

The Contextual Chiastic Structure and the Theological Meaning of Eternal Life: -A Study on Luke 9:51–11:13-¹

Ph.D. Young-Chool Oh (Biblical Studies)

- I. Introduction
- II. Chiastic Structure in Luke 9:51–11:13
- III. Literary Device and Narrative Theology
- IV. Theological Shift in Eternal Life Understanding
- V. Conclusion

Abstract

This study analyzes the eternal life narrative—including the Parable of the Good Samaritan—in Luke 9:51–11:13 from contextual, literary, and theological perspectives. Traditional interpretations have primarily understood the parable as an ethical lesson and an exemplary model of neighborly love. However, this study reinterprets the parable within the broader chiastic structure of Luke's narrative as a redemptive-historical message, exploring the theological essence of eternal life.

To achieve this, the study reshapes the sequential narratives in Luke into a contextual chiastic structure, demonstrating how the questions and responses regarding eternal life symmetrically correspond and reinforce the overarching theological message.

Specifically, this research integrates Inter-Narrative Structure, Intertextuality, and contextual narrative analysis to show that the parable of the Good Samaritan, as part of the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative, transcends mere ethical teaching and conveys a divine invitation grounded in God's grace and redemptive work. Moreover, through the narrative of Martha and Mary, it emphasizes that eternal life includes human response and obedience to God's word as a component of the faith journey.

Ultimately, this study underscores that contextual analysis and literary techniques function not in opposition but in harmony, reinforcing Luke's theological message and deepening the understanding of eternal life. It seeks to enrich theological discourse and provide a more nuanced redemptive-historical perspective on the concept of eternal life in the Gospel of Luke.

Keywords: Contextual Chiastic Structure, Inter-Narrative Structure, Eternal Life, The Good Samaritan, The Narrative of the Lawyer's Eternal Life, Luke 9:51–11:13.

¹ This article is an English translation and expansion of the original Korean study titled "The Contextual Chiastic Structure and the Theological Meaning of Eternal Life: A Study on Luke 9:51–11:13," which was published in the *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 42 (2025). The present version has been refined for international readership, with attention to theological clarity and narrative-linguistic analysis.

I. Introduction

This paper analyzes Luke 9:51–11:13 with a focus on the contextual chiasmic structure² and the theological meaning of eternal life, exploring how the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative reveals both the redemptive-historical message and the essential nature of eternal life. The Parable of the Good Samaritan, one of the most well-known stories in the Bible, has traditionally been interpreted as a moral teaching emphasizing Christian ethics and the practice of love and compassion.³ While many interpretations focus on the ethical lesson of neighborly love, they often fail to account for the deeper theological significance embedded within the narrative context of the Lawyer's question about eternal life.

Luke's Gospel is widely recognized for its integration of theological content with sophisticated literary techniques.⁴ Rather than merely presenting moral instructions, Luke employs narrative structures that guide readers toward a more profound understanding of the Kingdom of God and the essence of eternal life. The Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative is positioned at the center of a contextual chiasmic structure, with the Parable of the Good Samaritan forming a theological climax. The parable is presented as a response to the Lawyer's question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25), and functions not merely as an ethical example but as a narrative device conveying a redemptive-historical message.

Kenneth Bailey analyzed the broader travel narrative (Luke 9:51–19:48) through a chiasmic lens, highlighting key themes such as the Kingdom of God, discipleship, and eschatology.⁵ Similarly, Buckwalter explored the theological depth of the chiasmic structure in Luke 9:51–19:27 with an emphasis on discipleship.⁶ Building on these earlier studies, this paper narrows its focus to Luke 9:51–11:13, further developing the contextual links and theological meaning within the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative.

This study divides Luke 9:51–11:13 into six sequential narrative units: (1) the Samaritan Village Narrative (9:51–62), (2) the Sending of the Seventy Narrative (10:1–20), (3) the Divine Revelation Narrative (10:21–24), (4) the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative (10:25–37), (5) the Martha and Mary Narrative (10:38–42), and (6) the Lord's Prayer Narrative (11:1–13). These units are arranged symmetrically to form a contextual chiasmic structure, highlighting Luke's theological intention.

2 The term contextual chiasmic structure refers to the macro-level literary design of Luke 9:51–11:13 in which entire narrative units are symmetrically arranged to center around a theological theme—in this case, the question and meaning of eternal life. This structure emphasizes redemptive-historical coherence across the broader context.

3 Maurice Ryan, "Revisiting the Parable of the Good Samaritan," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 16, no. 1 (2021): 14-15; Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 357–360; Reimer, Ivana. "Recontextualizing Luke's Good Samaritan: Moral Philosophy and Parabolic Narrative," *EJ* 33, no. 2 (2015): 68–81.

4 Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 112–115; Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 25–29.

5 Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 79-85

6 H. Douglas Buckwalter, "The Hike of Hikes-Luke's Travel Narrative (Luke 9:51–19:27)," *EJ* 33, no. 2 (2015): 68–81.

Richard L. Pratt defines an episode as the smallest narrative unit capable of standing on its own while also contributing meaningfully to the overall message.⁷ He emphasizes the importance of analyzing how these units are interconnected to construct a coherent and theologically rich narrative.

Through a paragraph-by-paragraph chiasmic analysis, this paper demonstrates how each narrative unit progressively reveals the theological meaning of eternal life by means of question-and-answer sequences. This analysis sheds light on Luke's literary intention and guides the reader into a deeper theological understanding.

The study pursues three main objectives:

- (1) to clarify the theological nature of eternal life through a chiasmic structural analysis of each narrative unit;
- (2) to offer a contextual interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan based on Luke's literary strategies, including adjacent contextual linkage and symmetrical design;
- (3) and to show how an intertextual reading with Ezekiel 34, which presents Jesus as the divine shepherd, resonates with the chiasmic framework of this passage.

Ultimately, the study argues that the Parable of the Good Samaritan transcends mere moral instruction and reveals the essence of eternal life as an invitation grounded in divine grace and redemptive initiative.

II. The Contextual Chiasmic Structure of Luke 9:51–11:13

The analysis of the sequential narrative context in Luke 9:51–11:13 through a contextual chiasmic structure is an original contribution.⁸ This structure is not merely a symmetrical arrangement but a carefully crafted literary design in which questions and answers correspond complementarily, forming a unified theological message.

- Contextual Chiasmic Structure of Luke 9:51–11:13

A (9:51–62): The Characteristics of Those Unworthy of Eternal Life

B (10:1–20): Question 2 – What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?

C (10:21–24): Answer 1 – Those Who Have Received God's Revelation

C' (10:25–37): Question 1 – What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?

B' (10:38–42): Answer 2 – Eternal Life Begins with Listening to the Word

A' (11:1–13): The Characteristics of Those Worthy of Eternal Life

This structure deepens the contextual coherence between the narrative units and gradually reveals

⁷ Richard L. Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1990), 180.

⁸ Young-Chool Oh, "A Study on the Parable of the Good Samaritan: Using a Narrative Scene Analysis Method," (Ph.D. diss., Korea The Reformed Graduate University, 2023), 197.

the theological message of eternal life.⁹

For example, in Matthew 22:20–21, Jesus employs a chiastic structure.

a (Question): "Whose image and inscription is this?" (22:20)

b (Answer): "It is Caesar's" (22:21a)

a' (Conclusion): "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (22:21b)

This structure forms a chiastic relationship between the question and the conclusion (a and a'), with the central response (b) connecting and completing the message. These examples suggest that questions and answers in a paragraph-based chiastic structure can function as an effective narrative device to convey a redemptive message by responding to each other. Based on this, this study utilizes the paragraph-based question-and-answer structure to explore the nature of eternal life, keeping in mind the literary technique of the Gospel of Luke.

1. Analysis of the Six Narrative Units

The paragraph-by-paragraph chiastic structure of Luke 9:51–11:13 is characterized by the independence and interconnectedness of each paragraph.¹⁰ This structure is used as a literary technique to effectively convey the central message, and it concretizes the theological message centered on questions and answers about eternal life. Through this, readers are invited to understand God's grace and redemptive invitation more deeply, and it emphasizes that the essence of eternal life is not simply dependent on human effort, but comes from God's grace and choice.

1.1. A: The Characteristics of Those Unworthy of Eternal Life (Luke 9:51–62)

1) The Narrative of the Samaritan Village: An Attitude Unworthy of Eternal Life

⁹ Whether Luke explicitly intended such a chiastic structure remains an open question in scholarly discourse. However, it is widely acknowledged among scholars that the Gospel writers did not merely compile the deeds and teachings of Jesus at random, but arranged them according to deliberate theological intentions. Luke's Gospel, likewise, is understood not as a random collection of events, but as a purposefully constructed narrative that reveals the redemptive-historical flow and the coming of the Kingdom of God. The fact that the six narrative units are arranged within a coherent and connected context may be regarded as a structural trace of the author's editorial intention. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assert definitively that Luke consciously employed a chiastic arrangement between these narrative units. However, if we understand Luke's Gospel as written under organic inspiration, such a structure can be received as a literary formation guided by the Holy Spirit. This does not conflict with theological interpretation. Thus, regardless of whether Luke explicitly intended this structure, utilizing the literary design evident within his composition as a means of theological interpretation is a legitimate and valid hermeneutical approach.

¹⁰ A paragraph-by-paragraph chiastic structure refers to a literary arrangement in which each narrative unit is intentionally paired with a corresponding counterpart, typically through mirrored themes or question-and-answer correspondences. This study refers to it as a macro-chiasmus, distinguishing it from micro-level chiasmus, which occurs at the sentence or clause level. It highlights Luke's distinctive narrative strategy, in which entire sections and story units are organized within a deliberate chiastic framework.

As Jesus and His disciples journey through Samaria, they are rejected by the Samaritan villagers (Luke 9:52–56). This scene reflects the deep-seated hostility and historical tension between Jews and Samaritans.¹¹ The passage highlights Jesus' refusal to retaliate in response to rejection, thereby demonstrating the universal scope of the Gospel and the boundless love of God. Furthermore, Jesus uses this moment to teach His disciples the proper attitude essential for true discipleship.¹²

The rejection by the Samaritan villagers serves as a symbolic representation of human resistance to God's redemptive work, illustrating how rejecting God's invitation can result in alienation from the blessing of eternal life. However, Jesus' response underscores that this divine invitation remains open to all people, irrespective of ethnic or social distinctions. Ultimately, this passage transcends a mere historical conflict or individual circumstance. It functions as a theological narrative that reveals the essence of an attitude unfit for eternal life, emphasizing the necessity of embracing God's invitation rather than resisting it.

2) The Attitude Unworthy of Eternal Life and Its Theological Significance

Luke 9:51 marks a pivotal turning point where Jesus' redemptive ministry begins in earnest, introduced with the distinctive phrase, "when the time for his ascension was approaching." The term "ἀνάληψις" (analepsis) used here is a key theological concept encompassing both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, signifying not only Jesus' ascension but also the mission that must be fulfilled before it—namely, the revelation of the essence of eternal life.¹³

This theological implication naturally connects with the subsequent pericopes, serving as a prelude to the overarching theological framework of questions and answers regarding eternal life. Specifically, the Sending of the Seventy Narrative (B), the Divine Revelation Narrative (C), the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative (C'), the Martha and Mary Narrative (B'), and the Lord's Prayer Narrative (A'), which appear after Luke 10, form the paragraph-by-paragraph chiasmic structure. These structures are arranged in such a way that the essence of eternal life is progressively revealed.

While acknowledging previous studies that regard this passage as a turning point in Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and His redemptive mission, this study further highlights its critical role in illuminating the theological nature of eternal life. Ultimately, the story of rejection in Samaria and the refusal of the divine invitation symbolically represents those who are unworthy of eternal life, reminding readers of the significance of God's grace and His redemptive-historical invitation. In this way, the passage emphasizes that eternal life is not merely an ethical pursuit but rather a full response to God's grace.

11 Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 197.

12 Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), ePub edition, section titled "Galilean Ministry: Revelation of Jesus (4:14–9:50)—Christology and Salvation."

13 Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), ePub edition, section titled "Turning to Jerusalem."

1.2. B: Question 2 – What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life? (Luke 10:1-20)

1) The Sending of the Seventy Narrative: Eternal Life Is Having Our Names Written in Heaven

Luke 10:1–20, the Sending of the Seventy Narrative, serves as a pivotal passage that announces the arrival of the kingdom of God and extends a redemptive invitation to eternal life. Jesus sent the Seventy in pairs to proclaim the gospel, and their message of the kingdom of God was a blessing to those who accepted it but a judgment to those who rejected it (Luke 10:9-12).

Notably, Jesus instructed the disciples to rejoice not in their ministerial success but in the fact that their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20). This passage does not merely emphasize the importance of discipleship but also contrasts the destinies of two groups regarding eternal life and the kingdom of God. Those who receive the gospel are already those whose names are written in heaven, and through this, they respond to God's redemptive invitation. In contrast, those who reject the gospel reflect a spiritual reality in which their names are not recorded in heaven, and as a result, they come under God's judgment. Thus, the acceptance or rejection of the gospel is not merely a matter of personal choice, but a response shaped by God's grace and sovereign election.

This theological emphasis is a recurring theme throughout the Gospel of Luke. In particular, the narrative of the sending of the Seventy is directly linked to the subsequent question posed by the lawyer regarding eternal life (Luke 10:25) and the Parable of the Good Samaritan, providing essential context for understanding the path to eternal life. This passage suggests that eternal life is not attained through human effort but is determined by God's grace and is made manifest in the lives of those who respond to that grace through faith and obedience to the gospel.

2) Eternal Life: The Shift Toward the Question and Its Theological Message

As the disciples proclaim the gospel, they witness miraculous signs, including the submission of demons. However, Jesus redirects their focus by stating, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20), thereby emphasizing a more significant spiritual reality. Having one's name written in heaven is not merely a symbol of glory but signifies participation in the salvation granted through Jesus Christ, ultimately aligned with God's redemptive purpose.¹⁴

The miraculous subjugation of demons hints at the blessings experienced by those whose names are inscribed in heaven, underscoring their relationship with God. Yet, this passage does not explicitly explain how one's name is recorded in heaven. This naturally leads readers to wonder, "What must I do to obtain eternal life?" and to explore the nature of eternal life. In this way, rhetorical questioning functions as a literary device that enhances communication with the reader and increases persuasive effect.¹⁵

14 Dal Lee, "Rejoice That Your Names Are Written in Heaven," *The Biblical Studies for Preachers* Vol.10 No.8 (2004): 60.

15 So-yeon Chung, "A Comparative Study of Appearance and Persuasive Effect of Rhetorical Question in Academic

Luke extends the tension of this unspoken question into the following section (Luke 10:21–24), the Narrative of Divine Revelation, where the gradual unfolding of eternal life is presented not as a result of human effort or merit, but as a gift granted by God's revelation. Through this literary progression, Luke highlights that the essence of eternal life is not grounded in ethical action or human achievement but in divine grace and revelatory initiative—guiding readers to a richer theological understanding.

1.3 C: Answer 1 – Those Who Have Received Divine Revelation (Luke 10:21–24)

1) Divine Revelation Narrative: The Blessedness Given to the Disciples

The phrase "at that time" (Luke 10:21) marks a transition point in the discussion on eternal life. This Divine Revelation Narrative, parallel to Matthew 11:25–27, is placed in different contexts in each Gospel. In Matthew, it follows the unrepentance of Chorazin and Bethsaida, emphasizing that their failure to respond to Jesus' miracles stems from not receiving God's revelation.¹⁶ In contrast, Luke strategically places this passage after Jesus' statement, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). This contextual arrangement highlights two theological points: "Being recorded in heaven signifies eternal life, while divine revelation is emphasized as a sovereign gift from God."

Jesus' pronouncement, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see" (Luke 10:23), is not merely a declaration of happiness but an affirmation that the disciples have received God's revelation and been invited to eternal life. This blessing does not result from human effort but is a divine privilege granted by God's sovereign will. Consequently, this passage emphasizes that eternal life is not achieved by human means but bestowed as a grace-filled revelation from God.

2) The Role of the Divine Revelation Narrative and Its Theological Message

The report of the Seventy emphasizes that having one's name written in heaven is of greater significance, clearly revealing that the essence of eternal life belongs to the heavenly realm. The following Divine Revelation Narrative (Luke 10:21–24) highlights that God's revelation is granted through Jesus' prayer and desire. Through this, readers are reminded that eternal life is not attained by human merit or effort, but is a gift of God's grace. Unlike Matthew, Luke deliberately places the Divine Revelation Narrative immediately after the discussion on names being written in heaven (Luke 10:17–20). Such narrative sequencing implicitly raises a crucial theological question: "How does one's name come to be written in heaven?"

This question naturally leads to the lawyer's inquiry in Luke 10:25: "What must I do to inherit

Writing and Popular Writing(1) -focus on the essays and articles by university students," *Korean Journal of Rhetoric* 13 (2010): 247-253.

16 Daehun Kang, *Matthew Commentary, Vol. 1* (Seoul: Revival and Reformation Press, 2019), 760-765.

eternal life?" By structuring the narrative in this way, Luke guides readers toward a progressive understanding of eternal life, emphasizing that it is rooted in God's grace and revelation rather than human effort. Ultimately, this structural arrangement prepares for the theological significance of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37). It reinforces that eternal life is not based on human actions or merit but on God's grace. This reflects Luke's broader redemptive-historical perspective, underscoring that eternal life is initiated and sustained by God alone.

1.4. C': Question 1 – What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life? (Luke 10:25–37)

1) The Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative: The Nature of Love and the Posture of Reception

The lawyer asks Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). This question reveals his understanding of eternal life as something that can be obtained through specific actions. Rather than giving a direct answer, Jesus turns the question back to the lawyer, prompting him to find the answer himself. In response, the lawyer cites the heart of the Law: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

However, unable to fully grasp the implications of his own answer, the lawyer poses a follow-up question: "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). While this may appear to be an attempt to clarify the object of love, it actually reflects a deeper misunderstanding of the very nature of love itself. In response, Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This shifts the focus from the question, "Who is the object of love?" to the perspective of the wounded man—"Who showed love?"

From the perspective of the man who was robbed, the issue is not about defining who qualifies as a neighbor, but about identifying who acted with mercy. In this narrative, Jesus introduces the verb *splagchnizomai* (σπλαγχνίζομαι)—to have compassion—highlighting the inner essence of love. In doing so, he leads the lawyer not to define love's object, but to recognize the posture of receptivity required to truly understand and embody love.

2) Theological Message of Eternal Life: It Is Granted to Those Who Receive Redemptive Love

After telling the parable, Jesus asked the lawyer, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" (Luke 10:36). This question was designed to lead the lawyer to identify himself with the man who was attacked, thereby drawing him into direct participation in the parable. If the lawyer considers himself righteous, he will be unable to accept the condition of the man who fell among robbers, and will remain trapped within the question, "And who is my neighbor?" This reveals that the lawyer's mindset is still centered on works and that he has not yet escaped from a self-righteous view of eternal life. However, when he recognizes himself as the man who fell among robbers and accepts this reality, he becomes prepared to receive God's

redemptive love with an open heart.

Only by identifying with the wounded man—acknowledging his own vulnerability—can the lawyer become truly receptive to God's redemptive compassion. From the perspective of the man who was robbed, the object of love is the one who restores his life—the merciful Samaritan. This symbolically illustrates that eternal life is not earned through human merit or moral achievement but is given to those who receive God's redemptive compassion.

Thus, Jesus moves beyond the lawyer's attempt to define the boundaries of "neighbor" and instead presents the foundation and essence of true love. The lawyer must recognize, through the parable, that he is in the same state as the man who was robbed, and that the object of love is not defined by ethical categories but by the one who shows mercy.

Roh-Sik Park defines the Kingdom of God as "a kingdom that embraces the wounded and forms the most inclusive community through the gospel of mercy."¹⁷ This interpretation is closely tied to the earlier discussions regarding "having one's name written in heaven" (Luke 10:20) and "receiving divine revelation" (Luke 10:21–24) as essential to inheriting eternal life. Ultimately, the Parable of the Good Samaritan conveys a theological message far beyond a moral lesson—it reveals that eternal life is granted to those who receive God's redemptive love.

1.5. B': Answer 2 – It Begins with Listening to the Word (Luke 10:38–42)

1) The Martha and Mary Narrative: Eternal Life Begins with Reception and Listening

The narrative of Martha and Mary begins with Jesus being received (*hypodechomai*, ὑποδέχομαι) into their home. While Martha is busy with hospitality, Mary chooses to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to His teaching. When Martha expresses frustration over Mary's behavior, Jesus affirms that Mary has chosen the better portion. Traditionally, this passage has been interpreted as a contrast between action (Martha) and contemplation or listening (Mary), with emphasis on differing spiritual attitudes.¹⁸ More recent studies have approached the text from a socio-transformational perspective, exploring its implications for gender, space, and social roles.¹⁹

However, when analyzed through the lens of chiasmic structure, the narrative functions not merely as a contrast between roles, but as a literary unit that highlights the theological starting point of eternal life—receiving the Word. Particular attention should be given to the verb *hypodechomai* (ὑποδέχομαι), which appears only twice in the New Testament, both in Luke (10:38 and 19:6). In Luke 19:6, Zacchaeus receives Jesus into his home and, through this act, experiences salvation.²⁰

17 Roh-Sik Park, "A Narrative Reading of Luke 10:25-37," *The New Testament Society Of Korea* 30/02 (2023): 234.

18 YoungSook Choi, "Martha und Maria, die die Trennungswand des Raums überqueren - Neuinterpretation von Lukas 10:38-42," *The New Testament Society Of Korea* 29/04 (2022): 438-446.

19 YoungSook Choi, "Martha und Maria, die die Trennungswand des Raums überqueren - Neuinterpretation von Lukas 10:38-42," 458.

20 Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed.

His reception of Jesus is not mere hospitality, but a redemptive act tied to his faith response.

Similarly, Martha's reception of Jesus should be understood in this redemptive context. Just as Zacchaeus demonstrated his faith by surrendering his possessions, Mary's act of listening to the Word can be seen as a faith-filled response to the invitation of eternal life.²¹ Her posture reveals the essential beginning of eternal life: receiving and responding to the Word. Thus, the Martha and Mary narrative should not be reduced to a simple dichotomy between service and spirituality. Instead, it should be read as a theological statement that underscores the significance of both receiving Christ and listening to His Word as the foundational response to the redemptive call of eternal life.

2) The Theological Significance of Receiving and Listening to the Word

Luke connects this narrative with the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative to emphasize that listening to the Word of God is a crucial starting point for receiving eternal life. Within this context, eternal life is portrayed as a divine gift granted through attentiveness to the Word, and the act of listening marks the essential beginning of the journey toward eternal life. Mary's posture, as described in this passage, is later extended in John 12, where she anoints Jesus with perfume in preparation for his burial. This progression illustrates how those who receive redemptive love through listening to the Word respond with devoted action and practical faith.

Mary's act of anointing reveals that she has received the redemptive love of God and now regards Jesus as the object of love and the center of her devotion. Her action goes beyond intellectual assent, demonstrating that eternal life is not merely an abstract concept but is realized through concrete responses to God's love and redemption. Thus, receiving the Word and living it out in practice are deeply intertwined, forming the core posture required to enter into eternal life.

François Bovon interprets Luke 10:25–42 as a chiasmic structure shaped by the double commandment (a–b–b'–a').²²

- a: The love of God (Luke 10:27a),
- b: The love of neighbor (10:27b),
- b': The parable of the Good Samaritan (10:30–37),
- a': The Martha and Mary narrative (10:38–42).

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1037. According to Danker, *hypodechomai* (ὑποδέχομαι) carries a stronger connotation than *dechomai* (δέχομαι). While *dechomai* generally denotes ordinary hospitality or reception—and is used in Luke to describe welcoming disciples or offering hospitality (Luke 9:11; 10:8; 10:10)—*ὑποδέχομαι* implies a more deliberate and intentional act of reception, often associated with a response of faith. Particularly in Luke 10:38 and 19:6, the usage of this verb underscores theological significance within the redemptive narrative. In the case of Zacchaeus, his act of receiving Jesus marks a pivotal redemptive moment. Similarly, Martha's reception of Jesus may be interpreted as a symbolic expression of her faithful openness and spiritual response to Him.

21 Ulrich Busse, "A Study of Luke 10 in Context," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 61, no. 1&2 (2005): 87–89.

22 François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:21* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 52–64.

Charles H. Talbert also reads this passage as a reflection on the double commandment, asserting that it stands at the center of Luke's ethical teaching.²³

However, this study seeks to complement such readings by reinterpreting the Martha and Mary narrative—within the broader context of Luke's Gospel—as a theological message concerning the beginning of eternal life. In the chiasmic structure, the Martha and Mary narrative (B') serves as the theological response to the earlier unit (B), which poses the question regarding "having one's name written in heaven." Furthermore, the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37), which emphasizes a receptive attitude toward divine mercy, finds a natural parallel in Mary's act of listening at Jesus' feet.

Although eternal life belongs to the heavenly realm of divine grace, Mary's posture of longing and attentiveness to the Word exemplifies the human starting point for accepting the invitation to eternal life. Rather than viewing Martha and Mary in simple opposition, it is more accurate to understand Martha as a sign of reception and Mary as a sign of obedient listening. When viewed this way, both become essential conditions for entering into eternal life.²⁴ Therefore, these two narratives go beyond moral instruction to reveal that eternal life begins in one's response to God's grace and Word. Their complementary relationship further clarifies the theological centrality of eternal life within Luke's narrative framework.

1.6. A': The Characteristics of Those Worthy to Inherit Eternal Life (Luke 11:1–13)

1) The Lord's Prayer Narrative: Structure and Meaning

Luke 11:1–13 includes Jesus' instruction to His disciples on how to pray, as well as the parable of a friend who comes at midnight. This passage presents the characteristics of those who are worthy to inherit eternal life through the content of prayer, offering essential guidance for disciples to live as true citizens of the Kingdom of God. In particular, the structural pattern surrounding the core message of prayer—what Jesus emphasizes and how God responds—reveals that prayer is not a mere religious obligation but a vital component in the journey toward eternal life.

²³ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 120-126.

²⁴ Welcoming Jesus into one's life like Martha, and attentively listening to His Word like Mary—even amid the busyness of daily life—is precisely the path to eternal life that Luke presents. Rather than simply contrasting the two figures, the text offers an integrated vision of the journey of faith toward eternal life. We may have been inclined to read this passage in an overly flat or dualistic way, casting Martha solely in a negative light. However, Luke carefully illustrates that eternal life is opened to those who both receive Jesus and respond to His Word. His narrative does not merely contrast Martha and Mary as opposing characters; rather, it reveals two complementary attitudes of faith that often coexist within the believer—the hospitality that invites Jesus into everyday life, and the attentiveness that pauses to hear His voice. In this interplay, Luke narratively unfolds a gospel journey that leads toward eternal life.

The literary structure of Luke 11:1–13 can be outlined as follows:²⁵

a (11:1): The disciples' request, "Teach us to pray."

a' (11:2–13): Jesus' response (b–c–d–c'–b')

b (11:2): The first focus of prayer: Hallowing God's name and seeking His kingdom.

c (11:3–4): Second focus of prayer—"Ask, seek, knock"

d (11:5–8): Parable of the Friend at Midnight—The importance of persistence

c' (11:9–10): Response to the second focus—"It will be given to you; you will find; it will be opened"

b' (11:11–13): Response to the first focus—God gives the Holy Spirit.

This chiastic structure highlights the symmetrical arrangement between the content of prayer (b and c) and God's response to that prayer (b' and c'). At the literary center lies the parable of the friend at midnight (d), powerfully highlighting the indispensable posture of urgency and trust in one's relationship with God. This central placement reflects the foundational attitude of one who is worthy of eternal life.

The passage therefore teaches that eternal life is not granted merely through verbal confession or moral deeds. Rather, it is given to those who engage in an ongoing, trust-filled relationship with God—those who live a life of persistent, heartfelt prayer. In this way, prayer becomes not just a spiritual discipline, but a dynamic expression of one's readiness and qualification to receive eternal life.

2) The Characteristics of Those Worthy of Eternal Life and Their Theological Significance

The parable of the friend who comes at midnight (Luke 11:5–10) goes beyond teaching the importance of persistent prayer; it emphasizes a posture of trust in God's grace and mercy within a relationship with Him. In the parable, the friend does not respond merely because of personal ties, but because of the petitioner's earnest and persistent request. This illustrates not only the principle by which God answers prayer, but also symbolizes the kind of prayerful posture that those who have received eternal life must have in seeking the Holy Spirit—for only by receiving the Spirit can one live as a citizen worthy of the kingdom of God.

The prayer Jesus teaches His disciples centers around two key themes. First, the petition for God's name to be hallowed and His kingdom to come leads to the reception of the Holy Spirit, which marks the beginning of life as a worthy member of God's kingdom (b'). Second, the prayer for daily bread, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from temptation goes beyond addressing everyday needs; it expresses the essential requests for maintaining a faithful life as a member of God's people. These prayers signify the desire to resist sin, pursue holiness, and remain under God's sovereign rule.

25 Young-Chool Oh, "A Study on the Parable of the Good Samaritan: Using a Narrative Scene Analysis Method," 198.

Thus, those who have received the Spirit must continually seek God's guidance in order to fully realize the life of eternal significance. Luke sets this structured model of prayer in contrast with the earlier depiction of those unworthy of eternal life (A), highlighting that those who receive the Holy Spirit are the ones who obey God's Word and whose names are written in heaven.

Ultimately, eternal life is entirely a gift of God's grace. Its full meaning is realized in those who, having received the Spirit, live a life of holiness through continual dependence on God's leading. In this way, the Spirit-filled believer not only begins the journey of eternal life but also completes it through a life of faithful prayer and obedience.

2. The Theological Significance of the paragraph-by-paragraph Chiastic Structure

2.1. Overview and Symmetrical Analysis of the paragraph-by-paragraph Chiastic Structure

The narrative of Luke 9:51–11:13, which begins with the themes of the invitation to and rejection of eternal life, is composed of six units that form a clear chiastic structure. This structure is symmetrically arranged around the central question and answer concerning eternal life (C–C'), with each unit contributing a distinct theological message that connects the whole. At the center, the discussion of eternal life clearly reveals the nature of the Kingdom of God and God's redemptive invitation, emphasizing that eternal life is not based on ethical behavior but is grounded in a relationship with God and His grace. At the narrative's center, the theme of eternal life unveils the nature of the Kingdom of God and the divine redemptive invitation extended through Christ.

1) C–C': The Answer and the Question of Eternal Life

In the C' section (Luke 10:25–37), the lawyer asks, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Preceding this, the C section (Luke 10:21–24) presents the disciples as those who have already inherited eternal life by recognizing and following Jesus as the Messiah. This recognition is made possible by divine revelation, which is given as a gracious gift from God. That is, God's love is manifested through revelation, and those who receive it are granted eternal life.

Thus, the lawyer's question in C' is, in a theological sense, already answered in C. The salvation of the man who fell among robbers—the central parable of C'—is not achieved through human effort or merit, but through the compassion (σπλαγχνίζομαι) of the Good Samaritan, who bestows life through love. The verb σπλαγχνίζομαι expresses deep empathy toward human suffering and is frequently used in the Gospels to describe Jesus' compassionate ministry. This ministry transcends social, ethnic, gender, and cultural boundaries, underscoring the universal reach of God's gracious gift.²⁶

26 Seong Hee Kim, "The Power of Jesus' Compassion: Through 'σπλαγχνίζομαι' in Mark," *The New Testament Society Of Korea* 20/03 (2013): 713–715.

In other words, the process by which the man who was left for dead receives life is analogously connected to the reception of eternal life—it is accomplished through the bestowal of love that flows from a heart of compassion. Such an internal reading harmonizes with a theological interpretation that emphasizes eternal life not as a reward for ethical conduct or merit, but as a gracious gift rooted in God's love and mercy.

2) B–B': The Second Question and Answer Concerning Eternal Life

When the seventy returned, they reported with joy, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." In response, Jesus said, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Here, having one's name written in heaven signifies that they have inherited eternal life. While the disciples witnessed events on an earthly and visible level, Jesus reinterprets these events from a heavenly perspective, connecting them to a deeper spiritual reality.

If having one's name written in heaven is equivalent to receiving eternal life, a natural question arises: "How can one's name be written in heaven?" This question parallels the lawyer's later inquiry: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). Therefore, the B section (Luke 10:1–20) serves as a narrative moment that implicitly raises the question of eternal life. In contrast, the B' section (Luke 10:38–42)—the narrative of Martha and Mary—offers a theological answer: eternal life begins with receiving Jesus and listening to His Word.

In this way, B' functions as the response to the question posed in B. It provides the answer to the implicit inquiry, "How can my name be written in heaven?" Through this structural pairing, Luke presents two key theological insights: first, that the ultimate cause (*prima causa*) of eternal life is divine revelation; and second, that just as the disciples followed Jesus upon receiving revelation, so too must those who receive Him begin by listening to His Word.

Consequently, if having one's name recorded in heaven (B) represents the ultimate dimension of eternal life, then its initial step on earth is found in the act of welcoming Jesus and attentively receiving His Word (B'). Luke thus clarifies that the heavenly reality of eternal life is inaugurated through a grounded and receptive posture toward Christ in the present.

3) A–A': Those Unworthy and Those Worthy of Eternal Life

The A section (Luke 9:51–62) portrays those who are unworthy of eternal life through two examples: the rejection of Jesus by the Samaritans and the inadequate commitment of those invited to follow Him. In contrast, the corresponding A' section (Luke 11:1–13) presents those who are worthy of eternal life—disciples who ask Jesus to teach them how to pray, who seek God's name and kingdom, and who are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This contrast is not merely a difference in attitude but forms a theological structure that juxtaposes two kinds of responses to the invitation of eternal life. However, Luke does not end with simply portraying the possession of eternal life; rather, he emphasizes that those who seek God's

name and kingdom must ultimately be led to the reception of the Holy Spirit. That is, those who have inherited eternal life are to continue in a posture of persistent faith, seeking God's reign and presence.

Luke makes it clear that the act of seeking God's name and kingdom is not just a pious exercise, but a necessary process through which the Holy Spirit is given. In this way, the faithful pursuit of God's kingdom becomes the defining characteristic of those truly worthy of eternal life.

2.2. The Chiastic Structure and Its Theological Implications for Understanding Eternal Life

It is important to recognize that readers often interpret the biblical text through their own cognitive frameworks—ethical perspectives, cultural assumptions, or modern moral standards. Bonnie Howe notes that readers tend to understand texts according to their cognitive frameworks, which can sometimes create distance from the original intent of the text. In this way, readers may impose modern moral frameworks or culturally conditioned readings onto the Parable of the Good Samaritan, reducing it to a mere moral lesson.²⁷

However, Luke, as a divinely inspired author, intentionally conveys God's message through his literary techniques and theological purpose. Therefore, in order to grasp the full theological significance of the passage, interpreters must go beyond their own cognitive frameworks and seek to uncover the textual intent of the author. Jae-Hoon Yang emphasizes that "contextual reading is an interpretive approach that considers extratextual factors while seeking to discern the author's intent within the broader literary context." He argues that such an approach enables a more accurate theological understanding of the text.²⁸

This contextual approach invites readers to interpret the entire narrative of Luke 9:51–11:13—including the Parable of the Good Samaritan—within the chiastic structure at the paragraph level. The theological insights drawn from this chiastic analysis are as follows:

First, eternal life is a gift granted by divine revelation and grace, not based on human merit or works.

Second, eternal life begins with receiving and listening to the Word of God, as clearly depicted in Mary's posture of sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His Word.

Third, eternal life involves responding to the invitation of the Kingdom of God by discerning and obeying God's will, through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, the narrative units in Luke are interconnected, and the entire narrative is structured to reinforce a redemptive-historical message.

As a result, the paragraph-by-paragraph chiastic reading demonstrates that although eternal life belongs to the heavenly realm, it is experienced in the present through attentive listening, as

27 Bonnie Howe, *Because You Bear This Name: Conceptual Metaphor and the Moral Meaning of 1 Peter* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 91–94.

28 Jayhoon Yang, "Bible Translation and a Contextual Reading of the Text: A Case Study with the Parable of the Prodigal Sons," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 39 (2016): 189.

exemplified by Mary, and is sustained by the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. This analysis affirms the reliability of the chiasmic structure proposed in this study as a valid interpretive tool. Ultimately, this interpretation underscores that eternal life is not the result of ethical performance, but a gracious gift bestowed by God through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

III. Luke's Literary Techniques and the Eternal Life Narrative

1. Luke's Literary Craft: The Structural Beauty of Narrative

The Gospel of Luke is not merely a historical account but a theologically rich narrative crafted with sophisticated literary techniques. In particular, the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative functions as a distinctive Lukan pericope—an independent unit with a coherent and complete plot structure. Although this narrative may initially appear to convey a moral lesson, Luke intentionally employs three literary strategies—inter-narrative structure, intertextuality, and paragraph-level chiasmic structure—to anchor its interpretation within the Old Testament and to highlight its theological significance in the broader canonical context. Within the redemptive-historical framework, this narrative is integrally tied to Jesus' ministry and functions as a central element that emphasizes the theological essence of eternal life.

1.1. Highlighting Central Theological Imagery through Inter-Narrative Structure

Previous studies have defined intra-textuality as a literary technique that emphasizes theological messages through the repetition of words, concepts, themes, or narrative structures within a single textual unit.²⁹ However, intra-textuality remains limited in describing structural relationships between multiple independent narratives.

This study introduces the term inter-narrative structure to describe a literary technique whereby independent narrative units are intentionally connected to highlight a central theological image. Inter-narrative structure transcends mere conceptual repetition, linking entire narrative scenes to reinforce redemptive-historical themes.

In Luke's Gospel, the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative is structurally connected to two other independent narratives: the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11–17) and the royal entry into Jerusalem at Bethany (Luke 19:28–40). These connections deepen the theological significance of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

In the Nain narrative, Jesus is portrayed not merely as a miracle worker but as the divine shepherd who restores life to the dead—paralleling the Samaritan's rescue of the man left for dead, and highlighting Jesus as the redeemer of the lost. Similarly, the royal entry narrative underscores Jesus' sacrificial love and messianic identity, expanding the parable's redemptive implications

²⁹ Kent D. Palmer, *Intratextuality: Exploring the Unconscious of the Text*, independent research paper, (2002): 1.

beyond ethical instruction.

Through these narrative links, Luke clarifies that the true focal point of the Good Samaritan parable is Jesus Christ.³⁰ Moreover, his use of inter-narrative structure to associate the Eternal Life Narrative with Jesus' divine identity provides a literary foundation for its intertextual resonance with Ezekiel 34. In doing so, Luke affirms that Jesus is the divine shepherd foretold in the Old Testament, reinforcing the redemptive and messianic fulfillment of His mission.

1.2. Connecting the Old Testament through Intertextuality³¹

In Ezekiel 34, God promises to send a divine shepherd who will bind up (ḥābash, חָבַשׁ) the wounded sheep and deliver them. The term חָבַשׁ ("to bind up") refers not merely to physical healing but to the deeper restoration of existential wounds—those that ultimately lead to death—thereby directly connecting to the redemptive work of the divine shepherd. Luke employs intertextuality to link Ezekiel 34 with the Parable of the Good Samaritan, thereby making Jesus' divine identity even more explicit.

In the parable, Jesus describes the Samaritan tending to the wounded man by pouring oil and wine on his injuries. Notably, Jesus uses the specific Greek term *trauma* (τραῦμα) to describe the wounds—emphasizing not simply physical injury but the deeper spiritual affliction related to sin and death.³² Furthermore, Jesus employs the verb *katadeō* to describe the act of binding the wounds. This verb is the Septuagint equivalent of חָבַשׁ in Ezekiel 34:16, reinforcing the intertextual bridge between the Samaritan's action and the divine shepherd's mission.

Thus, Jesus' use of *katadeō* and *trauma* serves as a theological device that reveals His self-disclosing intention, presenting Himself as the divine shepherd prophesied in Ezekiel 34. In this way, the Samaritan's act of compassion is not merely a model of human kindness but the fulfillment of the Old Testament's vision of redemptive love. The Good Samaritan, therefore, is not simply an ethical exemplar but a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ as the divine shepherd who rescues the wounded.

30 Young-Chool Oh,, "A Literary Approach to the Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke1," *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 39 (2024): 205-206.

31 This study seeks to move beyond the traditional interpretive framework that has often reduced the Parable of the Good Samaritan to a mere ethical lesson. To achieve this, it was necessary to demonstrate the theological context intentionally constructed by Luke. By skillfully applying three literary techniques—paragraph-level chiasmic structure, contextual placement, and intertextuality—Luke reveals that the Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative is far more than a moral teaching. Intertextuality, in particular, functions in conjunction with the chiasmic arrangement and narrative flow to affirm that this parable communicates a theologically sophisticated message through its literary design. Thus, the connection to the Old Testament is not merely a backdrop but a theologically strategic device that deepens the meaning of the parable and elevates its structural significance. In this way, Luke subtly leads the interpreter to a moment of reflection: "Perhaps we have read this parable too simply."

32 Young-Chool Oh, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan: An Intertextual Approach to Ezekiel 34," *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 41 (2024): 322-324.

The parable, then, is more than a moral teaching; it functions as a revelatory act in which Jesus unveils the fulfillment of messianic prophecy. This intertextuality acts as a theological bridge that confirms Jesus' identity as the divine shepherd carrying out a redemptive mission. Birger Gerhardsson also argues that the Parable of the Good Samaritan reflects the imagery of the divine shepherd in Ezekiel 34, emphasizing that Jesus is the one who seeks and cares for the lost. He contends that this parable expands beyond ethical instruction into the realm of redemptive theology.³³

In conclusion, Luke's use of intertextuality highlights the deep continuity between Jesus' ministry and the Old Testament. Through the Parable of the Good Samaritan—introduced by Jesus Himself as a vehicle of self-revelation—Luke presents the wounded man as one who receives divine compassion. In doing so, he underscores the theological essence of eternal life: it is not achieved by human merit or effort but is given through the acceptance of divine revelation and mercy. Therefore, the parable functions as a theological window through which the reader sees not only a moral imperative but also a messianic fulfillment rooted in Old Testament prophecy.

1.3. Revealing the Authorial Intent through Chiastic Structure

As the sequential narratives are reframed into a paragraph-level chiasmic design, the previously veiled essence of eternal life emerges progressively through a rhythmic interplay of questions and answers. The original intent of the passage—what Luke sought to communicate—is clarified through this literary structure, which does not undermine the authority of Scripture but rather affirms that the Gospel writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, intentionally conveyed the message of God.³⁴

This structure serves as a literary device that guides readers toward a deeper understanding of the theological essence of eternal life. By analyzing the chiasmic symmetry between the questions and answers, this study confirms that the Eternal Life Narrative is not merely a collection of ethical teachings but is composed in a way that emphasizes a receptive response to God's grace and redemptive love.

This chiasmic structure functions not only to preserve the text's logical coherence but also to spotlight its central theological message. It helps readers focus on the core themes of the narrative while strengthening the theological unity and redemptive flow of the passage. Il-Ho Sung argues that "chiasmus, beyond a simple arrangement of words, can be flexibly employed to highlight the logical flow and thematic focus of a passage," demonstrating its power as a tool for conveying theological meaning.³⁵

The paragraph-by-paragraph chiasmic structure proposed in this study brings into clear focus the theological depth of Luke's narrative, enabling a more systematic understanding of God's redemptive

33 Birger Gerhardsson, *The Good Samaritan - the Good Shepherd* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1958), 14-22.

34 Young-Chool Oh, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan: An Intertextual Approach to Ezekiel 34:1," 326.

35 Il Ho Sung, "A Study of Rhetoric Technique of Chiasmus." *History and Society* 37 (2007): 5.

plan and the message of grace. Ultimately, this structure integrates inter-narrative connections and Old Testament intertextuality, functioning as a crucial literary tool that leads readers to a deeper comprehension of God's redemptive-historical purpose.

2. The Theological Message of Eternal Life Through Adjacent Narrative Contexts

In the sequential narrative of Luke 9:51–11:13, adjacent contexts serve not merely as narrative arrangements but as theological devices that shape the meaning of eternal life. Tannehill argues that the Gospel of Luke is not a simple compilation of individual events but a unified narrative with structural coherence. Powell supports this claim by identifying internal cohesion, the development of character roles, and a consistent narrative purpose as key features that contribute to the Gospel's overall unity.

Within this framework, adjacent narratives function as structural mechanisms to reveal that the essence of eternal life lies in God's grace and sovereign initiative. Luke intentionally arranges the narrative units so that readers come to understand that eternal life is not earned through human effort or moral achievement, but belongs entirely to the domain of divine grace.

For example, the rejection of Jesus' invitation by the Samaritan village (Luke 9:51–56) illustrates those unworthy of eternal life, whereas the sending of the seventy disciples (Luke 10:1–20) portrays the continuation of God's invitation through the mission entrusted to His messengers. These two scenes together convey the theological message of eternal life through the contrasting imagery of "invitation and rejection." The mission of the seventy, which proclaims that "the kingdom of God has come near," makes clear the redemptive invitation initiated by God.

The miracles witnessed by the seventy and their resulting joy culminate in Jesus' exhortation: "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). This declaration emphasizes that eternal life is not the result of successful ministry but is given as a gift of divine grace. The following narrative of divine revelation links the joy of being written in heaven with the blessedness of those who have received God's revelation, further reinforcing that eternal life originates not from human qualification, but from God's sovereign choice and gracious initiative.

Thus, the adjacent narrative contexts underscore that eternal life is not a reward for ethical performance or religious observance, but a redemptive gift—an invitation extended by God through His grace. Luke's narrative composition guides readers to this theological insight by structurally weaving together scenes of rejection, mission, revelation, and joy under the overarching theme of divine initiative in eternal life.

By first presenting the themes of 'heavenly inscription' and the divine origin of eternal life, Luke naturally invites the reader to ask, "Then how can one inherit eternal life?" In response to this anticipated question, Luke strategically places the lawyer's inquiry within the narrative, allowing readers to engage with the question vicariously. Through the figure of the lawyer, the reader assumes the role of one who asks the central question—"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"—and is thereby drawn into an encounter with God's redemptive invitation and the necessity of human

response.

The Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative unfolds around this central question. In light of the preceding sections, which emphasize that eternal life is a gift belonging to the divine realm, the question now becomes: how can humans receive what has been given by God? The Parable of the Good Samaritan implicitly answers this question by portraying the wounded man who receives life by accepting the compassion of the Samaritan. This narrative subtly affirms that eternal life is deeply connected to the human act of receiving divine mercy and grace.

In connection with this, Martha's act of welcoming Jesus in the Martha and Mary narrative recalls the scene in Luke where Zacchaeus invites Jesus into his home. This act symbolizes a posture of receiving God's grace, which is concretely illustrated in Mary's response as she sits at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. Mary's receptive attitude reflects that of a wounded person accepting the help of a Samaritan, conveying the theological message that eternal life is a gift of grace but at the same time demands human response and acceptance.

The subsequent Lord's Prayer narrative reinforces this theme by exhorting those who have received eternal life to seek God's name and kingdom and to ask for the Holy Spirit, thereby becoming worthy participants in eternal life. This progression demonstrates that eternal life is not merely a matter of ethical practice but a journey of receiving divine grace and living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, Luke uses the adjacent narrative contexts to emphasize that eternal life is a gift grounded in God's grace and sovereignty, while also affirming the responsibility of faith and response required of those who receive it. These narrative connections deepen the redemptive message, showing that eternal life is not merely an ethical practice or intellectual understanding, but a holistic journey of accepting God's redemptive invitation and compassion.

IV. Reframing the Interpretation of Eternal Life Through Paragraph Structure

1. A Comparison Between Traditional Ethical Interpretation and Redemptive-Historical Paragraph Analysis

Traditional interpretations of the Parable of the Good Samaritan have often understood it as an ethical lesson emphasizing the importance of "practicing love for one's neighbor." This approach aligns with Christian ethical readings that stress the harmony between faith and action. However, interpretations that remain disconnected from the surrounding narrative context risk overlooking the deeper essence of eternal life and the proper posture required to receive it.

In contrast, paragraph-based interpretation considers the literary structure and narrative flow of Luke 9:51–11:13 as a cohesive whole. Within this broader context, the Parable of the Good Samaritan is not merely a moral teaching but a vehicle for conveying a redemptive-historical message about eternal life. This approach makes it clear that the essence of eternal life transcends moral practice and is fundamentally grounded in God's redemptive invitation and grace.

The paragraphal reading does not treat the parable in isolation, but rather analyzes it within the narrative framework shaped by the lawyer's question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). By doing so, it illuminates the deeper theological elements that Jesus intended to emphasize regarding the nature of eternal life.

2. Theological Conclusion and the Contribution of paragraph-by-paragraph Interpretation

Eternal life is a gift from God, granted to humanity through divine grace and mercy. It is fundamentally of heavenly origin. In Ezekiel 34, God promises to heal the wounded sheep—a promise that is vividly fulfilled in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan represents Jesus Christ, and the man who fell among robbers symbolizes the human posture of receiving divine compassion. Thus, eternal life begins with the human response of accepting God's revelation and sovereignty, which is concretely expressed through listening to and obeying the Word.

Listening to the Word is not merely an intellectual affirmation but a way of life—a lived acknowledgment of God's love and redemptive grace, expressed through faithful response. This receptive posture is initiated and completed by God's grace and becomes increasingly manifest through the interaction with the believer's active response.

This study offers theological and academic contributions in the following three areas:

First, the study proposes a paragraph-by-paragraph chiasmic structure. Rather than offering only the abstract theological answer of "faith," it demonstrates that while eternal life originates in the heavenly realm, it becomes accessible through the concrete human response of listening to the Word. This clarifies the essential theological message of eternal life.

Second, the theological depth of eternal life is reinforced. By applying the paragraph-by-paragraph chiasmic approach, this study demonstrates the intertextual connection between the Parable of the Good Samaritan and Ezekiel 34, confirming that the parable plays a central role in conveying the essence of eternal life and its redemptive-historical significance. This reveals that paragraph-by-paragraph interpretation is not merely a literary analysis but a tool closely aligned with the theological focus of the text.

Third, the study presents a redemptive-historical reinterpretation of divine invitation. Eternal life is not the result of ethical merit or human striving, but a gracious calling extended by God Himself. This invitation requires human acceptance, which is expressed through listening to the Word and obedience within a relationship with God. Unlike traditional ethical or moralistic readings, this interpretation shows how divine grace and human response operate harmoniously within the framework of redemptive history.

Additionally, this study has demonstrated the theological coherence and interpretive validity of the chiasmic structure by analyzing the message of eternal life through paragraph-by-paragraph design. This approach is not merely a stylistic device but an academically grounded method for delivering theological meaning. It also introduces a new interpretive framework—one that uncovers the theological richness of biblical narrative while expanding the scholarly application of literary

methodologies.

In conclusion, by linking Ezekiel 34 and the Parable of the Good Samaritan through paragraph-by-paragraph analysis, this study deepens the theological understanding of divine redemption and human response. It shows how God's grace and mercy are concretely realized in the gift of eternal life and illustrates the harmonious relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility in theological interpretation.

V. Conclusion

This study has analyzed the sequential narrative of Luke 9:51–11:13 through the paragraph-by-paragraph chiasmic structure, clearly demonstrating that eternal life is a gift grounded in God's grace and redemptive love. Theologically, this analysis has revealed that the essence of eternal life is not rooted in moral action but originates from divine revelation and grace. Luke's Gospel does not restrict eternal life to an ethical exhortation but portrays it as a redemptive event unfolding within the framework of God's salvific plan.

The Lawyer's Eternal Life Narrative shows that eternal life is initiated by God's revelation and love, and is realized through the human act of reception. The Parable of the Good Samaritan, in particular, illustrates that Jesus, as the divine shepherd, first extends His redemptive compassion to the wounded man. Eternal life does not result from human achievement, but begins in the posture of receiving divine mercy. By employing a paragraph-level chiasmic structure, this study clarifies that eternal life is a gift granted under God's sovereign authority. Moreover, through the concept of inter-narrative structure, this work has illuminated how the Eternal Life Narrative is connected to the redemptive and atoning work of Christ.

The study also expanded the theological depth of the redemptive message by linking the Parable of the Good Samaritan with Ezekiel 34 through intertextuality. In doing so, it affirmed that the parable is not merely a moral teaching, but a redemptive invitation tied to the mission of Jesus as the divine shepherd.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes that eternal life is not merely a future assurance, but a present reality. The phrase "your names are written in heaven" does not refer solely to future glory, but finds its meaning in the transformed life of obedience to God's Word in the present. The Martha and Mary narrative symbolizes this starting point of eternal life, and Mary's act of anointing Jesus' feet in John 12 can be seen as the practical outworking of a life that attentively listens to the Word. This affirms that eternal life is not a moralistic principle but a redemptive event.

Luke also emphasizes the communal dimension of eternal life. The Kingdom of God is not limited to individual salvation but is realized within and through a transformed community. The ongoing transformation through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit reflects the journey of maturing as the people of God, underscoring that God's redemptive love must extend beyond the individual to the community and the world.

In conclusion, by integrating the contextual structure of Luke and its redemptive message, this

study has sought to move beyond the limitations of traditional parable interpretation. It has provided a deeper theological understanding of eternal life and proposed a renewed interpretive direction—one that views the Parable of the Good Samaritan not merely as a moral lesson, but as a profound theological invitation grounded in God's redemptive love and the promise of eternal life.

Bibliography

- Alexander, Loveday. *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Bailey, Kenneth E. *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Luke 1:1–9:50. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994. ePub edition.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Luke 9:51–24:53. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996. ePub edition.
- Bovon, François. *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:21*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
- Buckwalter, H. Douglas. "The Hike of Hikes—Luke's Travel Narrative (Luke 9:51–19:27)." *European Journal of Theology* 33, no. 2 (2015): 68–81.
- Busse, Ulrich. "A Study of Luke 10 in Context." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 61, no. 1&2 (2005): 81–91.
- Choi, YoungSook. "Martha und Maria, die die Trennungswand des Raums überqueren – Neuinterpretation von Lukas 10:38–42." *The New Testament Society of Korea* 29, no. 4 (2022): 438–464.
- Danker, Frederick W. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Gerhardsson, Birger. *The Good Samaritan – the Good Shepherd*. Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1958.
- Green, Joel B. *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Howe, Bonnie. *Because You Bear This Name: Conceptual Metaphor and the Moral Meaning of 1 Peter*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Parables of Jesus*. Translated by S. H. Hooke. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972.
- Kang, Daehun. *Matthew Commentary, Vol. 1*. Seoul: Revival and Reformation Press, 2019.
- Kim, Seong Hee. "The Power of Jesus' Compassion: Through 'σπλαγχνίζομαι' in Mark." *The New Testament Society of Korea* 20, no. 3 (2013): 685–720.
- Lee, Dal. "Rejoice That Your Names Are Written in Heaven." *The Biblical Studies for Preachers* 10, no. 8 (2004): 44–60.
- Oh, Young-Chool. "The Parable of the Good Samaritan: An Intertextual Approach to Ezekiel 34." *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 41 (2024): 299–331.
- _____. "A Literary Approach to the Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke." *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 39 (2024): 181–212.
- _____. "A Study on the Parable of the Good Samaritan: Using a Narrative Scene Analysis Method." PhD diss., Korea The Reformed Graduate University, 2023.
- Palmer, Kent D. *Intratextuality: Exploring the Unconscious of the Text*. Independent research paper, 2002.
- Park, Roh-Sik. "A Narrative Reading of Luke 10:25–37." *The New Testament Society of Korea* 30, no. 2 (2023): 213–245.

- Powell, Mark Allan. *What Are They Saying About Luke?* Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1990.
- Pratt, Richard L. *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives*. Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1990.
- Reimer, Ivana. "Recontextualizing Luke's Good Samaritan: Moral Philosophy and Parabolic Narrative." *European Journal of Theology* 33, no. 2 (2015): 68–81.
- Ryan, Maurice. "Revisiting the Parable of the Good Samaritan." *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 16, no. 1 (2021): 1–15.
- Snodgrass, Klyne. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Sung, Il Ho. "A Study of Rhetoric Technique of Chiasmus." *History and Society* 37 (2007): 1–29.
- Talbert, Charles H. *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.
- Van der Wat, Jan G. "Jy moet jou naaste asook jou vyand liefhê: Liefde in Lukas 6:27–38 en 10:25–37." *In die Skriflig* 55, no. 1 (2021): 1–8.
- Yang, Jayhoon. "Bible Translation and a Contextual Reading of the Text: A Case Study with the Parable of the Prodigal Sons." *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 39 (2016): 183–202.