

# Luke-Acts and the Holy Spirit

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In a previous paper I have explored the centrality of the phrase “make disciples” in the Great Commission as given by Matthew. The understanding of the Great Commission was greatly enhanced by linking both the commission and its major terms with the narratives and discourses which preceded it. “The theme of discipleship is central to Matthew’s gospel and to Matthew’s understanding of the church and mission” (Bosch 1991:73).

More than any other text in the Bible, Matthew’s ‘Great Commission’ has been used by the Protestant missionary movement to inspire and shape its outreach to people across the globe. This important text has often been lifted out of its context and has been subject to either limited or wrong understandings.

Although there is no consensus by scholars regarding the exact nature of the structure of Matthew, it is clear that both the narrative and discourse material are carefully constructed and linked together both by a number of structures and common themes. These themes are developed throughout the gospel and are encountered one final time in the giving of the Great Commission.

The theme of Christ’s authority and Lordship is central to the gospel and the final commission. The right of Jesus to rule is both attested and contested in Matthew. The same questions raised by the religious leaders of the Jews will no doubt be raised by the leaders of the nations as well. As such, Matthew has provided the missionary disciples a wonderful compendium of material on how Jesus handled questions of His authority.

Disciples are to be made through responding to the call to be baptized and then follow the teachings of Jesus. Again, Matthew has given a wealth of didactic material which the disciples can use as they go forth in obedience to the Great Commission. The calls to follow Jesus in commitment are both frequent and diverse.

Over twenty-five percent of Matthew is filled with rich discourse, with the Sermon on the Mount being the largest single unit of Christ's teachings in the four gospels. Along with the narratives that surround the discourses, the disciples have a large storehouse from which to bring forth things new and old. Lastly, the promise of Christ's presence continues to echo until the gospel is preached as a witness to all the nations.

From the above brief summation and conclusions it is evident that Matthew's book can be seen as a manual on discipleship. Although it might not be possible to conclude that Matthew wrote or that the apostles used the book for this purpose, it is clear that there is abundant justification to do so.

This paper seeks to buttress both the biblical and theological foundation of making disciples by studying the seminal importance of the Holy Spirit and discipleship as portrayed in Luke-Acts. In this regard: "Luke 4:16-21 has, for all practical purposes, replaced Matthew's 'Great Commission' as the key text not only for understanding Christ's own mission but also that of the church" (Bosch 1991:84). As such, Luke 4:16-21 is seen as "being of programmatic significance" (Marshall 1971:91). The same Spirit which rests upon the Messiah will soon be promised and given in abundance to the waiting and praying community of disciples at Pentecost.

Luke's pneumatology was one of the first aspects of his theology that came to be studied for itself. More than any other New Testament author Luke speaks of the Spirit of God and it is commonly observed that the Spirit is the connecting thread which runs through both parts' of his work, as well as the unifying force throughout Luke's narrative (Verheyden 1999:41).

The church has not always taken such an interest in Luke-Acts. "In the opening words of his first Homily on the Acts of the Apostles, St. John Chrysostom complains that, 'This book and its author are so little known that many people are not even aware there is such a book in existence'" (Hardon 1954:303). This can hardly be said at the present time. At the beginning of two full pages of footnotes which lists some of the current books and doctoral dissertations about Luke and Acts J. Verheyden states "It has been said and repeated many times: the flood of publications on Lk and Acts is overwhelming" (1999:8).

While it is not the purpose of this paper to survey the field of scholarship in Luke-Acts the following focused themes will be dealt with. The first chapter deals with some of the challenges of linking Matthew with Luke and how the birth narratives show both common and

contrasting elements. Chapter two explores the historical and theological unity of Luke-Acts with special attention paid to the parallelisms of Luke 1-2 with Acts 1-2.

In the third chapter the programmatic significance of Luke 4:16-21 is explored with special attention given to the Spirit and the Old Testament antitypes. Chapter four gives a brief overview on Luke's concept of discipleship. The fifth chapter deals with the important hinge verse of Acts 1:8 while chapter six gives special attention to Acts 2 and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

## CHAPTER 1

### CONNECTING MATTHEW WITH LUKE-ACTS

In building a biblical theology of discipleship based on the first and third gospels, one of the first issues to be resolved is to study their compatibility with one another. In general terms, the “synoptic problem” both recognizes and tries to understand the similarities and differences between Matthew, Mark and Luke. The past resolution of these apparent difficulties by redaction/source criticism<sup>1</sup> are currently being challenged by the literary/narrative school of interpretation.<sup>2</sup> This first section deals with some of the hermeneutical issues surrounding the possible linking of Matthew with Luke-Acts.

#### Can Matthew and Luke-Acts be Connected?

In his book *Luke: Interpreter of Paul, Critic of Matthew*, Eric Franklin posits that Luke may have been written in response to the publication of Matthew (1994:314,381). According to Franklin "Mark is his primary source: Matthew is a well-used source, but it is a much less influential one; it is, in reality, a much less respected one" (1994:315). Franklin discusses the distinct possibility that Luke's introductory remarks to provide a more “orderly account” was directed towards his disagreement with Matthew (1994:170-173).

According to Franklin, the heart of these disagreements between Matthew and Luke centered on the law and eschatology (1994:166-173). On these subjects Luke is seen as much more influenced by Paul who was more critical of the Judaizing influences than Matthew was within the early church.

One possible explanation of why Matthew differed from Luke in the handling of the Law and other issues was that they were writing to different audiences. Franklin himself brings up

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<sup>1</sup> In source criticism of the synoptic gospels, Mark is seen as the first written and based on the original, common source “Q.” The other gospel writers then borrowed and modified from Mark and “Q.” This school of interpretation is more concerned with the historical part than the literary whole.

<sup>2</sup> In literary criticism, the interpretation is less concerned about the source of the material than with the wholistic text as it is presented to us. It is more concerned with the literary whole than the sources for the parts.

this possibility but dismisses it by saying:

Orchard and Goulder both believe that Luke's differences from Matthew are caused by the fact that he was writing for Gentile Christians whereas Matthew was concerned with a more Jewish-Christian community. Such a view, however, is not easily upheld. . . . there was unlikely to have been a very great difference—if any at all—in the ethnic situations of the two communities linked, albeit in different ways, to them. Both were mixed (1994:311).<sup>3</sup>

Bosch would disagree with Franklin on his understanding of the *sitz im leben* of the New Testament authors. Instead of writing to the same audience, Matthew and Luke are thought to address the group from which they came from and who they were best acquainted with. In this regard Matthew "was probably a Jewish Christian writing for a predominantly Jewish Christian community" whereas Luke "was perhaps the only Gentile author of a New Testament book and wrote for Christians who were predominantly of Gentile origin" (1991:84-85).

Bosch goes on to say that Matthew's purpose for writing to the mostly Jewish Christian community was both pastoral and missionary. The church was first of all facing a crisis of identity from physical persecution by Roman rule and theological attacks from the Pharisees. Matthew uses the historical replaying and fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures in the genealogy, birth and life of Jesus in order to counteract the claims made by the Pharisees that their Lord was not the Messiah and their community was not the church.

In addition to addressing pastoral concerns, Matthew's gospel was written to explain the incorporation of Gentile Christians into the body of believers and to embolden the Jewish Christians to see the "opportunities for witness and service around them" (Bosch 1991:59).

Whereas Bosch thinks Matthew's wrote to "a predominantly (perhaps even exclusively) Jewish Christian community" (1991:85), Raymond Brown sees Matthew's church as being more mixed and facing the challenges of an increasing number of Gentile believers. "In this situation of a mixed community with dominance now shifting over to the Gentile side, Matthew is concerned to show that Jesus has always had meaning for both Jew and Gentile" (1993:47).

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<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in his book, Franklin sounds a little less dogmatic that Matthew and Luke wrote for the same audience: "It ends with a possibility, no more indeed than a probable possibility, by suggesting that Luke's work could have been written out of, or at least to, the same church from and for which Matthew wrote" (Franklin 1994:38).

While Bosch and Brown might disagree on the exact make-up of Matthew's community, they both agree that Luke was writing to a different constituency. Whereas Matthew was primarily addressing a Jewish constituency, Luke was probably writing to a second generation Gentile church (Brown 1993:235) which needed to be assured of both its Jewish roots and the continuing presence of Jesus through the Spirit in mission (Bosch 1991:86). The different audiences become clearer when common subjects within the two gospels are compared and contrasted in how both gospels begin and end.

### **Comparing the Beginning and Ending of Matthew and Luke**

Matthew and Luke both begin their gospels with the story of the birth of Jesus, his growing up and genealogy. Both are unique to these gospels and do not appear in Mark and John.<sup>4</sup> In commenting on the opening page of the New Testament Brown states that for most people the genealogy is:

'an arid page in the Holy Book.' As Hemplemann points out, aesthetically the genealogy strikes people as monotonous and pointless; morally it troubles preachers by listing ancestors for Jesus who were dishonest, brutal or immoral; and philosophically, as an opening page of the NT, it does not offer much by way of helpful or salvific message" (1993:596).

Despite the initial reaction most readers have to the opening phrases of the New Testament, a deeper look into the construction and purpose of the genealogy is richly repaid. Matthew begins his gospel and the New Testament with the words: "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1). Bauer has argued that the opening verse of the book of Matthew is a superscription to the first major division of the book (1:1-4:16) and it "introduces the family registry" (1996:139) which follows.

As such, the "biblos geneleos" of Matt. 1:1 can be translated either as "the book of origin" or "the book of genealogy." Hence the book of Genesis is alluded to by the opening

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<sup>4</sup>This places these accounts somewhat outside of the usual source criticism of the synoptics which makes most of the gospel writings dependent upon Mark and "Q." It also helps to highlight the themes of these two books directly without the influence of a Markan perspective.

A much more thorough attempt to distance both Matthew and Luke from dependence upon Mark and "Q" is presented in the book *Beyond the Q Impasse—Luke's Use of Matthew* by a team of scholars. In this very detailed analysis, convincing proof is set forth that "Luke was thoroughly conversant with canonical Matthew and made it the basis of his gospel" (1996:319). Perhaps Matthew's position as the first synoptic gospel will not only be recognized by its place in the New Testament canon but in the minds of modern critical scholars as well.

words of the New Testament and “requires the reader to enter the world of Matthew’s Gospel by way of the history of Israel, which began with Abraham” (Bauer 1996:157).

Within this record of Israel’s history there are liars (Abraham, Jacob); an adulterer and murderer (David); kings who sacrificed their sons in fire (Ahaz, Manasseh) and three of the four Gentile women are of questionable repute (Tamar, Uriah’s wife and Rahab). The listing of the genealogy is salvific because “the task of Jesus’ mission is announced in the first pericope after the genealogy: ‘It is he who will save his people from their sins’” (1:21) (Harvey 1998:126).<sup>5</sup>

In Matthew’s gospel Jesus is not only portrayed as the Messiah who will save His people from their sins but will redeem the pain of their past history by treading the same historical and theological path the children of Israel trod on their way to the promised land.

Viewed in this light, the genealogy in Matthew would have a very practical pastoral and missionary implications for the Jewish believers in the community. The tracing of Jesus’ heritage back to David and Abraham would legitimize His standing within the Jewish community. It also puts to rest those questions concerning the authority of Jesus which are brought up repeatedly in the gospel (Mt. 9:1-8; 21:23) and forever settled in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18).

Furthermore, the listing of both Jewish and Gentile sinners, dramatically illustrates the universal salvation brought to view through the naming of Jesus at the beginning of the gospel and the command to make disciples of all nations at the end. Thus from the outset, Matthew uses the genealogy to address the concerns of the Jewish believers who were being unsettled by the unbelieving Jews on the one hand and the influx of the Gentile Christians on the other.

Whereas Matthew places his genealogy at the very beginning of his gospel, Luke places it after the baptism of Jesus in apparent affirmation of the heavenly anointing of the Spirit and the divine benediction of His sonship from the Father (Luke 3:22).<sup>6</sup>

Besides the obvious difference in the position of the two genealogies, the most striking contrast between them is their ordering and extent. Whereas Matthew begins with Abraham and

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<sup>5</sup> When Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees at Matthew’s house why he ate with the tax collectors and sinners, He told them that He had “not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (9:13). The genealogy not only identifies sinners as “His people” but, by listing the Gentile women, plants the seed which will blossom to the Great Commission’s command to go and make disciples of all the nations.

<sup>6</sup> As will be discussed in the next chapter, Luke perhaps does not begin with the genealogy because his primary interest is not to establish the authority of Jesus within Judaism but to provide an historical continuity between the Spirit-inaugurated events of the birth of Christ (Luke 1-2) and the birth of His church (Acts 1-2).



ends with Jesus who is the son of Joseph, Luke begins with Joseph and ends with Jesus as “the son of Adam, the son of God” (Lk. 3:38). In dealing with these strong differences, Brown comments that

"it is possible to have conflicting genealogies of the same person if those genealogies have different functions. Only one or neither of them may be historical in terms of traceable biological lineage, but both of them may be accurate in terms of the function they serve, e.g., Matthew's intention to show that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah, and Luke's intention to show that Jesus is the Son of God" (1993:85).

Through distinct means Matthew and Luke accomplish different ends. Matthew appeals to his Jewish readers by grounding Christ's heredity in Abraham and his Gentile readers by including non-Jews in the genealogy. Luke appeals to the Gentiles by tracing Jesus back beyond Abraham to Adam and his Jewish readers by essentially affirming Matthew's genealogy back to Abraham.

Brown would also posit that the genealogies are different because their communities were substantively different (contra Franklin): "If Luke traces Jesus to Adam, that may reflect the fact that his is a Gospel written for the Gentiles of the Pauline churches. In a mixed community, Matthew could appeal to Gentile Christian interest by tracing Jesus to Abraham" (1993:90). It is further set forth by Brown that the Gentile Christians would have no trouble understanding the placing, omission of names and the counting of the generations because there have been found "classical parallels to almost every aspect of the Matthean genealogy" (1993:589-590).

So far this section has stressed how the genealogies have furthered the particular message Matthew and Luke wanted to share. This message was shaped by an apparent difference in the communities they addressed. The distinct messages sent to differing communities is further illustrated in the infancy narratives.

Franklin proposes that "Luke's infancy narratives can be seen as a determined response to the stories he found in Matthew" (1994:364). Franklin interprets Matthew's story of the Magi to reflect his hostility towards the Jews who are pictured as not being aware of the Messiah's birth. Luke, in reacting to this story, replaces it with the visit of the shepherds which affirms the faith of Israel. On this and other points, Franklin states that "it seems likely that Luke's position was such as to understand the significance of the Matthean stories and consciously to reject it" (1994:374).

In answer to Franklin's arguments concerning the non-compatibility between the New Testament infancy narratives it should be first noted that there are eleven major points which are shared by the two accounts which include: Joseph is of Davidic descent (Matt 1:16,20; Luke 1:27,32; 2:4); conception through the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18,20; Luke 1:35); the child is to be named Jesus (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:31) and the birth takes place in Bethlehem (Matt 2:1; Luke 2:4-6) (Brown 1993:34-35).

Despite the similarities, the two accounts are quite different. Only Luke depicts the story of Zechariah, Elizabeth and the birth of John the Baptist. Luke also tells us about the census which brings Joseph to Bethlehem, the visit of the shepherds, the presentation of Jesus as the Temple and the visit of Jesus with his parents to the Temple at the age of twelve. On the other hand, Matthew concentrates on a different set of circumstances of which Luke makes no mention: the star, the magi, Herod's plot against Jesus, the massacre and the flight and return from Egypt.

The attempt to harmonize these apparent differences into one story has often met with less than success. "Commentators of times past have harmonized these different details into a consecutive narrative, so that the ordinary Christian is often not even aware of a difficulty when Lucan shepherds and Matthean magi fraternize in the Christmas scene" (Brown 1993:35).<sup>7</sup>

In Matthew's gospel the theological motifs of the first two chapters "anticipate the theology of the rest of the Gospel" (Brown 1993:585). Among these are the presence of God, (1:23;18:20;28:20); the universal appeal, rule of the Messiah (2:1-12;8:11;28:19); the Davidic and Son of God Christology, (1:1;3:17;14:33); and continuity with the Old Testament, (1:23;2:6;4:13-16).

Conzelmann virtually ignored the contribution of the Lukan infancy narratives to the rest of the gospel and Acts because it did not fit into his account of the threefold salvation history of Israel (3:1-4:13); Jesus (4:13-22:3) and the church (22:3 through Acts). However, Brown maintains that just as Acts 1-2 provides a smooth transition between the Jesus-led disciples to the Spirit-led Church, Luke 1-2 supplies a much needed segue from the story of Israel to the story of Jesus.

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<sup>7</sup> Although Brown raises some questions about the historical and miraculous details of the accounts (1993:36) he nevertheless sees "value" in the recovery "of the infancy stories as theology" (1993:37). This is the foundation of Brown's seven-hundred and fifty-two page book on the birth of the Messiah: "The infancy narratives do make sense as part of their respective Gospels will be the leitmotif of this commentary" (1993:38).

There appear, almost from the pages of the OT, characters like Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, who are the final representatives of the piety of Israel, while Mary recites a hymn that vocalizes the aspirations of the remnant . . . .The voices of these figures form a chorus to hail the new era marked by the advent of JBap and of Jesus (1993:242).

In the same way, Acts 1-2 stresses the continuity between the group of disciples which Jesus founded and the community of believers which the Spirit would lead in order to accomplish the mission of the church. Stronstad would agree with Brown by saying that "in the structure of Luke-Acts, the Pentecost narrative stands in the same relationship to Acts as the infancy-inauguration narratives do to the Gospel" (1984:49). Brown goes beyond Stronstad in emphasizing the overt parallelism between the opening of Luke and Acts, especially in the activity of the prophetic spirit.

The outpouring of the prophetic spirit which moves people to act and speak (Luke 1:15,41,67,80; 2:25-27) is not well attested in the ministry but resembles very closely the pentecostal and post-pentecostal outpouring of the prophetic spirit in Acts 2:17: 'I shall pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy' (1993:243).

This illustrates perhaps the greatest difference between how the infancy narratives are handled in Matthew and Luke-Acts. In Matthew the opening stories are lined up serially, one right after the other, in order to illustrate that Jesus is the New Moses and the fulfillment of Israel's history surrounding the Exodus. In Luke 1-2 the opening stories are paralleled with the events of Acts 1-2 in order to accomplish Luke's purpose of showing the continuity between the Old Testament's era's manifestation of the Spirit in Israel and the New Testament's manifestation of the Spirit in the Church.

As such the birth narratives, (contra Franklin), can be seen as complimentary and not competing claims based on the different communities they were writing to and their overall theological purpose. By extension, it might also be posited that since the birth narratives in both gospels anticipate the subject matter and theology which follow, the rest of the gospels might be complimentary as well. David Bosch sees such a harmony in the two missionary commissions of Matthew and Luke.

Bosch reports that Luke's commission found in 4:16-21 which stresses compassion for the poor has, "for all practical purposes, replaced Matthew's 'Great Commission' as the key text

not only for understanding Christ's own mission but also that of the church . . . especially in conciliar and liberation theology circles" (1991:84).

However, despite the fact that "Luke's understanding of mission differed in significant respects from that of Matthew . . . and Paul . . . the three portrayals are, at most, subparadigms of one coherent early Christian paradigm of mission" (1991:84). The following table summarizes and compares the complimentary themes which have been discussed in this section.

**TABLE 1**  
**COMPARING MATTHEW AND LUKE**

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Luke</b>
Genealogy	Traces Jesus back to David and Abraham to show that the Messiah was truly rooted in Judaism.  Includes four Gentile women in the genealogy. Shows the gospel is to be more inclusive than the traditional Jewish culture.	Traces Jesus back to Adam to show that the Messiah came from a common, worldwide humanity.  Follows for the most part Matthew's genealogy from Abraham to affirm the Judaic heritage of Christianity.
Birth Narratives	Introduces the major theological themes of Matthew and presents Jesus as the New Moses.	Links together the Old Testament prophetic ministry with the New Testament ministry of the Spirit.
Commissioning	Jesus gives the commissioning from Galilee to provide the Jews with an outward look to the Gentiles.	Jesus gives the commissioning from Jerusalem to provide the Gentiles with a deeper tie with the Jews.
Mission	Must intentionally cross the boundary of culture to reach the nations.	Must intentionally cross the boundary of self-centeredness to reach others with compassion.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONNECTING LUKE WITH ACTS**

This section initially addresses how redaction criticism has influenced a shift in the study of Luke-Acts from the historical to the theological. It will be argued that a synthesis between the two must be present in order to nurture a Biblical faith. The second part of the chapter looks at the unity of Luke-Acts by citing important theological and historical parallels between the two books.

#### **History and Theology**

In his major commentary *The Acts of the Apostles*, Joseph Fitzmyer states that "the major problem that confronts any interpreter of the Acts of the Apostles today is the historicity of the Lucan account" (1998:124). Despite the claims by Luke to Theophilus that he has attempted to "carefully investigate" and "write an orderly account," scholars such as Conzelmann (1960), Dibelius and Haenchen have been skeptical of Luke's historicity.

The influence of the source-critical school "brought about a major shift in emphasis in Lukan studies. Lk-Acts now came to be regarded and appreciated primarily as the work of a theologian" (Verheyden 1999:22). In this view advanced by Conzelmann and others, Luke is primarily concerned with the meaning of history and not just the recording of incidents which may or may not have occurred.

Countering this questioning of the historical value of Luke-Acts are sounded in the works of Bruce (1985), Gasque (1975, 1989), Hengel (1979) and Marshall (1971). Fitzmyer himself espouses "a middle ground between the skeptical approach and the conservative reaction to it" (1998:124). In seeking this middle ground Fitzmyer cites a number of arguments which attempts to qualify the historicity of Luke-Acts. Among these qualifications are the conjectures that Luke has not written according to the canons of modern history, nor

has he been solely dependent on historical details to shape his stories. On the positive side, details of Luke's accounts are confirmed elsewhere in the New Testament (2Cor 11:2; Rom 15:22-25) as well as in the writings of Josephus (1998:126).

Perhaps Fitzmyer's strongest qualification against the historicity of Acts centers on Luke's recounting of miracles and heavenly interventions. These are seen by Fitzmyer as "the most problematic narratives in Acts" because they ultimately involve a "philosophical judgment" of whether God supernaturally intervenes in human history (1998:125). He affirms that Luke apparently felt that the miraculous was a possibility because he included the incidents in his account. However . . .

the fact that Acts forms part of the inspired New Testament does not make the Lukan account, narrated in the past tense, necessarily historical. Neither church teaching nor theologians have ever maintained that the necessary formal effect of inspiration is historicity (1998:126).

Although the conservative school noted above would agree that inspiration in itself does not guarantee historicity, neither is it excluded. Marshall would affirm that the New Testament sets forth a strong relationship between faith and historicity.

"Our point is that the events which faith interprets as divine acts must be real, historical events, or otherwise they cannot be interpreted at all. The facts may be tested historically, but the ultimate decisions are matters of faith" It is faith which sees the resurrection as an act of God; it is faith which goes on to confess 'Jesus is Lord.' But, 'if Christ has not been raised . . . faith is in vain.'" (1971:52).

Although there is a continuing debate over the historicity of the Lukan accounts, there is no debate over the value of the theological contribution of Luke-Acts to our understanding of the New Testament. In fact, one of the benefits of the historical-critical study of Luke-Acts was to lead scholars to study the wonderful richness of the underlying theology. "Conzelmann and Haenchen asked for the theological significance of Luke's work as a whole, while downplaying the relevance of Acts as an historical account" (Verheyden 1999:25).

Others would agree that Acts is "much more" than the early history of the Christian Church (Fitzmyer 1998:47) and that it is "the highly innovating work of a theologian interpreting the Christian message for the situation of the Church of his time" (Verheyden 1999:25). Jervell calls Luke "the theologian of Scripture par excellence" (1984:122). Stronstad in his discussion of

the Holy Spirit in Acts states that Luke must not always be interpreted by Paul but "is a theologian in his own right and must be treated as such" (1984:11).

Bosch would join the chorus of voices by saying that "Luke was first and foremost a theologian . . . . He was not a mere chronicler of history . . . . His interest was in the way the Gentile mission was to be motivated theologically not in an history report of the origins and course of the mission" (1991:87). Finally, Hengel states Luke is a "historian and theologian who needs to be taken seriously . . . . We only do justice to the significance of Luke as the first theological 'historian' of Christianity if we take his work seriously as a source" (1979:61,67).

The table below summarizes the positions of the historical and theological study of Luke-Acts today. The historical-critical school represented by Conzelmann, Haenchen, Verheyden, Fitzmyer and others have downplayed the historicity of the Lukan account and accentuated the theological is represented in quadrant one. The more conservative school represented by Bruce, Marshall, Gasque and others would be situated in quadrant three which affirms both the high historical and theological value of Luke's work.

### **The Unity of Luke-Acts**

Luke and Acts are introduced by similar prologues which naturally point to a two volume work. However, because they have traditionally been separated in the New Testament canon, this has tended "to obscure the second-volume character of Acts" (Fitzmyer 1998:50). Not only on this practical but theological terms, the question of the unity of Luke-Acts has been raised.

In his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, Hans Conzelmann argued that Luke wrote the book in order to explain to the Christians of his day the historical delay in the promised return of Jesus. Out of this eschatological concern, Conzelmann posited that Luke-Acts was not merely written to record history but to primarily give meaning to it.<sup>8</sup>

Within this theological-historical framework, he divides Luke-Acts into three distinct phases of salvation history which included John the Baptist (the period of Israel), Jesus (the middle of time) and the epoch of the Spirit (the Church). Therefore Conzelmann would see a theological discontinuity between Luke-Acts, between John, Jesus and the Church

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<sup>8</sup> As was denoted in the previous chapter, Conzelmann who is from the redactive school of interpretation, would tend to shift emphasis from the uncertain facts of history to their theological meaning .

Scholars today have generally not followed Conzelmann's theological division of the work. Hengel states that his thesis "was certainly attractive, but nevertheless misleading. . . . the whole double work covers the one history of Jesus Christ" (1979:59). According to Hengel, Luke-Acts was necessarily divided into two parts in order to make a distinction between the activity of the earthly Jesus and His work as exalted Lord.

Gasque observes that recent criticism has recognized that in order to understand Luke-Acts both volumes need to be considered (1989:308). Stronstad also argues for the theological unity of the two books by stating that "since Luke and Acts are a single work, it would be far more natural to stress their theological continuity or homogeneity" (1984:4). Finally, Verheyden reports that "there is an almost complete consensus in Lukan studies today that Luke's work indeed constitutes a unity" (1999:3). In the next section it will be illustrated through several themes that this unity was achieved by a conscious parallelism between Luke-Acts.

### **Parallelisms in Luke-Acts**

Fitzmyer categorically states that "in any discussion about the unity of the Lucan Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, the role of the holy Spirit is an important element" (1999:165). Bosch also sees the Holy Spirit as a uniting theme in Luke-Acts by saying "Luke unites the time of Jesus and the time of the church in one era of the Spirit" (1991:87).

Luke accomplishes this by paralleling the role of the Spirit and other themes in the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus in Luke 1-2 and the birth of the Church in Acts 1-2. In this sense, Fitzmyer sees the Spirit primarily as the "inaugurator" of the ministry of Jesus and the Church (1999:172,174). Brown specifically sees that the work of the Spirit and the ministry of the angels are reflected in the two-volume work of Luke-Acts:

The outpouring of the prophetic spirit which moves people to act and speak (Luke 1:15,41,67,80; 2:25-27) is not well attested in the ministry but resembles very closely the pentecostal and post-pentecostal outpouring of the prophetic spirit in Acts 2:17: 'I shall pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy' . . . . The angelic appearances which are frequent in the infancy narrative (1:11,26; 2:9) have little parallel in the ministry of Jesus but close parallels in Acts (5:19; 8:26; 10:3; 12:7; 27:23)" (1993:243).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Brown further posits that "it is not surprising that in many ways the infancy narrative is closer in spirit to the stories in Acts than to the Gospel material which Luke took from Mark and Q" (1993:243).



Parallelism also abounds within the infancy narratives themselves. Many elements of both the divine announcement and prophetic speech are similar. In addition, whereas Matthew grounds his gospel in the Old Testament through the genealogy and flow of the story, Luke recaptures the well-known story of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah through the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth. The ancient Simeon and Anna seemed lifted right out of the Old Testament and not only provide a linkage to the past, but a foretaste of the Pentecostal blessing when both old and young, men and women will share in the renewal of the prophetic spirit. Brown maintains that the rich pericopes of the birth stories "contains the essential theology of the Old and New Testaments" (Brown 1993:596). Further parallels between the birth of John/Jesus and the church are briefly listed in the following table.

**TABLE 3**  
**THE BIRTH OF JOHN/JESUS AND THE CHURCH**

<b>The Birth of John/Jesus</b>	<b>The Birth of the Church</b>
Zechariah is chosen by lot.	Matthias is chosen by lot.
Elizabeth remains in seclusion.	The church remains in seclusion.
Zechariah can't speak with his tongue.	The Church speaks in tongues.
Many, both men and women speak prophetically at the conception and birth of John and Jesus.	Many, both men and women speak prophetically at the conception and birth of the Church.
Promises of Messiah will be fulfilled.	Promises of Messiah have been fulfilled.
Anna stays in the temple continuously worshipping God.	The church stays in the temple continuously worshipping God.

According to several scholars, the overall purpose of this apparent parallelism was to bind the two books and the Old Testament together into the key concept of salvation (van Unnik 1973:340-373). This salvation did not begin with the birth of Jesus, but had its roots in the Old Testament promises of the Messiah. "One of the reasons why Luke has made considerable use of the OT is Christology, his desire to relate the Jesus-story and its sequel to the plan God begun in the OT and precisely Jesus' role in that plan" (Fitzmyer 1998:92).

Marshall finds in the theme of salvation "the key to the theology of Luke. Not salvation-history but salvation itself is the theme which occupied the mind of Luke in both parts and of his

work" (1971:92). A summary of Marshall's thought on this subject is concisely given by Verheyden:

He greatly emphasizes that for Luke salvation is not an abstract notion. It has taken the form of a concrete historical figure. What Luke tells us in the Gospel about Jesus, his ministry, his proclamation of the Kingdom, and his passion and resurrection is the account of how salvation is realized through Jesus (1999:27).

Bosch maintains that although the universal dimensions of this salvation "remain vague" in the infancy narratives, "not so the references to Israel's salvation! Luke, the non-Jew, here presents Jesus as first and foremost the Savior of the old covenant people" (1991:92). Again this would fit well within the motif mentioned earlier that Luke wanted to ground the new Gentile believers deeply into the roots of faithful Israel. Below is a table which illustrates further parallelisms between Luke and Acts which show the strong connection between the two books.

**TABLE 4**  
**THE THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF LUKE-ACTS**  
**(Stronstad 1984:34)**

	<b>Luke</b>	<b>Acts</b>
Beginning	Birth, anointing of Jesus	Baptism, filling of disciples
Inaugural Proclamation	Jesus' Nazareth sermon	Peter's Pentecost sermon
Confirmatory Miracles	Casting out demons and healing sick in Capernaum	Healing lame man at Beautiful gate
Success	Widespread popular acclaim	Widespread popular acclaim
Opposition	Pharisees, leaders of the Jews	Sanhedrin, Jews of the dispersion
Travel	Itinerant ministry in Galilee, Judea	Missionary journeys of Peter and Paul
Arrest and Trial	Threefold trial: Before Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod	Threefold trial: before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa
Consummation	The Cross	Rome