CHAPTER ELEVEN

PRESENT AND FUTURE ESCHATOLOGY IN LUKE

Professor W. G. Kümmel’s *Promise and Fulfilment* marked a permanent advance in the understanding of the eschatological teaching of Jesus.\(^1\) Going beyond the ‘realized’ eschatology of C. H. Dodd\(^2\) and the ‘futurist’ eschatology of J. Weiss and A. Schweitzer, Kümmel demonstrated that for Jesus the kingdom of God was both a present reality and an imminent future expectation. The present chapter examines several texts in Luke in which the present and future manifestations of the kingdom are set in juxtaposition. It is hoped that this will illuminate the Evangelist’s understanding of an important theme as it is related to other Gospel traditions and to the proclamation of Jesus.

The pairing of present and future perspectives observable in Luke is itself noteworthy. A few times it represents Markan or Q traditions. Often it is a tradition peculiar to the third Gospel or is the result of Lukan alterations of the material. The latter is evident especially in the structure of certain Lukan episodes.

**LUKE 3:16–17**

In the account of the ministry of the Baptist, Lk 3:16f. has the following:

(16) John answered them all ‘I baptize you (ὑμᾶς) with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you (ὑμᾶς) with the Holy Spirit

---


\(^2\) Since *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London 1936, 84–87) Professor Dodd himself has gone beyond ‘realized eschatology.’ In *The Second Coming of Christ* (Cambridge 1951, 17), for example, he recognizes an expectation of a final consummation in Jesus’ teaching. However, since it is ‘beyond history,’ it is doubtful that Dodd allows for a ‘future’ eschatology any more than before. Cf. G. Lundström, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, Richmond 1963, 250.
and with fire. (17) His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Lk 3:16 appears with some differences of order and wording in Mk 1:7–8. But it is clear that Luke depends most upon a Q tradition that includes 3:17 (cf. Mt 3:11–12). The eschatological perspective of the saying depends in some measure on the interpretation given to the phrase, ἐν πνεύματι ἐγήκο καὶ πυρὶ. It is generally agreed that in the Synoptic tradition it and the shorter Markan phrase, πνεύματι ἐγήκο, refer to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus. Luke elsewhere ascribes to Jesus a prophecy similar to the Markan form of the saying.3

Since the Evangelists provide the only available context for the Baptist’s teaching, their interpretation would appear to give the best clue to his intention. That is, the Baptist expected the mightier one, the Messiah, to give his followers (ὑμᾶς) a redemptive ‘spirit baptism’ as a sequel to his own ‘baptism of repentance’ (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3). However, following Wellhausen, most commentators take the original reference to be the fire4 or wind and fire (πνεύματι καὶ πυρὶ)5 of destructive judgment. Supporting this interpretation is the fact that in the Old Testament fire is a frequent symbol of such judgment and is used in this way in the present context.6 Also, in the New Testament description of Jesus’ death we find baptism as a symbol of annihilation (Vernichtung).7 Furthermore, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, promised in the messianic age, was not viewed as a specific act of Messiah.8

7 Bultmann (note 4).
8 Taylor (note 4). This objection carries weight only on the supposition that John could say nothing new; for this teaching is presented as at the core of the Baptist’s message. One cannot rule out the possibility, moreover, that for the Qumran sect