

THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS

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1. Introduction

Each of the Gospels contains diverse traditions concerning the resurrection which are shaped by the continuing experience and reflection of communities over a period of years.¹ Amongst the Synoptic Gospels, Mark and Matthew conclude their works with stories of appearance of the risen Jesus which express his universal lordship until the parousia. In doing so they write as to make it impossible to take up the pen again.² For Luke, however, who intended a continuum in a second volume, the perspective is different.

In the Third Gospel, the resurrection is the point of transition from the story of the earthly Jesus to the story of the movement which went by his name. It is also the basis of this movement.³ This is why the appearances in Lk 24 look forward to the narrative of Acts and the ministry of the apostles.⁴ Consequently, the importance of Luke 24 can be seen by the place occupied by the resurrection of Jesus in Acts.⁵ In this exegetical essay I intend to present the structure of this chapter and then survey the literary dynamics involved whilst placing the themes of the chapter in their wider context. These aspects shall be intertwined into each other.

¹ Johnson points out that such “after death” stories were not unknown in the Hellenistic culture. Stories of heroes becoming immortal or ascending were in circulation, as were accounts of missing tombs and of the dead visiting the living in vision or dreams. In comparison to these, two elements common to the accounts about Jesus should be noted: the Jesus of the resurrection accounts is not vestigially visible but is rather emphatically present in a more powerful way, and the communal character of the stories. cf. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina 3, Minnesota 1991, 389-90.

² In the case of Mk, his so-called “shorter ending” (16:1-8) has only an empty tomb account. Mt has an empty tomb account (28:1-8), a very short notice of an appearance to the women (28:9-10) and the final commission by Jesus to the Eleven in Galilee (28:16-20).

³ It is for this reason that Luke spells out successive stages from the resurrection to the exaltation, from the exaltation to the gift of the Spirit, and to the effects of the Spirit in the historical circumstances, activities and characteristics of the Christian community. cf. C.F. Evans, *Saint Luke*, New Testament Commentary, Philadelphia 1990, 887.

⁴ cf. Johnson, 390.

⁵ In Acts the resurrection is affirmed as the installation of Jesus as Israel’s messiah by God (cf. Acts 2:24-36; 3:13, 22ff; 4:11; 13:33-37) and as that through which salvation is gained (cf. Acts 4:11ff). To bear witness to it is the special function of the apostles (cf. Acts 1:2ff; 4:33) and this evokes the opposition of the authorities (cf. Acts 4:1ff; 5:17ff).

2. Structure of Lk 24

Luke 24 is a trptych and I have divided it as follows:⁶

The Empty Tomb (vv. 1-12)

Contextualization (vv. 1-3)

Appearance at the Tomb (vv. 4-8)

The Women's witness to the Eleven and others (vv. 9-11)

Peter's visit to the Tomb (v. 12)

The Appearance at the Road to Emmaus (vv. 13-35)

Away from Jerusalem (vv. 13-16)

The Dialogue (vv. 17-27)

First Part (vv. 17-24)

Second Part (vv. 25-27)

The Emmaus Meal (vv. 28-32)

Back to Jeruslaem (vv. 33-35)

The Appearance in Jerusalem and Ascension to Heaven (vv. 36-53)

Jesus appears to the disciples in Jerusalem (vv. 36-43)

Jesus' final commission (vv. 44-49)

The Ascension (vv. 50-53)

3. Unity of Lk 24

This structure places together the witness to the resurrection on a wide basis of testimony of women, of individual disciples in intimate discourse with the Lord, of Peter as the chief apostle and of the officially commissioned apostles. This shows that the resurrection faith is the result of a series on intertwined events showing a kind of history of the risen Lord. Evans shows how that this is achieved by various unities of composition.⁷

A *unity of place* is emphasized in the sense that Jerusalem and its environments, towards which the story had been directed from 9:51, are stressed as the necessary locations of the appearances (vv. 13,33,49,50,52), and the necessary base from which the Christian movement is to proceed (v. 47).⁸

There is also a *unity of time* indicated by the fact that the journey of Emmaus takes place on the same day as the visit to the tomb (v. 13) and leads immediately (v. 33) to a return

⁶ The criteria I have used for my division is the movement that one can trace in the narrative and hence change of persons, locations, actions and subjects of discussions have been taken into consideration.

⁷ cf. Evans, 888-9.

⁸ cf. Johnson, 15.

to those for whom the appearance to Peter has become an accomplished fact. This is immediately followed by an appearance of the Lord (v. 39), his instruction and parting.⁹

The *unity of persons* is another concern in this chapter. It is two of those to whom the women have reported, so the Eleven and the rest (vv. 9,13), who go to Emmaus. It is the Eleven and their companions to whom these two report, and with whom they experience another appearance, and receive instruction and blessing (v. 33). In all of these, a community in the process of formation from eyewitnesses to ministers of the word is noticed.¹⁰

In Lk 24 there is also a *unity of theological themes*. Unlike Matthew's apologetic strategy in the face of Jews calling in question the resurrection (Mt 27:26ff), for three times Lk 24 presents an assertion, in the face of unbelief, of the divine necessity of the passion and resurrection. This is first asserted by the angels within the story of the empty tomb who trace back a prophecy made by Jesus during his earthly ministry (*must be*, v. 7). In the second time it is stated by the risen Lord, in a credal form, as the burden of the entire OT (*was it not necessary?*, vv. 26, 32). In the third instance the previous two are combined and the risen Lord shows the passion and resurrection to be the burden of his previous teaching and of the OT (*must be fulfilled*, v. 44).¹¹

Another theological theme binding the whole chapter together is the combination of "the mysterious with the matter-of-fact": the living one, who is not to be sought among the dead, and who can appear and disappear at will, remains a man who walks and talks and eats as they do. He is also raised and exalted as man.¹²

4. The Empty Tomb (Lk 24:1-12)

In this pericope Lk follows his immediate source, Mk 16:1-8, but he greatly modifies it.¹³ Lk *adds* some clarifications e.g. when the women went in they did not find the body (v. 3). He also adds the dramatic question: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

⁹ This contrasts the narrative in Acts 1 where a forty-day period of appearances is concluded by the ascension.

¹⁰ cf. Johnson, 390.

¹¹ This doctrine of the divinely ordained suffering and resurrection of the messiah is expanded in Acts (cf. 23:6;24:14ff;26:6-8,22ff).

¹² cf. Johnson, 390.

¹³ The explanation that comes to dominate the synoptic studies during the last 200 years has been the two-document hypothesis. This theory explains the triple-tradition i.e. the material common to Mk, Mt and Lk, by arguing that Mk was the first Gospel to be written and that Mt and Lk used it independently. It also argues that along with Mk, Mt and Luke used another common sources which has been called "Q". This explains the double-tradition i.e. the material that is found in Mt and Lk but not in Mk. A related version of this is the four-document hypothesis which assumes the two-document hypothesis and adds that the special Matthean material (M) and the special Lucan material (L) came from two additional sources known to the respective evangelists. cf. Mark Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem. A Way through the Maze*, London 2001, 20-1.

(v. 5). These additions show that “the emptiness of the tomb is emphasized in Lk”.¹⁴ Lk also makes some *adaptations* e.g. the women’s purpose for anointing Jesus almost disappears (v. 1), Lk omits the questioning of the women on the way to the tomb about who would take away the stone, Mk’s one angel become two and they appear after the women have entered the tomb (v. 4), he does not refer to an appearance in Galilee but a remembrance of what Jesus said there (v. 6),¹⁵ the women do not remain silent but tell all this to all the rest (v. 9). Lk’s *special material* is seen in the presence of Joanna (v. 10).

In the adaptations that Lk makes, he emphasizes the role of women as eyewitnesses and evangelists¹⁶ in contrast to the disbelief attributed to the men who regard the women’s report as delirium (v. 11). The women are portrayed as the ones who *do* remember (v. 8) what Jesus had said in Galilee (v. 6) and thereby “Luke informs the reader that the women have come to belief, and [to] the proper understanding of the event”.¹⁷ This is part of the prominence that the Third Gospel gives to the marginalized women in the patriarchal Greco-Roman world and his alternative role to women in ancient Judaism.¹⁸

5. The Appearance at the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35)

The Emmaus story is the middle and largest section of the trptych, constituting almost half of Lk’s resurrection chapter and so I shall consider it in greater detail. Here the use of Mk by Lk has come to an end. Marshall is of the opinion that Lk is by no means creating this story *de novo* but this is surely grounded in some tradition¹⁹, which Fitzmyer suggests that it comes to the evangelist from “L”.²⁰ To some extent it anticipates features in the third part of the trptych: sudden appearance of Jesus and doubts about his identity, meal setting and the explanation of Jesus’ suffering from Scriptures.²¹

This serves a particular function in Luke 24. Wansborough described the Emmaus story as a turning-point in the narratives. The first part ends with the male disciples in utter disbelief in the resurrection. This continues in the first half of the Emmaus narrative, where the disciples fail to recognize Jesus. The turning point of faith comes gradually:

¹⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, Michigan 1978, 882.

¹⁵ Goulder insists that this is not an adaptation of Mk (as is often said) but the replacement by a fuller statement of the reminiscence by Mt. It is important to note that Goulder does not subscribe to the two-document hypothesis in resolving the synoptic problem. His solution is that Lk knew Mt (and thereby solving the problem of the double tradition by eliminating Q) and both knew Mk (and thereby solving the problem of the triple tradition). cf. Michael D. Goulder, *Luke. A New Paradigm*, Sheffield 1989, 775. Brown finds no convincing proofs supporting Goulder’s theory. cf. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, New York 1977, 266.

¹⁶ cf. Robert J. Karris, “The Gospel according to Luke”, in Raymond E. Brown et al (Eds), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London 1993, 720.

¹⁷ Johnson, 391.

¹⁸ cf. Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, Cambridge 1995, 94.

¹⁹ cf. Marshall, 891.

²⁰ cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, The Anchor Bible 28A, New York 1985, 1554-5.

²¹ cf. Marshall, 890.

first through Jesus' explanation of the meaning of his suffering, then at the breaking of the bread when their eyes were opened.²²

This narrative also provides an easy transition from the empty tomb account to the appearance of Jesus to the full gathering of the disciples. By the details and length of this narrative Lk has created a bridge between the shock of absence (the tomb) and the shock of full presence (the appearance to the community).²³

Basing himself on C.H. Dodd, Fitzmyer classifies the Emmaus story as a *circumstantial narrative*²⁴ that is devoid of apologetic concerns: once Jesus is recognized, he vanishes and one does not even know whether he ate anything at table. This contrast the third part of the tryptic where the apologetic concern emerges (vv. 41-3)

In the Emmaus narrative, Lk's artistic powers are seen at their height. The suspense and excitement of the account develops into four parts: the meeting (vv. 13-16), the conversation on the road (vv. 17-27), the meal (vv. 28-32) and the return to Jerusalem (vv. 33-35).²⁵ Within this structure, Lk provides a sense of particularity by the rich use of detail e.g. the name of the village and its distance from the city (v. 13), the name of the disciple (v. 18) and the gestures of hospitality (v. 29). The story is also full of emotions e.g. the men stopping in sorrow (v. 17), their report that the women had stunned them (v. 22) and their recollection of how their hearts had burned while in conversation with Jesus (v. 32).²⁶

The Emmaus episode is also filled with Lucan theological motifs so much so Sammut calls it "a window on Luke's theology".²⁷ The literary framework supporting and giving a context to the Emmaus narrative is that of a *journey*. This is noted from the language used right from the start as it describes the disciples on their way to Emmaus.²⁸ The journey theme is one of the main important geographical schemas by which Lk structures his Gospel. This features Jesus journey towards Jerusalem and back to the Father (9:51-19:27).²⁹ This theme portays the spiritual journey that the disciple makes in following Christ by taking one's cross and thereby Lk provides an image for the Christian life as an

²² cf. H. Wansbrough, *Risen from the Dead*, Great Britain 1978, 65. Scerri also brings out clearly this turning point in the Emmaus story. cf. Hector Scerri, *Emmaus*, in *The Sunday Times* (April 15, 2001), 43.

²³ cf. Johnson, 398.

²⁴ Dodd had showed that one could not classify the post-resurrection appearance-stories according to the categories used for the rest of the Gospel tradition. Instead he suggested the distinction of three kinds of appearance stories: *concise narrative*, *circumstantial narratives* and *mixed narratives*. *Circumstantial narratives* manifest the art and craft of the storyteller, his concern for dramatic development, vivid details, traits of character, conversion, etc. Along with the Emmaus story, Jesus' appearance to the seven disciples fishing at the Sea of Tiberias, is another example (Jn 20:26-29). cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1556-7.

²⁵ cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1559.

²⁶ cf. Johnson, 398.

²⁷ Christine Sammut, *The Emmaus Narrative: A Window on Luke's Theology*, unpublished Diploma in Religious Studies dissertation, Faculty of Theology, University of Malta, Malta 2002.

²⁸ cf. Karris, 720.

²⁹ cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, The Anchor Bible 28, New York 1985, 169.

imitation of Christ.³⁰ The *city of Jerusalem*, the fixed point from which they move away and towards to, is another motif.³¹

Another theme is that of *discipleship*. For Lk this has three characteristics: faith repentance and baptism.³² The Emmaus narrative portrays the first two as the disciples as slowly responding in faith (in listening to the Risen Lord) and converting in the sense that the narrative begins with the disciples moving away from discipleship but it ends up by them committing themselves to it as they walk back to Jerusalem. In doing so they re-direct their life.³³

The *proof-from-prophecy* constitutes other theme showing Lk's ability to read the OT globally and making use of it to point to Jesus as the Christ.³⁴ This bridges on to another theme: *the plan of God* i.e. in using the proof-from-prophecy device Lk shows a concern to form a continuation between Judaism and Christianity, showing that God's divine plan has been acting since the OT.³⁵

The Emmaus narrative also creates a literary tension since Lk is presenting Jesus to the readers whilst the disciples themselves do not recognize him. The *portrait of Jesus* is one of a prophet³⁶ and the suffering messiah.³⁷ This allows Lk to give a summary of the life of Jesus that stands in a continuation with Acts.³⁸

³⁰ cf. Green, 102.

³¹ cf. Sec 4, "unity of place".

³² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of his Teachings*, London 1989, 119.

³³ cf. Green, 108.

³⁴ cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1558; cf. Sec. 4, "unity of theological themes".

³⁵ cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 12-3.

³⁶ Fitzmyer points out that Lk often portrays Jesus as a prophetic figure similar to the OT prophets. cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 213. Thus, in this pericope Lk seems to suggest that the disciples of Emmaus forgot the rejection which was an important part of the prophet's life. This is why Jesus takes them back to this by insisting on "*all the prophets have said [italics mine]*" (v. 25). cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1558.

³⁷ The most important title used of Jesus by Lk is "Christos" referring to Him as the Messiah or Christ. cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 213. Lk 24:26 qualifies this as being a suffering messiah. Lk also presents Jesus himself as pointing to passages in the OT, where the Messiah was to suffer (vv. 27, 46). cf. Green, 25. Nonetheless, Fitzmyer emphasizes that this concept of a suffering suffering messiah is found nowhere in the OT or in any Jewish literature and that it cannot be mistaken for the concept of the suffering servant in Isa 53. cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1558. He goes further to say that neither do other NT writers or contemporary Jewish literature speak of a suffering Messiah. cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 200. This is a controversial issue in biblical studies which I have personally studied elsewhere. cf. Hayden Williams, *The Suffering Servant. An Exegesis of Isa 52:13-53:12*, unpublished assignment in Prophetic Literature: Exegesis, Faculty of Theology, University of Malta, Malta 2001, 21-9; Evans, 910-11; Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Michigan 1988, 636-7.

³⁸ McBride draws up the connections in the Gospel and Acts with vv. 19b-21a. and he gives the following schema: *concerning Jesus of Nazareth* (Lk 4:34; Acts 2:22; 4:10) *a prophet* (Lk 4:24; 7:16; 13:33; Acts 3:22; 7:37) *powerfull* (Lk 4:1, 14, 36; 5:17; 6:19; Acts 1:8; 4:7, 33; 10:8) *in deed and word* (Lk 4:36; 7:22; 10:24; Acts 1:1; 2:22; 7:22; 10:37ff), before God (Lk 1:6; Acts 10:38) *Chief Priests and rulers* (Lk 23:13; Acts 13:37) *delivered him up* (Lk 9:44; 24:7; Acts 3:13) *to be condemned to death* (cf. Mk 10:33) *and crucified him* (Lk 23:21, 33; 24:7; Acts 2:3, 36; 4:10) *our own hope* (Acts 28:20) *the one to redeem Israel* (Lk 1:68; 2:38; 21:28; Acts 7:35; 28:20). cf. Denis McBride, *Emmaus: The Gracious Visit of God According to Luke*, Dublin 1991, 133.

The theme of *hospitality* (v. 29) is a theological theme presented in the Emmaus narrative that has its roots in the OT where hospitality often brought people into a direct contact with God who was in the form of the stranger.³⁹ By using this motif Lk urges the Christian readers to be hospitable with the travelling missionaries and the poor.⁴⁰

Hospitality ushers the scene of the *meal* which is considered as the climax of this pericope. There is a whole debate among biblical scholars regarding its nature and significance. Robinson considers it as any other meal⁴¹ whereas Fitzmyer affirms that this scene (with Christ reclining at the table, taking bread, uttering a blessing, breaking the bread and offering it to them (v. 30)) recalls the Last Supper⁴² and see in it a fulfillment of what Jesus said that he would not drink and eat with them until the Kingdom of God is fulfilled (v. 15). Hence, at Emmaus Jesus shows that the Kingdom has been fulfilled.⁴³

The lesson in the story is that, henceforth, the risen Christ will be present to his assembled disciples, not visibly (after the ascension), but in the breaking of the bread. So they will know him and recognize him, because so he will be truly present among them.⁴⁴ This is the climax of another theme which Fitzmyer calls *revelatory*: the stranger – the risen Christ – is only gradually made manifest in his new status to these journeying disciples.⁴⁵

³⁹ Lk's Gospel carries the theme that God is visiting his people in the person of Christ. The outcasts and sinners take up the opportunity to accept Jesus and invite him in. cf. McBride, 144-5.

⁴⁰ cf. Sammut, 37.

⁴¹ cf. B.P. Robinson, "The Place of the Emmaus Story in Luke-Acts", in *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984), 487. Table-fellowship is an important motif in Lk who presents Jesus as having meals with sinners, Pharisees and friends. Here Jesus taught the Good News to the poor and transcended the social barriers at his time putting himself in a continual state of ritual impurity. Jesus' behaviour is an *ôt* (a prophetic gesture) showing that in his person God's Kingdom has come and it is open for everyone who accepts it. cf. Green, 86-9. Jesus' meals also symbolize the eschatological banquet. cf. Pierre-Marie Galopin, "Meal" in Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, London 1973, 344; cf. John P. Meier, "Jesus", in Raymond E. Brown et al (Eds), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London 1993, 1320.

⁴² This is also seen as the Lucan way of referring to the Eucharist. cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1559; Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 261. Marshall refers to Bultmann who comments that the early church associated the resurrection appearances with meals since it expected Jesus to appear at the Lord's Supper. However, Marshall looks at it in an inverted way and maintains that the importance of the Last Supper is actually acquired from the fact that the Risen Christ had appeared at meals. cf. Marshall, 898.

⁴³ cf. Donat Spiteri, *Il-Bxara t-Tajba skond San Luqa*, Sensiela Naqraw il-Bibbja 3, Malta 1993, 176.

⁴⁴ Scholars often ask whether this scene reflects the primitive liturgical celebrations. These point to the use of OT Scriptures as being the liturgy of the Word, the proclamation of resurrection faith, the meal setting with the breaking of the bread. Such elements are there and they clearly suggest a relation to the Eucharist, but Fitzmyer insists that whether they also reflect the mode of a primitive Eucharistic celebration is another matter. For him this may be more eisegetical than exegetical. cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1560.

⁴⁵ cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1558. In stating that "their eyes were opened" (v. 31) Lk uses the theological passive and thereby indicating an action carried out by God. cf. Johnson, 396.

6. The Appearance in Jerusalem and Ascension to Heaven (Lk 24:36-53)

The last part of the tryptch is one literary unit made up of three scenes as I indicated in the structure of Lk 24. It recounts the third appearance of the risen Christ in the Lucan resurrection narrative taks place in Jerusalem itself on the same evening following the discovery of the empty tomb, immediately after the return of the disciples from Emmaus.⁴⁶ There is a parallelism between this composite scene and the Emmaus incident: an appearance that is not comprehended, an instruction based on Scripture which leads to a proper revelation, a meal and Jesus' departure (not by vanishing but by ascending). The only element that is added is the commision that Jesus gives to the disciples.

Scene 1 (vv. 36-43) constitutes a *mixed-appearance narrative*⁴⁷ and has a different language and style from the Marcan appendix (Mk 16:14-15) recounting the same episode. Thus, one can conclude that there is no dependence on Mk and that it comes from "L".⁴⁸ However, it also shares some common similarities with Jn⁴⁹ but it differs from it in that in the Lucan scene the disciples are terrified but in the Johannine scene they rejoice at seeing Jesus.

Peculair to this scene is the *apologetic motif*. Christ challanges them to touch him, look at his hands and feet, flesh and bones; and he asks them for something to eat although it is not stated that they were at table and that Jesus ate the fish.⁵⁰ This creates a parallelism to the Emmaus story. Thus this scene, in his own way, Lk stresses the identity and the corporeality of the risen Christ⁵¹ against the docetism of the Gnostics⁵² at that time.⁵³

Scene 2 (vv. 44-49) is remotely related to the finale of the Matthean Gospel (Mt 29:19-20a) and to the Marcan appendix (16:15-16). Whereas the Matthean affirmation of God's

⁴⁶ cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1572.

⁴⁷ According to Dodd, these are *concise narratives* (stories reporting nothing except that which is absolutely essential to a bare report of what happened and which have an easily recognizable common pattern [situation, appearance, greeting, recognition, word of command], resulting from being often repeated and hence rubbed down and polished by repetition) developing into *circumstantial narratives* (cf. footnote 24). cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1556-7.

⁴⁸ cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1573.

⁴⁹ Some details can be seen in the following points: "stood in their midst" (Lk 24:36b;Jn 20:19), "and said to them: 'Peace be with you!'" (Lk 24:36c;Jn 20:19d), "As He said this, He showed them his hands and his feet" (Lk 24:40;Jn 20:20a). cf. Evans, 917.

⁵⁰ This has been the subject of various controversies among scholars. cf. Gerald O'Collins, "Did Jesus Eat the Fish (Luke 24:42-43)?", *Gregorianum* 69 (1988) 65-76.

⁵¹ cf. Evans, 909; Johnson 405.

⁵² Gnosticism is a dualistic religious movement that emerged in the second century that denied Christ's real incarnation and the *salus carnis* (i.e. the salvation of the flesh). It is in this sense that it has docetic tendencies since the docetists claimed that the Son of God merely seemed to be a human being. cf. "Docetism", "Gnosticism" in Gerald O'Collins – Edward G. Farrugia, *A Conise Dictionary of Theology*, Edinburgh 2000, 65, 96; cf. Raymond E. Brown et al, "Early Church", in Raymond E. Brown et al (Eds), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London 1993,1353.

⁵³ The Johannine community was also coping with this problem but it dealt with it in a different way by introducing the Thomas episode (Jn 20:24-29). cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, The Anchor Bible 29 A, New York 1970, 1033.

Jesus abiding presence as the Emmanuel is clearly expressed, Lk's Christ assures his followers of his presence in a different way: through the way of the Spirit who will assist their witness.⁵⁴

Fitzmyer notes that the formulation of the commission in each Gospel is made to suit the major theme in the theology of the Gospel.⁵⁵ For Lk, the commission of the Eleven is foreshadowed by the mission of the Twelve (9:1-6) and its formulation is in terms of "repentance" and "forgiveness of sins"⁵⁶ but its major theme is "witness" (cf. Acts 1:8)⁵⁷ that starts from Jerusalem.⁵⁸ This function is related to the OT which not only talk about the suffering Messiah but they become the basis for the witnessing of the disciples.

Scene 3 (vv. 50-53) consists of the end of the appearance of the risen Christ to the disciples in Jerusalem. Nothing corresponds to the Mt or Jn. Only the Marcan appendix seems to have some parallel when it states that Jesus "was taken up to heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God" (Mk 16:19).⁵⁹ At this point, Brown notes that just as Lk's Gospel began in the Temple when an angel came down from heaven to Zechariah, by inclusion it ends in the Temple as Jesus has gone to heaven.⁶⁰

This scene is also the climax and conclusion of the Lucan Gospel. In 9:31, the transfigured Jesus spoke about his departure (*exodus*) completed at Jerusalem and thus the goal and destiny towards which the Lucan Jesus has been resolutely moving (9:51) has been reached through the ascension which also opens the book of Acts (1:9-11). Thus, the narrative has prepared the reader for this departure and its prophetic significance.⁶¹ Lk's description of the ascension is influenced by apocalyptic stage

⁵⁴ For Lk, the withdrawal of Jesus is not so much an absence as it is a presence in a new and more powerful mode i.e. when Jesus is not among them as another specific body, he is accessible to all as life-giving spirit. cf. Johnson, 406.

⁵⁵ In the Marcan commission the disciples are to "preach the gospel", a theme that Lk has avoided. Mt does not express it in terms of the "gospel" neither, but the distinctive element is to "make disciples of all nations" and to "teach them to observe all that I had commanded you" and thereby reflecting his teaching presented in the five main discourses. cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1578-81.

⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that in these passages repentance and forgiveness are not connected with any doctrine of the death of Christ as an atonement or sacrifice, but with his resurrection and exaltation to be both judge and gracious messiah. cf. Evans, 923. This forms part of Lk's wider theology which does not incorporate the ransom attitude i.e. how the Lucan Jesus saves the lost is not stated. One must turn to Acts to learn anything more conclusive about the offer of salvation. There is becomes evident that Jesus' exaltation (i.e. resurrection and glorification) are the preeminent salvific events. cf. Green, 125.

⁵⁷ What had been said to the women and the disciples of Emmaus is now reiterated and expanded so as to become the possession of the whole apostolic company as the basis of faith and message. cf. Evans, 921.

⁵⁸ cf. footnote 5.

⁵⁹ cf. Marshall, 907.

⁶⁰ cf. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 262.

⁶¹ cf. Johnson, 406.

props⁶² and OT background.⁶³ Its main affirmation is that Christ is with the heavenly Father in glory.⁶⁴

7. Conclusion

Lk had promised in the beginning of his Gospel that his systematic account would be based on what the original eyewitnesses and ministers of the word passed on (Lk 1:2). Indeed, his concluding chapter indicates that he thinks that the disciples fulfilled their mission after that they had seen the risen Christ. Such resurrection narratives are artistically depicted by Lk as he uses various literary skills. In doing so he combines various sources and presents his own theological motifs.

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⁶² These include a rapture with motion upward through the heavens, a cloud as the elevator, and angel interpreters. cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV*, 1587.

⁶³ Stories about ascensions in the Hebrew Bible are also mentioned e.g. Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11).

⁶⁴ cf. Spiteri, 179.

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