2-27).

In spite of her unrestrained ambition, never could the earthly Jerusalem have dreamed of so exhilarating a reality. How true it is that God is able 'to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think' (Eph. 3:20). Glorious things had been spoken of God's city, they have all come true through Jesus Christ in whom all the promises of God find their Yes (2 Cor. 1:20).

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THE EMMANUEL PROPHECY AND ITS CONTEXT—III

In the former articles¹ we have considered the historical context of the Emmanuel prophecy and have passed in review the various identifications of Emmanuel that have been put forward through the centuries. Despite its abandonment, even by some Catholics in recent years, the traditional view that Emmanuel is none other than the future Messiah seen by Isaias in prophetic vision still seems the most acceptable. Apart from being the traditional understanding of the oracle it seems the one that suits best the context of the Book of Emmanuel (Is. ch. 6-12). The Messias-Emmanuel of 7:14, then, is the Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace of 9:6 and the Shoot from the Stump of Jesse of 11:1.

It must be admitted, however, that the immediate context offers a serious difficulty to this view. In v. 14 the Prophet said to the House

¹ cf. *Scripture*, 1962, pp. 118-25 ; 1963, pp. 19-23