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THE DIVINE NECESSITY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES AN ENQUIRY INTO THE USE OF Δεῖ IN LUKE-ACTS

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Introduction

The extensive studies carried out through the past centuries have proved that Luke is not writing just pure history, rather a kerygmatic history.¹ The nature and the purpose of his work are made clear in

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¹Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, AB28; New York: Doubleday, 1981; Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell, New York: Faber and Faber, 1961. Until Conzelmann (1954) Luke was normally considered as a historian among the evangelists. This is made clear in the work of Charles K. Barret, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study*, London: Epworth Press, 1961. None of the four Gospels can strictly be called as biography of Jesus but rather a unique kind of literature. It is the presentation in narrative form and the expansion of the apostolic preaching. Luke is also counted as a historian like Josephus, Polybius and Plutarch because the prologue of Luke looks like the prologue of any other

the prologue to the Gospel (Lk 1:1-4).² Scholars who have tried to establish the narrative unity in Luke-Acts have pointed out a number of elements, running throughout the two volume work such as the journey motive,³ the parallelism,⁴ the saving plan of God, etc.⁵ The fulfilment of God's plan, that runs through Luke-Acts as the overarching theme, is expressed by the use of an impersonal verb $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$.⁶ The investigations show that $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ is a preferred term by Luke for describing the necessity of fulfilling God's saving will in the life of Jesus and the then disciples. The present study explores the meaning of the word $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ and its significance in the Lucan context and thereby establishes that it has its basis in the will of God concerning Jesus and his disciples. The readiness of Jesus and the disciples to mould their life according to the divine necessity is presented as a paradigm for those who follow Jesus.

Luke's choice of words and phrases are consistent in presenting Jesus and the disciples as the instruments in the hands of God to serve the purpose of bringing into realization the universal plan of God for the salvation of the world. Luke narrates the story of Jesus, presenting him as the role model who consumes the divine will about his life and executes it; the disciples are those who follow Jesus on his way. God's plan determines the entire life destiny of Jesus as well as the disciples.

Methodology

There are hundred and one occurrences of $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ in the NT and forty are found in the Lukan writings. Those verses in which $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ occurs with a particular significance, unfolding the necessity of doing the

history of his time. However he was a religious historian, a minister of the word. He was a theologian, but not a theologian dealing with abstractions or pure theological concept, but with the real concrete historical life of Jesus of Nazareth. Donald Senior, "Biblical Update: Luke and the Gospel of Canticles," *The Bible Today* 50 (2012) 335.

²Paul Schubert, "The Structure and Significance of Luke 24," in "*Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann*": zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag am 20. August 1954, ed. W. Eltester; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1954, 165-186.

³David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, 290. Joseph A. Pulickal, *Dynamics of Jesus Community: Towards the Discipleship in Lucan Theology*, Bangalore: ATC, 2007, 79.

⁴Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Mathew and Luke*, New York: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993, 243.

⁵Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 1: *The Gospel according to Luke*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990, 1.

⁶Charles H. Cosgrove, "The Divine $\Delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ in Luke-Acts: Investigation into the Lucan Understanding of God's Providence," *Novum Testamentum* 26 (1984) 168-190.

will of God by Jesus or his disciples, are analyzed in detail. The task is achieved by reading the text diachronically and synchronically. The work is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, a survey is done on the studies carried out in the past few years on the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in Luke-Acts. In the second chapter, all the significant occurrences of the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in Luke, related to the theme of the present study are analyzed for identifying the way in which Jesus has followed the divine necessity in his life. The significance of the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in the particular context is identified by a close reading of the passage in which the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ occurs. In this process the narrative aspects of the texts are analyzed in a detailed manner to find out the significance of the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$. In the third chapter, all the significant occurrences of the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in Acts, related to the theme of the present study, are analyzed for identifying the way in which Paul and the then disciples followed the divine necessity in their life. The fourth chapter deals with the significance of this study in the Indian context.

Divine Necessity in the Life of Jesus

The divine necessity underlined in the life of Jesus is investigated by analysing nine occurrences of the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in the Gospel of Luke. The first occurrence of the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in Luke is in 2:49; "Did you not know that I *must* ($\delta\epsilon\iota$) be doing the affairs of my Father?" Jesus establishes his identity by the use of the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$. The term occurs in the context where Jesus had to give a clarification to other characters in the narrative with regard to his identity. By expressing the divine necessity in doing the affairs of his Father in heaven Jesus defined his identity as Son of God. The universal dimension of Jesus' mission was made known to the reader as a divine necessity by the use of the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$. By pronouncing God as his Father Jesus was distancing himself from his earthly family and committing himself to the project of the Father, viz. to be available to everybody who was in need of liberation. Jesus' strange behaviour could be justified as he was doing it as a divine necessity. Jesus becomes the central character in the narrative as he is the sole interpreter of the enigma that characterized the narrative from the beginning. The divine necessity that Jesus was determined to follow was identified as a powerful expression alluding to the previous as well as to the following narrative. Jesus' pronouncement could shed light on his future ministry and the paschal mystery, which would be portrayed only later in the narrative.

The divine necessity involved in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God is identified by analyzing Luke 4:42-44. The term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ appears

in v. 43; “I *must* (δεῖ) proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.” Jesus’ pronouncement in the temple scene that he must be engaged in the affairs of his Father is realized in his mission as the one proclaiming the Kingdom of God without ceasing and without boundaries. The universality of Jesus’ mission was expressed by the term δεῖ: In the temple scene Jesus had to clarify to his parents that he has not come to belong to a particular family. In the present scene he had to clarify to the crowd that he could not be tied up to any group or sect. The action of Jesus could be justified as he was submitting himself to the will of God by following the divine necessity. The term δεῖ manifests that all the actions of the protagonist in the narrative are subordinated to a particular power, the divine will. Jesus achieves prominence in the narrative as he is both the proclaimer and the proclaimed. The term δεῖ is the key to interpret the text as it has a significant role in determining the proposed structure and the unity of the text.

The divine necessity involved in carrying on the destiny of Jesus is expressed in his encounter with the Pharisees (Lk 13:31-33). The term δεῖ appears in the response of Jesus to the Pharisees about the threat from Herod. The response of Jesus was, “Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I *must* (δεῖ) be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem” (Lk 13:33). The identity of Jesus is revealed here as the Son of God endowed with the power to heal and exorcise. The text doesn’t communicate this fact apparently: however, the reader can pick it up from the use of the term δεῖ in the text. Jesus had to give a clarification to all around him about his teaching, exorcism and healing. Jesus justifies his action by insisting on the divine necessity of his ministry which is expressed by the term δεῖ. The determination of Jesus to follow the divine necessity in the face of hostility alludes to the general pattern of the journey narrative in which Jesus had to face opposition and his strong resolve to continue his journey. The use of δεῖ together with the reference to the destiny of Jesus renders the statement of Jesus a second passion prediction in the travel narrative. Hostility against the identity of Jesus and his mission is heightened as Pharisees appear as opponents in the narrative. The intensity of such hostility against Jesus is increased by the reference to Herod who represents the archetypal enemy.

The divine necessity to visit the lost is expressed in Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). The term δεῖ occurs in the statement of Jesus to Zacchaeus: “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down;

for I *must* (δεῖ) stay at your house today” (Lk 19:5). Jesus’ purposeful entry into the city of Jericho, the encounter with Zacchaeus, visiting his household in the face of opposition and the saving activity, all find their explanation in the divine necessity that Jesus expresses by the use of the term δεῖ. Therefore, the term δεῖ is the key for the interpretation of the entire unit. The strangeness of Jesus’ activity before the crowd finds its elucidation in the divine necessity with which Jesus is empowered to do the saving activity. The divine imperative which was expressed in the beginning of Jesus’ journey towards Jerusalem is confirmed in the expression of the divine necessity Jesus follows in his ministry on the road to Jerusalem. It alludes to Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem where the hostility against Jesus would reach its climax in the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

There are two passion predictions in which the term δεῖ occurs in Luke (Lk 9:22; 17:25). The necessity of Jesus’ suffering is expressed by the term δεῖ which underlines the divine will and purpose behind the suffering. The identity of Jesus is revealed as the one destined to suffer as part of divine necessity. The presence of the term δεῖ in the passion prediction alludes to the sovereign power of God as He raises Jesus from the dead against the rejection he suffers from the then generation. The presence of the term δεῖ in the resurrection narrative like Luke 24:7, 26, 44 alludes to the unbroken continuity in the narrative manifested by the presence of the term δεῖ which recalls the passion predictions. The mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection which was hidden from other characters in the scene is revealed as divine necessity by the term δεῖ in the narrative. Therefore, the term δεῖ is the key to interpret the passage. Jesus turns to be the protagonist of the story as the interpreter of the mystery and the interpreted. The disciples are invited to recognize the identity of Jesus as the one who fulfilled the divine necessity.

Divine Necessity in the Life of the Disciples

The divine necessity in the life of disciples is identified by analysing the occurrences of the term δεῖ in Acts. The term δεῖ occurs twice in the passage narrating Paul’s vocation (Acts 9:6, 16). The entire missionary journey of Paul is being summarized in the use of the term δεῖ twice in the narration as it alludes to Paul’s faithful following of Jesus in his ministry and the suffering he had to undergo to execute the will of God. The universal dimension of his mission is revealed in the narrative as a divine necessity. The term δεῖ used by exalted Jesus shows the continuity in the narrative which was

frequently used by Jesus during his earthly ministry. The divine necessity in the tribulations of the disciples is expressed in Acts 14:22. It is a powerful expression in the narrative as Paul must defend it in the future as received from the Lord as a divine necessity. As in the other occurrences, the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ appears as a kernel in the narrative indicating transition in the narrative, where the mission directed to Jews changes to mission oriented to Gentiles. It introduces the major themes in the following narrative, viz. divine guidance in the new mission and suffering for the name of Jesus. The term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ used by exalted Jesus shows the continuity in the narrative which was frequently used by Jesus during his earthly ministry.

The divine necessity in the tribulations of the disciples is expressed in Acts 14:22: "It is through many persecutions that we must ($\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$) enter the kingdom of God." The identity of the emerging character, 'the community of the new disciples,' is presented in the narrative as destined to suffer for their faith, which guarantees them entry into the Kingdom of God. The term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$, which was a Jesus' word, is now uttered by Paul and Barnabas. Therefore, it becomes an Apostles' word too. As in the previous cases the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ appears here in a climactic context as it is the conclusion to the first missionary journey. The divine plan that undergirds the narrative is once again emphasized by the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$. The term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ functions here as a key to interpret the passage.

The divine necessity in the journey of Paul to Rome is expressed on three occasions: Acts 19:21; 23:11 and 27:24. The term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ appears at the crucial stages of the narrative. Divine necessity in the journey of Paul is expressed at the beginning of the journey in 19:21 and it is further confirmed by the Lord in 23:11 when Paul's life was in a serious danger (23:12-13). The third instance of the occurrence of the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ is when the reader gets an impression that it would be impossible for Paul to reach Rome (27:24). The appearance of the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ at the crucial stages of the narrative enhances the unity of the narrative which deals with Paul's long journey to Rome as a divine necessity. God's sovereignty over all the other characters in the narrative is manifested by the use of the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ in the crucial stages of the narrative.

Out of the forty occurrences of $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ in Luke-Acts, the present study has taken into consideration only fifteen cases for a detailed investigation. These occurrences were preferred as they are directly related to the main thrust of the present research. However, the present study leaves scope for exploring the significance of the use of the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ occurring in other texts in Luke-Acts.

Divine Necessity in the Life of the Disciples Today

The disciples of Jesus have got a unique identity after the example of Jesus and the then disciples; therefore, they have a significant role to play in solving some of the burning problems prevalent in the Indian society. The narrative of Luke-Acts which ends as an open ended narrative gives the narrative an eternal value. The future disciples are invited to follow the divine necessity that has determined the life of Jesus and the then disciples. The implications of the use of the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ in the Lukan narrative are still relevant, as they can challenge and interpret the life of the disciples today.

In the life of Jesus and his disciples, they remained faithful to do the divine necessity even by sacrificing their life. The disciples today are invited to consider, all that they can do for reaffirming the dignity of each and every person in the society, as doing the affairs of the Father in heaven. The disciples of Jesus today are called to reach out to the people, who are counted among the lost, as a divine necessity of the time. Proclaiming the Kingdom of God, which aims at the liberation of all in the society, need to be considered as a divine necessity today in the midst of many challenges. The disciples today are invited to suffer when it is divinely willed for the sake of the mission they are entrusted with.

Conclusion

The general strategy of the author to present Jesus and his disciples in the frame work of the universal plan of God is made known to the reader by including in the crucial stages of the narrative the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$. Divine necessity which demands an unconditional obedience to the will of God finds its justification in the advantage deriving from the action of the characters. The use of the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ in certain texts is identified as a rhetorical device applied by the author to enhance credibility to the narrative. The study proposes Jesus and his disciples as models for those who are called to follow Jesus in the world today. The close reading of the texts in which the term $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ occurs in Luke-Acts makes clear that the narrative of Luke is an appeal to each and every reader to be obedient to God's will or to the divine necessity in their life, in order to create a better future.