

PENTECOST AND SINAI: ASSESSING ACTS 2 THROUGH A LUKAN LITERARY PATTERN

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Abstract

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Some scholars conclude that in the account of Pentecost in Acts 2 the author makes parallels to the event of the giving of the law at Sinai. Previously these parallels have primarily been argued through secondary texts. This thesis is interested in engaging with the primary text, the Old and New Testament, in order to prove Luke himself would not make Pentecost/Sinai parallels. The goal is to identify a Lukan pattern of parallel within his wider work through which the suggested Pentecost/Sinai parallels can be assessed. The author of Luke-Acts uses an identifiable pattern when paralleling Old Testament narrative, and such a patterns not yet been used for the debate surrounding the relation between Pentecost and Sinai. Our examination will consist of four case studies in Luke-Acts in which the author parallels Old Testament narrative. A pattern from these case studies will then be used to draw conclusions concerning the Pentecost and Sinai debate.

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1. Introduction

The account of Pentecost in Acts 2 sees Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit fulfilled. The chapter recounts how the disciples are empowered by the Spirit to proclaim God's message and the community that forms as a result. Keener sees the first two chapters of Acts as transitional in Luke-Acts and therefore introducing major themes that are seen throughout the book of Acts, fulfillment of prophecy, the power of the Holy Spirit, signs and wonders, the gospel going out to all nations, apostolic witness to Jesus, and the formation of Christian community.¹ Such an important event in Christian history has been analyzed and dissected countless times. Articles on the opening chapters to Acts continue to be written, demonstrating the inexhaustible riches that the New Testament offers. But does every "new take" on Pentecost really contribute to our understanding of Acts 2, or do some of these "new takes" place ideas on the passage that are not there?

One area that has been debated concerning Pentecost is its relation to the giving of the Law at Sinai beginning in Exodus 19. A variety of arguments have been made either for² or

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 642; He also draws from B. R. Gaventa, *Acts* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville, Abingdon, 2003), 61.

² Among scholars who argue for Sinai as a background for Pentecost are Sejin Park, *Pentecost and Sinai: The Festival Of Weeks As A Celebration Of The Sinai Event*, (London: T&T Clark, 2008) and "The Festival of Weeks and Sinai" (Ph.D, University of Notre Dame, April 2006); J.C. VanderKam, "The Festival of Weeks and the Story of Pentecost in Acts 2," *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. C. A. Evans; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 185-205; B. Noack, "The Day of Pentecost in Jubilees, Qumran, and Acts," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 1 (1962), 73-95; Fitzmyer, "The Ascension of Christ and Pentecost," *Theological studies* 45 (1984), 409-40; Kretschmar, "Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 66 (1954-55), 209-53; Dupont, "The First Christian Pentecost," *The Salvation of the Gentiles* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1979), 35-59; J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 38-54; M. Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethic Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (JPTSup 19; Sheffield: SAP, 2000), 232-73; W.H. Harris, *The Descent of Christ: Ephesians 4:7-11 and Traditional Hebrew Imagery* (Biblical Studies Library; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 143-70.

against³ the appearance of Sinai allusions in the Pentecost event found in Acts 2. But which camp is correct? Is part of Luke's intention in Acts 2 to suggest links between Sinai and Pentecost, or is the parallel absent from his account? Is the giving of the Spirit in the new covenant equivalent to the old covenant gift of the law, or is Acts 2 unjustly used to portray such a connection? The theological implications are fascinating if Luke's version of the Pentecost story refers to Sinai, but this paper will not focus on these implications. The intention of this paper is to verify whether the parallels are present.

1.1 Literature Review

Some scholars have been drawing conclusions about Luke's Pentecost account in its relation to Sinai, but their arguments draw heavily from secondary texts. In fact, the majority of arguments for Sinai parallels by authors listed in footnote 2 above have appealed to secondary texts, most commonly The Book of Jubilees, Philo, and rabbinic writings. A complete literature review of these works is unnecessary as there will be dialogue with them throughout the paper. However, a few of these dialogue partners are worth introducing.

In regard to arguments from secondary texts, James VanderKam is notable. He focuses on Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus, and early rabbinic literature. Arguing with an emphasis on the ascension, he sets forth that an association with Weeks and Sinai is a background for the Acts 2 text.⁴ In a later study he argues that the Qumran community, taking

³ Most notable among those who see no parallels to Sinai in the Pentecost narrative include I.H. Marshall, "The Significance of Pentecost," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30 (1977), 347-69; O'Toole, "Acts 2:30 and the Davidic Covenant of Pentecost," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 (1983), 245-58; F.F. Bruce, "The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles," *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 166-83; R. P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*, (JPTSup 6; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 173-201; D. L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (JSNTSup 12; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 155-87.

⁴ VanderKam, "The Festival of Weeks and the Story of Pentecost in Acts 2," 185.

their cue from the account of Sinai in book of Jubilees, held an annual ceremony of covenant renewal during the Feast of Weeks.⁵ These conclusions were used to argue that both Sinai and covenant renewal would be in the mind of the author of Luke-Acts as he wrote Acts 2.

Vaderkam's "The Festival of Weeks and the Story of Pentecost in Acts 2" provides an intriguing summary and acts as a useful gateway to the thinking of those who argue for parallels between Pentecost and Sinai.

Sejin Park has produced perhaps the most extensive work on the subject with both his Ph.D dissertation and a similar published work focusing on the subject.⁶ He examines the Feast of Weeks in the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, Jubilees, and the Dead Sea Scrolls in detail before moving on to the actual biblical text. As he looks at the arguments, he also examines work previously done on the subject. Though the secondary texts are the focus, he also makes biblical parallels between Acts 1-2 and the Exodus account of Sinai. The wide range of biblical parallels are presented in a more detailed fashion than had been done previously.⁷ This work is highly recommended as it goes in-depth on many subjects and presents the majority of arguments for parallels between Sinai and Pentecost. Park will act as the most cited dialogue partner in this paper, most especially in the chapter on Acts 2 and Sinai.

If the argument for a Sinai parallels to Pentecost can be explained in a paragraph - a paragraph that influenced me to believe that Luke used these parallels as I started my research - it may be the paragraph found in Max Turner's *Power From on High*. Turner states the

⁵ James VanderKam, "Sinai Revisited," *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (Ed. M. Henze; Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 49.

⁶ Park's dissertation and published work respectively are "The Festival of Weeks and Sinai," and *From Pentecost and Sinai: The Festival Of Weeks As A Celebration Of The Sinai Event*.

⁷ Park, "The Festival of Weeks and Sinai," 200-66. These pages of Park's thesis contains to a greater extent what he sees as biblical parallels than this paper can cover.

similarities between Philo's interpretation of the Sinai event in Exodus and Luke account of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Both Philo and Luke (i) envisage a holy theophany before the assembled people of God; (ii) in each case we have to do with a redemptive-historical event on earth which is formative for that people of God, marking a real new beginning of some kind... (iii) in each this sign or wonder involves a miraculous sound, and a rush of something "like" fire from heaven descending to the people, and dividing to reach all, and (iv) in each case this results in a miraculous form of speech, spreading and so coming to be heard by a multiplicity... in their own language... (v) each involves an important "gift" given to God's people and (vi) this gift comes to Israel as the consequence of Israel's leader... ascending to God!⁸

Turner's argument here is convincing. If Philo saw the event at Sinai in a similar way to the event of Pentecost, there would be a chance that Luke thought the same.

Is there enough evidence in the secondary texts to conclude that author of Luke-Acts saw parallels between Pentecost and Sinai? Based on the evidence of the extrabiblical sources alone, the answer is at the most a hesitant maybe. Jubilees seems to stand at the forefront in prominence, with the Qumran scrolls contributing to the practice of its material. Philo presents similar conclusions outside of the closed community, and the rabbis demonstrate an eventual wide readership and adoption of covenant renewal practice. The material, when separated from the biblical evidence, most certainly suggests the possibility that Luke would be familiar with Weeks as commemorating the giving of the law at Sinai. If Luke was familiar with a Weeks/Sinai tradition, he did not necessarily include the connection in his account of Pentecost.

There has been some backlash against the jumping to conclusions regarding parallelism. Sandmel's concept of parallelomania clearly outlines the dangers of seeing parallels where none exist, and we will examine some of these dangers in the conclusion. I. H. Marshall is among

⁸ Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 1996), 284-85.

those who see the danger of parallelomania. Marshall does not deny the association of covenant renewal and the Feast of Weeks among certain groups, but does not believe this connection to be the view of Judaism as a whole, citing a lack of evidence in Philo and Josephus. Marshall argues that fulfillment of prophecy after the resurrection in the giving of the Holy Spirit is the focus of Acts 2 rather than a parallel with the Sinai event.⁹

The lack of a definite clarity causes some, such as Darrell Bock, to be wary of jumping to premature conclusions. In his commentary on Acts, Bock makes clear that Jubilees is key to the debate. However, he mentions that the Pentecost connection in Jubilees is not necessarily as specific as some make it out to be. Though Bock does not deny that current feasts are connected to the patriarchs, he adds, “What is harder to ascertain is whether the connection is a broad one to an older covenant tied to Noah, or to the specific event of the giving of the law, although Jub. 1:1 appears to favor the latter.”¹⁰ In his view, Jubilees and other secondary texts are far from clear enough to be cited as definitive evidence.

Robert Menzies argues against the suggested literary allusions to Sinai in the Acts 2 account, and his work *Empowered For Witness* will often be mentioned in the following chapters. Menzies focuses on language/imagery parallels in Philo and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, the language miracle parallel, Moses typology, and associations with Psalm 67. Ultimately finding the arguments for each deficient, Menzies concludes that Pentecost is not presented as a “new Sinai.” The absence of parallels means that Luke does not view the gift of the Spirit as a

⁹ Marshall, “The Significance of Pentecost,” 368-69.

¹⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Baker Academic, 2007), 1:1.

counterpart to the gift of the law.¹¹ Menzies' arguments are strong as they deal with both language and imagery issues in addition to the secondary and primary texts.¹²

Largely ignored has been Luke's method of parallelism, especially in relation to his wider work. Passages such as the birth narratives in Luke 1-2 and Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 6-7 have parallels that are more widely agreed upon. If a pattern can be identified in the less debated passages, making Luke's method of parallel clear, then an important yet unexplored piece can be added to the Pentecost/Sinai puzzle. Searching for a Lukan pattern also appeals to the primary text alone. Though the secondary texts are of value, in this case they have been placed in such high regard that arguments stemming from the primary text have gone missing. An emphasis on the primary text causes the Pentecost/Sinai parallels to be viewed in a different light than they have been previously.

Regarding the primary text, this paper will attempt to identify a pattern Luke uses when deliberately paralleling narrative passages, primarily OT narrative passages. The pattern from Luke's method will be used to see if the suggested Pentecost/Sinai parallels can be verified. Four passages and their parallels will be examined: Stephen's martyrdom in Acts 6-7; the birth narratives in Luke 1-2; the Elijah/Elisha/Jesus connections in Luke 4:16-30 and 7:1-17; and the transfiguration in Luke 9:28-36. A broad scope will save us from the the temptation to have tunnel vision regarding Sinai and Pentecost. It will also suggest when observations concerning a Lukan pattern would be faulty, as these observations can be checked against other case studies that are chapters apart and contain different subject matter.

¹¹ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 189-201, citing particularly 201.

¹² For more works that take a stance against Pentecost/Sinai parallels, see footnote 3 in the first chapter of this paper.

Can a Lukan pattern be found, and can the pattern provide evidence that overrules or clarifies the evidence suggested in secondary texts? If so, then the debate concerning Pentecost/Sinai parallels can achieve more nuance with primary texts and give an understanding of the author that has been ignored for much of the debate. The internal parallels between the Exodus account and the Acts account will be fully examined on their own and through the lens of a Lukan pattern once case studies concerning Luke's method of parallel have been completed. Each case study will be examined in its own chapter. These will contribute to the identification of Luke's pattern of paralleling OT narrative passages. This identified pattern will be used to examine Pentecost and if it bears a major relation to Sinai.

2. Case Study #1: Jesus and Stephen in Acts 6-7

Before looking at how Luke parallels Old Testament narrative, it is worth looking at an instance where Luke parallels himself and other Synoptic writers within his own writing.¹³ Characteristics of Luke's method that are found here, though internal in nature, inform his overall general method. To set a sort of template, it is important to find some events where the majority of scholarship is in agreement that Luke has intentionally created parallelism. One instance where there is agreement is in the parallels between Jesus and Stephen. Though there may be differing views in specific parts or the number of parallels, there is at least agreement that the parallels are certainly there.¹⁴ Barrett writes that Luke "introduced allusions which bind the story of dying Stephen to the story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Stephen's vision of the Son of man standing at the right hand of God recalls Lk. 22:69; his prayer, Receive my spirit, recalls 23:46; his intercession for his murderers, 23:34 (if the long text is read)."¹⁵ Likewise, Witherington writes that "Luke is deliberately writing this story to indicate how Stephen's last days and end parallel those of his master, Jesus."¹⁶ It is interesting to take note that while Luke

¹³ The source materials for the Stephen account are difficult to determine and debated among scholars, but there are elements from both Mark and Luke included in the Acts parallel. For more on the nature of sources, see Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 355; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 380-82.

¹⁴ An example of some scholars who cite these parallels include Marcel Simon, *St. Stephen and the Hellenists in the Primitive Church* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1958), 21; Frederick J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 58; M.D. Hamm, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 40-41; Richard I. Pervo and Harold W. Attridge, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 195; M.D. Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 42-43; Charles H. Talbert, *Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helways, 2005), 66-67; Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of all Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 100.

¹⁵ Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 380.

¹⁶ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 252.

parallels the other accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, he does include a couple of elements from his own gospel. He was familiar with at least one of the other gospels or their source when writing his account, but deliberately chose to leave parts out of his crucifixion account that were in the source material in order to parallel them with the martyrdom of Stephen. Bruce notes that "this is not the only place where Luke omits a theme in the ministry of Jesus, featuring in the other Synoptic Gospels, in order to deal with it in a new context in the life of the early church."¹⁷ Rather than a full examination of Stephen's speech and martyrdom, this paper will give a brief outline of the agreed upon parallels and then make observations in relation to Luke's method.¹⁸ Witherington notes ten parallels between the account in Acts 6:8-8:3 and the crucifixion of Jesus in the Synoptic gospels. A survey of Witherington's ten parallels will give context before examine the characteristics Luke uses in his paralleling narratives.

2.1 Stephen/Jesus Parallels

First, Jesus and Stephen each have a trial before the high priest¹⁹/the Sanhedrin. Jesus is taken before them in Luke as well as the other gospels (Mark 14:53; Luke 23:66). In Acts, Stephen is "brought before the council" (Acts 6:12) and spoken to by the high priest (7:1).

Second, false witnesses accuse both Stephen and Jesus of crimes that lead to their execution. These witnesses bear testimony against Jesus in Matthew (Matt. 26:60-61) and Mark

¹⁷ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 127. He cites Acts 5:15 as an example.

¹⁸ For more on the full account of Stephen, including his speech, see Keener, *Acts*, 1294-1445; Bock, *Acts*, 266-317; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 114-44;

¹⁹ Bruce suggests that the high priest may still have been Caiaphas at Stephen's trial, as he held that office until A.D. 36. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 129; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.35, 95.

(Mark 14:56-57), but are absent in Luke's account. Luke only includes the false witnesses in his telling of the crucifixion of Stephen (Acts 6:13).

Third, there is testimony concerning the destruction of the temple. The false witnesses accuse Jesus of saying "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days" (Matt. 16:61; Mark 14:58). Once again absent in Luke's account of Jesus, the witnesses say they heard Stephen say "that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us," (Acts 6:14).

Fourth there is reference to the temple "made with hands" (Mark 14:58; Acts 7:48). This is present in Mark but omitted in Luke.

Fifth, there is the saying of the Son of Man. Jesus says during his trial that "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14: 62), and likewise in Luke "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God (Luke 22:69). Stephen also speaks of the Son of Man, saying, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). All instances refer to Jesus as the "Son of Man" and depict him at the "right hand" of God. The "Son of Man" saying is significant. It only appears in two other places outside the gospels (Rev. 1:13, 14:14),²⁰ but in the form of ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου, meaning "one like the son of man."²¹

Sixth, there is a charge of blasphemy on both men. The word for blasphemy, βλασφημία, is used in Mark 14:64, Matt. 26:65, and Acts 6:11. It does not appear in Luke. Faw thinks that blasphemy is implied in the Lukan account when Jesus is before the council and before Pilate

²⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 7:55-56.

²¹ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 160.

when comparing the two stories. Faw writes, “In both instances the opponents accuse them of *blasphemy* (Luke 22:71; Acts 6:11-13). They are linked closely together in the charge of speaking against the temple and threatening to change the customs of Moses (Luke 21:56; 23:2; Mark 14:58; Acts 6:13-14).”²² However, the absence of the word βλασφημία makes it more likely Luke is making reference to elements not found in his own account of Jesus’ trial.

Seventh, the High Priest’s asks a question to the man on trial after he has been accused. In Mark, he asks, “Are you the Christ, the son of the blessed?” (Mark 14:64). In Acts, he asks Stephen “Are these things so?” (Acts 7:1). Once again, this does not appear in the Lukan account.

Eighth, each Stephen and Jesus give up their Spirit in their last hour. Of the Synoptics, this saying only appears in Luke. Jesus cries out, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,” and Stephen calls out “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59).

Ninth, both Jesus and Stephen cry out with a loud voice. Though the verbs differ for the way Jesus and Stephen cried out, each account records that Jesus and Stephen did so with a φωνῆ μεγάλης, meaning “loud voice.” (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:60).

Tenth, the two figures intercede for their enemies that they might receive forgiveness. This is another event that only appears in the gospel of Luke. Where Jesus says, “Father, forgive them,” Stephen says, “Lord, do not hold this against them” (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). This is Stephen’s final statement before dying, where Jesus’ final statement in the Lukan account was when he gave up his spirit.

²² Chalmer Ernest Faw, *Acts* (Believer’s Church Bible Commentary; Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 94.

2.2 Observations on Stephen/Jesus Parallels

The evidence above shows that Luke does indeed compare Stephen's trial and martyrdom to Jesus' crucifixion story. There are five observations to be made concerning Luke's methods in his parallels.

(1) Luke seems to be paralleling the experience of *characters* in the narrative. The events that happen to Jesus happen to Stephen, they do not happen to a plurality of people. Keener writes, "Luke certainly chooses to record *these* details (rather than others available to him at least in Mark's passion narrative) to emphasize the continuity between the martyred Lord and the first of his martyred followers."²³ In this story the Jesus/Stephen parallel is the focus, but there is also parallel with other characters as well. There are those in each story who falsely accuse, and there is a high priest in each story that asks the man on trial a question. The parallel does not seem to be primarily focused on place, nor of events not involving people. It seems rather the parallel is primarily one concerning the *characters* of Jesus and Stephen and showing how the two are similar.²⁴

(2) Luke *uses narrative to parallel narrative* in the case of Jesus and Stephen. Though perhaps an obvious observation, it will be important to remember when Luke starts paralleling the Old Testament, which contains many different genres. With internal parallels he has almost

²³ Keener, *Acts*, 1430.

²⁴ Though not fully examined in this paper, Stephen is not the only person in Acts that Luke parallels to Jesus. A. J. Mattiel Jr. discusses Luke's use of multiple characters paralleling a single character within his writing in his examination of the Jesus-Paul parallels in "The Jesus Paul Parallels and the Purpose of Luke-Acts: H. H. Evans Reconsidered," *Novum Testamentum* 17 (Jan. 1975), 15-46. He writes, "It should be noted that many of the parallels are not exclusive parallels regarding Jesus and Paul. Paul in Luke-Acts is often parallel to others, such as Peter, Elijah, and Elisha, and other persons in Acts are also parallel to Jesus, especially Stephen... Moreover, the very fact that Luke has given us these other parallels makes it all the more likely that he has also drawn a Jesus-Paul parallelism" (22). As we will see later, Luke uses the same methods when paralleling the OT. He does not restrict NT character to only paralleling one character within that NT character's entire narrative.

no choice in the matter, but when things get complicated elsewhere the simplicity of the Jesus/Stephen account acts as a helpful reference point. Luke uses events, experiences, actions, and characters from a narrative, not prophecy or poetry, when he parallels Jesus with Stephen.

(3) Luke uses multiple *sources of the single story he is paralleling*. Luke takes from the accounts he already knows, seemingly Mark or Q,²⁵ as well as his own account of Jesus' crucifixion to make his point about Stephen. Two of the ten parallels are in Luke alone, and five of the ten parallels are only in Acts and the other Synoptic gospels. Witherington writes concerning Luke's combination, "Here is compelling evidence that Luke had Acts in mind while writing his gospel, and edited certain items out of his Markan source about Jesus' Passion, but wrote up the Stephen story using language reminiscent of the Markan Passion account!"²⁶ It is important to note that the multiple accounts all concern the *same event*. Luke is very specific and particular and does not include a wide range of other sources. Luke refuses to use many trial, crucifixion or martyrdom stories, but focuses the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Luke does not mind drawing from multiple sources in his parallels. In this first case study, Luke refrains from using dissimilar events despite using multiple sources.²⁷

(4) Though many parts of the events happen in generally chronological order, Luke does not always keep the same chronology for every part of the narrative. Luke makes sure to include the elements, but is not overly concerned with rearranging them. For example, the Lukan narrative places Jesus' statement of "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34) before he says "Father,

²⁵ see Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 355; C. K. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 380-82

²⁶ Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 253.

²⁷ In the next case study, we will see that Luke uses multiple birth narratives as a parallel in Luke 1-2, but as will be shown those stories share a similar structural pattern that makes the use similar to Luke's usage of different crucifixion accounts.

into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). However, in his narrative of Stephen’s martyrdom, Stephen’s last words are “Lord do not hold this against them” (Acts 7:60), where his committal of his spirit to Jesus came before (Acts 7:59). Acts 6 and 7 does not contain a moment-to-moment narrative parallel. There are some differences in actual episodes of the event, such as Stephen giving a long speech where Jesus stayed silent. This supports the historical authenticity of the event, as different perspectives present different variations in each account. *Luke presents a general sense of narrative movement, though not an exact chronological parallel.*

(5) Luke parallels Stephen to Jesus to establish him as a prophet in the line of Moses and Jesus. “Like Joseph, Moses, and Jesus Stephen is full of grace and power and inspired words, and is depicted as someone of great character and stature - appropriate for the church’s first martyr.”²⁸ Stephen’s view of himself, as evidenced in his speech, matches Luke’s character identification. “This correspondence fits Stephen's own presentation of himself (Acts 7:51) following the pattern of Jesus and the prophets (7:52), and Moses and the patriarchs (7:5, 9, 27-28, 37), whereas his opponents resemble those who persecuted the prophets (7:52).”²⁹ In agreement, Johnson writes that the point Luke is making with the parallels is not to emphasize “the personality of his characters but rather their prophetic power that is affected by the Holy Spirit.”³⁰ The prophetic designation - not fulfillment - seems to be Luke’s reason for the parallels,

²⁸ Witherington, 252.

²⁹ Keener, Acts, 1430. See also H. J. B. Combrink, *Structural Analysis of Acts 6:8-8:3*, Stellenbosch Theological Studies 4 (Capetown: Dutch Reformed Church Publishers, 1979), 22.

³⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 143.

which is consistent with observation 1 above. David Moessner perhaps best explains the prophetic parallel:

As Luke concludes his description of Stephen, his legacy in the line of Jesus as the prophet like Moses and all the rejected prophets is sealed. In his dying breath Stephen utters the words of Jesus on the cross (Acts 7:59—Luke 23:46) but now directly to the “Lord Jesus” himself. Moreover, his echo of Jesus’ prayer on the cross for forgiveness (Acts 7:60—Luke 23:34) now takes on the added dimension that the same leaders (Sanhedrin) of Israel are continuing their rejection of Jesus by stoning Stephen. When we join to this continuity the oft-cited parallels between the charges against Jesus and Stephen, the portrait of Stephen as a type of the Deuteronomistic rejected prophets and antitype of the prophet like Jesus (Moses) is poignant indeed.³¹

Luke uses the parallel to *identify* a character in his narrative with another character in the parallel narrative. He does not chiefly identify the role of the event in Acts 6 & 7, but rather the role of the person who is involved in the event. The rejected prophet role as demonstrated in Stephen continues after the death and resurrection of Jesus in the Lukan narrative.

³¹ David P. Moessner, “‘The Christ Must Suffer’: New Light on the Jesus-Peter, Stephen, Paul Parallels in Luke-Acts,” *Novum Testamentum* 28(3) (1986), 234.

3. Case Study # 2: The Birth Narratives of Luke 1-2

The parallels within the birth narratives of John and Jesus, particularly in the first chapter of Luke, provide clues as to how Luke uses parallels in his wider work. The birth narratives act as a perfect segue in case studies, for Luke parallels internally with the stories of Jesus and John but more importantly with the Old Testament. “Luke’s story of Jesus not only parallels his story of John but has unmistakable resonances of the story of the childhood of Samuel in the OT (1 Sam 1)... The infancy narrative was in large part freely composed by Luke on the basis of information obtained from earlier models and in imitation of some OT motifs.”³² The parallels to similar birth narratives in Genesis, 1 Samuel, and Judges are less controversial than the parallels to Sinai in Acts 2, and there seems to be general agreement that Luke indeed does refer to Old Testament birth narratives in the first two chapters of his gospel.³³ An examination of the parallels in these passages will further reveal Luke’s method of referring to other canonical passages. We have seen how Luke parallels himself, but the parallels in the Pentecost account that many claim are not self-referential. Pentecost/Sinai parallels involve Old Testament narrative. The principles he applies by hearkening to Old Testament birth narratives also apply to

³² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 309. For an extensive background on possible sources and different views on these sources for the birth narratives in Luke see I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 45-48.

³³ A brief list of those that support OT parallels includes Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*; David T. Landry, “Narrative Logic in the Annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26-38),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114.1 (1995): 65; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 52; Walter L. Liefeld, “Luke,” *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Edited by Frank Gaebelin; Vol. 8; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 824-25; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*; Helmer Ringgren, “Luke’s Use of the Old Testament,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 79.1/3 (1986), 227-35; C.T. Ruddick, “Birth Narratives in Genesis and Luke,” *Novum Testamentum* 12.4 (1970), 343-48; Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987); Lou H. Silberman, “A Model for the Lukan Infancy Narrative?,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113.3 (1994), 491-93; Robert H. Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Vol. 24; The New American Commentary; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992), 74.

the narrative of Sinai in the story of Pentecost. Before looking at the parallels to the Old Testament, we will examine the Luke's internal parallels between Jesus and John the Baptist.

3.1 Internal Parallels in Luke 1-2

Interestingly, the very first use of parallels within Luke's writing comes almost immediately. In fact, after his introduction in vv. 1-4, the narrative begins in v. 5 with the introduction of the parents of John the Baptist, an introduction which finds its parallel with the parents of Jesus (1:26-27). Green writes that "the dominant feature on the literary landscape of Luke 1:5-2:52 is the point-by-point parallelism between John and Jesus. Most obvious is the juxtaposition of the annunciation stories (1:5-23, 26-38) and narratives of birth-circumcision-naming (1:57-66; 2:1-27, 34-39)."³⁴ Though there is not total agreement on the arrangement of the parallels, there is common agreement in their presence."³⁵ Both Joel Green and Raymond Brown outline the parallels between John and Jesus.

Raymond Brown's outline is split up into seven episodes, and the parallels between Jesus and John are mainly found in two diptychs. The episodes are (1) the annunciation about John the Baptist; (2) the annunciation about Jesus; (3) the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth; (4) the birth/circumcision/naming of John; (4) the birth/circumcision/naming of Jesus; (6) the presentation of Jesus in the temple; and (7) finding Jesus in the temple.³⁶ The first diptych lies between episodes 1 and 2, the annunciations, and here Brown believes is the "closest parallelism."³⁷ There is also

³⁴ Green, *Luke*, 331.

³⁵ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 250.

³⁶ Brown, 250.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

parallelism in the second diptych found in episodes 4 and 5. Brown cites “confusing factors” with the similarities and differences of parallelism in the other sections,³⁸ which is why it may be easier to come at these parallels by looking at Luke 1 and 2 as one narrative section.

Joel Green does this in his examination of the parallels. He writes, “The presence of such a pervasive parallelism is hardly accidental and indicates on the part of the narrator a conscious attempt to invite the reader to view these two narrative cycles together. At a primary level these two stories are one.”³⁹ Green finds seven main points of parallel, and each parallel finds its origin in the John narrative before being imitated in the Jesus narrative. These are (A) the introduction of parents (the parents of John in 1:5-7; the parents of Jesus in 1:26-27); (B) the annunciation (1:8-23; 1:28-38); (C) the mother's response (1:24-25; 1:39-56); (D) the birth (1:57-58; 2:1-20); (E) circumcision and naming (1:59-66; 2:21-24); (F) prophetic response (1:67-79; 2:25-39); and (G) growth of the child (1:80; 2:40-52).⁴⁰ The parallels themselves are self-explanatory, but there are a few remarks that should be made concerning Luke’s method.

First, as with Jesus and Stephen, the focus is centered around character. Character pairings with similar actions and experiences include Mary and Elizabeth, the angel which appears, and most importantly Jesus and John the Baptist. It is worth noting however that the character parallels are not limited to one previous character. For example, Zechariah hears the annunciation from the angel, and his wife Elizabeth gives a response. In the Jesus narrative, Mary gives the "mother's response" but also is the one who is present for the annunciation of the angel, not her betrothed Joseph. Mary takes on the experiences of more than one character. Luke

³⁸ Ibid., 251.

³⁹ Green, *Luke*, 332.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

does not shy away from multiple-character parallels, and as we will see Luke does this elsewhere in his writing.

Second, the internal parallels in Luke 1 and 2 are intertwined. Though the Jesus parallel always comes later, Luke does not lay out the entire narrative of John the Baptist before moving into the Jesus narrative. The alternating nature seems incongruent when the Old Testament parallels are not seen as a part of the narrative. As shown in the next section, the alternating pattern points to the Old Testament. When the pattern of Old Testament narrative is taken into consideration, Luke's intertwined internal parallels appear far more consistent with Luke's method than they appear in and of themselves.

Third, there is an easily identifiable chronology. The parallel narratives do not always have an exact action-for-action chronology in Luke-Acts, but here Luke is more specific than usual. For example, Brown writes that “in terms of parallelism the Magnificat and Benedictus are close to each other in length, tone, and speakers (respective parents); yet the episodes in which they are placed are not parallel.”⁴¹ Not much else happens out of order, though the alternating nature does lead to a convergence in the middle of the narrative (Luke 1:39-45, 56) and some elements in the Jesus narrative have no parallels with John (2:22-39).

Fourth, Luke once again uses narrative to parallel narrative. Mary and Zechariah both have outbursts of poetic praise, but the content of the Magnificat and Benedictus is not used to parallel a future narrative action or event. Luke stays within self-made parameters of genre when comparing the two passages.

⁴¹ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 251.

Finally, the parallels function as a means to demonstrate Jesus' superiority. Luke shows that Jesus and John are not equals simply by the length dedicated to each of them. "Repeatedly the balance is tipped in favor of Jesus, so that we are left in no doubt as to who is the preeminent of the two children."⁴² Luke's purpose is clear by more than the length he dedicates to each of them.

The fact that the first diptych culminates with the mother of JBap praising Mary as the mother of Jesus already hints at Luke's attitude: although they are parallel, Jesus is superior to JBap. The second diptych, based on the birth narratives (see Table XIV), makes this superiority explicit by giving much more attention to the future greatness of Jesus than to the future greatness of JBap. The wonders surrounding the birth, circumcision, and naming of JBap cause all who hear him to ask, "What then is this child going to be?" The birth of Jesus is heralded by an angel who identifies the child as Messiah and Lord.⁴³

Just because Jesus is compared to another character does not mean he is on equal footing. Luke uses the parallels so that the reader may know the superiority of Jesus over the character he is "like."

3.2 Old Testament Birth Narrative Parallels

Now that we have examined Luke's internal parallel methods, we turn to his usage of the Old Testament. The complexity of the birth narratives display an overlap of internal and external parallels, and therefore provide a natural starting point for examining Old Testament narrative parallels. Not only does this section start Luke's gospel, but as mentioned above there is general agreement that Luke is paralleling the Old Testament birth narratives. Before analyzing Luke's

⁴² Green, *Luke*, 333.

⁴³ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 252.

method, it is important to understand the pattern of the birth narrative and the parallels being made.

3.2.1 *Pattern of Old Testament Birth Narratives*

The major birth narratives in the Old Testament are the birth of Isaac by Sarah (Gen. 17:15-22; 18:9-15; 21:1-8), the birth of Samson by the wife of Manoah (Judg. 13:2-25), and the birth of Samuel by Hannah (1 Sam. 1:1-2:11). Each of these stories follow a similar pattern. First, there is an announcement that the woman is barren. Next, there is a divine announcement that a child will be born to the barren woman. Fitzmyer discusses six parts of a pattern that are found in the birth announcements both in the Old Testament and New Testament, though not all six are found in each story. These are (1) the appearance of an angel; (2) the one receiving the message responding with fear; (3) a comforting or reassuring word; (4) a message from God; (5) a request for a sign or an objection; (6) a sign of assurance to the one receiving the message.⁴⁴ Raymond Brown divides the announcements into five similar steps.⁴⁵ Brown also subdivides the actual message into eight identifiable parts. These are (1) the visionary is addressed by name; (2) a qualifying phrase describing the visionary; (3) the visionary is urged not to be afraid; (4) a woman is with child, or about to be with child; (5) She will give birth to the (male) child; (6) the name by which the child is to be called; (7) an etymology interpreting the name; and (8) the

⁴⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 318-321. See also Edgar W. Conrad, "The Annunciation of Birth and the Birth of the Messiah," *CBQ* 47 (1987), 656-68; Robert Alter, "How Convention Helps is Read: The Case of the Bible's Annunciation Type-Scene," *Prooftexts* 3.2 (1983), 115-130. Green also suggests the possibility that Luke revises the conventional commissioning form of the OT. Green, *Luke* 342. For more on this, see Terrence Y. Mullins, "New Testament Commission Forms, Especially in Luke-Acts," *JBL* 95 (1976), 603-14; Benjamin J. Hubbard, "Commissioning Stories in Luke-Acts: A Study of Their Antecedents, Form, and Content," *Semeia* 8 (1977), 103-126.

⁴⁵ The step he does not include, Fitzmyer's third, is included in Brown's subdivision of the actual message of the angel. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 156.

future accomplishments of the child.⁴⁶ Other elements that follow the birth announcement in multiple stories are the birth of the child, a mention of the child's circumcision, the naming of the male child, a reaction - usually by the mother - of praising God, and a mention of the child's growth. Focusing mainly on the start of both the Jesus and John narrative, these patterns are easily identifiable in Luke.

3.2.2 Old Testament Parallels in Luke 1:5-25

In the narrative of the birth of John, Luke starts with the common comment about the barrenness of the mother, in this case Elizabeth. "But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years" (Luke 1:7). Stein writes, "The Greek term "no children" (*steira*) is used of Sarah (Gen 11:30), Rebekah (25:21), Rachel (29:31), and Samson's mother (Judg 13:2-3; cf. also 1 Sam 1:5)."⁴⁷ The comment that Elizabeth and Zechariah were "both well advanced in years," echoes that of Sarah and Abraham in Genesis as they "were old, advanced in years" (Gen. 18:11). "A late rabbinic comment observes that whenever Scripture says that someone had no child, later one was born to her. (Gn. R 38 (23c) (c. AD 300), in SB II, 71). So here the implied parallelism with Abraham and Sarah and other Old Testament couples prepares the reader for the possibility of a miracle."⁴⁸

The first Lukan birth announcement to Zechariah in the temple also follows the Old Testament template. All six parts of Fitzmyer's pattern happen in the story of the divine announcement to Zechariah. First, there is an appearance of an angel standing next to the altar of

⁴⁶ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 156.

⁴⁷ Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition*, 74.

⁴⁸ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 53.

incense (Luke 1:11). An angel also appears to both Manoah (Judg. 13:11) and his wife (13:3, 9).⁴⁹ Second, Zechariah is “troubled” and “fear fell upon him” (1:12). Though Zechariah responds with fear, this does not seem to be a common response of the one receiving the message and should not be viewed as a parallel. The only other mention of fear in an Old Testament birth narrative is that of Sarah, but the fear is not from the announcement of an angel or God but from God’s response to her laughing at the message (Gen. 18:15). This also applies to the urging to not be afraid (Luke 1:13), which is present in the New Testament stories but not in the Old Testament.

Then the angel gives the divine message to Zechariah. As with Abraham, the message is given to the husband of the old couple. The message contains seven of Brown’s eight parts of divine messages at biblical birth announcements. Luke in this case omits only the etymology of John’s name. The message still echoes the messages given to Abraham and Manoah and his wife. Luke continues following the Old Testament pattern, as Zechariah asks for a sign and shows some doubt following the angel’s message, saying “How shall I know this? For I on my part am an old man and my wife gone far forward in her days” (Luke 1:18). Abraham in Genesis 15:8 and Zechariah ask exactly the same question, but the question is not treated equally in both accounts. Lenski notes, “That is due to the fact that Abraham believed (Gen. 15:6), but Zacharias did not. The one asked for a sign to strengthen his faith, the other asked for a sign that he thought could not be given because the thing that was promised was no longer possible.”⁵⁰ Though the

⁴⁹ In Judges, the reference is specifically to “the angel of the Lord.” Though this could be a reference to Jesus, the author still uses the term for angel and the parallel stays consistent despite the possible interpretation. For a discussion on the “angel of the Lord,” see C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect & Evil*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 81-88.

⁵⁰ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel*, 52.

reaction to each was different, that Luke mimics Abraham's question with Zechariah's points to Luke's drawing on the birth narrative in Genesis.

The result of the announcement is then stated by Luke, that Elizabeth conceived (Luke 1:24), as did the wife of Manoah and, though delayed by several chapters, Sarah. Then, instead of moving on to the birth of John, his narrative is cut off for some verses. Luke moves on to the beginning of the birth narrative of Jesus. Leifeld believes that the switch to the Jesus and Mary narrative was made to show the connection of what is happening to the Old Testament.

To make this connection with the OT, Luke also uses a pattern of alternation, in which attention shifts back and forth between John the Baptist and Jesus. Far from being a confusion of sources, as is sometimes supposed, this alternation is a literary device to focus attention successively on each person (cf. G.N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*, SNTS Monograph Series 27 [London: Cambridge University Press, 1974], pp. 55–56). Luke clearly identifies John as a successor to the OT prophets. Through his alternating presentations, Luke links John and Jesus, whom Luke apparently also identifies as a prophet (Minear, *Heal and Reveal*, pp. 95–96). Since he also sees in Jesus far more than a prophet, Luke's device of alternation goes beyond comparison to contrast, with Jesus presented as "Son of the Most High" and messianic Deliverer (1:32–33, 69, 76; 2:11, 30).⁵¹

This alternation is not a part of the Old Testament birth narratives, for only here in the biblical text are two birth narratives presented together. Luke's dedication to the Old Testament is made known by his refusal to focus on his internal parallels alone, causing the reader to identify that Jesus and John have similarities with other prophetic figures. This creates an interesting juxtaposition that brings together multiple characters and narratives into one logical cohesive narrative.

Part of the first section involving John includes a reference to Elijah. The angel says that John will "go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the

⁵¹ Leifeld, "Luke," 824-25.

children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:17). John here is clearly identified with Elijah, but he is not in any way here paralleled with Elijah. The references to the Old Testament in verse 17 are from the prophetic book of Malachi (especially 2:6-7; 3:1, 18; 4:5-6),⁵² not from a narrative involving Elijah. The genre distinctions here cause the character’s relation to Elijah to be seen through the lens of the prophetic words in Malachi rather than events and actions surrounding the character of Elijah. “The multiplicity of allusions to Malachi in vv 16-17 work together with the explicit reference to John’s being anointed ‘with the spirit of Elijah’ to identify the promised son as a prophet of no mean significance.”⁵³ Elijah is to have a ministry of proclamation and repentance as described in both Malachi and Luke 1:17, and his role as a prophet is in a similar vein to Elijah for he is working in Elijah’s “spirit and power.”⁵⁴ Therefore, though the character identification is clear, it is not in the way of narrative parallel like we see elsewhere in this passage. In a later case study, Jesus is identified with Elijah through narrative parallel, revealing Luke’s permissiveness regarding multiple characters being “like” an Old Testament character.

3.2.3 *Luke 1:26-38 Analysis*

The second of Luke’s birth narratives begins with the appearance of the angel, in this case specifically identified as Gabriel, echoing not only the Old Testament but Elizabeth as well

⁵² For more on the Elijah-Malachi connections, see Green, *Acts*, 386-392; Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (SNTSMS 7; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968), 42-43; Robert J. Miller, “Elijah, John, and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke,” *NTS* 34 (1988) 611-22.

⁵³ Green, *Luke*, 390.

⁵⁴ For relation between the “spirit and power” in Luke see Max Turner’s works “The Spirit and Power of Jesus’ Miracles in the Lucan Conception,” *NovT* 33 (1991), 124-52 and “The Spirit of Prophecy and the Power of Authoritative Preaching in Luke-Acts: A Question of Origins,” *NTS* 38 (1992), 66-88.

(Luke 1:26). Unlike other birth narratives, Mary is not barren or considered too old to conceive. Instead she is an unmarried virgin, the first place where her story differs from the typical pattern. She acts again in a different manner from the Zechariah with her response to the angel. Rather than fear, she “was greatly troubled,” and “tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be” (1:29). The differences with the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth are important to note. Though the order of events continues in the same way, the events do not need to unfold in the same way. Luke leaves room for differences within the stories he parallels, though the basic outline is still present.

After the angel gives the divine message, as is standard, Mary responds with the question, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (1:34). Her response is controversial. As David Landry puts it, “What sense does it make for a woman betrothed to be married to object to an announcement that she is about to give birth (1:34)?”⁵⁵ Though Landry looks to Fitzmyer,⁵⁶ Brown⁵⁷ and Schaberg⁵⁸ to answer the controversy in relation to virginal conception, the answer also strengthens the parallelism between the births of Jesus and John. First, Mary as a literary character believes the birth to be a physical impossibility, just as Zechariah believed a birth by Elizabeth to be a physical impossibility.⁵⁹ This also echoes the physical impossibility of previous birth narratives, though Mary’s conception is much different. Second, Mary’s objection makes

⁵⁵ Landry, “Narrative Logic in the Annunciation to Mary” 65.

⁵⁶ Specifically he references Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Virginal Conception of Jesus in the New Testament,” *To Advance the Gospel*, (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 56 (originally published in *TS* 34 [1973] 541-75). He also refers to *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*.

⁵⁷ Landry cites both Brown’s *The Birth of the Messiah* and his article “Luke’s Description of the Virginal Conception,” *TS* 35 (1974), 360-63.

⁵⁸ Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*.

⁵⁹ Landry, “Narrative Logic in the Annunciation to Mary,” 72.

sense if she expects the conception to happen immediately or very soon after the announcement of the angel. Immediacy would also be the expectation of the reader, since this was the case with Elizabeth in the previous verses.⁶⁰ Third, Mary's response is not one looked negatively upon by the messenger, like Zechariah's, as is evidenced by the angel's response to her question. An examination of the annunciation to Mary suggests the angel's positive response to Mary is due to the absence of virginal conception in the Old Testament births. Landry writes, "Zechariah can fairly be punished because there is *precedent* for his situation. This has happened before in the OT."⁶¹ The event happening to Mary is markedly different from every other miraculous birth in the Old Testament. Though there are parallels in the story of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, Luke makes sure the reader knows that this birth is greater than the other miraculous births of the Old Testament and in his own writing.

In his answer to Mary, Gabriel makes the parallel himself. "And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren" (1:36). The following verses recount Mary's visit to Elizabeth during her pregnancy. I point this out particularly because, in addition to the preceding argument, Luke very explicitly lets the reader know that a parallel is happening. It is as if Luke is telling his readers, "This is very much like what is happening to Elizabeth, so make the connection!" Thus, when examining other possible uses of parallelism in Luke-Acts, elements similar to those used in the birth narrative should be a proof.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁶¹ Ibid., 76.

3.2.4 Luke 1:39-2:52 Analysis

The Magnificat, Mary's song of praise during her visit to Elizabeth, has its predecessor in the Old Testament in Hannah's hymn of praise to God after the birth of Samuel. What is worthy of note is that, in the chronology of events, here is the only place that Luke differs from the Old Testament story. Rather than wait until after the birth to have Mary respond in praise, he does so beforehand while Mary is still pregnant.⁶² For our purposes, it is not worth going into the Old Testament "reminisces of biblical language"⁶³ in the Magnificat of Mary and Benedictus of Zechariah. The expressions of praise are poetic in nature, and though there are similarities to the praise of Hannah, the specifics are not necessary in understanding Luke's narrative purposes since the action of praise is present.

The rest of the story of John the Baptist's birth continues the same chronology as after his birth as do the Old Testament stories. There is the event of his birth (Luke 1:57; Gen. 21:1; Judg. 13:24; 1 Sam. 1:20), echoing Genesis his circumcision (Luke 1:59; Gen. 21:4), the naming of the son (Luke 1:60-63; Gen. 21:3; Judg. 13:24; 1 Sam. 1:20), and the end of the birth narrative which mentions the child's growth (Luke 1:80; Gen. 21:8; Judg. 13:24-25; 1 Sam. 1:24, 2:11). John's complete narrative is finished before the birth of Jesus, whose birth and subsequent events are fleshed out in more detail than that of John.⁶⁴

The events are present in the Jesus narrative. Jesus is born, there is a reaction of praise beyond that of Mary in the angels and shepherds (Luke 2:6-20), there is mention of his

⁶² Brown suggests that the Magnificat was placed here due to two stages of Lucan composition, and that "the Magnificat was added to an already composed Lucan narrative." For Brown's full argument see Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 339-341; 346-355.

⁶³ Ringgren, "Luke's Use of the Old Testament," 227-35.

⁶⁴ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 95.

circumcision (2:21), the son is named Jesus (2:21), and the mention of the boy's growth concludes the narrative (2:40). As noted, the greater length given to the birth of Jesus shows the superiority of Jesus over John. "Just as the pronouncement to Mary of Jesus' birth was superior to that given to Zechariah about John the Baptist's birth, and just as Jesus' conception was more wonderful, so was his birth. John's birth was marked by his father Zechariah's prophecy. Jesus' birth was marked by a theophany and angelic chorus, a historical dating, and the use of several Christological titles."⁶⁵ When Luke uses his parallels that involve Jesus, it demonstrates superiority in this instance not only over John, but over those born in the Old Testament. This point is made obvious thanks to Luke paralleling himself here with a very noticeable length difference. Does this mean that all of Luke's parallels display superiority? This does not seem to be the case, as is evidenced with John in Luke 1,⁶⁶ when Jesus himself is not involved. Therefore superiority as a mark of parallelism should not be assumed immediately when Luke uses it as a literary device.

3.3 Observations on Birth Narrative Parallels

Three facets in particular seem important in cases where Luke deliberately constructs parallels. First, there is a *clear identification of character*. Elizabeth and Mary are both implied to be the archetype of a barren woman that is a common thread in the Old Testament. The narrative similarities discussed above confirm this. This also applies to their sons, who will go through similar events as did the sons in the Old Testament stories. However, as in Luke's

⁶⁵ Liefeld, "Luke," 104.

⁶⁶ Nothing in John's narrative hints at his superiority to the Old Testament figures after whom he was born, and nothing indicates his mother and father were superior to Old Testament parents in birth narratives.

internal parallels, the characters do not always line up action-for-action. Green writes that Luke “can move easily from character to character in his employment of the Genesis story - thus, for example, Zechariah is like Abraham, but so is Mary; Zechariah is like Sarah, but so is Elizabeth; John is like Isaac and Ishmael; and so on.”⁶⁷ This demonstrates that the parallels in the birth narrative do not make typological argument or use “fulfillment language.” Brown suggests that “Luke's method is not one of identifying figures in the infancy narrative with OT characters; rather he uses pigments taken from OT narratives to color in the infancy narrative.”⁶⁸ There seems to be much that is vague concerning the purpose of Luke’s Old Testament parallels and his reasons for similarities in characters. Green writes that many scholars have analyzed and examined Luke’s technique, but “the significance of these observations has not always been explored adequately.”⁶⁹

The parallels in Luke 1-2 have been identified and commented on,⁷⁰ but Luke’s ultimate aim is not as obvious as in other passages that parallel Old Testament passages. Part of this may be the multiplicity of birth narratives drawn upon rather than a single particular passage. The birth narrative is a particular type of story with an identifiable pattern that Luke follows. It may be the character-driven nature of his single passage parallels elsewhere becomes peripheral, as Luke does not have the luxury of comparing only a single passage due to the reappearance of birth narratives throughout the Old Testament. Green argues that, “Luke 1-2 has become a kind

⁶⁷ Green, *Luke*, 344.

⁶⁸ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 451. It is interesting to point out that, as much as Brown spends writing about the Lukan infancy narratives and their parallels, that the exact meaning or purpose of Luke’s method is left vague, and even Green right that the “significance of these observations has not always been explored accurately.

⁶⁹ Green, *Luke*, 345.

⁷⁰ For more, see Rene Laurentin, *The Truth of Christmas: Beyond the Myths. The Gospels of the Infancy of Christ* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s, 1986), 43-60; Roddick, “Birth Narratives in Genesis and Luke,” 343-48.

of echo chamber for the interplay of ‘the old stories’ with Luke's own story. Hence, we have much less need to clarify to the exclusion of other probable candidates the precise source of an allusion in this Lukan material... than to appreciate the many voices from the past given a fresh hearing.”⁷¹ Despite these claims, there is room for specificity concerning character. Luke identifies John as a successor to Old Testament prophets within the narrative (Luke 1:16-17, 76-79) by the words of his characters, and his miraculous birth identifies him with prominent Old Testament figures. Luke is demonstrating that John himself is a prominent figure and prophet. Jesus is another prominent figure, but the superiority of his greatness is also made known within the narrative by the words of characters present in it (1:32-33, 76-78; 2:11). The miraculous birth declares his importance just as those born in Old Testament birth narratives were important.

Second, *Luke uses specific narrative passages to parallel specific narrative passages.* The genre specifics are vital, as Luke's usage of non-narrative Old Testament passages are not part of a narrative parallel. Though there is an instance of prophecy in the birth of John (Luke 1:17), it is used as a prophetic fulfillment rather than a parallel to Luke's narrative. The genre of Old Testament narrative should not be mislabelled as prophetic in order to fit a theological point in Lukan writing, and he does not appear to do so himself. In the next case study Luke does include prophecy as a part of his narrative and he explicitly clarifies its usage. When Luke does not do so, the assumption can be misleading in the interpretation of Luke's text.

Third, *there is similar narrative movement to the Old Testament narrative in which there is a parallel.* So far, in both of Luke's birth narratives, he keeps the chronology of the mention of a woman unable to have children, a divine announcement (with its elements), and an initial

⁷¹ Green, *Luke*, 346. Also John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California), 1981.

reaction by the one who is given the announcement. The birth narratives reveal Luke's obvious consistency with chronology due to the outlined pattern he follows. Though some events deviate slightly, as is seen in Mary's story, the actual order of events very closely parallels those of the other birth narratives. As with character identification, Luke does not restrict himself to a rigid retelling of the Old Testament story, but leaves room for revision within the broad chronological scope.

4. Case Study #3: Jesus and Elijah/Elisha in Luke 4 and 7

In Luke 4:24, Jesus speaks of how “no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.” In the following verses, 4:25-30, he mentions two miracles - one of Elijah and one of Elisha. The raising of a widow’s son, done by Elijah, and the healing of Naaman the Syrian from a distance, done by Elisha, were done in places which were certainly not the hometowns of either prophet. Ironically, or perhaps suitably, Jesus is speaking in his hometown of Nazareth, and is subsequently driven out of his hometown by those listening to him say these very things. Though earlier John the Baptist was identified with Elijah, here that identification is given to Jesus.⁷²

Luke does not end his evoking of these Old Testament prophets in Luke 4. In Luke 7, Jesus himself performs two miracles, back to back, that are more than just similar to those mentioned in Luke 4. The parallels here, as in the birth narrative, are somewhat complex. They involve multiple characters in multiple passages. Luke hearkens not only to the Old Testament, but also makes another intertextual connection within his own writing. As Jesus is compared to both Elijah and Elisha, we can see more clearly how Luke uses Old Testament narrative in his writings. However, it must be noted how markedly different the use of parallels is here than in the birth narratives, though in structure rather than method. The main differences are the use of prophecy, which happens because Jesus himself interprets prophecy within the narrative, and the relation between Luke 4 and 7. Still, Luke’s method is consistent with other parallels despite the complexity.

⁷² Due to the focus on narrative parallel, this paper does not examine in detail the relation of John the Baptist to Elijah. For more on the differing views of Jesus and John’s relation to Elijah in Luke-Acts, see Markus Ohler, “The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God,” *JBL* 118.3 (Autumn, 1999), 461-76; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*; J. G. Kelly, “Lucan Christology and the Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” *JES* 21 (1984), 688-708; Miller, “Elijah, John, and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.”

4.1 Jesus and Elijah/Elisha in Luke 4:16-30

To understand the parallels of Elijah and Elisha in Luke 7, we must first look to Luke 4:16-30.⁷³ Jesus begins⁷⁴ his ministry in Galilee and then comes to his hometown Nazareth, where he reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue. From Isaiah 61:1-2, he reads, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). Siker writes that there are two fulfillments of prophecy in 4:16-30. “The first is the Isaiah reading itself, which Jesus explicitly proclaims to be fulfilled in 4:21b.”⁷⁵ In verse 21, Jesus says, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,” showing Jesus himself interprets the prophecy as fulfilled. Siker goes on, “It also finds fulfillment when in 4:25-27 Jesus refers to the Elijah/Elisha stories as the interpretive guide to the Isaiah reading.”⁷⁶ This, according to Siker, is all part of the first prophetic fulfillment. As Jesus discusses that he is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah, he references the stories of Elijah and Elisha, for they previously filled a prophetic role. Luke does not yet draw out the full comparison between them, instead waiting to parallel the two

⁷³ The source of this passage has general consensus in Mark 6:1-6 with some additions by Luke. See Jeffery S. Siker, “‘First to the Gentiles:’ A Literary Analysis of Luke 4:16-30,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111.1 (1992), 74-75; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 526-28; R. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (ed. James Marsh; New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 32.

⁷⁴ Siker cites the broad agreement that Luke 4:16-30 functions as “programmatic” for Luke and “anticipates the Gentile mission so central to Acts” in “First to the Gentiles,” 75. This study does not cover the programmatic nature of the passage or the Jew/Gentile relation that may be implied in the Elijah and Elisha stories, but for a few differing views on the subject outside of Siker, see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 524-40; R. Tannehill, “The Mission of Jesus According to Luke IV 16-30,” *Jesus in Nazareth* (ed. W. Eltetter; New York: de Gruyter, 1972), 51-75; H. Anderson, “Broadening Horizons: The Rejection of Nazareth Pericope of Luke 4:16-30 in Light of Recent Critical Trends,” *Int* 18 (1964) 259-75; C.A. Evans, “Luke’s Use of the Elijah/Elisha Narratives,” *JBL* 106 (1987), 75-83; R. L. Brawley, “The Identity of Jesus in Luke 4:16-30 and the Program of Luke-Acts,” *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (SBLMS 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 6-27.

⁷⁵ Siker, “‘First to the Gentiles,” 86.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

characters with Jesus (7:1-17). The second fulfillment is pronounced and fulfilled in the passage, the pronouncement in verse 24, that “no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.” Siker writes that the prophecy is one “the Nazareth congregation is quick to fulfill in 4:28-30 by seeking to kill Jesus in violent opposition to his interpretation of 4:18-19 and 21b in 4:25-27. They treat him as a false prophet.”⁷⁷ With these possible fulfillments in play, Luke's parallels of prophetic figures in 7:1-17 take on more meaning. When we examine four examples of how Luke uses 7:1-23 to parallel 4:16-30, we will see more clearly how and why Luke chooses to parallel these stories concerning Elijah and Elisha.⁷⁸ Before doing so, the validity of the parallels between Jesus in Luke 7 and the Elijah/Elisha stories found in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 5 must be proven as present.

4.2 Jesus and Elisha Parallels in Luke 7:1-10

In Luke 4:27, he writes “And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” Luke 7:1-10 shares many similarities with the narrative of the cleansing of Naaman by the prophet Elisha.⁷⁹ The story referenced is found in 2 Kings 5, and interestingly involves the prophet Elisha, where the following story in Luke 7 will parallel Elijah. Luke 7:1-10 echoes the story in 2 Kings, and the

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Though Siker examines six parallels in his treatment on Luke 4:16-30, only four have a direct relation to the passages in Kings, and these are the four we will examine later. For the other two read Siker, “First to the Gentiles,” pg. 87.

⁷⁹ See D.A.S. Ravens, “The Setting of Luke’s Account of the Anointing: Luke 7:2-8:3,” *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988), 282-92; T. L. Brodie, “Luke-Acts as an Imitation and Emulation of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative,” *New Views on Luke and Acts* (ed. E. Richard; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990).

stories follow a similar structure. John Shelton names six elements that demonstrate the literary dependence of the two passages.⁸⁰

(1) First, both stories introduce the characters of the commander and the servant.⁸¹ Like the high ranking of the centurion in Luke, Naaman was “commander of the army of the king of Syria (2 Kings 5:1). The centurion in Luke has a highly valued slave who is ill. However, in the 2 Kings story, Naaman is both commander and slave, and is called δούλος both by himself and the king of Syria in 2 Kings 5:6, 17, and 18. Naaman is the slave who is sick as well as the commander in the narrative. The slaves in both stories are held in high esteem (2 Kings 5:1; Luke 7:2) by their masters, thus the desire for them to be healed. Luke, as he does elsewhere, mixes elements and character roles in his parallels. Shelton writes, “Luke has to juggle roles a bit to accomplish a detail by detail match. Naaman is sick, the centurion is not. However, this switching of details is a technique not uncommon to ancient literature in general and Luke specifically (e.g. conflation, the roles of Elijah and Moses in the character of Jesus or dispersion, the role of Elijah found in both John the Baptist and Jesus).”⁸²

(2) Second, there is a “speaking and hearing about the healing prophet.”⁸³ In 2 Kings, there is lengthy description of how both Naaman and the king come to hear of the prophet Elisha from a slave girl. Luke shortens this element and rids the story of the lengthy aside by simply

⁸⁰ John Shelton, “The Healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5. 1-19) as a Central Component for the Healing of the Centurion’s Slave (Luke 7. 1-10),” *The Elijah-Elisha Narrative in the Composition of Luke* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Joseph Verheyden; London: T&T Clark, 2015), 65-87.

⁸¹ Shelton names a few scholars who consider the category of Naaman and the centurion to be similar, including David Ravens in *Luke and the Restoration of Israel* (JSNTSup 119; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 130, Robert Tannehill in *Luke* (ANTC: Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 123-24, and Joel B. Green in *Gospel of Luke*, 284.

⁸² Shelton, “The Healing of Naaman,” 79.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

saying, “when the centurion heard about Jesus” (Luke 7:3). Though the detail may be trivial, it goes unmentioned in the telling of the story in Matthew 8:5-13, showing yet another instance of Luke’s attempts to stay true to the Old Testament narrative.

(3) Third, there is a request from a third party to heal the slave. The king of Syria in 2 Kings sends a letter to the king of Israel asking for the healing of Naaman. Though he does not refer to Elisha directly, the king of Syria sends the letter, gifts, and Naaman himself in hopes that the king of Israel would lead Naaman to the prophet they heard of from the slave girl. Likewise in Luke, the centurion sends “elders of the Jews” to ask for healing. Shelton points out that “the concept of sending off for a healing is exclusive to these two passages.”⁸⁴ Even Matthew’s and John’s accounts of the story in Luke do not include the sending of a third party on the slave’s behalf. Both third parties also refer to the one they want to be healed as a δοῦλος, (2 Kings 5:6; Luke 7:3), and they each use a means of persuasion. In 2 Kings the incentive is gifts of talents of silver, shekels of gold, and clothing (2 Kings 4:5). In Luke, the elders appeal to what the centurion has done because of his love of Israel and his building of a synagogue for them (Luke 7:5).⁸⁵

(4) The fourth parallel is that there is a prescription given. The location where the prescription is given is similar. Naaman is stopped outside the house Elisha is staying in, and the messengers from the centurion stop Jesus “when he was not far from the house” (Luke 7:6). During this meeting, a messenger gives Naaman Elisha's prescription for healing, and the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 80. Also Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel*, 130; David W. Pao and Eckhart J. Schnabel, “Luke,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 299.

⁸⁵ John Benjamin Shelton, “Naaman and the Centurion (2 Kings 5 and Luke 7),” *Masters of Arts*, Mary Immaculate College: University of Limerick. (2013), 126-27.

centurion tells Jesus his prescription for healing his servant. The word *λόγος* is used to describe each prescription. The centurion believes that Jesus can heal the servant simply by his word, even though he is miles away from the sick man. Likewise, Naaman's servants convince him that the *λόγος* of Elisha will heal him if he obeys it (2 Kings. 5:13). The prescription is in what Shelton calls a "hypothetical scenario."⁸⁶ In essence, there is a hypothetical description of how the healing will be done and the convincing of a character to carry out the scenario. Naaman's servants convince him to dip in the river as Elisha said, and the centurion convinces Jesus to heal the servant from a distance. Again, this is an instance where there is a reversal in who says what, with Luke having Jesus the healer as the one "convinced" rather than the one being healed as in 2 Kings.⁸⁷ Each healing is completed from a distance, with the healer miles away from the one he heals.

Worth noting is the true uniqueness of a character in the Old Testament performing multiple healings. Though there are times where a character performs a healing, those characters are not typically defined by their healing miracles. Shelton writes, "I think that many people have grown up under the assumption that the Bible is overflowing with healing thaumaturges. yet, up until Elijah/Elisha, there was not another (other than God) who was connected with powerful healing and resurrections... All throughout the OT, other than Elijah and Elisha, there is a complete lack of a person known for his/her healing power."⁸⁸ This observation adds weight to

⁸⁶ Shelton, *Naaman and the Centurion*, 130.

⁸⁷ Shelton also includes under the prescription section that there are three commands in each story that are followed. For more, see *Naaman and the Centurion*, p. 131

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 125-26.

the argument that in these back-to-back parallels concerning healing and resurrection, Luke would be pointing to the only other characters who were associated with them.

(5) 2 Kings 5:15 and Luke 7:9 share a similar structure of declaration. Regarding the declaration itself, Shelton provides four elements of this structure. The elements are: “(1) statement of setting, (2) indicator of declaration, (3) negative contents, (4) and location.”⁸⁹ Before the declaration, the position of the declarer is described using a form of στρέφω, and the audience of the declaration is described by each writer, setting the stage for the declaration. Second, the indication is made by each, though they are different. 2 Kings uses ἰδοῦ δέ, where Luke uses λέγω ὑμῖν. Third, the negative contents, are the way in which the declaration is phrased. Naaman says, “I now that there is *no* God in all the earth but in Israel.” Likewise, Jesus gives the declaration that “*not* even in Israel have I found such faith.” Finally, the locations stand in opposition to each other. Where Naaman is a man outside of Israel who has faith in the God of Israel, Jesus shows that inside Israel no one has as much faith as the Gentile centurion.⁹⁰

(6) The final parallel in the two stories concerns the return home. Although initially the parallel may not seem to have much weight, the passages in Matthew and John do not describe a journey home. Luke makes sure to keep consistency with the story of Elisha rather than solely the source of the story. Luke distills the return home to a single sentence, though in 2 Kings it lasts from 5:15-19. The return “to the house,” a phrase found in both narratives, concluded the journeying motif found in each story. “There is travel in the introductions, travel to request from the healers, and travel to a house for the healing. The journey is cut short for the declarations and

⁸⁹ Ibid., 135.

⁹⁰ Larrimore C. Crockett, “Luke 4:25-27 and Jewish-Gentile Relations in Luke-Acts,” *JBL* 88 (July 1969), 182.

there is a journey back home. The journeying motif (seen also in the overall plot of the Gospel of Luke) ties each passage together and the two texts closer together.”⁹¹

The combination of elements above show quite clearly that Luke is paralleling the account of Elisha healing Naaman in 2 Kings 5 with Jesus’ healing of the centurion’s slave. Components that signify similarities according to Shelton include “genre, theme, style, plot, motifs, structure, order, and wording.”⁹² With the validity of the parallels of Luke’s first story proven, we turn to the validity of parallels in the second.

4.3 Jesus and Elijah Parallels in Luke 7:11-17

A briefer look at the following story in Luke 7 reveals Luke parallels back-to-back, though in opposite order, the stories mentioned in Luke 4. In 4:25-26, Jesus recounts how there were many widows in Israel during the three year and six month drought found in 1 Kings 17-18. Though there were many widows, “Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in a land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow” (4:26). In Luke 7:11-17, we see Jesus’ own story with a widow and her dead son. On the outskirts of Galilee, in a town called Nain,⁹³ Jesus performs the miracle. Jesus has compassion on the woman (7:13) and says to her while touching the bier, “Young man, I say to you arise” (7:14). The widow’s son comes back to life, and the people say “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people” (7:17).

⁹¹ Shelton, *Naaman and the Centurion*, 137.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹³ Craig Evans, in the *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew-Luke* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2003), 171-172, suggests that Nain refers to the ancient city of Shunem, which was the city in which the woman in 2 Kings 4 lived. However, as this story is referring to Elijah’s miracle, the connection is unlikely.

Brodie breaks down the parallels into five sections.⁹⁴ One of the five sections he relates to the story of Jesus healing the centurion's slave,⁹⁵ but we will focus on the other four.

(1) After a brief introductory phrase, the settings are described (1 Kings 17:17; Luke 7:11-12). In 1 Kings 17:10 Elijah arises and goes to *πυλῶνα τῆς πόλεως*, ("the gate of the city) where he meets the widow. Likewise, Jesus meets the widow *πύλη τῆς πόλεως*, at the gate of the city. Each story includes a widow and her dead son. The widow in Elijah's story lives alone with only her son (1 Kings 17:17), and Luke says the son in Jesus' story was "the only son of her mother" (Luke 7:12). Luke sets the stage in parallel with 1 Kings in both location and character.

(2) The next section is the performing of the miracle and can be found in 1 Kings 17:19-21 and Luke 7:13-14.⁹⁶ Elijah prays to the Lord to heal the dead son. To perform his miracle, he stretches himself out on the child and pleaded to the Lord for his life to return. Jesus performs his healing with words, "Young man I say to you arise." Brodie makes the parallel between the "compassion" Jesus felt and the possible implicit compassion seen in Elijah's emotional outburst.

(3) 1 Kings 17:23 and Luke 7:15 show the restoration of life to the son. Each text has a direct correspondence to the "prophetic words" which preceded it. "Elijah prayed that the soul might return, *and it was so.*" Jesus commanded the young man to rise up, *and the dead man sat*

⁹⁴ T. L. Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 2004), 302.

⁹⁵ Brodie compares the widow's admission of sinfulness in 1 Kings 17:18 to the centurion's sense of unworthiness in Luke 7:6-7. Some linguistic similarities and the close connection with the stories in Luke 7:1-10 and 7:11-17 make an interesting case, but the heart of the sinfulness/unworthiness parallel is difficult to justify, and the parallel would be outside of Luke's normal methods. Brodie wishes to have every part of the OT story to have a NT counterpart, but Luke's inclination to refuse exact parallels allows for some absences. See Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament*, 303-04.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 304-05. Brodie's sectional arrangements are very helpful, but as mentioned in footnote 34 he is more ready to make conclusions about parallels than the view taken in this paper. Therefore the parallels above echo Brodie's structure for separating the narratives, but not always the actual parallels he views as present.

up.”⁹⁷ In both stories the dead son vocally makes his revival known (“cried out” in 1 Kings 17:22 and “began to speak” in Luke 7:15). Then both Jesus and Elijah give the risen son “back to his mother.” This phrase in Luke 7:15, ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν τῇ μητρὶ, is word for word the phrase used in the LXX in 1 Kings 17:23.

(4) 1 Kings 17:24 and Luke 7:16-17 end each story with a proclamation of the status of the one who performed the miracle. The widow declares Elijah to be “a man of God” (1 Kings 17:24) and the crowd surrounding Jesus declared him to be “a great prophet” (Luke 7:16).⁹⁸

This event shares many elements with 1 Kings 17:8-24.⁹⁹ The combination of these elements make it very clear that Luke is referring, at times verbatim, to the miracle of the prophet Elijah. More so than the previous parallel, Luke makes use of every part of the Old Testament narrative. “Every element of the Old Testament text has been incorporated in some form into the New Testament... It follows that Luke appears to have made systematic use of the Old Testament text, he also used other sources.”¹⁰⁰ But why does Luke decide to mirror the two incidents? A return to Luke 4 makes Luke’s purposes become clearer, and tells us even more about how Luke uses Old Testament narrative. There are four connections to be discussed between Luke 4 and Luke 7.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 306.

⁹⁸ Evans, *Bible Knowledge Background Commentary*, 172.

⁹⁹ See T.L. Brodie, “Towards Unraveling Luke’s Use of the Old Testament: Luke 7:11-17 as an *Imitatio* of 1 Kings 17:17-24,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986), 247-67; G. J. Steyn, “Intertextual Similarities Between Septuagint Pretexts and Luke’s Gospel,” *Neotestamentica* 24.2 (1990), 240-41; Murray J. Harris, “The Dead are Restored to Life: Miracles of Revivification in the Gospels,” *Gospel Perspectives, The Miracles of Jesus* (vol. 6; eds. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 299-300.

¹⁰⁰ Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament*, 307.

4.4 Connections Between Luke 4 and Luke 7

(1) In 4:18-19, there are two things prophesied that Jesus fulfills in Luke 7. The first is that Jesus has been anointed “to proclaim good news to the poor” (4:18), and the second that he has been sent “to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (4:18-19). In 7:22, Jesus himself says that this has been fulfilled to messengers from John the Baptist. Jesus claims in this verse, in order to mirror the prophecy in vv.18-19, that “the blind receive their sight” and “the poor have good news preached to them” (7:22). Also included in Jesus’ claims are that “lepers are cleansed” and “the dead are raised up.” Jesus just fulfilled these claims in the previous verses by healing the centurion’s servant (7:1-10) and raising up a widow’s dead son (7:11-17).

(2) Luke 4:25-26 says, “But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.” A clear reference to 1 Kings 17, Luke mirrors the Elijah narrative in Luke 7:11-17, as shown above.

(3) In Luke 4:27, Jesus states, “And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed but only Naaman the Syrian.” Another clear reference to the Old Testament, this time to 2 Kings 5, finds its counterpart in Luke 7:1-10. Jesus enacts his own healing from a distance to a Gentile. Though the Elijah and Elisha stories are separated by many chapters in 1 and 2 Kings, Luke puts them together. Likewise in Luke 7, though presenting them inversely in order, the miracles of Jesus that parallels the Old Testament

miracles are presented back-to-back. Siker writes, “as 4:25-27 functions on one level as the fulfillment of 4:18-19, so 7:1-17 functions on another level as the fulfillment of 4:18-19 enacted in the ministry of Jesus.”¹⁰¹

(4) Though the elements of 4:18-27 and 7:1-22 are paralleled with inverse order, both sections end on a similar note. Luke 4:28-30 with the crowd surrounding Jesus becoming filled with anger at his words, driving him out of the town and hoping to throw him down a cliff. In Luke 7:23, the crowd is not angry, but Jesus says something to John’s messengers concerning the same theme. He says, “blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” Where the earlier crowd became offended at Jesus proclaiming himself to be the fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus himself says that the one who is not offended by his prophetic fulfillment will be blessed.

4.5 Observations on Jesus/Elijah Parallels in Luke 4 and 7

There are five observations to be drawn from this case study. First, the notion of identifying a parallel character with the Old Testament narrative stays constant. Just as Mary and Elizabeth were the parallels of mothers like Sarah and Rebekah, Jesus is the parallel to both Elijah and Elisha. The stories also include other characters that do the same, though as examined above their actions are sometimes performed by others in the story. The widow and her son in 2 Kings match those in Luke 7, and Naaman matches at different points in different ways both the centurion and his ill slave. So far, according to these two case studies, Luke does not parallel a narrative unless he does so with a character parallel in mind. The notion of character is a standout characteristic in Luke’s methodology.

¹⁰¹ Siker, “First to the Gentiles,” 88.

The notion of character is not completely rigid, but rather can be quite complex. This is common with the other parallels we have analyzed so far, and Green agrees that the variation in character parallel is a characteristic of Luke. Green writes, “As is typical in intertextuality, so in this instance the interplay between the Elijah-account and the present pericope registers both similarities and variation.”¹⁰² Jesus, in back-to-back stories, is compared to two separate Old Testament characters, Elijah and Elisha. This is similar to how Mary and Elizabeth both seemed to be compared to the multiple women involved in birth narratives of the Old Testament. The complexity of character parallelism is made very noticeable in how Luke portrays the centurion and the slave in Luke 7 in comparison to Naaman. Though the centurion is in a similar military advisor position as Naaman, he is not the one being healed, but instead his slave. Actions and events sometimes shift in the Lukan narratives. This may be due to Luke’s desire to adhere to the facts, or in some cases may be to make a theological point or counterpoint to the story told in the Old Testament.

Second, Luke again uses narrative to parallel narrative. There is some navigating to do with prophecy in Luke 4, but Luke does not use the prophecy in 4:18-19 as a parallel. Brodie points out that, though some point to Greco-Roman biographies,¹⁰³ the narrative parallels are primarily from the Bible. Though it may be true “that the organization of Luke’s work into two parts conforms, to some degree, to the organization of various Greco-Roman biographies, it does not seem to be from these biographies that Luke drew his basic plan or model. Such dependence on Greco-Roman models, if it is present, is best seen as a complement to a more basic

¹⁰² Green, *Luke*, 868.

¹⁰³ Charles H. Talbert, *What is a Gospel?: The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

dependence - that on a narrative from the Bible.”¹⁰⁴ Shelton argues for an even more specific parallel of genre in Luke 7:1-10. "Both stories belong to the broader genre of prose/narrative; they also belong to a sub-genre of miracle stories; furthermore, they belong to an even smaller sub-genre of declaration focused miracle stories.”¹⁰⁵ Luke stays consistent with his other parallels, making them within the genre of narrative.

Third, there is consistency with the birth narratives in that there is a matter of chronology, perhaps even more so. In both stories the order of events, with slight differences, stays the same. The examination of the structures of each story proves that Luke is very attentive to the chronology of the Old Testament narratives and models his narratives so that the chronologies match. Shelton agrees that the slight movements do not discount Luke’s parallels elsewhere.

“The major points of structure and plot in 2 Kgs 5:1-19 are followed by Luke. Each division has a counterpart in the other text. The characters are introduced, the problem is presented, a solution is requested, a prescription is given, and a declaration is announced. As mentioned before, Luke has the climax in the same location as 2 Kgs does. Where other sections are distilled, adjusted, or moved, the declarations (2 Kgs 5:15 and Luke 7:9a) are markedly similar in size, theme, and position. Minor points of structure and plot, however, can be moved. The best example is the different locations of the healing—which allows for more emphasis to be placed on the centurion and his declaration.”¹⁰⁶

Luke does not seem to mix up the order of a narrative and place them in random order.

Fourth, unlike the birth narratives, the parallels here serve as a *representation of prophetic fulfillment*. It is very important to note the explicitness with which Luke makes this known. He starts 4:16-30 with Jesus himself reading from the prophet Isaiah, after which Jesus

¹⁰⁴ Brodie, “Luke-Acts as an Imitation and Emulation of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative,” 85. It is important to note that Brodie is not here speaking only of the stories in Luke 7:1-17, but also other specific that he believes parallel Jesus with Elijah and Elisha. These include Luke 7:36-50 and 9:51-56.

¹⁰⁵ Shelton, *Naaman and the Centurion*, 140.

¹⁰⁶ Shelton, *Naaman and the Centurion*, 139.

says that what the prophecy says has been fulfilled. Jesus “identified his baptism as the anointing of a regal prophet (4:18-19), his fate as that of the prophets (4:24), and the character of his ministry as continuous with that of Elijah and Elisha (4:25-27).”¹⁰⁷ Luke 7, mirroring the fulfillment of implied in 4:25-27, confirms that Jesus is a prophet like Elijah and Elisha who has fulfilled this prophecy. The fulfillment is confirmed yet again when, directly after the Elijah/Elisha parallel narratives, Jesus confirms his prophetic deeds, which mirror those mentioned in chapter 4. We can see that Luke quotes the prophecy and then proclaims its fulfillment all from the mouth of Jesus himself, giving further validity that this is part of Luke’s purpose in the mention of prophetic figures. This case study proves that Luke *does* use Old Testament narrative parallels as a means to *represent* prophetic fulfillment, but also that he makes it *explicitly clear* that he is doing so.¹⁰⁸

Fifth, like the birth narratives, the parallel serves to show the superiority of Jesus.¹⁰⁹ Where Old Testament narrative births were briefly mentioned, the birth of Jesus was heralded and described in detail for many verses. Though not demonstrated here by length, the prophetic work of Jesus is portrayed by Luke as far better than that of his Old Testament counterparts. For example, Elisha makes Naaman go through a seven-fold ritual cleansing for a non-life threatening disease, where Jesus merely speaks to heal a man near death. “These changes allow for a more dramatic and amazing healing by Jesus.”¹¹⁰ Elijah must plead in prayer with God that

¹⁰⁷ Green, *Luke*, 874.

¹⁰⁸ Paul J. Achtemeier in “The Lucan Perspective on the Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch,” *JBL* 94(4) (1975), 547-62, refutes that Luke presents these miracles as a means of prophetic fulfillment. Though it would help my argument, he does not give much evidence for his conclusion, and thereby I am not convinced of his argument.

¹⁰⁹ Siker, “First to the Gentiles,” 89. Green, *Acts*, 869.

¹¹⁰ Shelton, *Naaman and the Centurion*, 139.

the dead son of the widow be brought back to life. Jesus simply speaks to the dead son. This displays not only his prophetic power, but Green suggests it may also equate Jesus with God. “Jesus is thus shown to be more than a prophet; indeed, the narrator refers to him as ‘Lord’ in v. 13, and in his authoritative word through which the young man is brought back to life Jesus the Lord fulfills the role performed by the Lord God in 1 Kings 17:21-22.”¹¹¹ Luke implies Christology through Jesus’ superiority to Old Testament figures, in this particular case through the immediacy of his healing power.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Green, *Luke*, 869.

¹¹² This case study was restricted to Luke 4 and 7, but there may be other parallels between the prophetic ministry of Jesus and Elijah and Elisha. For more, see Evans, “Luke’s Use of the Elijah/Elisha Narratives”; B.F. Lindar’s, “Elijah, Elisha, and the Gospel of Miracles,” *Miracles* (ed. C.F.D. Moule; London: Mowbray, 1965), 63-79; Miller, “Elijah, John, and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke,” 611-22.

5. Case Study # 4: Jesus and Moses in the Transfiguration in Luke

9:28-36

Closest in content to the Pentecost/Sinai parallels is Luke's account of the transfiguration. This story has direct ties to Moses, as he appears as one of the two figures Jesus converses with on the mountain. Many commentators and scholars have examined the relations between Moses and Jesus, including Luke's use of the Pentateuch in these verses, and the conclusions they have drawn vary drastically. Some find a great amount of parallels or allusions to Moses on Sinai,¹¹³ where others see none or almost no parallels to Moses and Sinai.¹¹⁴ This is perhaps the most telling case study for our examination of whether or not there are Sinai references in Acts 2. Like some scholarly opinions on Acts 2, the transfiguration story reveals opinions on Luke's use of Exodus, the character of Moses, Mt Sinai, and theophanic language. A look at scholarly opinion and a comparison to the three previous case studies will help clarify Luke's purpose in this passage and ultimately in Acts 2.

¹¹³ Scholars who point to the Sinai parallels in the Synoptic gospel accounts of the transfiguration include Ulrich W. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness: The Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and its Basis in the Biblical Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub., 2009), 111-119; S.E. Johnson, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Adam & Black, 1960), 156-58; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 99-101; and W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew II* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 685-86; A.D. Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story and Jewish Christian Controversy* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 1996), 42-49.

¹¹⁴ Scholars who see very little Moses-Sinai typology and parallels in Synoptic transfiguration accounts include R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1964), 652; A. Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Robert & Scott, 1909), 238; W.C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 183-85.

5.1 Moses and Jesus Parallels in the Transfiguration in Matthew and Mark

A brief overview of the parallels some see in Matthew and Mark are worth analyzing before we turn to Luke, especially with the Markan account likely acting as source material for Luke.¹¹⁵ A. D. Moses lists eight parallels between Moses and Sinai in the Mark and Matthew accounts.

First, there is a similar phrase of time in both accounts. “The unusually precise time reference καὶ μετὰ ἡμέρας ἕξ in Mark 9.2 and Matthew 17.1 (καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέρας ἕξ) is said to recall Exodus 24.16-17, where for six days the cloud covered Mount Sinai, and on the seventh day Yahweh called Moses out of the midst of the cloud.”¹¹⁶ However, many scholars do not see parallelism with Exodus 24. The six days may simply be telling the chronology between Jesus’ teaching and the transfiguration.¹¹⁷ Others suggest that the phrase could imply that the transfiguration occurred on the seventh day, the sabbath.¹¹⁸

Second, both events happen on a mountain. Though there is a similar setting, the mention of the mountain is not specific enough to refer to Sinai. Moses and Elijah may have experienced theophanic revelations on Sinai and Horeb, but that should not be taken as strong evidence for a typology or parallelism by Luke. Hutton writes, “The best evidence for such a typological

¹¹⁵ Keener notes that Mark and Q as a source for Luke is generally agreed upon. Keener, *Acts*, 92; also Green, *Luke*, 266-67; Johnson, *Acts*, 3-5; Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 61.

¹¹⁶ A. D. Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 43. On this point also see B. W. Bacon, “After Six Days,” *HTR* 8 (1915), 94-95; W. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 317-318; R. McCurley, “‘And After Six Days’ (Mark 9:2): A Semitic Literary Device,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93(1) (1974), 67-81.

¹¹⁷ W. C. Braithwaite, “The Teaching of the Transfiguration,” *ExpTim* 17 (1905-1906), 372-73; Johnson, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 156; Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness*, 111-12.

¹¹⁸ A. E. Burn, “The Transfiguration,” *ExpTim* 14 (1902-1903), 443; Margaret E. Thrall, “Elijah and Moses in Mark’s Account of the Transfiguration,” *NTS* 16 (1969-70), 311.

linkage is the fact that 2 Pet 1:18 interprets the mountain site as ‘the holy mountain’ (2 Pet. 1:18, τῷ ἁγίῳ ὄρει). However, such language is too general to be convincing, and certainly the reference in Mk 9:2 and Mt 17:1 to ‘a lofty mountain’ (ὄρος ὑψηλόν) provides even less help.”¹¹⁹

Third, a cloud overshadows the mountain in both stories (Exod. 24:16; 40:34-35; Mark 9:7). A.D. Moses also points out the major time difference in the cloud theophanies. “In Exod. 24:16 the cloud covered the mountain for six days, and on the seventh day Yahweh called Moses; at the transfiguration the cloud alights only at a specific moment and after they had ascended the mountain.”¹²⁰ The immediacy of the transfiguration theophany when compared to the lengthy Sinai theophany make a connection less likely, especially because cloud theophanies are not restricted to one passage, even appearing multiple times in the Exodus account. Theophanic language and supernatural events on mountains are not particular to Sinai alone, but they also occur on other mountains (1 Kings 18:30-46; 19:11) and in relation to eschatological events, which may be implied here. (Dan. 7:13; Joel 2:1-2)

Fourth, both accounts include a divine voice speaking from the cloud (Exod. 24:16; Mark 9:7). However, where the voice in Exodus 24-34, is directed to Moses, at the transfiguration the voice addresses the disciples, not Jesus. As we have seen in Lukan writing a switch in character actions is common. Nevertheless, the voice does not provide any certain parallels. As we will see later, Luke seems more likely to refer to the voice at Jesus’ baptism than the voice at Sinai.

¹¹⁹ Rodney R. Hutton, “Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration,” *Hebrew Annual Review* 14 (1994), 112.

¹²⁰ A.D. Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 45. McCurley, “‘And After Six Days’ (Mark 9:2): A Semitic Literary Device,” 77-78. McCurley argues that the different function of the temporal phrase “six days” and the difference time of the cloud on the mountain does not hurt the Sinai parallels because both lead to the climax of God speaking from the cloud on the seventh day.

Fifth, Moses is featured in both stories. A.D. Moses writes “if going beyond Exodus 24 to its larger context, in 34:29 the face of Moses shines due to his meeting with God, which may be compared with Matthew’s *καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος* (Mt. 17:2) and Luke’s *τὸ εἶδος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἕτεροω* (Luke 9:29).”¹²¹ As this paper will show, the connection in Exodus 34 seems very likely in the synoptics, and especially in Luke.

Sixth, there is the idea of the leader choosing companions to take with him on the mountain. Where Jesus takes only the three disciples with him on the mountain, Moses takes the seventy elders, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu (Exod. 23:1, 9), and later only Joshua (Exod. 24:13). If there is a parallel here, it is not a specific passage-to-passage parallel outside of the idea that people accompanied their leader on the mountain. Bultmann points out that Moses’ companions did not witness the theophany with Moses in Exodus 24:15-18,¹²² but McCurley argues that the entire Sinai event should be taken into consideration as Moses’ companions witnessed a theophany earlier (Exod. 24:9-11).¹²³

Seventh, the two events contain theophanies. As discussed above, the theophany is not a strict Sinai parallel as discussed in the second and third parallels above.

Eighth, A.D. Moses mentions a couple of other parallels he believes to be less significant. These include a fear motif (Mt. 17:6-7; Exod. 34:30) and the suggestion that the transfiguration cloud (Mark 9:7) recalls the cloud in the wilderness.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 43.

¹²² Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 260.

¹²³ McCurley, “And After Six Days,” 76.

¹²⁴ Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 44.

5.2 Jesus and Moses Parallels in the Transfiguration in Luke 9

Though it is true many elements are similar in the Sinai and transfiguration stories of Matthew and Mark, many of the parallels above are quite possible but also very uncertain. Turning to the transfiguration in Luke, the elements present in Luke's account can be analyzed in light of his parallels in other passages. Outside of the possible parallels above which also appear in Luke's account, some scholars find a myriad of other parallels to make in the Lukan passage. David Moessner argues strongly that the transfiguration story is all part of a Moses typology that permeates not only the transfiguration but also all of chapter 9 and through to chapter 19.¹²⁵ Using the transfiguration story, Moessner argues, "Luke sets forth a fourfold new exodus typology of the prophetic calling of Jesus that conforms closely to that of Moses in Deuteronomy as we have outlined it above. This typology in fact becomes the organizing principle for the form and content of the whole central section."¹²⁶ But is this typology as present as Moessner and others say it is?

In the fourfold Moses typology, Moessner points out four elements in Luke's account that differ from the other synoptic writers' accounts. First, Jesus and Moses both hear words of God from a cloud on the mountain and are called to be the mediators of his message. "Only Luke of the three Synoptists speaks of Jesus transfiguration taking place 'while he was praying' (9:28b,

¹²⁵ Much has been written on the journey of this section of Luke's gospel and whether or not it relates to Moses throughout Deuteronomy. Though there is not time to cover it in this paper, good resources include: David P. Moessner, "Luke 9:1-50: Luke's Preview of the Journey of the Prophet Like Moses of Deuteronomy," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102.4 (1983), 575-605, and *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 45-79; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Composition of Luke, Chapter 9," *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (Ed. Charles H. Talbert; Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1978), 146-47; Robert O'Toole, "Luke's Message in Luke 9:1-50," *CBQ* 49 (1987), 74-89; D. A. S. Ravens, "Luke 9.7-62 and the Prophetic Role of Jesus," *NTS* 36 (1990), 121.

¹²⁶ Moessner, "Luke 9:1-50," 588.

29a); like Moses Jesus is one who speaks directly with God.”¹²⁷ Moessner provides other allusions that he believes proves his point. He compares the mountain “burning with fire” (Deut. 5:23) in Moses’ experience with the spectacle of glowing persons in Luke. A cloud descends and a voice comes from the cloud, which is consistent with theophanies in the narratives of Moses. The three disciples, who are part of the “twelve” and therefore represent the twelve tribes, are a witness to the transfiguration just as the twelve tribes witnessed the revelation of God’s word on the mountain.

Of the many connections made, there is not much that reveals consistency with Luke’s use of the Old Testament in the passages we have discussed. Jesus is identified with Moses, but the identification of other characters in the story would be a muddled conglomeration. The argument that Jesus at prayer matches Moses speaking with God is weak, as Moessner points out in his own footnote. “It may be objected that since Luke alone presents Jesus at prayer in other instances (e.g., 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18) and since Exodus also portrays Moses speaking directly with God (e.g., 19:9-13), this detail does not say very much, if anything at all.”¹²⁸ In an argument for connections to Exodus but not to the extent of Moessner, Rodney Hutton discusses the mention of Jesus going to the mountain to pray. “Luke’s reference to ‘*the mountain*’ whence Jesus goes to pray (9:28) leads the reader to connect this site not with Sinai but rather with the mountain of 6:12 which has no Mosaic connections. In fact, if the mountain represents anything for Luke, it is a place where Jesus can go for prayer in the midst of his encounter with the forces of evil.”¹²⁹ The mention of Jesus’ prayer more likely point to Jesus’ baptism earlier in Luke. In

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., in footnote 56.

¹²⁹ Rodney Hutton, “Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration,” 112.

Luke 3:21-22, Jesus is baptized. After, as he was praying, the Holy Spirit descends on him like a dove. Then a voice from heaven says, “You are my beloved Son: with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22). There are a few similarities between Luke’s account of the baptism and the transfiguration. In the Transfiguration, Jesus was in prayer while he was changed. After the appearance of his face is altered, a voice came from ‘heaven.’ Also, the words “This is my Son” are reiterated in Luke 3:22. The consistency of elements like prayer, the voice, and even the voice’s words make Jesus’ baptism a better candidate of comparison than Moses on Sinai in Exodus 19 and onward. This would also fit in more coherently with Luke’s methods of parallelism, most apparently in his tendency to parallel a single passage.

Second, in his fourfold typology Moessner writes, “From the mountain the persistent stubbornness of the people in not hearkening to this voice is divulged through the twisting of this voice in the image of the molten calf; this defiance in turn illustrates the unwillingness of the people to ‘hear’ the voice from the beginning.”¹³⁰ The disciples on the mount of transfiguration sleep during the remarkable event (Luke 9:32), and see the glory of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah after they have woken up. Then a voice comes from the cloud and the disciples are told to obey Jesus and to “listen to him.” Many believe this points to the people of Israel at Mt. Horeb, who had to be disciplined from a voice in the cloud because of their stubbornness (Deut. 4:36).

Though this may initially seem like a proper allusion, the connection is more of a possibility than a probability. Though Moessner tries to appeal to the passages on either side of the transfiguration story to compare the disciples with the people of Israel,¹³¹ he also explains its

¹³⁰ Moessner, 587.

¹³¹ His argument can be seen in pp. 590-595

rejection. “It may be objected already that this second analogy hardly holds together when it is recalled that in fear of their own lives the Israelites eagerly accepted Moses’ mediation of the divine voice on the mountain in contrast to the halting ambivalence of the disciples, who do not even comprehend the life-and-death matters in the midst at all.”¹³² The confusion of the disciples in comparison with the stubbornness of Israel is a great difference. Luke’s character parallels tend to be very similar in motive and action, but that similarity is not found with the disciples and the people of Israel. Moessner argues that the typology here is “far more fundamental than a specific sequence or episode” and that we need to “penetrate these deeper dimensions.”¹³³ However, in the examples we have seen, Luke tends to be very specific when he references the Old Testament, and it is unlikely that his methods would begin to change so dramatically in this passage.

Though there is not a parallel with other characters, still very present within these verses is a Moses typology. There is a verbal connection with the LXX of Deuteronomy 18:15, which contains the promise of a coming prophet like Moses, and Luke 9:35. God commands that to the prophet “you shall listen” (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε, Deut. 18:15), and at the mount of transfiguration the voice from the cloud commands “listen to him” (αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε, Luke 9:35). What Hutton refers to as the Moses/prophet typology can be found with both the presence of Moses and the “listen to him” that God commands. Hutton writes that this prophet, “when read in the light of the note of non-fulfillment in Deuteronomy 34:10, came eventually to be reserved for the singular eschatological prophet further promised in Mal. 3:1 and 3:23.”¹³⁴

¹³² Ibid., 590.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Hutton, “Moses on the Mount,” 108.

The possible presence of this typology must be filtered through the context. The narrative genre of Sinai discounts its parallel being present, but Deuteronomy 18:15-18 does not present a narrative. Instead, the prophetic promise presented with the words of God through Moses finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.¹³⁵ Luke is not using parallel of a narrative to show the messianic and prophetic fulfillment that Jesus brings in being the “prophet like Moses.” Again, this reduces the likelihood of a Sinai allusion outside of Exodus 34 in the transfiguration narrative. Jesus is like Moses, but the event is not like the entire event at Sinai.

Third, “while Moses is still on the mountain and as he descends is sent on the Exodus, his journey is disclosed to be a suffering journey to death.”¹³⁶ Likewise, the ἔξοδος (“exodus”) which Jesus was “to fulfill in Jerusalem” (9:31) is the substance of Jesus’ conversation with Moses and Elijah. Moessner argues for a typology expressed in the mention of the ἔξοδος. “*Like Moses, then, Jesus’ calling to journey to death is revealed to those on the mountain who would follow behind him to reach the ‘promised land’ of salvation (Deut 10:11; 1:7; Luke 9:22-25 to 32 to 51).*”¹³⁷ This is the outcome seen when presented through the lens of a new exodus/Moses typology.

The presence of a vicarious suffering typology modeled after Moses cannot be seen as anything more than an assumption, albeit a very likely assumption. The word exodus has strong

¹³⁵ Just as John the Baptist is presented as the “prophet like Elijah” who heralds the coming of Jesus (Mal. 3:1, 4:5-6; Luke 3:4-6) and later Luke presents Jesus as the a prophet par excellence in comparison to Elijah (Luke 4:25-27), Jesus is not here merely presented as one who announces the Messiah. He is indeed the actual Messiah, not merely a prophet proclaiming his coming. Citing Bloch, Hutton writes, “The view that the mosaic profit and the exodus messiah were one and the same was likely fostered by the liturgical practice of reading certain texts (namely Exodus and the Song of Solomon) in the synagogue on Passover in a strictly messianic sense” (Hutton, footnote 17 pg. 108).

¹³⁶ Moessner, “Luke 9:1-50,” 587.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 595.

connotations to the Old Testament and to Moses in particular. Each of the three synoptics “lock the transfiguration into the context of the passion prediction,”¹³⁸ which further bolsters the idea of typology. If Luke includes more Moses typology with this concept, he does not do so through narrative parallel. Jesus’ journey to death is much different to that of Moses, and if the ἔξοδος here does indeed mean his death then direct Moses parallels should be far removed. Though parallels are to be looked for, it becomes very easy for parallelomania¹³⁹ to creep in when Luke’s methods are not remembered and held in check. If gleanings from the previous case studies are to be followed, there is Old Testament parallel in the transfiguration story, but to a specific passage rather than a general idea.

Fourth, Moses’ calling “does not effect deliverance for all those who follow him to the promised land but only for the people of the new land.”¹⁴⁰ Perhaps most strangely, Moessner says that Luke is the only one of the Synoptists who “links the figure of a child directly to the mountain of revelation.”¹⁴¹ This is strange because the mount of transfiguration narrative has no mention of a child, and neither to the preceding verses in chapter 9. Instead, he considers what Jesus says in 9:23-25 to be of submissive childlikeness, and that the child in 9:46-47 following the transfiguration represents this as well. Comparing this childlike submission to his desired typology, he writes, “*For just as through Moses’ death the ‘children’ do enter the land of deliverance, so through Jesus’ death the childlike who submit to the prophet like Moses whom God ‘raised up from’ his ‘brethren’ (Acts 3:22a), do receive the blessings the covenant*

¹³⁸ Hutton, “Moses on the Mount,” 114.

¹³⁹ The term “parallelomania” was popularized by Samuel Sandmel in “Parallelomania,” *SBL* 81 (Mar., 1962), 1-13. Sandmel’s concept will be discussed later.

¹⁴⁰ Moessner, “Luke 9:1-50,” 587.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 597.

*promised to Abraham (3:24-25).*¹⁴² The rejection of prophets or messengers of God is most certainly a thread that runs through the Old Testament and can be seen with Moses, but using such as a new exodus typology is again a conjecture that cannot carry much weight. Just as argued above, Luke does not use the Old Testament in such a non-specific way in order to make a point. His Old Testament narrative allusions are intentional and purposeful with a specific passage or passages in mind.

5.3 Jesus and Moses Transfiguration Parallels in Exodus 34

Still, the transfiguration narrative in Luke does indeed seem to have Old Testament narrative parallels that are consistent with Luke's methods elsewhere. The transfiguration of Jesus has parallels to Exodus 34, when Moses went up to speak with God and the glory of God shone on Moses' face after descending the mountain. "The shining of Moses' face is often taken to be the obvious typological antecedent for Matthew's statement that Jesus' face 'shone like the sun' (ἔλαμψεν... ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, Mt. 17:2) as well as for Luke's reference to a change in the appearance of Jesus' face (τὸ εἶδος τοῦ προσώου αὐτοῦ ἕτερον).¹⁴³ There are a few elements that connect the two stories, though the parallels are minimal when compared to the birth narratives or the case study concerning Jesus' parallels to Elijah and Elisha.

First, there are the literary connections. Both Jesus and Moses go up on a mountain and their appearance is radically changed. The skin of Moses' face shone "because he had been talking with God" (Ex. 34:29), Likewise, while Jesus was praying "the appearance of his face

¹⁴² Ibid., 598.

¹⁴³ Hutton, "Moses on the Mount," 110.

was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white” (Luke 9:29). The Marcan account does not include the change in Jesus’ face, but only his clothes. Both Matthew and Luke include the change in Jesus’ face, highlighting the comparison to Moses. Where Mark is uninterested in making a connection between Moses and Jesus in this aspect, the latter two synoptic writers stress this connection.

Second, there are linguistic connections. The use of the verb συλλαλεῖν (“converse with”) is present in both the LXX of Exodus 34:35 and it is also used in all three synoptics during the transfiguration. The word is rarely used, present in the Old Testament only on five occasions (Ex. 34:35; 1 Chron. 12:14; Prov. 6:22; Isa. 7:6; Jer. 18:20). Moses’ face would be unveiled when he spoke with God, and Jesus’ glory was present as he conversed with Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:30). Although not used in Luke, the presence of the verb μεταμορφοῦν in Matthew and Mark may help the argument. The verb is used only twice else in the New Testament, once in Romans 12:22 and more importantly in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which alludes to the transfiguration of Moses. “This scarcity of usage suggests that Paul’s own use of the word results from a traditional association of metamorphosis with the glorification of Moses’ face.”¹⁴⁴ Luke’s omission of the word likely has nothing to do with his refusal of the Mosaic connection. Instead, it may be “to avoid a term that might have suggested Hellenistic ideas of an epiphany, the appearance of a God. Instead he describes the remarkable alteration of Jesus’ face and the dazzling whiteness of his clothing, ‘bright as a flash of lightning’ (*exastrapon*).”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Hutton, 111.

¹⁴⁵ Liefeld, “Luke,” 926.

Though the verb itself does not appear in the Lukan story, both passages use a variation with the root δόξα. The LXX contains the passive verb δεδόξασται (“was glorified”) to show that Moses’ transformation on Sinai (Ex. 34:29). Similarly, Luke says Moses and Elijah appeared ἐν δόξῃ (“in glory”) and that when the disciples awoke they saw τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ (“his glory”), referring to Jesus. Hutton believes that Luke “may be stressing the connection with Moses’ glorification by his appeal to the vocabulary of ‘glory’ itself.”¹⁴⁶

5.4 Observations on Jesus/Moses Parallels in the Lukan Transfiguration

Luke’s transfiguration account draws considerably from Mark, but he does not change his methods in the process when referring to Old Testament passages. One could make the case for there being a myriad of parallels between the transfiguration and Sinai. However, when the account is compared to the case studies in Luke, these parallels would be inconsistent with Luke’s writing style. The patterns found in the Stephen/Jesus parallels, the birth narratives, and the Jesus/Elijah/Elisha parallels can easily apply to Luke’s account of the transfiguration.

(1) The notion of character as the primary means of parallel is once again a major characteristic of Luke’s parallel. Jesus in his transfiguration is compared to Moses, whose face shown after being on the mountain with the God. The suggestions that there are parallels to other characters outside of Moses himself in the transfiguration story are unlikely, especially as there are no counterparts in Exodus 34, the particular passage Luke parallels here. However, there very well may be a Moses typology that extends beyond the parallels to Exodus 34. This typology, which has been briefly examined above is also through the notion of character. Moving into the

¹⁴⁶ Hutton, 111.

Acts 2 account, it is very important to remember that Luke's typology if present here is of a *person* rather than an *event*. Luke's purposes is not to say that the transfiguration is like the one on Sinai. Instead, he is showing how Jesus is like Moses, and the events surrounding each character serve to show the likeness between the persons.

(2) Luke again parallels specifically with a particular passage. Ringe writes, "The transforming effect of the Sinai experience on Moses (Exod. 34:29-35) is mirrored in the reference to Jesus' being transfigured (μετεμορφώθη), a detail accented and more closely linked to the Sinai narrative by Luke's detailed rather than summary account, and by the description of the clothing."¹⁴⁷ Ringe, though in agreement with general Sinai parallels, acknowledges the more detailed use of Exodus 34 than the other passages. An overshadowing cloud displays God's presence in the Sinai story, but Exodus 24 is not the only place in Scripture to include such imagery (Exod. 13:21; 16:10; 19:9; 40:34; 2 Sam. 22:12). God displays himself in this way in many passages, and making a direct connection or parallel to Sinai rather than other theophanic locations is unnecessary.

Also, Luke tends to keep to a particular story or type of story. Though the birth narratives are found in many Old Testament passages, they have the same basic structure and point. The birth narratives stories all abide by a similar template. Moses does speak to God on a mountain on more than one occasion, but there is not a template or "type" here that can be drawn from. The many instances where Moses speaks to God on the mountain vary greatly throughout the exodus story. Therefore, all Sinai interactions should not be applied in Luke as the birth narratives have been. Just because there are some similarities between the transfiguration event

¹⁴⁷ Sharon H. Ringe, "Luke 9:28-36: The Beginning of an Exodus," *Semeia* 28 (1983), 88.

and many events at Sinai does not mean Luke is making a direct correspondence between the two.

(3) As we can see, Luke still keeps a general chronology of events in his parallels. Due to the brevity of the paralleled passages, the pattern is very easy to identify and follow. Compared to the other case studies, the parallel here is the most simple. To those that identify parallels from the Sinai story extending from Exodus 19-34, there is a disregard for Luke's general chronology in his parallelism. Though he does indeed mix the order of events, they are events that happen in close relativity to each other. To make the case for elements of fifteen chapters to parallels a few verses in Luke would mean that Luke dramatically altered his methods. For instance: three companions of Jesus match Exodus 24; then Jesus in prayer matches Moses speaking directly with God in Exodus 19:9-13; then the transfiguration of glory matches Moses in Exodus 34; then the confusion of the disciples matches the stubbornness of the people of Israel and their rebuke from a voice in the cloud in Deuteronomy 4:36. When strung together, these events are extremely widespread when compared to Luke's other parallels. The likelihood of Luke picking and choosing parts of the exodus story to parallel the transfiguration becomes very doubtful, and it would be very uncharacteristic of Luke to do so from what we have seen.

(4) Once again, as in the birth narratives and the Jesus/Elijah/Elisha parallels, Jesus is presented as greater than the one he is compared to. As should be expected concerning Jesus, there is an escalation when compared to the Old Testament counterpart. Jesus radiates His own glory, whereas, Moses reflected the glory of God. Jesus is the theophany himself, his shining

glory radiating from within.¹⁴⁸ Jesus' glory is even greater than that of Moses, for he is not merely reflecting God's glory but his glory is of himself. "The transfiguration scene, then, is primarily about legitimation, as Jesus' glory, the glory that will be manifested upon his exaltation, is proleptically unveiled."¹⁴⁹ The glory of Jesus, which has yet to be seen in full, here is revealed early. It is only glimpsed briefly at the transfiguration, but unlike the glory of Moses it will not fade when Jesus is exulted. As we have seen from all three case studies where Jesus is a parallel to an Old Testament figure, Luke appears to be intent on presenting Jesus as one greater than his predecessors.

¹⁴⁸ For more on the possible typology present see David L. Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," *SJ29* (1976), 137-57; G.P. Hugenerberger, "Introductory Notes on Typology," *The Right Doctrines from the Wrong Text: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Ed. G.K. Beale; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 331-34.

¹⁴⁹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 389. Others who seem to be in agreement on this include Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 799; Bock, *Luke*, 867; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 695; and John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (WBC; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 498.

6. An Analysis of Parallels Between Acts 2 and Sinai Through Lukan Literary Pattern

As we will see below, some some scholars argue that Luke enriches the Pentecost passage with parallels to the account of Moses and the Israelites at Sinai. Other scholars still discount the allusions to Sinai in Acts 2. The arguments cover a vast range of topics, but none of them deal directly with Luke's method of parallels in his wider work. How do the suggested parallels in Acts 1-2 appear in relation to Luke's parallels elsewhere? I put forward three patterns that have been constant in the four case studies: (1) Luke parallels a specific narrative passage; (2) Luke adheres to the order of events of the passage he is paralleling; and (3) Luke's parallels always concern characters in addition to elements and events. If Luke is indeed paralleling Sinai in Acts, these three patterns should be central to his connections. The following pages present many of parallels to the Sinai event found in Acts 2, specifically those found in the actual Exodus Sinai account. This method may initially seem restricting, but Luke tends to use single passages in his parallels. The quantity of evidence suggested from strictly biblical parallels is considerable and therefore worthy of careful consideration. After an initial analysis of the biblical parallels, they will be viewed through the lens of Luke's threefold literary pattern.

6.1 The Luke-Acts Ascension in Relation to Sinai

The first possible allusion to Sinai in Acts appears before the actual event at Pentecost in Acts 2. The ascension narrative, which includes the last chapter of the book of Luke and the first of Acts, sets the stage for the outpouring of the Spirit. Some believe the ascension text to be the starting point of similarities between Sinai and Pentecost. Moses ascends Mount Sinai to receive

the law, and Jesus “ascends” to the right hand of his Father from Mount Olivet. The reason I put “ascends” in quotes in relation to Jesus is because technically he is taken up into heaven, one of many difference between the accounts. Luke marks the ascension as the first chronological step in his Pentecost-Sinai interactions almost as a foreshadowing of the history-changing event to come. Sejin Park discusses the similarities between the ascension and Sinai, and the strongest connections between the two are as follows.¹⁵⁰ (After marking the similarities, the parallels will be examined through the patterns in Luke's method found above).

(1) First, the location of each ascension is similar as each takes place on a mountain. In Exodus 19:2, the Israelites arrive and make their camp at Mt. Sinai, where Moses “went up to God.” God calls out to Moses while he is on - according to the LXX - the ὄρος, the “mountain.” In Acts 1:12, immediately following the ascension, we find that the disciples returned from the ὄρος Olivet. This implies that Jesus spoke his final words to disciples on a mountain before ascending to the right hand of the Father. Moses ascends a mountain, where Jesus’ ascension is to heaven after he is already on a mountain. Though a mountain is present in each account, Moses is the only one whose ascension is up an actual physical mountain.

(2) The number forty appears in relation to each ascension, though in different manners. In the Exodus account, Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on Mt. Sinai with God on two different occasions (Ex. 24:18; 34:28). In Luke’s writing the number 40 appears as the amount of days between the resurrection of Jesus and the ascension of Jesus, during which he appeared to the disciples and spoke to them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Zwiep argues that the

¹⁵⁰ Sejin Park is one of the few scholars who goes into detail about the relation of the Ascension and Sinai. He lists eight elements that he believes argue for an Ascension/Sinai parallel, and five of his strongest are listed here. *From Pentecost and Sinai: The Festival Of Weeks As A Celebration Of The Sinai Event*, (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 213-218. He also draws heavily from VanderKam, “The Festival of Weeks,” 196-98.

length of days is not exact and rather a Lukan redaction. In agreement with Lohfink, Zwiep writes that “the candidate number had to be sufficiently close to the fiftieth day (Pentecost) to bring out the close chronological connection of ascension and Pentecost (Acts 1:5 οὐ μετὰ πολλὰς ταύτας ἡμέρας); further it had to be a round number with no claim of chronological exactness, since Luke did not have an exact date at his disposal.”¹⁵¹ The mention of forty days seems primarily to be used as a chronological connection between the ascension and Pentecost with a possible secondary allusion to Sinai.

(3) The cloud covering the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9, 11) recalls Moses’ ascent on Sinai (Ex. 19:3, 20, 24:1-2). Yahweh tells Moses he will appear in a thick cloud (Ex. 19:9), and three days later it descends on the mountain. “The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up” (19:20). Moses again ascends into the cloud on Sinai in order to receive the law (24:15-18). In the ascension of Jesus, with the disciples looking on, a cloud “took him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). The Israelites of the Exodus and the disciples of Jesus are left looking on as their leader disappears, enveloped in cloud. Because a cloud as part of a supernatural event appears elsewhere in the Bible (Rev. 11:12) and in Luke, including on a mountain as at the transfiguration (Luke 9:34-35), it is difficult to say with certainty that the cloud refers to Sinai specifically. In addition, where the cloud merely rests on the mountain that Moses ascends, in Acts the cloud performs a different function by taking Jesus away.

(4) In each account the one ascending commands those looking on to wait. In Exodus 24:14, Moses and Joshua command the elders, “Remain right here until we return to you,” before

¹⁵¹ Ariel W. Zwiep, *The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 187.

ascending up mount Sinai. Likewise, at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts a similar command is made. “But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). A second person plural imperative, καθίσατε, is used by Luke here. In the LXX version of Exodus 24:14 a different second person plural imperative, ἡσυχάζετε, is used. Both ἡσυχάζετε and καθίσατε have the same general meaning of “resting” or “remaining in one place.”¹⁵² Not only do they both employ a similar imperative, but each is told to wait for some sort of return. Moses returns with the two tablets of the testimony (Ex. 32:15), and Jesus sends his Spirit to rest¹⁵³ on his disciples. There are similarities in the command, but also differences. The verbs are different, and the waiting for Moses to return is a much different command than waiting until “you are clothed with power from on high.” Where Moses makes his command to wait while he goes up the mountain, Jesus tells his disciples to go down the mountain to wait for their meeting with God.

In Acts 1:4 Luke repeats Jesus’ command to his disciples, though this time as a summary rather than quoting Jesus. “He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). This may account for the use of περιμένω as the verb used to portray the “remaining” of the disciples. The word περιμένω is only used here in the New Testament and is not in the Exodus account. This rare usage is likely due to anticipation of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise, which Luke is emphasizing at the start of Acts. In Exodus there was not an anticipated promise the Israelites were waiting for, making it unlikely that there is any relation between the two.

¹⁵² Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William Arndt, & Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 440, 491.

¹⁵³ Luke uses the same word in Acts 2:4, καθίζω, that he used when Jesus told the disciples to wait for him. They sat in waiting and in return the spirit “sat” or rested on them.

(5) Park cites blessings as another parallel, though not as certain as others.¹⁵⁴ Moses blesses those who built the sanctuary using εὐλογέω (Ex. 39:43). Likewise, Jesus does the same to his followers just before his ascension using εὐλογέω (Luke 24:52) However, the blessing given by Moses seems so far past the his ascension that it is unlikely Luke would be using it as a parallel. That it could also be associated to Jacob's final blessing in Genesis 49¹⁵⁵ lessens this argument even more.

6.1.2 Assessment of Ascension/Sinai Parallels

The ascension narrative in Luke-Acts is a literary foreshadowing of the giving of the Spirit in Acts 2. Could Luke be alluding to the ascension of Moses as a way to foreshadow the Sinai parallels in the Pentecost narrative? The above arguments make it seem unlikely. Park even admits that Luke's readers wouldn't see the connections. "Many of these allusions are complex and vague, enough so that it is doubtful that a first century reader or hearer of the text could reasonably be expected to notice them."¹⁵⁶ Still, these parallels are worth examination through the patterns found in Luke's parallels elsewhere.

(1) Are the parallels listed above with a *specific narrative passage*? The answer here is yes at least in relation to genre. Moses' ascent on Sinai is presented in narrative,¹⁵⁷ as are the events surrounding Jesus' ascent. However, concerning a specific passage, the results are outside

¹⁵⁴ Sejin Park in *Pentecost and Sinai* cites other ascension parallels, though in this writer's opinion they are much weaker and therefore not included here. They can be found on pp.203-208 of *Pentecost and Sinai*.

¹⁵⁵ Park, "The Festival of Weeks and Sinai," 232.

¹⁵⁶ Park, *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁷ For more on the genre of Exodus and the Pentateuch as a whole, see John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 25-33.

of Luke's method. Parallels Park cites include multiple ascents (Ex. 19:3, 24:1-2), two separate instances of a cloud (19:9, 24:15-18), two instances where Moses spends 40 days and 40 nights on the mountain (24:18; 34:28), the commands for the Israelites to wait (24:14), the return with the two stone tablets (32:15), and the giving of a blessing (39:43). The interruption of narratives (e.g. between chapters 20 and 24, 25 and 32) in order to give the law implies that the narrative passages, though part of a larger cohesive whole, are separated and distinct from one another. One could better argue that the ascension imitates solely the events in chapter 19 or chapter 24, but then the parallels would be too few and vague to make any concrete conclusions.

The Lukan ascension story also is separated by the beginning of a new book, Acts. Though the ascension in Acts 1 is a continuation of Luke 24, the separation indicated by Luke's preface (Acts 1:1-2) necessitates separate passages. Not only are there multiple Old Testament passages involved in the apparent parallels, but also multiple Lukan passages. This greatly deviates from Luke's normal pattern. There may be unintended likeness, but a deliberate parallel is unlikely. One would have to argue either solely from the ascension narrative in Luke 24 or the narrative in Acts 1.

(2) Is there an *adherence to chronology* between the two passages? Park argues that a parallel chronology is present. "If the rabbinic formula for the determining date of Pentecost is used, then the fifty-day span (Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9-10) would cover the period beginning from just after Pentecost to the Festival of Weeks when Moses ascended Sinai. In Lukan chronology, this corresponds to Jesus' death just after Passover to the gift of the Spirit on the day

of Pentecost.”¹⁵⁸ This parallel is inexact, as VanderKam notes, since the Exodus parallel is from Passover to the ascent where for Luke it runs from the Passover to the descent of the Spirit.¹⁵⁹

In Luke’s parallels elsewhere, the order of events takes precedent over the timing of events. The order of events is very similar between the two passages if the argument for a particular passage above is disregarded. There is an ascent, the appearance of a cloud, the command to stay, and a blessing. Many elements in the Sinai account are nowhere to be found in the Luke-Acts account. These include multiple ascensions, multiple interruptions of speech from God, the instance of the golden calf, and more. Luke does not always include every element from the Old Testament accounts. For example, when paralleling the story of Naaman and the centurion, there are two kings involved and a messenger girl that are not present in Luke. Those differences are few when compared to the number of events missing at the end of Luke and beginning of Acts. Such differences are unusually high for the ascension to make a consistent parallel to Sinai. If Luke were making a connection, it would be highly uncharacteristic of him to do so with so many absences.

There are also additions in the Lukan version of the ascension that are markedly different from anything in Exodus. The disciples ask Jesus a question before he ascends. This has no counterpart in the Sinai event (Acts 1:6). The cloud does not merely rest on the mountain but takes Jesus out of the disciples’ sight (Acts 1:9). After Jesus ascends, two men in white robes, likely angelic beings, appear and speak with the disciples (Acts 1:10-11). The combination of

¹⁵⁸ Park, “The Festival of Weeks and Sinai,” 230.

¹⁵⁹ VanderKam, “The Festival of Weeks,” 197.

additions and absences shows that these parallels do not fit in with the pattern of Luke's adherence to chronology.

(3) Does Luke parallel by *identifying characters*? Park argues more from events and elements than characters in the narrative. Still, the character parallels can be suggested. The most obvious association is between Jesus and Moses, who were seen as parallel characters in the transfiguration. Both ascend, command those with them to wait, and give a blessing. If one argues for this parallel despite the aversions listed above, one could claim the superiority of Jesus to Moses. His ascension is most certainly displayed as greater. Moses goes up a mountain and speaks with God, but Jesus is taken up to heaven, accented with the appearance of angels.

With secondary characters, the parallels are trickier to identify. Elsewhere, the secondary characters have been individuals rather than groups of people. In the Lukan ascension, no individuals are named, and the disciples are always referred to as a collective (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:2-11). There are individuals named in the Sinai story, such as Aaron, Nadab, Abihu (Ex. 24:1), and Joshua (24:13). These find no counterpart in Luke-Acts. If one takes the group of Israelites as the Old Testament counterpart for the disciples, then both watched their leader ascend and are told to wait for a return. Outside of this, the secondary character parallels prove scarce.

All three of Luke's patterns in his parallel methodology are absent in his version of the ascension in Luke-Acts. He does not parallel a specific passage on either side, the adherence to a chronology of events is missing, and the character identification with Moses is present, but limited. If one were to make the case for a Sinai parallel, it would perhaps be best to appeal to

Exodus 24 alone, though there the parallels become even less certain. For a proof to be made, the Acts 2 account must be able to stand up to Luke's pattern on its own.

6.2 Acts 2 and Pentecost/Sinai Parallels from the Primary Text

More so than the ascension, numerous scholars see connections between Sinai and the events at Pentecost. The quantity and quality of these parallels vary, as does their affirmation among scholars. Many discount the presence of a Sinai background for Acts 2. Techniques ranging from linguistic choice to thematic similarities are cited as evidence that Luke intentionally compares the giving of the Spirit to the giving of the law. The purpose of Luke hearkening back to the giving of the law means nothing if there is no evidence to support that he actually is alluding to the Exodus account. The following seven points are the strongest biblical arguments¹⁶⁰ that Luke is indeed doing so.

(1) Both passages give an indicator as to the timing of their events. In Exodus 19:16, when a thick cloud covered the mountain and Moses received the ten commandments from God, the text describes the timing as “γενηθέντος πρὸς ὄρθρον” (“getting toward dawn”), meaning that it was in the morning. Likewise, the event at Pentecost happened in the morning. This is given away in Peter's speech, as he explains that he and the other disciples are not drunk since it is only the third hour of the morning (Acts 2:15). The third hour is estimated to be around nine

¹⁶⁰ One argument which this paper has left out concerning the biblical text asserts that Acts 2:33, like Ephesians 4:8, is based on Psalm 67:19 and presents an exegesis of Psalm 67 that is in opposition to rabbinic exegesis. This argument is left out because of its weakness and more so because it does not deal directly with the Exodus Sinai account as the other parallels do. For more on this argument, see Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 198-201; Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern*, 181-83; O'Toole, “Acts 2:30 and the Davidic Covenant of Pentecost,” 245-58; Harris, *The Descent of Christ: Ephesians 4:7-11 and Traditional Hebrew Imagery*; Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (UK: S. C. M Press, 1973), 58-59.

a.m.¹⁶¹ With this in mind, the timing of the events is not concurrent. A reach can be made to proclaim the timing of the events as similar, but why would Luke not say γενηθέντος πρὸς ὄρθρον if his purpose was to parallel?

(2) Words related to sound are prevalent in Exodus 19:16. There is “thunder and lightning” (φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαί) and then “the sound of a trumpet sounded forth strongly” (φωνὴ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἤχει μέγα). Again in 20:18 φωνή is used to describe thunder and the sound of a trumpet. Acts 2:6 sees the usage of φωνή in relation to the sound of the voices of the disciples who were speaking in various languages. In some rabbinic traditions, the first φωνή in Exodus 20:18 is translated “voices” rather than “thunder.” Rabbi Johanna writes, “the ten commandments were promulgated with a single voice, yet it says ‘all the people perceived the voices’ (Ex. 20:18); this shows that when the voice went forth it was divided into seven voices and then went into seventy tongues, and every people received the law in its own language” (*b. Sab.* 88b).¹⁶² The interpretation is intriguing, for it would provide a more direct link between the tongues spoken by the disciples at Pentecost and the many represented nationalities at Sinai. Menzies, though, is unconvinced of the parallel, pointing out the differences.

In the rabbinic legends the oracle is delivered by God himself; in Luke’s account it is transmitted by Spirit-inspired disciples. The rabbinic legends speak of individual words being divided into different languages, a concept completely foreign to Luke’s account. And of course the number of language groups represented by Luke’s *Volkerliste* is considerably less than the seventy cited in the rabbinic legends.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 9: John and Acts* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelin; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 274.

¹⁶² Isidore Epstein, ed., *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, 2:420. From Bruce, 53.

¹⁶³ Menzies, *Empowered For Witness*, 197.

The differences between the language miracle in both the rabbinic Sinai legends and the actual Sinai account with the language miracle at Pentecost make the parallel improbable. Add to this the commonality of φωνή, which is used over 135 times in the New Testament, and Luke using φωνή as a parallel becomes even less likely.

There is a second connection with sound that is claimed as a parallel. The noun ἦχος, meaning “sound,” is used in Acts 2:2. The verbal form, ἤχει, is used in the Sinai story. Estrada notes that this verse “also indicates that the sound came from heaven (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), the same source in Exod. 20:22 - ‘I have spoken to you from heaven (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λελάληκα πρὸς ὑμᾶς).”¹⁶⁴ It is also interesting to note that outside of Acts 2:2, ἦχος is used only one other time in the New Testament. The word appears in Hebrews 12:18-19. More considerable differences appear here than similarities. Other sounds present within the Sinai account are that of a trumpet and thunder, neither of which is present in Acts 2. In addition, the presence the lightning at Sinai is nowhere to be seen in Acts 2. The “sound” from heaven in Acts is described as “a mighty rushing wind.” Bock notes, “This is the only place where this phrase about wind appears; it does not appear in the LXX.”¹⁶⁵ Where the writer of Exodus observes thunder and lightning as natural elements in the sound, Luke describes the sound with the natural element of wind, just as the Holy Spirit is compared to wind elsewhere (John 3:8).

(3) The appearance of natural elements continues as both authors include fire. Mount Sinai “was wrapped in smoke because the Lord has descended on it in fire (‘πυρί’)” (Ex. 19:18). This is reminiscent of the pillar of fire that led the Israelites in their Exodus. The divided tongues

¹⁶⁴ Nelson P. Estrada, *From Followers to Leaders: The Apostles in the Ritual of Status* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004), 197.

¹⁶⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 2:2

that rested upon the disciples are described ὡσεὶ πυρός, “as of fire” (Acts 2:3). Luke uses the principle of analogy in that no actual fire was present in the tongues. The tongues are only *like* fire,¹⁶⁶ just as the sound was *like* a rushing wind. Bock argues against the occurrence of Sinai motifs due to natural elements, writing, “The imagery suggests the power of God’s presence, but not necessarily Sinai, unless one appeals to the general cultural backdrop of Pentecost and the law, which Luke does not develop.”¹⁶⁷ In a sense, he is saying that theophanies outside of Exodus also include fire and smoke (e.g. Judges 13:20-22), so the occurrences in Exodus and Acts are not to be seen as related. It is interesting to note that Luke not once, but twice¹⁶⁸ goes out of his way to describe something in a simile as an act of nature. Still, there is a major difference in the association of the elements. “In contrast to the Sinai traditions, Luke associates the Spirit rather than the voice of God with the wind and fire imagery. In Luke’s account, these metaphors are not directly related to the language miracle.”¹⁶⁹ Add to this argument that smoke is not mentioned in Luke though it is part of the theophany at Sinai, and the theophanic elements as parallels begin to look considerably weaker. Once again, the potential parallels contain significant differences.

(4) The proclamation of a message to a group of God’s people lies at the heart of the Pentecost and Sinai events. The majority of Acts 2, vv. 14-39, is concerned with Peter’s sermon to the gathered crowd. Witherington sees similarities with more than just Sinai. He writes, “It is interesting to note parallels to various Old Testament theophanies where God comes down and

¹⁶⁶ Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 132.

¹⁶⁷ Bock, Acts, 2:3.

¹⁶⁸ The other time, examined earlier, is the sound like a rushing wind in v. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Menzies, *Empowered For Witness*, 195.

there is fire on the mountain and Moses or someone is given a word to speak for the Lord (Exod. 19:18; 2 Sam. 22:16; Ezek 13:13). In those events as well, we are talking about the experience of a group of God's people when together."¹⁷⁰ The lack of uniqueness in this parallel serves as evidence against a direct Sinai parallel, since such an occasion is too common to hint at one particular Old Testament instance. Also, at Sinai, God is the one who does the speaking. In Acts, Peter does the speaking. Luke could have made a connection more clear if he wrote that Peter spoke while "filled with the Holy Spirit" as he did in Acts 4:8. Though a message is central, the difference of speakers and the commonality of messages to groups of people throughout the Bible make this a shaky argument to stand on.

(5) At each event there is a mixed group of people. The makeup of people gathered at Sinai includes more than just Hebrew-speaking Israelites. At the start of the Exodus, the people of Israel were joined by a more diverse group. "A mixed multitude went up with them..." (Ex. 12:38). Commenting on this verse, Polhill writes, "This verse confirms that the Israelites of the exodus (and thereafter) were actually a mixed people ethnically," and again, "many persons who were not descended from Abraham or Israel joined the Israelites as they left Egypt."¹⁷¹ The same diversity would have been represented at Sinai. Still, they are not like the Acts crowd in that they all were Jews living in Egypt. At Pentecost, people from various places gathered together.

Describing the people at Pentecost, Luke writes, "Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven." (Acts 2:5) The nations are represented at Pentecost, a mixed multitude unlike Sinai. When the crowd hears the disciples speak in their own

¹⁷⁰ Witherington, 132.

¹⁷¹ John B. Polhill, *Acts* (vol. 26; The New American Commentary; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 303.

language, Luke provides a list of the different nations gathered. “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors of Rome, both Jews and Proselytes, Cretans and Arabians” (Acts 2:9-11). Park comments, “The makeup of the crowd that gathers around Peter is carefully defined, unlike the amorphous crowds that gather so often to listen to Jesus (Acts 2:5-11).”¹⁷² Luke makes sure that his readers know the diversity of the audience at Pentecost. Cited as a hearkening back to Sinai, Luke decides to make explicitly known that other nations were represented at Pentecost. Bruce suggests this idea, writing, “there may be an implied parallel between that event and what was now happening in the statement that people ‘from every nation under heaven’ heard the praises of God, ‘each individual... in his own speech.’”¹⁷³ Bock correctly notes however that the languages are not the focus due to the inclusion of Jews and proselytes in the list.¹⁷⁴ The people speak different languages at Pentecost, but there is no reason to believe that many languages were spoken at Sinai. Bock also writes that “the list appears to highlight the key communities where Jews of the Diaspora congregated and suggests the gospel’s universal scope.”¹⁷⁵ The parallel being suggested is implicit rather than explicit in nature. A Sinai allusion would be secondary here if viewed as present, as the main

¹⁷² Park, 215

¹⁷³ F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 54.

¹⁷⁴ Bock, *Acts*, 2:9-11.

¹⁷⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 2:9-11. Also see Martin Hengel, “*Ἰουδαία* in the Geographical List of Acts 2:9-11 and Syria as ‘Greater Judea,’” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10 (2000), 161-80. Others take the list to be a “table of nations” (J.M. Scott) or an astrological list (Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 116-17; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 136; B. M. Metzger, “Ancient Astrological Geography and Acts 2:9-11,” *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (ed. W. Gasque and R. Martin; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 123-33. None take it primarily as a Sinai reference, and these different views do not match up with how multiple nations are presented at Sinai.

focus in the listing of nations is the universality of the gospel, not that there were many nationalities represented at Sinai.

(6) The timing of Sinai and Pentecost chronologically match in relation to Old Testament pilgrimage festivals. The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, is one of the three pilgrimage festivals. Exodus 12-13 associates the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the exodus, and Leviticus 23 associates the Feast of Booths with wilderness wanderings (vv. 42-43). The Feast of Weeks is between those two festivals, and Sinai is chronologically between the two events related to the feasts. As Park notes,

Since the Sinai event came chronologically between these historical events and the Festival of Weeks comes between the festivals of Unleavened Bread (I/15-21) and Booths (VII/15-21) on the calendar, one might say that such an association was begging to be made, especially when one considers that, according to Exodus 19:1, the Israelites approached Sinai in the third month.¹⁷⁶

A connection with Weeks and Sinai is possible. Acts 2 takes place during the Feast of Weeks, and if the feast hearkened back to a historical event, since the other pilgrimage feasts do, it would most likely be Sinai. However, this parallel relies on the view that the Feast of Weeks makes a direct connection with Sinai, a view not explicitly taken in the Bible. An assumption that Luke thought this way makes the parallel just that, an assumption and nothing more.

(7) After spending forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai, Moses descends with the two tablets of testimony and finds the people have made a golden calf for themselves (Ex. 32). Moses then commands the sons of Levi to kill men in the camp, and that day “about three thousand men of the people fell” (Ex. 32:28). After Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, a contrasting conclusion involving the same number of people happens. Luke writes, “So those who received

¹⁷⁶ Park, *Pentecost and Sinai*, 198.

his word were baptized, and there were added to that day about three thousand men” (Acts 2:41). Where three thousand men died for their sin and rejection of God’s commands at Sinai, three thousand were baptized for receiving the word at Pentecost.¹⁷⁷ In the four case studies above, we have seen escalation concerning characters or events (such as Jesus’ inner glory at the transfiguration compared to Moses’ reflection of glory), but not a complete reversal. The differing consequences of death and baptism would be an interesting comparison to make, but nothing in Luke’s method elsewhere suggests he would do so.

6.2.1 Assessment of Parallels From the Lukan Pattern

The Pentecost event is one of the greatest in the Bible, and one of the most important in the establishment of the church. Could it be that Luke is comparing it to another important event in scripture, the giving of the law at Sinai? Are both texts about the establishment of a covenant people through divine gifts? Is the first people established by writing on stone, and the second by writing on hearts? The parallels above in and of themselves are unconvincing. Many of the arguments are intriguing, but ultimately fall short of carrying the same weight as the arguments for parallel in the case studies examined above. Will these parallels become stronger or weaker when filtered through Luke’s pattern of parallel? Three questions must be discussed.

(1) Does the Pentecost passage in Acts 2 parallel a *specific narrative passage*? If one takes Exodus 19 and 20 as one narrative passage, there is a small case to be made. Most of the parallels argued above, such as time of day, the sounds, and central proclamation are all found in Exodus 19 and 20. But the mention of the 3,000 lies in Exodus 32, far removed from the other

¹⁷⁷ In much of my reading, commentators who mention other Sinai parallels do not often mention this one (Bock, Bruce, Barrett, Polhill, etc.).

parallels and does not fit this characteristic of Luke's methodology. Many of the parallels named above are from assumption and not actually made in the text. The mixed multitude described by Luke is implied earlier in Exodus 12, but the author of Exodus does not mention any diversity in potential parallel chapters 19 and 20. In past case studies, the texts correspond mainly by explicit parallels mentioned in each passage. Arguing from an element that goes unmentioned in either Exodus 19-20 or Acts 2 does nothing to strengthen the case.

Perhaps the most glaring problem with the specific passage parallel concerns the comparisons between the descent of the Spirit and the descent of the law. The descent of the Spirit, the most central event in Acts 2, happens in the passage. The descent of the law to Moses begins in Exodus 20, but does not physically reach the people until much later. The matter appears too complex to be declared a part of the parallel passage with a degree of confidence.

(2) Does the Pentecost account *adhere to the chronology* of the Sinai account? If one were to make the argument that there is an adherence to chronology, they might include the ascension in Acts 1 and the events in Acts 2 as one narrative unit. This would add a chronological arc that is larger and more complete than only the events at Pentecost. The major plot points of ascent and descent can be taken together. However, when taken together, some new problems arise. The most blatant problem includes the interruption of the ascent/descent narrative with the choosing of the twelfth disciple in Acts 1:12-26. An intermission breaks up the narratives of the ascension and descent into two separate sections. If the events in vv. 12-26 had a counterpart in Exodus the problem would be easier to overcome, but one does not exist. In his other narrative parallels, Luke does not interrupt his writing with an intermission before continuing on with the parallel. Taking the ascent/descent as one narrative unit that Luke

parallels is an appealing option, but Luke would be acting far outside his normal pattern if this was the case. Therefore, no matter how logical putting the two together seems, Luke's methods elsewhere cause the ascent/descent combination to be unlikely.

If an adherence to chronology is approached from Acts 2 alone according to the parallels above, the result is strange. Where Luke tracks a general movement in the birth narratives and the stories comparing Jesus to Elijah and Elisha, the arguments above are more from elements than narrative events or actions. If we were to summarize the events in Acts 2, it might go as such: the disciples gather (v. 1); the Spirit descends and fills the disciples (2-4); they speak in tongues (4-6); the crowd reacts (7-13); Peter gives a sermon (14-36); many are saved and baptized (37-41); and a fellowship of believers forms (42-47). After Moses' ascension in Exodus 19 and 20, the events can be outlined as follows: God speaks to Moses (Ex. 19:3-6); Moses tells the elders what the Lord commanded him (7-8); the Lord speaks to Moses again (9-13); Moses descends and consecrates the people (14-15); the Lord comes down in a theophany with the people at the base of Sinai (16-20); Moses goes up and speaks with God (21-25); God gives the ten commandments (20:1-17); the people are afraid of the theophany on the mountain, but Moses tells them not to fear (18-20); Moses ascends again and the Lord gives more commands (21-26). The dissonance between these two passages concerning narrative movement is obvious. Viewed from this perspective, there seems to be almost no chance of a parallel with an adherence to chronology.

A major mistake made by those who see Sinai parallels in Pentecost is an emphasis on elements. They equate similar elements in each story to argue that Luke is making a connection, even though the elements are not in and of themselves unique. Putting too much emphasis on the

account of elements in Philo and his writings' similarity to Luke rather than studying the primary texts themselves causes such confusion. This quotation from Max Turner which was used earlier in the paper reads differently in light of the emphasis of element over character.

Both Philo and Luke (i) envisage a holy theophany before the assembled people of God; (ii) in each case we have to do with a redemptive-historical event on earth which is formative for that people of God, making a real new beginning of some kind - a mighty "sign" of mightier consequences, as Philo puts it; (iii) in each this sign or wonder involves a miraculous sound, and a flash of something "like" fire from heaven descending to the people, and dividing to reach all, and (iv) in each case this results in the miraculous form of speech spreading and coming to be heard by a multiplicity (of Israel alone or of the far-away too?) in their own language, and destined to reach "the ends of the earth".... (v) each involves an important "gift" given to God's people and (vi) this gift comes to Israel as the consequence of Israel's leader (both Philo and Luke would add "and King" [e.g., *Mos.* 2.1-7, etc.]) ascending to God!¹⁷⁸

At first glance, these similarities seem remarkable. However, when we compare them to the actual Sinai account, which Luke certainly had knowledge of and access to, and to Luke's observed pattern, the argument weakens. Similar elements are always a part of parallels, but without proper counterparts in the narrative movement they are merely that - similar elements. There is no accounting for tongues, the initial amazed response of the people, or their ultimate response of baptism and salvation in the Sinai story. On the other hand, there is no accounting for actual fire or clouds, multiple ascents and descents, speaking directly with God, the fear of the people, or the commands of God in the Pentecost story. The vast amount of narrative differences are irreconcilable with other parallel passages in Luke-Acts. One would have to argue that Luke parallels Philo's account but almost completely disregards the actual biblical text if they believe this passage hearkens to Sinai.

¹⁷⁸ Turner, *Power From on High*, 284-85.

(3) Do the suggested parallels in the Pentecost account *concern characters*? At first glance, the consideration seems possible, though the emphasis in the parallels above does not lie in the characters. Like Moses, Jesus ascends a mountain. Unlike Moses Jesus does not descend, but instead the Holy Spirit descends. Moses speaks to the people of Israel at Sinai and God speaks to Moses, but in Acts 2 Peter and the disciples speak to the multitude of people. If a group of people can be taken as a character, then in each case a multitude receives a message from a messenger of God.

The scramble of parallels above are difficult to organize. Luke often is flexible with his character parallels and allows for characters' motives and actions to mix within his narrative. The character arcs above however create more differences than similarities. For instance, Moses would have to be the Old Testament counterpart for three characters. He ascends like Jesus, descends like the Holy Spirit, and speaks like Peter. Also, the gathered crowd in Exodus does not say as much as the crowd at Pentecost. Not much is written about the crowd in Exodus 19-20 outside of the fact that they fear the theophany. The crowd in Acts 2 does not fear, but are "bewildered" (2:6), "astonished" (7), and "perplexed" (12), concerning the disciples speaking in other tongues, and they vocally react (7-13). Peter is one of twelve disciples, but if this was a parallel to the twelve tribes would he be the one preaching to the multitudes and calling on them to repent and be baptized? God speaks more than anyone else at Sinai, but why does he not speak in Acts 2? The proposed Sinai connections create more questions than answers.

The most important distinction to be made concerning character has to do with the Holy Spirit. The parallel that each event concerns a "gift" to God's people makes a bigger claim than is immediately recognizable. If the "gift" in Acts 2 is the Holy Spirit, then its Old Testament

parallel “gift” is the law. Pentecost is indeed a very special and unique occasion, but that does not rule out the fact that nowhere else does a *character* or *person* in Luke-Acts have a parallel in a narrative passage to an Old Testament *concept* rather than a *person*. Shepherd in his work on the Holy Spirit as character in Luke-Acts concludes that “the Holy Spirit is best understood as a character in the narrative of Luke-Acts, and that the function of that character is to signal narrative reliability.”¹⁷⁹ The Holy Spirit is a major character in Luke-Acts, and one of the major characters of Acts 2. The argument that his Old Testament counterpart and in this case parallel is not another person but the concept of the “law” needs explicit surrounding evidence as it is contradictory to the rest of Luke-Acts. To say that Luke parallels the person and character in Luke’s narrative - especially the Holy Spirit - with the law is a major leap. If Luke’s chief concern was to parallel events, then a case could be made. However, the parallels of characters are just as if not more important than events. If the identified pattern in Luke’s parallels is to be followed, then the Holy Spirit/law connection should be disregarded.

¹⁷⁹ William H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts* (SBLDS 147; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994), 247. In addition to Shepherd’s work on the Holy Spirit as character, see Ju Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004).

7. Conclusion

The examination of Pentecost/Sinai parallels from a Lukan literary perspective points far more to their absence than to their presence. The suggested parallels exclude the threefold Lukan pattern of paralleling a specific narrative passage, a general chronology, and a focus on character. The study serves as a warning to placing parallels where they are not present, a term that Sandmel refers to as “parallelomania.” Sandmel defines the term as “that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction.”¹⁸⁰ This is not to say that parallels do not occur - they do occur often, especially in Luke-Acts. However, when someone as Sandmel puts it “overdoes the supposed similarity,” then conclusions are drawn from similarities in two separate passages that upon closer inspection do not act as parallel passages. “In dealing with similarities we can sometimes discover exact parallels, some with and some devoid of significance; seeming parallels which are so only imperfectly; and statements which can be called parallels only by taking them out of context. I must go on to allege that I encounter from time to time scholarly writings which go astray in this last regard.”¹⁸¹ As one who before this study believed there to be Pentecost/Sinai parallels, this observation is especially poignant. In context, both within the literary text and within Luke’s identifiable pattern, the Sinai event has similarities but not parallels with Pentecost, no matter how exciting or appealing making the connection may be. Similar elements

¹⁸⁰ Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81.1 (Mar., 1962), 1.

¹⁸¹ Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” 7.

occur in each passage, but there is not anything that suggests literary dependence on either the Exodus account, Philo, or early rabbinic writings.

In the Gospel of Luke, assuming Mark is the primary source material, Sandmel argues against parallels from other sources. “When Luke, presumably of Roman origin, appends editorializing comments to Mark, then it is scarcely likely that rabbinic passages can serve as persuasive parallels or, more importantly, as the direct sources for such editorializing.”¹⁸² I believe the same can be said regarding Acts 1 and 2. Though not using Mark as a source material since Mark did not document the Pentecost event, why would Luke begin to turn to secondary texts in order to make his parallels? That the author of Luke-Acts has an obvious familiarity with the Old Testament text is apparent in Acts 2 alone, which quotes from Joel and Psalms. Why would Luke, in possession of the primary source, go to a secondary source to make parallels that have to do with the primary source?

In parallel passages, it is important to remember that “distinctions are often more important than similarities.”¹⁸³ As demonstrated above, differences between Pentecost and Sinai far outweigh the similarities. Certain tropes of language and imagery are bound to repeat themselves in a text as large as the Bible, and secondary sources are bound to use similar language and images. Differences must not be disregarded or unexamined - this disregard is how parallelomania starts to creep in. Two written passages include far more than what makes them similar, and in this case that includes structure, characters, and a chronological movement of events that share little to no similarity.

¹⁸² Ibid., 9.

¹⁸³ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 193.

This study serves as a warning about the isolation of a single passage. Yes, the immediate context is of utmost importance and needs to be picked apart so as to comprehend its full meaning. Yet, focusing too heavily on the immediate context can result in ignorance of authorial intent. Ultimately, this is where the disagreement lies - over whether or not Luke himself intended for Sinai/Pentecost parallels in Acts 2. The immediate context shows possibility, and thus scholars have jumped to conclusions. When all aspects are taken into consideration however, including the Lukan parallel method examined above, the authorial intent can be more trusted because the author himself is analyzed beyond a single passage. That Luke was unconsciously influenced by traditions or secondary texts is a different argument, but the analysis above does not make that argument any stronger. In a time when passages of the Bible have been examined and dissected again and again, let us not forget to lean into the text without overcomplicating it, to take into account many facets of interpretation without overemphasizing one's importance over another, and to examine immediate and broad contexts in finding authorial intent.

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