

The Community of Disciples in Luke-Acts

By Pastor Jim Park, Ph.D.

In building a biblical theology of discipleship based on the first and third gospels, one of the initial issues to be resolved is to discuss how these two books compare and contrast with one another. In general terms, the “synoptic problem” provides ways to understand the similarities and differences between Matthew, Mark and Luke.¹

This purpose of this chapter is to discuss some of the important underlying differences in the communities of Luke and Matthew and how the two gospel writers were sensitive to those outside of their natural constituencies. Eric Franklin’s thesis that Luke wrote his gospel in critical response to Matthew will be addressed in the context of the composition of Matthew and Luke’s communities.

Just how Matthew and Luke addressed their particular communities will be discussed by showing how the genealogies, birth stories and geographical orientation of these two gospels compare and contrast with one another. Once the question of Luke’s relationship with Matthew is tentatively resolved, the primary importance of the theme of incorporation within Luke-Acts will be studied.

The programmatic nature of the “Nazareth pericope” of Luke 4:16-30 will be looked at along with Luke’s concept of discipleship as following Jesus in the Way. This second chapter will conclude with a discussion of the Holy Spirit in the life of the community of disciples. The first part of the dissertation will then conclude

¹ The past resolution of these apparent difficulties was set forth by redaction/source criticism. In source criticism of the synoptic gospels, Mark is seen as the first written and based on the original, common source “Q.” The other gospel writers then borrowed and modified from Mark and “Q.” This school of interpretation is more concerned with the historical part than the literary whole. This method is currently being challenged by the literary/narrative school of interpretation. See Appendix B for a more extended discussion of modern hermeneutical principles.

with a suggestion of how Matthew and Luke's concept of discipleship can be synthesized.

Luke and Matthew's Discipleship Communities

In his book, *Luke: Interpreter of Paul, Critic of Matthew*, Franklin posits that Luke may have been written as a critical response to the publication of Matthew (1994:314, 381). According to Franklin, "Mark is his primary source: Matthew is a well-used source, but it is a much less influential one; it is, in reality, a much less respected one" (1994:315).²

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

One possible explanation of why Matthew differed from Luke in the handling of the Law and other issues was that they were writing to different audiences. Franklin himself brings up this possibility but dismisses it by saying:

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

² Franklin discusses the distinct possibility that Luke's introductory remarks to provide a more "orderly account" was directed towards his disagreement with Matthew (1994:170-173).

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

Bosch would disagree with Franklin on his understanding of the *Sitz im Leben* of the New Testament authors. Instead of writing to the same audience, Matthew and Luke are thought to address the group from which they came from and who they were best acquainted with. In this regard, Matthew “was probably a Jewish Christian writing for a predominantly Jewish Christian community” whereas Luke “was perhaps the only Gentile author of a New Testament book and wrote for Christians who were predominantly of Gentile origin” (1997:84-85).⁴

According to Bosch, Matthew’s gospel was written to justify the incorporation of Gentile Christians into the body of believers and to embolden the Jewish Christians to see the “opportunities for witness and service around them” (1997:59). Whereas Bosch thinks Matthew’s wrote to “a predominantly (perhaps even exclusively) Jewish Christian community” (1997:85 emphasis his), Raymond Brown sees Matthew’s church as being more mixed and facing the challenges of an increasing number of Gentile believers.⁵

While Bosch and Brown might disagree on the exact make-up of Matthew’s community, they would both agree that Luke was writing to a different constituency. Whereas Matthew was primarily addressing a Jewish constituency, Luke was probably writing to a second generation Gentile church (Brown 1993:235) which needed to be assured of both its Jewish roots and the presence of Jesus through the Spirit in mission (Bosch 1997:86).

The issue of different audiences becomes clearer when common subjects within the two gospels are compared and contrasted. Matthew and Luke both

⁴ Bosch goes on to say that Matthew’s purpose for writing to the mostly Jewish Christian community was both pastoral and missional. The church was first of all facing a crisis of identity from physical persecution by Roman rule and theological attacks from the Pharisees. Matthew uses the historical replaying and fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures in the genealogy, birth and life of Jesus in order to counteract the claims made by the Pharisees that their Lord was not the Messiah and their community was not the church.

⁵ “In this situation of a mixed community with dominance now shifting over to the Gentile side, Matthew is concerned to show that Jesus has always had meaning for both Jew and Gentile” (Brown 1993:47).

begin their gospels with the story of the birth of Jesus, his growing up and a genealogy. These are unique elements to these gospels and do not appear in Mark and John.⁶

The next three sections discuss how Matthew and Luke attempted to bring their communities together through the genealogy, the birth narratives and their contrasting geographical interests. The first issue to be discussed is how these diverse communities were brought together through Matthew and Luke's unique perspectives on the genealogy of Jesus.

The Genealogical Community

Despite the initial reaction most readers have to the opening phrases of the New Testament, a deeper look into the construction and purpose of the genealogy is richly repaid.⁷ Matthew begins his gospel by tracing Jesus' heritage back to King David and the patriarch Abraham which would legitimize His standing within the Jewish community.

As was brought out in the previous chapter, the listing of both Jewish and Gentile sinners dramatically illustrates the universal salvation revealed through the naming of Jesus at the beginning of the gospel and the command to make disciples of all nations at the end.

⁶ This places these accounts somewhat outside of the usual source criticism of the synoptics which makes most of the gospel writings dependent upon Mark and "Q." It also helps to highlight the themes of these two books directly without the influence of a Markan perspective.

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

⁷ In commenting on the opening verses of the New Testament in Matthew, Brown quotes a German romantic poet of the eighteenth century who said that the genealogy is, "an arid page in the Holy Book" (1993:596).

Thus from the outset it could be said that Matthew uses the genealogy to address the concerns of the Jewish believers who were being unsettled by the arguments of the unbelieving Jews concerning the legitimacy of Christ's authority on the one hand and the influx of the Gentile Christians on the other. Whereas Matthew places his genealogy at the very beginning of his gospel, Luke places it after the baptism of Jesus in apparent affirmation of the heavenly anointing of the Spirit and the divine benediction from the Father (Luke 3:22).⁸

Besides the obvious difference in the position of the two genealogies, the most striking contrast between them is their ordering and extent. Whereas Matthew begins with Abraham and ends with Jesus who is the son of Joseph, Luke begins with Joseph and ends with Jesus as "the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38).⁹

Through distinct means Matthew and Luke accomplish different ends. Matthew appeals to his Jewish readers by grounding Christ's heredity in Abraham and his Gentile readers by including non-Jews in the genealogy. Luke appeals to the Gentiles by tracing Jesus back beyond Abraham to Adam and his Jewish readers by essentially affirming Matthew's genealogy back to Abraham.¹⁰

⁸ Luke perhaps does not begin with the genealogy because his primary interest is not to establish the authority of Jesus within Judaism but to provide an historical continuity between the Spirit-inaugurated events of the birth of Christ (Luke 1-2) and the birth of His church (Acts 1-2).

⁹ Brown comments that "it is possible to have conflicting genealogies of the same person if those genealogies have different functions. Only one or neither of them may be historical in terms of traceable biological lineage, but both of them may be accurate in terms of the function they serve, e.g., Matthew's intention to show that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah, and Luke's intention to show that Jesus is the Son of God (1993:85).

¹⁰ Brown would also posit that the genealogies are different because their communities were substantively different (contra Franklin): "If Luke traces Jesus to Adam, that may reflect the fact that his is a Gospel written for the Gentiles of the Pauline churches. In a mixed community, Matthew could appeal to Gentile Christian interest by tracing Jesus to Abraham" (1993:90).

The Birth Community

Franklin proposes that “Luke’s infancy narratives can be viewed as a determined response to the stories he found in Matthew” (1994:364).¹¹ While it is true that the accounts are quite different,¹² there are eleven major points which are shared by the two gospels.¹³ While the attempt to harmonize these apparent differences into one story has often met with less than success,¹⁴ the differences between the two infancy narratives can be traced to the different objectives each of the gospels had in the introductory verses.¹⁵

Just as Matthew wants to expand the missionary vision of his mostly Jewish readers to include the nations, (as brought out in his inclusion of the Gentile Magi’s interest and visit to the Messiah), Luke desires to awaken the nations to the unbreakable link to the Jewish heritage as found in the Old Testament.

Thus in the opening verses of Luke, “There appear, almost from the pages of the OT, characters like Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, who are the

¹¹ Franklin interprets Matthew’s story of the Magi to reflect his hostility towards the Jews who are pictured as not being aware of the Messiah’s birth. According to Franklin, Luke replaces the story of the Magi with the visit of the shepherds which affirms the faith of Israel. On this and other points, Franklin states that “it seems likely that Luke’s position was such as to understand the significance of the Matthean stories and consciously to reject it” (1994:374).

¹² Only Luke depicts the story of Zechariah, Elizabeth and the birth of John the Baptist. Luke also tells us about the census which brings Joseph to Bethlehem, the visit of the shepherds, the presentation of Jesus at the Temple and the visit of Jesus with his parents to the Temple at the age of twelve. On the other hand, Matthew concentrates on a different set of circumstances of which Luke makes no mention: the star, the magi, Herod’s plot against Jesus, the massacre and the flight and return from Egypt.

¹³ The similarities include: Joseph is of Davidic descent (Matt. 1:16,20; Luke 1:27,32; 2:4); conception through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18,20; Luke 1:35); the child is to be named Jesus (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31) and the birth takes place in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4-6) (Brown 1993:34-35).

¹⁴ “Commentators of times past have harmonized these different details into a consecutive narrative, so that the ordinary Christian is often not even aware of a difficulty when Lucan shepherds and Matthean magi fraternize in the Christmas scene” (Brown 1993:35).

¹⁵ In Matthew’s gospel the theological motifs of the first two chapters “anticipate the theology of the rest of the Gospel” (Brown 1993:585). Among these are the presence of God, (1:23; 18:20; 28:20); the universal appeal, rule of the Messiah (2:1-12; 8:11; 28:19); the Davidic and Son of God Christology, (1:1; 3:17; 14:33); and continuity with the Old Testament, (1:23; 2:6; 4:13-16).

final representatives of the piety of Israel, while Mary recites a hymn that vocalizes the aspirations of the remnant” (Brown 1993:242).

The prophetic rejoicing of the once barren Elizabeth (a possible type of Abraham’s wife Sarah) with her close relative Mary, could have been constructed to show the Spirit-directed relationship which should exist between the established Old Testament and the emerging New Testament people of God.¹⁶

As such, Matthew and Luke can be seen as complimentary (contra Franklin) and not competing claims based on their different context and their overall theological purpose.¹⁷ Whereas Matthew desires to have his Jewish constituents look outward to the nations, Luke wants his Gentile community to look back on the richness of the theological heritage of the Jews. Thus both writers are working for the wider incorporation of individuals into the New Covenant community of disciples. This theme is further brought out by the unique geographical concerns of each writer.

The Geographical Community

Joseph Fitzmyer points out that “unlike other evangelists, Luke begins and ends his Gospel in Jerusalem” (1998:56). The opening scenes of Zechariah, Simeon and Anna at the Temple are reflected by Jesus’ closing command to stay in Jerusalem until they would receive the Spirit.¹⁸ Luke, the Gentile writing to

¹⁶ This Spirit-directed relationship which should exist between the established faith and a new generation of believers has volumes to speak in our day which is finding it increasingly difficult to truly diverse communities to exist together, even within the church. The struggles many churches have had over “traditional” and “contemporary” worship services is just one case in point.

¹⁷ By extension, it might also be posited that since the birth narratives in both gospels anticipate the subject matter and theology which follow, the rest of the gospels might be complementary as well.

¹⁸ In particular, the last verse of the gospel “and they stayed continually at the temple, praising God” (Luke 24:53) is almost an exact parallel of Anna’s life who “never left the temple but worshiped night and day” (2:37). In addition, the prophetess “gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (2:38). Jesus returns with His parents to Jerusalem for the annual Passover feast (2:41-50) where He feels compelled to “be in my Father’s house.” The entire central part of Luke’s gospel is within the

Gentiles apparently wants to make it clear that the mission of the church must have its geographical and theological roots in Israel.

In the final meetings with the disciples in Luke 24, Jesus underlines “beginning at Moses” (24:27) as the root for understanding His own mission and “beginning at Jerusalem” (24:47) as the foundation for implementing their mission. To underline this, “Luke, the Gentile grounded his story in Jerusalem because He saw the need for rooting the Gentile church in Israel [in order that] the Christian church may never forget that it developed organically and gradually from the womb of Israel” (1997:115).¹⁹

Elizabeth, who represents the hopes of the Old Covenant people of God, clearly sees her role and her son’s role as subservient: “But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me” (1:43). There is no jealousy between the two women, only joy at the promised births.

Although this unity between the Old and the New Testament people of God was to be constantly tested both in the life of Jesus and the life of the Church, Luke nevertheless wants to underline the organic unity God purposed the church should have with Israel. Bosch succinctly states:

The Christian church did not begin as a new entity on the day of Pentecost. On that day, many Jews became what they truly were—Israel. Subsequently Gentiles were incorporated into Israel. Gentile Christians are part of Israel, not a “new” Israel. There is no break in the history of salvation. Not to be converted means to be purged from Israel; conversion means a share in the covenant with Abraham. The promises to the fathers

context of Jesus resolutely setting “out for Jerusalem” (9:51-19:40). Bosch comments: “The importance Luke attaches to Israel is borne out by the central role he ascribes to Jerusalem in his narrative” (1997:93).

¹⁹ This birthing is clearly signaled in the opening pericopes of Luke’s gospel. The miraculous Spirit-filled birth of John the Baptist to the Old-Testament-like parents of Zechariah and Elizabeth is intimately connected to the Spirit-empowered birth of Jesus to the young virgin Mary. The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth is theologically pregnant. Instead of picturing a discontinuity between the two women, the two eras, Luke clearly states that they are biologically (theologically) related to one another (1:36).

have been fulfilled. The church is born out of the womb of Israel of old (1997:96).

The continuity of God's purpose for Israel is not only rooted in the capital of Israel (beginning at Jerusalem) but perhaps more importantly, deep in the Old Testament Scriptures (beginning at Moses). Luke is constantly grounding his gospel in the Scriptures, not only to "prove" the validity of the events themselves but just as importantly to intimately intertwine the old and new branches into one organic entity empowered by the Spirit. The Gentile Christians therefore "are engrafted into the messianic Israel" (LaRondelle 1983:210).

Whereas Matthew ends his book with Jesus pronouncing the Great Commission on a mountain overlooking the Galilee of the nations, Luke both begins his gospel and Acts specifically in Jerusalem. Through the authority of Jesus and the witness of the Spirit, Matthew and Luke are attempting to nurture God's new community, the Church.

In the truest aspect of being sensitive to those who are different, Matthew and Luke urge their particular communities to look beyond their own self-interest and be connected in the teaching and practice of the universal brotherhood of all believers as set forth by the world's Redeemer. Table 3 summarizes this section which outlined how Matthew and Luke might have attempted to nurture a diverse community.

Within the communities of Matthew and Luke, there needed to be a conscious attempt to bring their different constituencies together in order to truly fulfill the commission to make disciples of both the Jewish and Gentile believers. Instead of being opposed to one another as Franklin has posited, it appears that both Matthew and Luke by a variety of means, sought to inform their natural

constituents of the true dependence they shared with one another as they fulfilled the Lord’s command to go and make disciples.²⁰

COMPARING MATTHEW AND LUKE’S MISSIONARY GOSPELS

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

Now that the linkage between Matthew and Luke has been discussed, the next section deals with the unity and the community of Luke-Acts. In the following discussion it will be seen that Luke has used the pivotal concept of parallelism in order to establish the continuity of the prophetic and Spirit-filled mission of God.

²⁰ Could it be that the current struggle in most churches between such issues as “traditional” and “contemporary” styles of worship and evangelism learn much from Matthew and Luke’s sensitivity towards the needs and viewpoints of those outside their natural constituency? In contrast to this, the Spirit is often poured out in Luke when the “traditional” Elizabeth meets the “contemporary” Mary. As will be shown in the pages to follow, this reconciliation between differing people is one of the foundational works of the Spirit in the writings of Luke.

The Unity and Community of Luke-Acts

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate Luke's attempt to bring together the diverse elements of the community of God under the unction of the Holy Spirit. Within this context, the historicity of Luke-Acts will be discussed along with the underlying purpose of Luke's use of parallelism to bind the two works together.

In his major commentary *The Acts of the Apostles*, Fitzmyer states that "the major problem that confronts any interpreter of the Acts of the Apostles today is the historicity of the Lucan account" (1998:124).²¹ In a view advanced by Hans Conzelmann and others,²² Luke is primarily concerned with the meaning of history and not just the recording of incidents which may or may not have occurred.²³

In arguing against this weak historicity, I. Howard Marshall argues persuasively that the New Testament sets forth a strong relationship between faith and historicity. "Our point is that the events which faith interprets as divine acts must be real, historical events, or otherwise they cannot be interpreted at all. The facts may be tested historically, but the ultimate decisions are matters of faith" (1971:52).

Although there is a continuing debate over the historicity of the Lukan accounts, there is no debate over the value of the theological contribution of Luke-

²¹ Despite the claims by Luke to Theophilus that he has attempted to "carefully investigate" and "write an orderly account," scholars such as Hans Conzelmann (1960) have been skeptical of Luke's historicity.

²² Fitzmyer's strongest qualification against the historicity of Acts centers on Luke's recounting of miracles and heavenly interventions. These are seen by Fitzmyer as "the most problematic narratives in Acts" because they ultimately involve a "philosophical judgment" of whether God supernaturally intervenes in human history (1998:125).

²³ Countering this questioning of the historical value of Luke-Acts are argued by F.F. Bruce (1985), W. Ward Gasque (1975, 1989), Hengel (1979) and I. Howard Marshall (1971). Fitzmyer himself espouses "a middle ground between the skeptical approach and the conservative reaction to it" (1998:124). In seeking this middle ground Fitzmyer cites a number of arguments which attempts to qualify the historicity of Luke-Acts. Among these qualifications are the conjectures that Luke has not written according to the canons of modern history, nor has he been solely dependent on historical details to shape his stories. On the positive side, details of Luke's accounts are confirmed elsewhere in the New Testament (2 Cor. 11:2; Rom. 15:22-25) as well as in the writings of Josephus (1998:126).

Acts to our understanding of the New Testament.²⁴ While Fitzmyer states that Acts is “much more” than the early history of the Christian Church (1998:47), J. Verheyden posits that it is “the highly innovating work of a theologian interpreting the Christian message for the situation of the Church of his time” (1999:25).

Jacob Jervell calls Luke “the theologian of Scripture par excellence” (1984:122) and Roger Stronstad feels that Luke must not always be interpreted by Paul but “is a theologian in his own right” (1984:11).²⁵ Bosch would join the chorus of voices by saying that “Luke was first and foremost a theologian . . . He was not a mere chronicler of history . . . His interest was in the way the Gentile mission was to be motivated theologically not in a history report of the origins and course of the mission” (1997:87).

The theological unity of Luke-Acts and its strong intent to build community is underscored by the depiction of the Holy Spirit in both books.²⁶ Luke accomplishes this by paralleling the role of the Spirit and other themes in the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus in Luke 1-2 and the birth of the Church in Acts 1-2.²⁷

In these parallel episodes, both Zechariah and Matthias are chosen by lot and Elizabeth and the disciples remain in seclusion in order to wait for the miracle births to occur. The aged Simeon and Anna not only provide a linkage to the

²⁴ In fact, one of the benefits of the historical-critical study of Luke-Acts was to lead scholars to study the richness of the underlying theology.

²⁵ In addition, Hengel states Luke is a “historian and theologian who needs to be taken seriously. . . . We only do justice to the significance of Luke as the first theological ‘historian’ of Christianity if we take his work seriously as a source” (1979:61, 67).

²⁶ Fitzmyer categorically states that “in any discussion about the unity of the Lucan Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, the role of the holy Spirit is an important element” (1999:165). Bosch sees the Holy Spirit as a uniting theme in Luke-Acts by saying “Luke unites the time of Jesus and the time of the church in one era of the Spirit” (1997:87).

²⁷ In this sense, Fitzmyer sees the Spirit primarily as the “inaugurator” of the ministry of Jesus and the Church (1999:172,174, emphasis his). Brown specifically sees that the work of the Spirit is reflected in the opening chapters of both Luke and Acts thus binding the books together (1993:243).

ancient past, but provide a foretaste of the Pentecostal blessing when both old and young, men and women will share in the renewal of the prophetic spirit.²⁸

The promises concerning the Messiah which are enunciated in Luke 1-2 are now proclaimed as being fulfilled in Acts 1-2. These unifying themes are listed below:

THE BIRTH OF JESUS AND THE CHURCH

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

According to W.C. van Unnik, the overall purpose of this apparent parallelism was to bind the two books and the Old Testament together into the key concept of salvation (1973:340-373).²⁹ Marshall finds in the theme of salvation “the key to the theology of Luke. Not salvation-history but salvation itself is the theme which occupied the mind of Luke in both parts and of his work” (1971:92).³⁰

²⁸ Brown maintains that the rich pericopes of the birth stories “contains the essential theology of the Old and New Testaments” (1993:596).

²⁹ This salvation did not begin with the birth of Jesus, but had its roots in the Old Testament promises of the Messiah. “One of the reasons why Luke has made considerable use of the OT is Christology, his desire to relate the Jesus-story and its sequel to the plan God begun in the OT and precisely Jesus’ role in that plan” (Fitzmyer 1998:92).

³⁰ A summary of Marshall’s thought on this subject is concisely given by Verheyden: “He greatly emphasizes that for Luke salvation is not an abstract notion. It has taken the form of a concrete historical figure. What Luke tells us in the Gospel about Jesus, his ministry, his proclamation of the Kingdom, and his passion and resurrection is the account of how salvation is realized through Jesus” (1999:27).

In the opening chapters of both Luke and Acts the Spirit inaugurates the birth and rebirth of the hopes of ancient Israel and ultimately centers on the salvation brought to fruition by the words and works of Jesus. This ministry is not to be reserved for ancient Israel alone, (who itself needs salvation) but has a clear missional intent as well.³¹

This missional intent goes much further than the salvation of solitary individuals, but can only be fully realized when they are united together under the Spirit in the renewed community of disciples which is rooted in Judaism and now expanding to incorporate the marginalized of the nations.

³¹ Very early in Luke it is clearly apparent that salvation is needed both by the Jews (cf. 1:16, 69, 77) and the Gentiles: “sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:29-31).