

**THE USE AND MEANING OF DEI
IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE**

**A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, OGBOMOSO**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE MASTER OF THEOLOGY DEGREE**

BY

CHIKA DIOKPALA OSSAI

JUNE, 2000

ABSTRACT

The basic idea underlying this study is the fact that God is in control and active in history. Thus events in history are under the directive of a divine hand whose goal is the salvation of humanity. Hence, the church needs to respond to her missiological task even in history.

The thesis defines and explains the term dei as an impersonal verb used in an imperatival sense by Luke, as a divine decree, to which humankind has a moral responsibility of response. This running strand of usage is overwhelming as Luke uses dei as an exegetical meaning for events in history.

Chapter two discuss dei from a survey of various scholarly works on Luke which cut across cultural, linguistic and theological lines. Chapter three deals with the use of dei in Luke which is divided into two sections. One, dei as imperative of divine decree, and two dei as imperative of moral responsibility.

Chapter four, focuses on the exegetical meaning of dei. This is considered in two parts namely: the location of dei in hoti clauses, and the location of dei in contexts of scripture or implied prophesy. Chapter five discusses the literary, theological, christological, and missiological implications of dei for Luke.

Chapter six draws a conclusion that dei in the third Gospel is a Lukan medium of relating events that have divine backing in history. It is the responsibility of the audience to respond to that which is revealed in history.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study carried out in this work, this writer concludes that Luke followed the literary pattern of his day.¹ This is especially brought to the fore by the Hellenistic styled prologue² (Luke 1:1 – 4) coupled with the use and meaning of dei as is discernable from the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon and Sophocles. Against this background Luke should be understood as theological history. He does not just “recount history,” but he patterns his narrative with a contemporary message of God for his contemporary audience. Luke’s history is history guided by divine hand.

A. SUMMARY

In line with the above, dei in the Gospel of Luke is used as an imperative of divine decree (2:49, 9:22, 13:33, 21:9, 22:7, 22:37, 24:7, 24:26, 24:44) which incorporates the Septuagint usage of that which must come to pass (Dan 2:28, 9, 45). Similarly, the Septuagint usage of dei (Lev. 5:17) equally reveals that it is an imperative of moral responsibility (4:43, 11:42, 13:14, 13:16, 15:32, 18:1 19:5). When Luke uses it in these two contexts, Luke demonstrates an exegetical formulaic motif. This is because, Luke tends to justify through the use and citation of Scripture that such events (cf. suffering, death and resurrection) in the life of Jesus were not accidental occurrences but part of a divine plan. Luke pushes dei outside the context of fate as used by Greek writers to a context of

¹ I. H. Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970), p. 109ff and David P. Moessner, “Re-Reading Talbert’s Luke: The ‘Bios’ of Balance, or the ‘Bias’ of History,” Cadbury, Knox, And Talbert. American Contributions to the study of Acts, M. C. Parsons & J. B. Tyson eds, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) pp. 203 – 223.

² L. Hurtado, “Gospel Genre, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel, p. 281.

divine fulfillment. The use of such verbs as boulē, plēroō and thelēma tends to suggest that God initiated these events. It is significantly recognizable as Jesus appears to be irrevocably committed to the necessity of the divine plan as revealed in dei (2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 21:9; 19:5; 22:4; 37; 24:7; 26, 44). The reference to Scripture (22:37; 24:44) in some of the dei contexts of divine imperative and use of the phrase "these things" (11:42, 21:9; 22:37 (touto) 24:26; 24:44) seem to justify the exegetical meaning of dei in Luke. Dei fits into Luke's theological history as a key to understanding the locus of the events in the life of Jesus. Dei helps to bring to birth the theology of divine hand that definitely guides history. This would give the needed certainty and assurance of faith that Luke sets out to achieve in his prologue (Luke 1:4).

Dei therefore cannot be separate from the theology of Luke enunciated from the prologue (Luke 1:1-1) to the climax of the narrative with the ascension of Jesus (Luke 24:50-53). Dei becomes the midwife of understanding the mission and passion of Jesus. Luke strikes this point when in 24:44 Jesus said to the two disciples on Emmaeus road: "these are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that every thing written about me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and psalms must be fulfilled"³

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Since dei suggests a dual imperative of divine activity and human response to that imperative, believers must be committed to the divine imperative in life and activities. The idea that God is consistently committed to the actualization of His plan must be all embracing in the mission of each believer. For Jesus it is

³ 24:44 (RSV)

necessary to be in the business of the Father (2:49). That confession seems to have been the driving force in Jesus' life and ministry (4:43; 9:22; 13:16; 13:33; 19:5; 22:37; 24:7; 26:44). Dei suggests that Jesus' life was marked by obedience to the divine will. This must be the attitude of all who are committed in their faith to Jesus as Saviour to:

1. Seek to obey the divine imperative revealed in Scripture and,
2. Seek to both win the lost and undergird the faith of those won to Christ

from sin. While these tasks are great, dei suggests that God's divine hand is the absolute help and guide in achieving the aforesaid. It will be necessary at this point, to make some suggestions for further studies.

C. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Scholars have not paid much attention to the use and meaning of dei in the Third Gospel. This should be reversed because of its use eighteen times, and more than the other Gospels. Moreover, there appears to be no other word so attached to the missiological context of Jesus' work like dei in Luke.

Since Luke uses dei more than the other Gospel evangelists, it will be worthy to investigate the way it is used and the meaning attached to it by Mark and Matthew. This is crucial since the word dei is foundational to an understanding of the missiological task of Luke.