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Does the Parable of the Minas Address the Delay of the Parousia? Luke 19,11–27 in its Lukan, Rhetorical and Roman Settings

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to question whether the parable of the minas (Lk. 19,11–27) is a reflection by Luke on the delay of the parousia. After a review of research showing that the delay-oriented interpretation of the parable has been prevalent for some time, there are four parts to the argument. First, in agreement with the delay hypothesis, it is argued (against a recent social-scientific interpretation) that the parable has allegorical features when compared with the portrait of Jesus in Luke-Acts (the “Lukan” setting). Secondly, examination of the parable and its frame in Luke 19,11 shows that Luke cannot straightforwardly be understood as applying the parable to a particular, contemporaneous eschatological concern (the “rhetorical” setting). Thirdly, the expeditions of royal claimants to Rome do not supply evidence for the “delay” reading of the parable because these journeys were not sufficiently cumbersome or protracted to imply delay in the parable (the “Roman” setting). Fourthly and finally, the article engages in exegesis of Luke 19,11–27 itself to show that the details of the parable do not point to a concern about delay on Luke’s part.

Zusammenfassung: Die vorliegende Studie stellt die These in Frage, dass das Gleichnis von den anvertrauten Pfunden (Lk 19,11–27) eine lukanische Reflexion zur Parusieverzögerung darstelle. Der vorangestellte Forschungsüberblick zeigt, dass diese „verzögerungsorientierte“ Interpretation seit langer Zeit vorherrscht. Die nachfolgende Argumentation besteht aus vier Teilen: Erstens wird in Übereinstimmung mit der Verzögerungshypothese und entgegen einer neueren, sozialwissenschaftlichen Interpretation argumentiert, dass das Gleichnis allegorische Züge aufweist, die sichtbar werden, wenn es mit dem Porträt Jesu im lukanischen Doppelwerk verglichen wird (der „lukanische“ Kontext). Zweitens zeigt die Untersuchung des Gleichnisses und seines Rahmens in Lk 19,11, dass Lukas nicht so gelesen werden kann, als beziehe er das Gleichnis auf eine bestimmte zeitgenössische eschatologische Sorge (der „rhetorische“ Kontext). Drittens liefern die Reisen von Thronprätendenten nach Rom keinen Beweis für eine verzögerungsorientierte Interpretation, da diese

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Reisen nicht beschwerlich oder langwierig genug waren (der „römische“ Kontext). Viertens und letztens befasst sich der Artikel mit der Exegese von Lukas 19,11–27 selbst, um zu zeigen, dass die Einzelheiten des Gleichnisses nicht darauf hindeuten, dass Lukas hier Bedenken hinsichtlich der Parusieverzögerung thematisiert.

Keywords: Luke, delay, parousia, Parusieverzögerung, parable, minas, pounds, client kings

While they were listening to this, Jesus proceeded to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and people were thinking that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. He therefore said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to be appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’ [...]” (Lk. 19,11–13).¹

The parable of the minas is usually thought to reflect on and address the delay of the parousia. An early instance of this interpretation is that of C.H. Dodd, who remarked already in 1935: “The parable is made explicitly to teach a lesson concerning the delay of the second advent.”² Unsurprisingly, Hans Conzelmann argued similarly that “its main *Pointe* is now that of the delay of the parousia”.³ Jan Lambrecht uses comparably strong language: for him, the parable has “the explicit purpose of solving the problem of the delay of the parousia.”⁴ Dieter Lührmann’s assessment of both Matthew’s parable of the talents and Luke’s parable of the minas is the same: “Gemeinsam ist beiden Traditionen [Mt + Lk], dass sich [...] die Parusieverzögerung zeigt.”⁵ Similarly for Dale C. Allison: the parable fictively “shows Jesus’ clear prescience of the delay of the parousia”, an instance of Luke’s “unpersuasive apologetics.”⁶ Examples along these lines could be multiplied.⁷ John

¹ Translations here and henceforth are my own.

² C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935), 147.

³ Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 74.

⁴ Jan Lambrecht, *Once More Astonished: The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 193.

⁵ Dieter Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, WMANT 33 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 70–71.

⁶ Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 65; idem, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 166.

⁷ E.g. M.D. Goulder, “Characteristics of the Parables in the Several Gospels,” *JTS* 19 (1968): 51–69, here 62: “to emphasise the delay before the Parousia”; Richard H. Hiers, “The Problem of the Delay of the Parousia in Luke-Acts,” *NTS* 20 (1974): 145–155, here 148: “the central point”; Lane C. McGaughey, “The Fear of Yahweh and the Mission of Judaism: A Postexilic Maxim and Its Early Christian Expansion in the Parable of the Talents,” *JBL* 94 (1975): 235–245, here 236–237; Gerhard Schneider, *Parusiegleich-*

Nolland speaks of “the standard view, that the parable seeks to explain the delay of the parousia”.⁸

The reason the parable is seen as a reflection of the delay of the parousia is twofold. First, the framing (v. 11) of the parable establishes that Jesus – within Luke’s narrative – is responding to the *Naherwartung* of his contemporaries:⁹ “While they were listening to this, Jesus proceeded to tell them a parable, *because he was near Jerusalem and people were thinking that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately* (διὰ τὸ ἐγγὺς εἶναι Ἰερουσαλὴμ αὐτὸν καὶ δοκεῖν αὐτοὺς ὅτι παραχρῆμα μέλλει ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναφαίνεσθαι)” (19,11). This is often seen as a transparent window onto Luke’s desire to correct feverish expectations of an imminent end.¹⁰

Secondly, the introduction to the parable proper in Luke 19,12 is taken as encoding delay: “A man of noble birth *went to a distant country* (ἐπορεύθη εἰς χώραν μακρὰν).” This journey to a “distant country” is frequently taken as a cipher for Jesus’ ascension to heaven and current long wait there.¹¹

This “long journey” and its implication of a delayed parousia is further amplified by the allusion in the parable to the motif of client kings going to Rome to have their reigns ratified by the emperor (*appellatio*), commentators usually referring to Herod the Great, and especially to Archelaus.¹² These journeys are seen as protracted processes, and therefore the nobleman’s journey and implied political negotiations are indicative of delay. Armand Puig i Tàrrach remarks: “Le délai de la manifestation du Royaume sera long, de la même façon que le prétendant royal a entrepris un

nisse im *Lukas-Evangelium*, SBS 74 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1975), 41; Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 3 (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 300; in more subtle terms: John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 392.
8 John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, WBC 35C (Waco, TX: Word, 1993), 913.

9 Indeed, as Kurt Erlemann, *Naherwartung und Parusieverzögerung im Neuen Testament: Ein Beitrag zur Frage religiöser Zeiterfahrung*, TANZ 17 (Tübingen: Francke, 1995), 168, notes, not “*Naherwartung*” but “*Nächsterwartung*”.

10 Sharon H. Ringe, *Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 234: “ostensibly” Lk. 19,11 contains a word to the disciples, but “the warning is more appropriately directed to Luke’s church”. Cf. Erich Gräßer, *Das Problem der Parusieverzögerung in den synoptischen Evangelien und in der Apostelgeschichte*, BZNW 22 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1957), 118 n. 1: “Nun, es ist schwer vorstellbar, daß nach Lc 19 11 noch eine andere Beziehung als die apologetische auf die Parusieverzögerung in Frage kommt.” Presumably also those who say “explicitly” above mean this too.

11 E.g. already Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London: Macmillan, 1927), taking this as an example of Luke’s “deferred eschatology” (292) or “delayed apocalyptic” (293). See also Gräßer, *Parusieverzögerung* (see n. 10), 116; Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), 474; Laurie Guy, “The Interplay of the Present and Future in the Kingdom of God (Luke 19:11–44),” *TynBul* 48 (1997): 119–137, here 121; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PilNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 722.

12 Almost all commentators mention one or more Herodian *principes*.

voyage pour un pays lointain.”¹³ Similarly Heinrich Baarlink: “Der Mann reist nicht nur in ein fernes Land; die Rückkehr hängt u. a. auch von der Zeit ab, die dieses In-Empfang-nehmen der Königswürde und -krone fordern wird, und irgendwie auch von den unerwarteten Hindernissen, die durch den Protest der Bürger und durch ihre Delegation, die sie zum Kaiser schicken, entstehen.”¹⁴ The same connection between the long journeys and Luke’s desire to rationalise the delay of the parousia is drawn by others.¹⁵

In sum, then, Luke’s parable of the minas reflects the delay of the parousia, this delay is allegorised in the parable’s reference to the nobleman going “to a distant country”, and this allegorising is underscored by the allusions to the cumbersome, long-winded processes by which provincial nobles, especially members of the Herodian dynasty, were granted kingship.

The present article seeks to counter this prevalent view of the parable by addressing four key questions about the assumptions underlying and guiding the parousia-delay interpretation of the parable. (The questions correspond to the four sections of the article below.) First, there is the question, which has recently become more pointed, of whether the parable can really be regarded as an allegory at all; in agreement with the delay hypothesis, the present article does interpret the parable as containing allegorical features and as referring to the parousia. Secondly, on Luke 19,11 in particular, can Jesus’ correction of the *Naherwartung* of his contemporaries be read as code for Luke’s reassurance of his contemporaries in a setting of disquiet about the parousia? This will be doubted. Thirdly, is it true that the trips of royal claimants to Rome really were cumbersome and protracted enterprises? This too will be challenged. Fourthly and finally, does the parable itself encourage such a mirror-reading of Luke’s contemporaries and this interpretation of the evangelist’s goals? We will treat these four questions in turn, focusing on the meaning of the parable in Luke’s Gospel rather than the parable’s pre-history.¹⁶ Through examina-

13 Armand Puig i Tàrrach, “La parabole des talents (Mt 25,14–30) ou des mines (Lc 19,11–28),” *RCT* 10 (1985): 269–317, here 281.

14 Heinrich Baarlink, *Die Eschatologie der synoptischen Evangelien*, BWANT 120 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986), 153.

15 E.g. Jacques Dupont, “La parabole des talents (Mat. 25: 14–30) ou des mines (Luc 19: 12–27),” *RTP* 19 (1969): 376–391, here 328; Siegfried Schulz, *Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 288; Hans Weder, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu als Metaphern: Traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Analysen und Interpretationen*, FRLANT 120 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 209. For discussion of different variants of this view, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, AB 28A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 1231. More recently, Guy, “The Interplay of the Present and Future” (see n. 11), 127.

16 On the whole question of redaction-history and the relation between Luke’s parable and Matt. 25,14–30, see e. g. the surveys in Adelbert Denaux, “The Parable of the King-Judge (Lk 19,12–28) and

tion of (1) the Lukan setting, (2) the rhetorical situation and (3) the Roman context, as well as (4) the details of the parable itself, the overall aim here is to challenge the idea that the delay of the parousia is really in view as a concern for Luke here.

1 Is Luke 19,12–27 an Allegory of the Parousia? The Parable in its Lukan Setting

Before addressing the meaning of the parable, it will be necessary to establish first that the parable is allegorical, or to put it better, has allegorising features. There have been two recent challenges to this conventional approach. The more significant of the two is the social-scientific approach to the parable. This interpretation will be challenged on the basis that it does not do sufficient justice either to the parable's immediate setting in Luke 19, or to the parallels between the nobleman in the parable and the figure of Jesus in the wider Lukan context. Before coming to the socio-economic reading, however, we can initially note another non-allegorical approach to the parable.

1.1 The “Imminent” Reading

First, Luke T. Johnson and Ignace de la Potterie have argued that the parable concerns not the parousia but rather Jesus' imminent inauguration of the kingdom. Johnson contends that Luke's parable cannot be an allegory: delay has been imported into scholarly interpretation of the parable of the minas from Matthew's parable of the talents. Instead Johnson takes the view that the immediate revelation of the kingdom of God is *confirmed* rather than denied by Jesus: the kingdom is evidenced in the acclamation of Jesus in 19,38,¹⁷ Jesus being called a king in the trial (23,2), and the man crucified alongside Jesus talking of Jesus entering his kingdom (23,42), which takes place “today” (23,43).¹⁸ De la Potterie's view is not dissimilar,

Its Relation to the Entry Story (Lk 19,29–44),” *ZNW* 93 (2002): 35–57, here 36–43, and Dieter Roth, *The Parables in Q* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 106–127. On the version in the “Hebrew Gospel”, see Andrew Gregory, *The Gospel According to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites*, OECGT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 143–146. See also Pseudo-Clementines, *Hom.* 3.61.

¹⁷ Luke T. Johnson, “The Lukan Kingship Parable (Lk. 19:11–27),” *NovT* 24 (1982): 139–159, here 150.

¹⁸ Johnson, “The Lukan Kingship Parable” (see n. 17), 152.

focusing more on the ascension.¹⁹ I pass lightly over these views as they have been strongly criticised elsewhere and have not penetrated the mainstream.²⁰

1.2 The Socio-Economic Reading

More recently, a popular reading of the parable sees the nobleman not as a cipher for Jesus, but instead as the villain. In the early 1990s, Richard Rohrbaugh labelled the parable “a text of terror,” noting further that “the master rewarded only those prepared to cooperate with him in his scheme of evil extortion.”²¹

Elizabeth V. Dowling has provided the most substantial exposition along these lines.²² On her reading, the issue is not a contrast between near and distant parousia per se; rather, “the oppressive practices portrayed in the parable also indicate that the βασιλεία of God is not yet being experienced in all its fulness, correcting the expectations of the arrival of the βασιλεία triggered by the proximity to Jerusalem.”²³ The parable therefore functions to “highlight the abuse of power by an oppressive ruler and the contrasting honorable actions of a slave, as well as illustrating the consequences of resisting an oppressive power.” On Luke’s understanding of the parable, “it is the third slave who is aligned with Jesus’ values.”²⁴

19 Ignace de la Potterie, “La parabole du prétendant à la royauté (Lc 19, 11–28),” in *À cause de l'évangile: Études sur les Synoptiques et les Actes offertes au P. Jacques Dupont O.S.B. à l'occasion de son 70^e anniversaire*, LD 123 (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 613–641.

20 See e. g. John T. Carroll, *Response to the End of History*, SBLDS 92 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1988), 100–103 (on Johnson); Vittorio Fusco, “The ‘Point of View’ and ‘Implicit Reader’ in Two Eschatological Texts: Lk 19,11–28; Acts 1,6–8,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: FS Frans Neirynck*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, C. M. Tuckett, G. van Belle and J. Verheyden, BETL 100 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 2:1677–1696, here 1687–1689; Guy, “The Interplay of the Present and Future” (see n. 11), 127–128.

21 Richard Rohrbaugh, “A Peasant Reading of the Parable of the Talents/Pounds: A Text of Terror?,” *BTB* 23 (1993): 32–39, here 33 and 36 respectively.

22 Elizabeth V. Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound: Women, Theology and the Parable of the Pounds in the Gospel of Luke*, LNTS 324 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), and further eadem, “Hearing the Voice of Earth in the Lukan Parable of the Pounds,” *Colloq* 48 (May 2016): 35–46.

23 Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound* (see n. 22), 76.

24 Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound* (see n. 22), 97. Walter Bindemann, “Harter Herr oder gnädiger Gott? Zur Auslegung des Gleichnisses vom anvertrauten Geld (Mt 25,14–30 par. Lk 19,12–27),” in *Bekanntnis und Erinnerung: Festschrift zum 75. Geburtstag von Hans-Friedrich Weiß*, ed. Klaus-Michael Bull and Eckart Reinmuth, RThSt 16 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 129–150, engages with the social-scientific interpretation, although his view of the parable focuses on the third servant’s understanding of the master as mirroring a Pharisaic view of God which “Gottes Willen mit der Tora identifiziert und deren minutiöse Erfüllung fordert” (134). The parable thus reflects a setting of Jesus’ conflict with the Pharisees.

Others have followed a similar line. For Richard B. Vinson, the parable is a parody of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom, and "part of Luke's strategy for undermining early Christian expectations that Jesus would be a king."²⁵ The same goes for the parable's depiction of discipleship: "So far in Luke, has there been any hint that unrestricted profit-taking was a good thing? Quite the contrary; so far in Luke, the right thing to do with one's possessions is to give them away [...]. This new king and his two trusted servants are a parody of Jesus' teaching."²⁶

Several articles by scholars based in South-Africa, Ernest van Eck (2011), Llewellyn Howes (2016) and J. Gertrud Tönsing (2019), also understand the nobleman in very critical terms: "The image of the master is decidedly negative, and could not have represented Jesus or God."²⁷ The parable responds to economic exploitation, and its "main intent was to illustrate how one can stand up to the reigning economic system of the elite without severely jeopardising one's livelihood and thereby contribute to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth."²⁸ The recent commentaries of David E. Garland (2012) and Robert L. Brawley (2020) take a similar view. For Garland, the parable's main idea is that "the vengeful king contrasts with the rule of King Jesus, the Messiah, who comes into the world to bring peace and goes to Jerusalem to give his life for others, not to destroy them."²⁹ Brawley focuses on the "good" servant, remarking on the "incredible increase of 1,000 percent that could hardly be achieved except by some kind of exploitative behavior".³⁰ Howes sums up the implications of these readings: "If the socio-economic context of the parable

25 Richard B. Vinson, *Luke*, SHBC 21 (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2009), 594. See also idem, "The Minas Touch: Anti-Kingship Rhetoric in the Gospel of Luke," *PRSt* 35 (2008): 69–86.

26 Vinson, *Luke* (see n. 25), 597.

27 Llewellyn Howes, "'Reaping Where You Did Not Sow': The Parable of the Entrusted Money (Q 19:12–13, 15–24, 26) and the Redaction of Q," *Journal of Early Christian History* 6 (2016): 18–54, here 29; similarly Ernest van Eck, "Do Not Question My Honour: A Social-Scientific Reading of the Parable of the Minas (Lk 19:12b–24, 27)," *HvTSt* 67 (2011): Art. #977, 11 pages; doi: 10.4102/hts.v67i3.977; J. Gertrud Tönsing, "Scolding the 'Wicked, Lazy' Servant – Is the Master God? A Redaction-Critical Study of Matthew 25:14–30 and Luke 19:11–27," *Neot* 53 (2019): 123–148.

28 Howes, "Reaping Where You Did Not Sow" (see n. 27), 31 and 39. Although his focus is on the interpretation of the parable in the earliest form of Q, Howes implies that this meaning is shared by Luke (45).

29 David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 1037.

30 Robert L. Brawley, *Luke: A Social Identity Commentary*, T&T Clark Social Identity Commentaries on the New Testament (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 228, following Vinson; similarly, Tönsing, "Scolding the 'Wicked, Lazy' Servant" (see n. 27), 132.

is taken into consideration, it is impossible to understand any of the characters allegorically.³¹

The difficulty with this set of non-allegorical views is that they work for the parable considered as a free-floating parable, but do insufficient justice to the literary context in Luke. First, there is a very strong bond between the parable and the frame in verses 11–12. Jesus told the parable *because* he was near Jerusalem and *because* people thought (διὰ τὸ ἐγγὺς εἶναι Ἰερουσαλήμ αὐτὸν καὶ δοκεῖν αὐτοῦς) that the kingdom of God would appear immediately. The causal link is then repeated in the following verse: “He *therefore* said (εἶπεν οὖν): ‘A man of noble birth went to a distant country [...]’.”³² Since the fact that he was near Jerusalem was not in doubt, the point Jesus is addressing must be the expectation of an imminent kingdom.

Secondly, this passage resembles a set of passages in Luke-Acts which all address the timing of the kingdom (Lk. 17,20–37; 19,11–27; 21,7–36; Ac. 1,7–8). In the others, too, the nature of the kingdom is not at issue; only the timing is.³³

Thirdly, although the imagery is jarring,³⁴ various parallels in Luke and elsewhere have unsavoury characters in parables denoting good characters in the outside world. The parable of the unjust judge in the previous chapter is an obvious example (Lk. 18,1–8), and Luke’s parable of the unjust steward is similar (16,1–9).³⁵ In Luke 7,41–42 God is likened to a money-lender; in *Gospel of Thomas* 109, the true disciple “lends at interest”. In the parable of the wicked tenants God is an absentee landlord who ultimately kills his tenants (Lk. 19,9–18). In Matthew, the parable of the unmerciful servant records how the master treats the servant who refused to allow his debtor more time for repayment: “In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart” (Matt. 18,34–35). The same applies to the king in Matthew’s parable of the wedding banquet (22,1–14). The *Gospel of Thomas* has the parable of the assassin (*Gos. Thom.* 98), scholars understanding the assassin either as the disciple or as God.³⁶ Notably, in the rabbinic parable of the king’s two servants, when the king

31 Howes, “Reaping Where You Did Not Sow” (see n. 27), 29.

32 Rightly emphasised by de la Potterie, “La parabole du prétendant à la royauté” (see n. 19), 633.

33 Fusco, “The Point of View and Implicit Reader” (see n. 20), 1678.

34 See Heiko Wojtkowiak, “Mit realistischem Blick – Lukanische Perspektiven auf Geld,” *ZNW* 114 (2023): 22–52, here 36–38, for recognition of this fact alongside a proper assessment of the financial imagery in the parable.

35 Judith Lieu, *The Gospel of Luke*, Epworth Commentaries (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1997), 149.

36 See Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary*, TENTS 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 555–557.

goes away, one servant plants copious gardens, while the other does nothing; when the king returns he shows his pleasure to the former and his displeasure to the latter.³⁷

In sum, Luke's immediate literary setting of the parable seems to demand a parable which deals with the timing of the kingdom's arrival in some way. The other discussions in Luke-Acts of when the kingdom will come provide analogies for the parable, and the still wider character of parables both in Luke and elsewhere show that the negative and/or violent characterisation of figures in parables is no obstacle to their representing positive figures such as God or Jesus.

1.3 Luke 19,12–27 as an Allegorising Parable about the Parousia

To argue positively for a parable with allegorical features, we can note the numerous points of contact between the parable and how Luke depicts Jesus, his disciples and his opponents. The strongest and clearest evidence for the allegorising in the parable features in the rewards to the servants (verses 16–26), and especially in the rationales for the master rewarding them as he does.

The servants' extravagant rewards and their rationales

The reports of the first and second servants (verses 16, 18) on their 1000 % and 500 % increases resemble the astronomical hundred-fold growth of the seed in Luke's parable of the sower (10,000 %!), or the mustard seed which miraculously becomes a tree (Lk. 13,18–19). The servants' rewards (verses 17, 19) are correspondingly extravagant: ten minas earn ten cities, and five minas five cities. Michael Wolter notes similar rewards for faithful servants elsewhere in Luke: in Luke 12, when the slaves prove reliable, the master himself waits upon them (v. 37); in the following parable, the *paterfamilias* puts the wise and faithful manager "in charge of all his possessions" (12,44).³⁸ This motif corresponds to Jesus' promise to his disciples: "I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk. 22,29–30). Similarly in Luke 12,32, Jesus promises his "little flock" that the Father will give them the kingdom.

³⁷ Tanna dēbe Eliyyahu (28) 26; see William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, trans., *Tanna dēbe Eliyyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1981), 347–348.

³⁸ Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 621.

Most instructive are the *rationales* for the king's responses to the first and third servants. In both cases, the king's words to them virtually quote Jesus' teaching earlier in Luke:

Luke 16,10a: "The person who is *trustworthy in something very small* (πιστός ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ) can also be trusted with much [...]."

Luke 19,17a: "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. '*Because you have been trustworthy in something very small* (ὅτι ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ πιστός ἐγένου) [...].'"

In addition to the verbal similarity, the logic of the king's actions is the same as that of God's judgment.

In the case of the third servant, when the king is called upon to explain his apparently harsh treatment, he again echoes Jesus' teaching:

Luke 8,18: "Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them (ὅς ἂν γὰρ ἔχη, δοθήσεται αὐτῷ· καὶ ὅς ἂν μὴ ἔχη, καὶ ὁ δοκεῖ ἔχειν ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ)."

Luke 19,26: "He [sc. the master] replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken from them (παντὶ τῷ ἔχοντι δοθήσεται, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὁ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται).'"

Adjusting for the different syntax, the two statements are almost identical (cf. also Matt. 13,12; 25,29; Mk. 4,25). There is hardly room here for supposing satire. By comparison with Jesus' usage earlier in the Gospel, the king uses the same words in very similar senses and contexts.

Overview

In addition to these specific points, there are broader correspondences between the parable and Luke's world throughout the narrative of the minas.

Introductory summary (19,12): On Jesus as the "nobleman", he is descended from (*inter alios*) Adam, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Boaz, Jesse, David and Zerubbabel – and of course God (Lk. 3,23–38). Elsewhere, Jesus is son of David (Lk. 1,32; 18,38–39), son of God (1,35; 4,3, 9, 41; 22,70), or son of the Most High (1,32; 8,28).

Going (ἐπορεύθη) to a distant country (19,12a): Compare Luke's use of πορεύομαι in the description of Jesus' ascent to heaven (Ac. 1,11). The ascension is crucial in Luke's narrative and christology (Lk. 24,50; Ac. 3,21). See further the next item.

To have himself appointed king (19,12b): In Luke 1,32–33 God promises that Jesus will reign on David's throne over Israel forever. Jesus' ascent to rule on a heavenly throne features more explicitly elsewhere, e. g. Luke 22,69 ("from now on, the Son

of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God”). Jesus also comes into a kingdom (Lk. 23,42), and was “exalted to the right hand of God” (Ac. 2,33) in fulfilment of Psalm 110,1 (Ac. 2,35), and thereby appointed as “Lord and messiah” (2,36) or “prince and saviour” (5,31). The specific language of λαμβάνειν βασιλείαν is not used theologically by Luke (23,42 is the closest), but comes rather from the discourse of kings receiving their appointments.³⁹

And then return (19,12b): Jesus’ return is described several times in Luke-Acts (Lk. 17,24; 18,8; 21,27; Ac. 1,11), and mentioned in the cluster of parables in Luke 12,35–46.

Entrusting the minas to the servants (19,13a): The commissioning of the servants can be compared with Jesus’ commissioning of his apostles and others.⁴⁰ They are Jesus’ witnesses and preachers, entrusted with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24,46–49; Ac. 1,7–8; cf. 5,32). They act in Jesus’ name, on his behalf, not in their own power (Ac. 3,12, 16; 4,8–10). Paul becomes a chosen instrument of Christ speaking in the Lord’s name (9,15, 28; 16,18; cf. 19,13). As the nobleman commissions his servants or slaves (δοῦλου), so Jesus’ followers are δοῦλοι of God/Jesus (Ac. 4,29; 16,17) and act in his service (δουλεύω, 20,19).⁴¹

“Until I come back” (19,13b): On Jesus’ return, see already on 19,12b above. In 19,13b, the verb ἔρχομαι is used for what symbolically represents Jesus’ return, as in the theological statements in Luke 18,8; 21,27; Acts 1,11.⁴²

The delegation of the citizens (19,14): The delegation motif is strongly coloured by the client-king discourse (cf. section 3 below). Luke does, however, emphasise Jesus’ rejection by his fellow Jews.⁴³ Jesus envisages opposition continuing against his envoys (Lk. 11,49; 21,12–17), and Paul’s antagonism towards followers of Jesus is described six times as persecution of Jesus himself (Ac. 9,4, 5; 22,7, 8; 26,14, 15).

The coronation and return (19,15a): See on 19,12b and 19,13b above.

The killing of the enemies (19,27): One prominent label for Jesus’ opponents is “this generation”, which will be condemned at the parousia (Lk. 11,29–30). Luke 20,43 and Acts 2,35 quote Psalm 110 and thereby prophecy the subjugation of Jesus’ enemies; Luke 12,8–9 also refers to Jesus’ opponents condemned at the parousia. Since the allegorical reference of Luke 19,27 is probably the fall of Jerusalem,

³⁹ Wolter, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 38), 619 notes *Ant.* 10.139 and 17, preface.

⁴⁰ Rightly, Hans Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium*, KEK 1,3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 608 notes that the reference is to mission.

⁴¹ Cf. Lk. 12,37, 43, 45–47.

⁴² Cf. also Lk. 12,36, 38, 39, 40, 43, 45.

⁴³ Lk. 4,28–29; 6,7, 11; 7,30; 9,22; 11,53; 13,34–35; 17,25; 18,31–33; 20,14–15; 23,2, 18, 20, 23, 35–36, 38. Cf. also the delegation of spies in Lk. 20,20.

however, Luke's depictions of the events of 70 CE are therefore more relevant:⁴⁴ e. g. this generation being held responsible (Lk. 11,50) is probably a reference to the fall of Jerusalem; clearer is Luke 13,6–9 (similarly 20,16); and explicit are Luke 19,41–44, where Jerusalem will fall because it did not recognise God's coming in Jesus, and 13,34–35, where the destruction of the temple is noted (cf. 21,20–24; 23,28–31).

1.4 Conclusion

Despite the recent popularity of a non-allegorical reading of the parable, a wealth of material in the rest of Luke-Acts resembles the elements of the parable closely enough to clue the reader into the encoded references. Although not a straight allegory, the parable clearly has allegorical features. This is most evident in the ways in which the king explains his treatments of the first and third servants. As Sharon H. Ringe rightly notes,

The allegorical equivalents are clear: After the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus leaves the disciples and ascends to sit at God's right hand. In the meantime, until his return at the final judgment, Jesus has entrusted his followers to carry on his ministry and to make it "prosper" and grow into the mission of the church. At an appropriate time, the risen Christ will return to demand an account of what they have done with the responsibility entrusted to them and to punish those who have been his enemies.⁴⁵

As we will see in the subsequent sections, however, reference to the parousia in the parable does not necessitate an allusion to delay.

⁴⁴ With Klein, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 40), 611, *pace* Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, BECNT 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 1531.

⁴⁵ Ringe, *Luke* (see n. 10), 235. Similarly, Klein, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 40), 609; François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Donald S. Deer, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 608 refers to "transparent allegory", though goes too far in supposing that the bystanders may be the angels of judgment (616).

2 The Parable and Its Narrative Frame in Luke 19,11: The Rhetorical Context

We move on, then, given the allegorising interpretation, to the question of whether the conjunction of the frame in Luke 19,11 (Jesus told the parable because of the people's *Nächsterwartung*) with the parable proper in 19,12–27 means that Luke is rationalising the delay of the parousia and/or responding to prophecies of feverish expectation in his own day.

Such a reading of Luke, however, fails to distinguish between (1) the function of the parable *within Luke's narrative* and (2) what Luke was communicating rhetorically – “over the heads” of the characters – to his own audience. I noted in the introduction that several scholars claim that the parable “explicitly” attempts to deal with the delay of Christ's return. Luke 19,11–27 does nothing of the sort. A case could of course be made that these verses *implicitly* deal with the second coming and its delay, but *explicitly* they deal with the claim that the kingdom would arrive with Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.

Alternatively, some do acknowledge a difference in theory between the narrative (or *diegetic*) and the rhetorical (or *extradiegetic*), but conflate the two in practice. C.H. Talbert, for example, considers that one can jump from the narrative to the rhetorical: “Once we assume redaction-critical principles, it is obvious that Luke 19,11 ff. reflects an eschatological problem agitating Luke's church.”⁴⁶ The idea that Luke's narrative is “transparent”, and that we can therefore pass seamlessly from the narrative setting to the rhetorical situation is problematic, however, as Vittorio Fusco and Michael Wolter have helpfully noted.⁴⁷

Fusco shows that, in order to identify Luke's goals, it is essential to distinguish between the “narrative setting” within the Gospel, and the “actual setting” of the evangelist and his readers, and to work out the relation between the two.⁴⁸ Contra Hans Conzelmann and others, it is “ingenuous to explain everything in reference to the evangelists' contemporaries”,⁴⁹ because “in Lk 19,11–28 and in Acts 1,6–8 its imminence is ruled out *only in reference to events that took place before the reader's time.*”⁵⁰ One cannot immediately assume Luke's rhetorical purpose, since there was

⁴⁶ C.H. Talbert, “The Redaction Critical Quest for Luke the Theologian,” *PRSt* 11 (1970): 171–222, here 172; Schneider, *Parusiegleichnisse im Lukas-Evangelium* (see n. 7), 41; and Lambrecht, *Once More Astonished* (see n. 4), 189.

⁴⁷ See also Kylie Crabbe, *Luke/Acts and the End of History*, BZNW 238 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 315–316.

⁴⁸ Fusco, “The Point of View and Implicit Reader” (see n. 20), 1680.

⁴⁹ Fusco, “The Point of View and Implicit Reader” (see n. 20), 1683.

⁵⁰ Fusco, “The Point of View and Implicit Reader” (see n. 20), 1682.

a variety of eschatological views in Luke's day: feverish expectation (cf. 2 Thess. 2–3), disappointment (2 Pet. 3), or a co-existence of imminent expectation and a sense of delay.⁵¹ Drawing on Fusco's work, Wolter similarly concludes: "Das Gleichnis will also nicht das Problem der Parusieverzögerung bearbeiten, sondern eine falsche Erwartung *innerhalb der erzählten Welt* korrigieren."⁵² Luke 19,11 applies in the first instance to past time, the time of Jesus, and cannot simply be transferred to Luke's present.⁵³

When one observes this point, it seems almost obvious that it is invalid simply to jump from narrative to rhetoric. This is not to rule out that there may be a rhetorical allusion in Luke 19,11–27 to the delay of the parousia, but this point would need to be argued, not assumed. The rest of this article will continue to interrogate some of the key claims underlying the "delay reading" of the parable. Now that it has been established that (1) the parable does have allegorising features, but (2) cannot be straightforwardly extracted from its narrative setting in Luke 19 and applied to a particular rhetorical context, we will (3) proceed to examine whether the visits to Rome by royal claimants were as protracted as is sometimes supposed, and finally (4) whether the parable itself can support a reading in terms of the delay of the parousia.

3 The Lengths of Visits to Rome by Royal Claimants: The Parable in Its Roman Setting

As noted, one of the key reasons why the parable has been understood as involving a lengthy delay is its use of the royal claimant motif. To recall one example from the introduction above, Heinrich Baarlink comments that the journeying, the coronation, as well as other obstacles, all point to the parable implying a considerable delay.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the phenomenon of nobles visiting Rome to be crowned as client kings, or "friendly kings" (technically, receiving *appellatio*), was a very common one.⁵⁵ Augustus forged treaties with "barbarian chiefs" (*barbarorum principes*), making them take oaths in the temple of Mars Ultor (Suetonius, *Aug.* 21.2).

51 Fusco, "The Point of View and Implicit Reader" (see n. 20), 1685–1686.

52 Wolter, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 38), 617–618.

53 Michael Wolter, "Israels Zukunft und die Parusieverzögerung bei Lukas," in idem, *Theologie und Ethos im frühen Christentum: Studien zu Jesus, Paulus und Lukas*, WUNT 235 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 311–335, here 333.

54 Baarlink, *Eschatologie der synoptischen Evangelien* (see n. 14), 153.

55 On the whole topic of client kingship see David Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of Client Kingship* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

Gaius and Claudius each conferred several monarchies in the Forum (Cassius Dio 59.12.2; Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.5).⁵⁶

The question to be addressed here is whether these visits were especially protracted, and therefore whether the parable of the minas therefore assumes a long interval between the nobleman's departure and his return as king. The focus here will be on Herodians, not only because knowledge of them was most accessible to Luke and his readers, but also because it is Herodian accessions to power about which we have most information.⁵⁷ We will see that the journeys of throne claimants to receive royal sovereignty were not especially lengthy.

3.1 Herod the Great (73 BCE – 5/4 BCE?)

The first figure to consider is Herod the Great himself. After appointments under Julius Caesar (*ca* 47 BCE) and Cassius (*ca* 46 BCE),⁵⁸ Herod was assigned a tetrarchy by Antony (*ca* 41 BCE).⁵⁹ As in the parable, this occurs in the teeth of complaints from several anti-Herod delegations.⁶⁰ Herod's position in his tetrarchy was under severe threat from the Parthians (*Ant.* 14.348–351). He therefore fled, ultimately reaching Alexandria (*J.W.* 1.277–279; *Ant.* 14.374–375). From there, he headed to Rome, sailing in the autumn of 40 BCE to Pamphylia, but because of the adverse conditions stayed for a time in Rhodes (*J.W.* 1.279–280; *Ant.* 14.377). There he had a trireme built, and sailed through the winter, landing at Brundisium (on the east coast, on the “heel” of Italy), from where he “hastened” to Rome (*J.W.* 1.281; *Ant.* 14.377–379). Both Antony and Octavian were keen to assist Herod, and the Senate conferred royal power upon him (*Ant.* 14.384–385).⁶¹ This resulted from both the long-standing friendship between Herod's family and the Caesarian party, and the desire of the Romans to solidify their position against the Parthians on the eastern frontier.

⁵⁶ On these passages, see Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King* (see n. 55), 27, and 24–37 for a wider survey.

⁵⁷ The other fairly substantial account is Tacitus's treatment of Tiridates I and Nero.

⁵⁸ Under Julius (by Antipater): Josephus, *J.W.* 1.203; *Ant.* 14.158; Cassius: *J.W.* 1.255; *Ant.* 14.280. See further Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, a new English Version rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Matthew Black, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 1:270–275; Nikos Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty: Origins, Role in Society and Eclipse*, *JSPSup* 30 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 99.

⁵⁹ Josephus, *J.W.* 1.244; *Ant.* 14.326. For the date, see Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, Personalities of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), xvi–xvii.

⁶⁰ Josephus, *J.W.* 1.242–243, 245–247; *Ant.* 14.324, 327, 329.

⁶¹ See also the briefer references in Strabo 16.2.46 (16.765); Appian, *Bell. civ.* 5.75 (319); Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.12.

Josephus remarked that Antony decided “there and then” (καὶ τότε) to make Herod king (*J.W.* 1.282); he notes that the whole business in Italy was concluded in seven days, after which Herod left and sailed to Ptolemais in Galilee (*J.W.* 1.290; *Ant.* 14.388, 394). When he finally regained control of Jerusalem, he massacred the partisans of Antigonus, the Parthian puppet-king, in 37 BCE (*J.W.* 1.358).

The main differences in reconstructions of the chronology concern how long Herod’s stay in Rhodes would have lasted; most scholars assume it is short, but Nikos Kokkinos suggests that building a trireme would have taken longer. Either way, while the journey to Rome was rather longer than planned due to the weather and the need to stop in Rhodes, it was not necessarily very protracted. The business in Rome itself (in late 40 BCE) was conducted very swiftly, in a matter of a week, and Herod left almost immediately for what appears to be an unproblematic journey home to Ptolemais. The two versions of events are thus as follows:

*Majority view:*⁶²

autumn 40 BCE	Herod leaves Alexandria
late 40 BCE	Herod crowned
spring 39 BCE	Herod returns to the east (Ptolemais)

*Kokkinos’s reconstruction:*⁶³

mid-Feb. 40 BCE	Herod leaves Alexandria
early autumn 40 BCE	Herod sails from Rhodes to Italy
autumn 40 BCE	Herod crowned
Oct. (e. g.) 40 BCE	Herod returns to the east (Ptolemais)

The events surrounding Herod’s first coronation therefore took, from start to finish (Alexandria to Rome to Ptolemais), well under a year (autumn 40 – spring 39 BCE). On Kokkinos’s chronology, although he requires a longer stay in Rhodes, the total time away would only have been slightly longer and still less than a year.⁶⁴

⁶² A.H.M. Jones, *The Herods of Judaea* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 44; Richardson, *Herod* (see n. 59), xvii.

⁶³ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 367–369. An October departure date is given because of the closure of the shipping season on November 11, before which Kokkinos quite reasonably assumes Herod left.

⁶⁴ Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9 notes that Augustus later expanded Herod’s territory further.

3.2 Archelaus (ca 27 BCE – post 20 CE), Antipas (ca 25 BCE – post 39 CE) and Philip (ca 26 BCE – 33/34 CE)

Herod's last will nominated Archelaus as his successor as king of Judaea, but detaching Galilee and Trachonitis, which he assigned as tetrarchies to Antipas and Philip respectively.⁶⁵ Josephus depicts Archelaus as anxious to go to Rome and have his rule ratified by Augustus as quickly as possible after Herod's death in 4 BCE (*Ant.* 17.208).

Archelaus left Jerusalem shortly after Passover, at which he disgraced himself by engaging in slaughter (*Ant.* 17.213–218), but certainly before Pentecost in 4 BCE: he did not hear about the chaos in Judaea at that time until he was in Rome (*J.W.* 2.42). Archelaus set sail for Rome from Caesarea, with several family members and friends (*Ant.* 17.220–222).

Antipas also set sail for Rome to claim the throne at roughly the same time (κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν), encouraged by family members that he had the greater right, and ignoring appeals to stand down (*Ant.* 17.224–226). There followed a trial before Augustus over the will. Before a decision was made, reports came of the disturbances in Judaea. A delegation of Jews arrived in Rome asking for autonomy, i. e. the dissolution of the monarchy and the installation of a Roman governor (*Ant.* 17.300–314). There are therefore two counter-delegations to Archelaus' visit to Rome: that of Antipas, and that of the “republican” autonomists.

Philip also then arrived, adding further complexity to the situation (*Ant.* 17.303).

After hearing the various speeches, Augustus pronounced his decision a few days later (ὀλίγων δ' ἡμερῶν ὕστερον). He appointed Archelaus over Judaea, but only as ethnarch (*Ant.* 17.317).⁶⁶ Strictly speaking then, Archelaus did not achieve what takes place in the parable of the minas, although there is some evidence that he was informally known as king.⁶⁷ The other half of the kingdom was divided, following Herod's will, between Antipas and Philip.

The chronology of the expedition is reasonably straightforward. If we accept the year of 4 BCE for Herod's death,⁶⁸ there is broad agreement between Harold W. Hoehner and Kokkinos on an approximate timeline:

⁶⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 17.188–190; cf. Lk. 3,1 when Antipas and Philip were still in office. See further Richardson, *Herod* (see n. 59), 19.

⁶⁶ Archelaus was appointed as ethnarch in the first instance, with the possibility of elevation to monarchy later; a possibility which was never realised.

⁶⁷ Richard D. Sullivan, “The Dynasty of Judaea in the First Century,” *ANRW* 2.8 (1977): 296–354, here 308, noting *Ant.* 18.93 (cf. 17.188) and Matt. 2,22. On the role of the ethnarch, see *Ant.* 14.117.

⁶⁸ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), also allows for 5 BCE as a possibility. On the whole timing, see further Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, SNTSMS 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 33–41 (the section entitled “Chronological Considerations of the Trial”).

<i>ca</i> mid-Apr. 4 BCE	Archelaus leaves Jerusalem for Caesarea
<i>ca</i> early May 4 BCE	Departure of Archelaus and Antipas for Rome
<i>ca</i> early July 4 BCE	Arrival of Archelaus and Antipas in Rome
mid-July 4 BCE?	First phase of trial over Herod's will ⁶⁹
early Aug. 4 BCE?	Arrival of Varus's report of Judaeian troubles
<i>ca</i> Oct. 4 BCE?	Arrival of Varus and Philip ⁷⁰
<i>ca</i> Oct./Nov. 4 BCE?	Second phase of trial over Herod's will
<i>ca</i> Nov. 4 BCE	Augustus' decision
winter 4–3 BCE?	Antipas and other brothers in Rome ⁷¹
spring 3 BCE?	Antipas and other brothers return to Palestine

This more detailed itemisation comes from Hoehner, with his illustrative dates.⁷² With the revolt in Judaea at a high point at Pentecost (1 June), Varus probably shortly afterwards sent his report to Rome: this might have taken a couple of months to arrive. Assuming roughly that Varus had regained control of the situation in Judaea in, say, August, and then set off for Rome with Philip, this would mean – allowing again a couple of months for the journey – that he would have reached Rome around October. Philip and Varus therefore arrived in the midst of all the trial proceedings. This chronology therefore implies that the brothers probably wintered in Rome before the beginning of the sailing season in 3 BCE. Following roughly the chronology of Hoehner, then, the brothers' expeditions probably took a little less than a year.

It is possible that the absence was shorter still. Varus would no doubt have sent his report, and travelled himself to Rome, as quickly as possible: the journey could be managed in under a month. Kokkinos places Archelaus' journey to Rome "in the early summer of 4 (or 5) BCE to claim the throne of Judaea",⁷³ and some, by fitting the chronology of the priesthood together, identify Archelaus' replacement of Joazar with Eleazar in the high priesthood in 4 BCE as well⁷⁴ – something which Archelaus

⁶⁹ Morten Hørning Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee: The Literary and Archaeological Sources on the Reign of Herod Antipas and Its Socio-Economic Impact on Galilee*, WUNT 2/215 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 77–79 (on Archelaus' accession according to Josephus) and 91–94 (on Herod Antipas and Rome).

⁷⁰ Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (see n. 68), 37.

⁷¹ Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (see n. 68), 39.

⁷² Hoehner gives as illustrative dates 20 April for Archelaus's departure from Jerusalem for Caesarea, a sailing in May, and arrival in Rome in July (*Herod Antipas* [see n. 68], 34).

⁷³ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 226.

⁷⁴ E.g. James VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 416.

only did on his return from Rome. If this is correct, Archelaus went to Rome and back in 4 BCE (after Herod the Great's death in March of that year).

Finally, having noted earlier that there were two counter-delegations to Archelaus's visit to Rome, one of which was from Jews wanting direct Roman government, we can note as reminiscent of the parable the character of Archelaus's rule: "When he took up his ethnarchy, Archelaus, remembering old contentions, treated brutally not only the Jews but also the Samaritans" (*J.W.* 2.111).⁷⁵

3.3 Agrippa I (11/10 BCE – 44 CE)

Herod the Great's grandson Agrippa I was "the last king of Judaea" and the subject of Josephus's θαύματος ἀξιότατον narrative.⁷⁶ To sow the seeds for his ambitions, Agrippa had spent a great deal of money on his connections in Rome in the early 30s (*Ant.* 18.145).⁷⁷

Agrippa I's visit in 36 CE

His visit to Rome in the year before Tiberius died (36 CE) was particularly important,⁷⁸ its purpose being "to transact some business with the emperor" or "to gain something from the emperor".⁷⁹ Tiberius initially refused to see him, but Agrippa eventually entered the Tiberian circle.⁸⁰ There Agrippa paid particular court to Gaius (*Ant.* 18.166), a potential successor to Tiberius who by that time was in his late 70s. Disaster struck when Agrippa was overheard saying that he wished Tiberius would soon give way, one way or another, to Gaius; Agrippa was imprisoned in September 36 for the rest of Tiberius' principate. When Tiberius died six months later, Gaius succeeded him and released Agrippa immediately: Josephus reports that on the death of Tiberius, Gaius sent a message to the Senate saying that he himself had acceded to the imperial throne, and that Agrippa was to be released (*Ant.* 18.234). The next chain of events is also fast: "not many days after" the funeral,

⁷⁵ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 190 and n. 63.

⁷⁶ See the subtitle of Schwartz's monograph (see n. 78), and Josephus' description of his tale in *Ant.* 18.129.

⁷⁷ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 277.

⁷⁸ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 278 rightly takes Daniel R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I: The Last King of Judaea*, TSAJ 23 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 50, to task for his odd interpretation of the time reference in *Ant.* 18.126.

⁷⁹ There is some ambiguity in Josephus' phrase πράξων τι παρὰ τῷ αὐτοκράτορι (*Ant.* 18.126). See discussion in Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 278 n. 52.

⁸⁰ Tiberius would not see Agrippa until he had repaid a vast debt (*Ant.* 18.162–165).

Gaius crowned Agrippa over what had been Philip's tetrarchy and (perhaps) Lysanias's realm (*Ant.* 18.237; Philo, *Flacc.* 25).⁸¹ Agrippa intended to take his leave immediately, but Gaius persuaded him not to go. Then, in Gaius' second year, 38 CE, Agrippa left Rome (*Ant.* 18.238). Hence:⁸²

spring–summer 36 CE	Departure from Alexandria
spring–summer 36 CE	Arrival in Rome
mid-Sept. 36–mid-Mar. 37 CE	Agrippa in prison
mid-Mar. 37 CE	Accession of Gaius and release of Agrippa
ca Apr. 37 CE?	Agrippa's coronation
June/early summer 38 CE	Agrippa left Rome for Palestine via Alexandria ⁸³
June/early summer 38 CE	Arrival in Alexandria "a few days later" ⁸⁴
ca Aug./autumn 38 CE	Arrival in Palestine

The location of Agrippa's return is uncertain, but he clearly went somewhere in his new kingdom (*Ant.* 18.238).

Agrippa I's visit in 39 CE

On his departure from Rome, Agrippa promised to revisit the city, and he apparently did so shortly afterwards.⁸⁵ The occasion for this quick return was that in 38/39 CE, according to Josephus, Antipas's wife Herodias was incensed by Agrippa I's return to the east with a royal throne and she therefore urged Antipas on to seek a crown.⁸⁶ Herod Antipas thus set sail for Rome (*Ant.* 18.246), and so Agrippa resolved to go to Rome to thwart him. He initially sent letters and gifts by hand of his freedman Fortunatus (*Ant.* 18.247), but seems also to have gone himself in 39 CE (*J.W.* 2.183). Agrippa's countermeasure was successful: Antipas never returned to govern, but was stripped

⁸¹ On the difficulty of determining when Agrippa received Lysanias' tetrarchy, see Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 280–281. See also references to the coronation of Agrippa in *J.W.* 2.181 (implying the immediate recognition of Agrippa on Gaius' accession), and the coronation and relations between Herod and Gaius in *Ant.* 18.194, 237, 239 (on his departure), 273, 289, and between Herod and Claudius in *Ant.* 19.236, 265.

⁸² Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 278–279, 282, 285 and n. 74; Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (see n. 68), 39 n. 3; Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* (see n. 58), 1:444–445.

⁸³ Via Alexandria: Philo, *Flacc.* 26. Rightly, Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 282, who shows that contra Schwartz, *Agrippa I* (see n. 78), Agrippa did not pass through Jerusalem on to Alexandria.

⁸⁴ Philo, *Flacc.* 27.

⁸⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.238; Philo, *Legat.* 261.

⁸⁶ See the note to *J.W.* 2.181 in H.St.J. Thackeray, trans., *Josephus in nine Volumes, vol. 2: The Jewish War: Book I–III*, LCL [203] (London: Heinemann, 1956), 393 n. f, and Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 277 on Agrippa's return.

of his tetrarchy by Gaius and exiled (*Ant.* 18.252). The hapless royal pretension of Antipas was a stroke of luck for Agrippa, who received the tetrarchy of Galilee and Peraea when it was confiscated from Antipas (*Ant.* 18.240). This probably took place the year after Agrippa's arrival in his kingdom: Cassius Dio reports that Agrippa was with Gaius (in Gaul?) in the winter of 39–40 CE (Cassius Dio 59.24.1).

Agrippa I's sphere was expanded further still on the accession of Claudius after Gaius's assassination in January 41 CE.⁸⁷ Agrippa in fact played an important role in Claudius' accession to the imperial purple.⁸⁸ Now Agrippa possessed the whole of Herod the Great's domain.⁸⁹ To establish this, Claudius and Agrippa declared a treaty, and Herod was permitted to address the Senate (Cassius Dio 60.8.3: see further below). Although the timing of the various events is uncertain, Kokkinos plausibly proposes:⁹⁰

39 CE	Antipas and Herodias go to Rome
39 CE	Agrippa sends Fortunatus
summer 39 CE?	Agrippa goes to Rome himself
Aug. 39 CE	Antipas and Herodias meet Gaius
summer 39 CE	Antipas and Herodias exiled
39/40	Gaius grants Agrippa Antipas's tetrarchy
late summer 41 CE?	Departure from Rome
early autumn 41 CE?	Arrival in Palestine

Kokkinos concludes that “Agrippa stayed at Rome until the late summer of 41, many months after Caligula's death and the accession of Claudius”.⁹¹ It is not altogether clear that this much time (“many months”) is required, however. Gaius was assassinated in January, and Josephus presents the events following as if they proceeded in a brisk manner. After Gaius' death in *Ant.* 19.110–113, a detailed description of the course of events of that same day follows,⁹² after which Josephus gives a summary of Gaius's principate (*Ant.* 19.201–211). Then comes the account of Claudius's activity on the day of Gaius's death, especially his interactions with the Senate and Agrippa.⁹³ Agrippa was summoned by the Senate to act as a go-between between them and

⁸⁷ See Josephus, *Ant.* 19.274–275; *J.W.* 2.215–216; Cassius Dio 60.8.2.

⁸⁸ Schwartz, *Agrippa I* (see n. 78), 91.

⁸⁹ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 289.

⁹⁰ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 285 with n. 74, 290.

⁹¹ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 285.

⁹² These include: a meeting of the Senate (*Ant.* 19.158–161), the seizure of Claudius (19.162–165), the speech of Sentius Saturninus in the Senate (19.167–184), and the murder of Gaius's wife and daughter (19.190–200).

⁹³ See Josephus, *Ant.* 19.235–236, Cassius Dio 60.8.2 and Josephus, *J.W.* 2.206–217 on Agrippa's assistance in Claudius's succession.

Claudius, then another gathering of the Senate was convened at night (*Ant.* 19.248): all this has apparently been happening on a single day. The next day begins at *Ant.* 19.254, and then “a few days later” the Parentalia (February 13–21) were celebrated (*Ant.* 19.272).⁹⁴ Immediately after this (*Ant.* 19.274) we read that Agrippa’s rule is confirmed.⁹⁵

There is a stretch of time required, however, (a) to account for news of Gaius’s assassination to reach Alexandria, which sparked the conflict between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria (*Ant.* 19.278), and (b) for news of the conflict in turn to come to Rome. Claudius then ordered the prefect of Alexandria to put down the fighting, and – at the urging of Agrippa and Herod of Chalcis – issued decrees in support of the Jews in Alexandria (*Ant.* 19.280–285), and in the rest of the empire (*Ant.* 19.286–291). Thereafter the pace quickens. Claudius despatched Agrippa “immediately” (αὐτίκα, *Ant.* 19.292) to his kingdom, and Agrippa for his part returned μετὰ τάχους (*Ant.* 19.293). The only evidence of Agrippa’s stay in Rome being lengthened after Claudius’ accession and the expansion of Agrippa’s territory is therefore the time required for a journey to and from Alexandria.⁹⁶ The best that can be hazarded is a very rough chronology, supposing (a) around 4–5 months from Claudius’ accession to the news of the Alexandrian trouble reaching Rome, and (b) that Agrippa sails home as soon as his diplomacy on behalf of Alexandrian Jewry is complete:

Jan.–Feb. 41 CE	Claudius’ accession and expansion of Agrippa’s territory
ca Feb.–Mar. 41 CE	Outbreak of conflict in Alexandria
ca Apr.–May 41 CE	News of conflict reaches Rome
summer 41 CE?	Agrippa departs and returns to Palestine

To conclude our tale of the colourful Agrippa I, his first visit to Rome – when he was made king – lasted a little over two years, and the second was perhaps a little shorter.

3.4 Herod of Chalcis (10/9 BCE – 48 CE)

Herod of Chalcis conducted the first fifty years of his life in relative obscurity, only entering public life in 41 CE.⁹⁷ At the same time that Claudius gave his first terri-

⁹⁴ See the helpful note in Louis H. Feldman, trans., *Josephus in nine Volumes, vol. 9: Jewish Antiquities: Books XVIII–XX: General Index to Volumes I–IX*, LCL [433] (London: Heinemann 1965), 340 n. a.

⁹⁵ Some other events are summarised and presented thematically rather than chronologically (e. g. the two marriages of Berenice).

⁹⁶ An inscription celebrates Agrippa’s safe return (*OGIS* 418), but is undated.

⁹⁷ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 305–306.

torial gift to Agrippa I, the new emperor (at Agrippa's request, according to *Ant.* 19.277) also granted Herod the kingdom of Chalcis (*J.W.* 2.217), in central Iturea. If not in Rome already, this Herod must have travelled to Rome for the occasion of his coronation.⁹⁸ Claudius made a treaty with Agrippa in a public ceremony in the Forum (*Ant.* 19.275),⁹⁹ and Herod and Agrippa were both permitted to speak in the Senate (Cassius Dio 60.8.3). These *appellationes* are confirmed by the numismatic evidence, which has both Agrippa I and Herod of Chalcis placing wreaths upon Claudius' head (see Figures 1 and 2). Herod departed to Chalcis in late 41 CE,¹⁰⁰ but we have no information about the duration of this stay.

3.5 Agrippa II (27/28 – 94/95 CE)

Agrippa II received several grants of power. First, he was crowned over the kingdom of Chalcis on Herod's death, i. e. sometime in 48/49 CE (*Ant.* 20.104; *J.W.* 2.223). Secondly, possibly while he was still in Rome,¹⁰¹ Claudius in 53 CE exchanged his kingdom of Chalcis for a larger domain.¹⁰² Agrippa II must have been in the east after that (if not before), because he assisted Rome in the conflict with Parthia in 54 CE.¹⁰³ As a result of that assistance, thirdly, Nero extended Agrippa's realm in 54/55 CE to include also "the Galilean districts of Tiberias, Tarichaea, Bethsaida-Julias, as well as territory in southern Peraea" (*J.W.* 2.252; *Ant.* 20.159).¹⁰⁴ Finally, Agrippa II again visited Rome in 75 CE, when he received praetorian status (Cassius Dio 65.15.3–4); Photius derives from Justus of Tiberias the information that Agrippa II also later received land (of unspecified extent) from Vespasian (*Bibl.* 33).¹⁰⁵ However, despite these numerous grants of territory to Agrippa II, it is difficult to know much about the dates of his movements.

⁹⁸ He may have already settled in Rome, but Kokkinos (*Herodian Dynasty* [see n. 58], 304–305) is perhaps too confident about this being certain.

⁹⁹ Schwarz, *Agrippa I* (see n. 78), 92.

¹⁰⁰ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 306.

¹⁰¹ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 319: "But Agrippa did not leave Rome immediately upon his appointment over Chalcis in 48/49. It appears that he stayed with Claudius at least until c. 51/52, when the trial concerning the conflict between Cumanus, the Jews and the Samaritans took place."

¹⁰² See David Jacobson, *Agrippa II: The Last of the Herods*, Routledge Ancient Biographies (London: Routledge, 2019), 35 on the new territory.

¹⁰³ Jacobson, *Agrippa II* (see n. 102), 37–38: the war with Parthia took place early on in Nero's principate (see Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.7).

¹⁰⁴ Jacobson, *Agrippa II* (see n. 102), 37–38.

¹⁰⁵ Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty* (see n. 58), 329.

3.6 Conclusion

It is easy to assume that in the ancient world travelling, especially by sea, was a long and expensive process, subject to delays because of the weather or political events. This is indeed the case. But it is also easy to exaggerate the length and inconvenience. According to the marvellous ORBIS tool, to sail from Alexandria to Rome could take as little as 18 days, and the return journey a mere 14 days; and from Caesarea Maritima to Rome the journey could be 23 days, and only 18 days back.¹⁰⁶ These timings are of course minimums, but it is clear that – as in the case of Herod the Great’s coronation – the whole process, even when long lay-overs are involved, could take place in well under a year. The visit of Archelaus, Antipas and Philip took (on Hoehner’s dating) about a year, or even less (on Kokkinos’s reconstruction). Agrippa I went for two years on his first visit, detained by a spell in jail and by Gaius’s arm-twisting: he was an exception in being subject to two delays in this instance. In the end, he was in Rome for almost the entirety of Gaius’s principate: his second visit sought to dash Antipas’s hopes of a crown.

Such counter-delegations to Herodians’ visits to receive *appellationes* were frequent. Herod the Great faced opposition, as did his heir Archelaus, from rival family members as well as from an anti-monarchy faction of Jews. As just noted, when Antipas sought a throne, Agrippa I set off to Rome to thwart him. Although Herod the Great prevailed over his opponents, the other two pretenders were frustrated: Archelaus received not the crown but an ethnarchy, and Antipas was completely undone, not only losing his tetrarchy but being sent into exile to boot. The opponents in the parable might therefore be forgiven for thinking that they too might be successful.

The main point to note here, however, is that there is no need to suppose that, in alluding to client kings’ visits to Rome, the parable of the minas intends to draw attention to a protracted delay of the parousia. While this discussion has been a lengthy process, delaying us from proceeding to the exegesis of Luke, delay was not a problem for most royal claimants.

106 ORBIS: *The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World*: <https://orbis.stanford.edu>. These are the timings for sailing in September; the seasonal difference is apparently not great (19 days for Alexandria to Rome in January), though obviously there was greater risk of delay, and the shipping season generally closed in November. Also valuable is Lionel Casson, “Speed under Sail of Ancient Ships,” *TAPA* 82 (1951): 136–148.



Figure 1: Obverse: ΒΑΣ ΑΓΡΙΠΠΑΣ – ΣΕΒ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ – ΒΑΣ ΗΡΩΔΗΣ
Classical Numismatic Group, LLC.¹⁰⁷



Figure 2: Obverse: ΒΑΣΙΛ ΗΡΩΔΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛ ΑΓΡΙΠΠΑΣ | ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ
BM (British Museum) 1985,1002.1. Wikimedia commons.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ See <https://www.cngcoins.com>: CNG Feature Auction 117 Lot: 429. I am grateful to Kate Rill of Classical Numismatic Group LLC for facilitating the permissions. I also thank RPC Online (<https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk>) for the higher resolution images.

¹⁰⁸ Image from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MBALyon2018_-_Expo_Claude_-_Chalcis_sub_Libanum.jpg. Photograph: Christophe Jacquand. Licence: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>. See further https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1985-1002-1.

4 The Details of the Parable

When we come to examine the parable, we see particularly clearly that there is no stress on the length of time that the throne claimant is absent, but rather the focus lies on the responsibility of the servants.¹⁰⁹

4.1 Compression in the Summary and Actions of the Throne Claimant (19,12, 13, 15)

The beginning of the parable, v. 12, is a short narrative summary: ἄνθρωπος τις εὐγενῆς ἐπορεύθη εἰς χώραν μακρὰν λαβεῖν ἑαυτῷ βασιλείαν καὶ ὑποστρέψαι. The effect of this summary is to compress the story: the statement telescopes the going, the receiving of the kingdom, and the return into a single sentence ἐπορεύθη ... λαβεῖν ... καὶ ὑποστρέψαι. This compression is the very opposite of seeking to convey a long, drawn-out series of events.¹¹⁰

In v. 13, all the preparation for the departure is limited to 17 mostly short words, and the actual departure itself is not even mentioned. Rather, the whole journey is summarised in the phrase ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι (19,13). The same is true of the king's return: v. 15 is also very compact, compressing the action of the nobleman's acquisition of the throne and his return into two subordinate clauses: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐπανελθεῖν αὐτὸν λαβόντα τὴν βασιλείαν.

4.2 The Parabolic Motif of Far-Off Travel (19,12a)

Foreign travel does not necessarily imply protracted delay or long-term absence in other parables.¹¹¹ For example, in *the parable of the sea-faring son* (Deut. Rab.

¹⁰⁹ Young Ho Kim, *Die Parusie bei Lukas*, BZNW 217 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 161, noting the absence of contact with the character who has departed in Lk. 19,11–27 and the parable of the tenants.

¹¹⁰ Jean-Noël Aletti, “Parabole des mines et/ou parabole du roi (Lc 19, 11–28): Remarques sur l’écriture parabolique de Luc,” in *Les paraboles évangéliques: Perspectives nouvelles*, ed. Jean Delorme, LD 135 (Paris: Cerf, 1989), 309–332, here 312: “La partie I (12–14) est très brève et bien des points sont passés sous silence.”

¹¹¹ Despite the assertion of Fusco, “The Point of View and Implicit Reader” (see n. 20), 1690 (“The entrustment of money to the servants also supposes a certain span of time”), this is not implied in the parable. Similarly, Guy’s claim (“The Interplay of the Present and Future” [see n. 11], 127, cf. 121) that “delay is further intimated by the sending of a delegation after the nobleman” is hardly tenable. See section 3 above.

on Deut. 4,25–26), the emphasis is on the distance between God and Israel when the latter is in tribulation, i. e. it reflects the experience of emotional distance from God's blessing.¹¹² In *the parable of the king's daughters getting married* (Pesiq. Rab Kah. 11.6), the journey of the king to a distant land highlights the fact that Israel is alone on the earth and subject to the mockery of the nations.¹¹³ Similarly in *the parable of the compassionate father and his runaway son* (Pesiq. Rab. 44), the point is the moral distance between Israel and God prior to the nation's repentance and divine action.¹¹⁴

In several of these parables the point of the departure of the main character (i. e. God) is to remove him from the stage so that the focus is on the human actors. In other words, such a parable draws attention to human agency, especially of those who have been left behind with responsibility or the duty to be faithful:

- *The parable of the unselfish steward* (Sifre Deut. 11).¹¹⁵ A king (God) goes across the sea leaving his small son (Israel).¹¹⁶ He does not entrust all his possessions to the son, in case the son squanders them. He leaves the son in the care of a steward (Moses), but the son complains that the steward is not as generous as the king.
- *The parable of the wedding after waves* (Exod. Rab. 19,7).¹¹⁷ This time it is the wife (Israel) who has come from across the sea to the king (God). On her journey, she was violently buffeted by waves (at the Red Sea), but the king tells her on her arrival to think not of the waves but of the joy of her return (i. e. celebrate the passover).

112 See Brad Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 152, quoting from Deut. Rab. (the version of the commentary on Deuteronomy in the Munich codex).

113 William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, trans., *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana: R. Kahana's Compilation of Discourses for Sabbaths and Festal Days*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 274.

114 William G. Braude, trans., *Pesikta Rabbati: Discourses for Feasts, Fasts, and Special Sabbaths*, YJS 18 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 2:779.

115 Ignaz Ziegler, *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch* (Breslau: Schottlaender, 1903), 428 + CLXII; Robert M. Johnston, "Parabolic Interpretations Attributed to Tannaim" (Dissertation, Hartford Seminary, 1977), 282 (§ 73).

116 In most of these parables the expression for the distant land is the same, viz. *mdnt hym*.

117 Ziegler, *Königsgleichnisse* (see n. 115), 351 + CXXVIII; S.M. Lehrman, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus* (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 238; Clemens Thoma and Simon Lauer, *Von Isaak bis zum Schilfmeer: BerR 63–100; ShemR 1–22*, vol. 3 of *Die Gleichnisse der Rabbinen: Einleitung, Übersetzung, Parallelen, Kommentar, Texte*, JudChr 16 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), 108.

- *The parable of the sailor’s wife* (Eccl. Rab. 9.8.1).¹¹⁸ A sailor (God) goes away and leaves his wife (Israel) behind. She dresses finely (avoids transgression) among her neighbours, who ask her why she does this. She replies that she does this in case her husband has favourable winds and returns quickly.
- *The parable of the virtuous woman* (Cant. Rab. 7.14.1).¹¹⁹ Here the king (God) went away leaving his wife (Israel) with little money and only a few possessions, but on his return she was able to say that she had not only saved what he left but added to it.
- *The parable of the lying steward* (Pesiq. Rab Kah. 14.5).¹²⁰ Here the king (God) goes across the sea but beforehand leaves all his possessions (Israel) with his steward (Pharaoh). The steward denied that the king was his master and refused to return the deposit. Only after torture did the steward relent and return the deposit.
- *The parable of the faithful queen* (Pesiq. Rab Kah. 19.4).¹²¹ When the king (God) goes away “to a country across the sea,” it is a test of the wife’s (Israel’s) faithfulness when her companions (the nations) mock her and tell her to take up with another man (a foreign god).
- *The parable of the king’s two servants* (Tanna dēbe Eliyyahu (28) 26).¹²² The king (God) went away to a city far across the sea: while he was away, one of his servants planted lots of orchards (illustrating love for God) and the other did nothing (illustrating awe of God). When the king returned he showed pleasure to the former and displeasure to the latter.
- *The parable of the consort and the maidservant* (Midr. Tanch., ed. Buber, on Num. 16,23).¹²³ A king (God) goes off to a foreign province leaving his wife (Israel) and her maidservant (the nations) behind. The maidservant mocks the queen but the queen remains confident that she will be loved and reckoned more beautiful when the king returns.

118 A. Cohen, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Ecclesiastes* (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 236.

119 Maurice Simon, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Song of Songs* (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 301.

120 Braude and Kapstein, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* (see n. 113), 363; also Ziegler, *Königsleichnisse* (see n. 115), 330–331 + CXIX.

121 Braude and Kapstein, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* (see n. 113), 436–437; Clemens Thoma and Simon Lauer, *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, vol. 1 of *Die Gleichnisse der Rabbinen: Einleitung, Übersetzung, Parallelen, Kommentar, Texte*, JudChr 10 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1986), § 53.

122 Tanna dēbe Eliyyahu (28) 26. See Ziegler, *Königsleichnisse* (see n. 115), 288–289; Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dēbe Eliyyahu* (see n. 37), 347–348; cf. Young, *Parables* (see n. 112), 89.

123 Translation from David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 116; see also Young, *Parables* (see n. 112), 286.

- *The parable of the queen and the maidservants* (Midr. Tanch.-Yelammedenu, on Exod. 34,1).¹²⁴ A king (God) went away to a distant province. While he was away there was gossip about the queen (Israel) among the servants, and the rumours reached the king. His advisor (Moses) tore up the marriage contract (the tablets). When the king returned, however, he found that she had done nothing wrong but that the maidservants had acted shamefully.

These few examples illustrate the way in which the point of these parables about the king's departure are precisely *not* to focus on the action of the king (God) but to bring to the fore how human beings (especially Israel) fulfil their responsibility to their absent husband/master, not least in the context of temptations or taunts from the other nations. This focus on human responsibility is clearly the point also of the parable of the wicked tenants in the Synoptic tradition, where similarly the vineyard-owner also went away. The same is true of the parable of the sower: despite its conventional name, the sower is dispensed with after the first verse, and the focus (at least in Luke) is on human response (cf. Lk. 8,18).¹²⁵

4.3 The Identity of the Slaves (19,15b)

E. Earle Ellis comments that when the nobleman returns, the same people whom he entrusted with the minas are still there to give their account of what they have done (implying that there is no delay).¹²⁶ At the same time, Jan Lambrecht's remark that it is "incredible" that Luke is not reckoning with "the parousia of the Lord in his own lifetime" is without justification.¹²⁷ One cannot infer much about a short or long duration of the end from the characters in the parable, any more than the same tenants killing both the prophets and the son implies in the parable of the tenants that the Hebrew prophets and Jesus the Son belong to the same generation.

¹²⁴ Midrash Tanch.-Yelammedenu § 30, on Exod. 34,1. See further Ziegler, *Königsgleichnisse* (see n. 115), 388 + CXLIII; Samuel A. Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu: An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing, 1996), 614.

¹²⁵ Rightly, Klein, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 40), 608 n. 118 rejects the notion of the distant journey being a cipher for delay.

¹²⁶ E. Earle Ellis, "Eschatology in Luke Revisited," in idem, *Christ and the Future in New Testament History*, NovTSup 97 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 120–128, here 121 n. 6.

¹²⁷ Pace the confident assertion of a parousia in Luke's lifetime in Jan Lambrecht, "Naherwartung in Luke? A Note on M. Wolter's Explanation of Luke 21," *ETL* 87 (2011): 425–431, here 430.

4.4 The Proportions of the Parable

The point noted above about Rabbinic parables which focus on human responsibility is also mirrored in the structure of the parable of the minas. When plotting out the parable we can see how little focus there is on the royal claimant and, conversely, how much attention there is on those left behind:

19,12: Parable summary

19,13: Summoning and commissioning of the servants

19,14: The counter-delegation of the enemies

19,15a: The reception of the kingdom and return

19,15b–26: The actions of the servants and their resulting treatment

19,27: The punishment of the enemies

In short, the framing of the parable in terms of the nobleman plot is summarised in one verse (19,12), referred to in a brief relative clause in the next (ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι) in v. 13; then the receipt of the kingdom and return are epitomised in the first third of v. 15. Thereafter, the rest of v. 15 up to v. 26 is all concerned with the actions of the servants and how their master treats them.¹²⁸ Additionally, two verses deal with the actions of the enemies and how they are treated as a result. In sum, the focus of the parable is very much on human responsibility and divine judgment, rather than any consideration of time.

4.5 The Details of the Parable: Conclusion

To sum up the point here, there is nothing in the parable to suggest delay. There is a rejection of the *Nächsterwartung* evinced in Luke 19,11, but nothing in the parable indicates protracted delay. The narrative techniques of compression and the proportions of the parable, along with the wider literary context of journey-parables, indicate that there is no focus on length of time.

¹²⁸ See further Aletti, “Parabole des mines” (see n. 110), 312–313 on the proportions.

5 The Meaning of the Parable

As discussed, therefore, (1) the parable of the minas is a parable with allegorical features: interpretations which excise the theme of time by supposing a different understanding of the kingdom do not do justice either to the immediate setting in Luke 19, or the wider literary context of Luke-Acts as a whole. (2) On the other hand, those who do advocate delay as the (or a) theme of the parable by jumping from the narrative immediately to Luke's rhetorical concerns do not do justice to the distinction between the internal narrative dynamics and rhetoric. (3) Thirdly, the visits to Rome by Herodian princes to receive imperial *appellatio* cannot support the idea that Luke and his audience have experienced delay in the parousia. (4) Finally, the parable itself, which heavily compresses the activity of the royal claimant and places predominant focus on the servants' responses, makes an emphasis on a long time-frame for the parousia unlikely. So, if the delay of the parousia is not the "Pointe", what is the purpose of the parable?

First, in one very attenuated sense, delay is the point, but only in the sense that the narrative recounts that the coming of the kingdom is *not* immediate in Luke 19. The point of the parable is therefore (1) to explain why the kingdom was not due to appear at the culmination of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, and thereby (2) to preserve an expectation of its arrival at the time determined by God.¹²⁹ This time is unknown to Luke and his readers. There is thus a relation between the narration and Luke's rhetorical purpose, but it is not an immediate one.

Secondly, as many have noted, there are close narrative hooks between the parable of the minas and both the Zacchaeus episode (19,1–10) and the triumphal entry (19,28–44).¹³⁰ The audience is the same in both 19,1–10 and 19,11–27, as the phrase "while they were listening to this" in 19,11 indicates. Jesus has just made a double announcement of salvation (σωτηρία, v. 9; σωσαί, v. 10), indicating the purpose of his coming reaching its fulfilment. As a result, although the coming of the kingdom is not imminent, the salvation which Jesus came to bring has already been launched. In the triumphal entry, Jesus is a *coming* king (19,38), and laments over his city (19,41–44). In the terms of the parable, then, the journey on which Jesus will embark has already been prepared. Jerusalem is not the location of the kingdom, but it is a beginning point from which the proclamation of the kingdom will start (Lk. 24,47; Ac. 1,8).

¹²⁹ Fusco, "The Point of View and Implicit Reader" (see n. 20), 1690–1691.

¹³⁰ E.g. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53* (see n. 44), 1531; Johnson, "The Lukan Kingship Parable" (see n. 17).

Finally, the key focus of the parable is on the responses to Jesus.¹³¹ As emphasised in section 4 above, the departure of the nobleman (like the departure of the vineyard owner in Lk. 20,9) is designed to enable the attention to rest upon human agency, and the proportions of the parable bear this out. In this respect, the parable also resembles the parable of the sower which posits a number of possible long-term responses (three faulty, one good) and the parable of the good Samaritan which presents two bad responses and one good. Unlike in these other two parables, however, the “moral” (cf. Lk. 8,18; 10,37b) is not made explicit in the parable of the minas (hence the possibility of the readings against the grain noted in section 1 above). Of the four responses to the king, i. e. those of the three servants and that of the opponents, the first two servants are clearly positive role models, and the third servant is a warning: as John the Baptist threatened at the beginning of the Gospel, not producing fruit in keeping with repentance is disastrous (3,7–9).¹³² The parable of the minas clearly motivates the reader to aspire to hear the words, “Well done, my good servant!” (19,17). The readers need to be faithful to the king’s commission in interim period before the end, which will come neither early (cf. 19,11), nor necessarily in Luke’s generation, nor necessarily after a very long delay, but at a time “which the Father has set by his own authority” (Ac. 1,7). There is no sense of embarrassment about, or apparent need for explanation of, any putative delay in the parable.

131 Hence my preference for the title “the parable of the minas” (and thereby what the servants do with the minas) rather than “the parable of the throne claimant”.

132 The aphorism about “Them that’s not shall lose” (19,26) functions generally in the Synoptic tradition as damnation: this sense is probable, though a little unclear in Mk. 4,25; is more probable in Matt. 13,12 and Lk. 8,18; and is certain in Matt. 25,29.