



Liberty University
DigitalCommons@Liberty
University

Faculty Publications and Presentations

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and Graduate
School


Fall 2006

The Narrative Function of the Temple in Luke-Acts

Ronald C. Fay

Liberty University, rcfay@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [History of Religions of Eastern Origins Commons](#), [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#), [Other Religion Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fay, Ronald C., "The Narrative Function of the Temple in Luke-Acts" (2006). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 365.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/365

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and Graduate School at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.

THE NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF THE TEMPLE IN LUKE-ACTS

RON C. FAY*

Typically, discussions concerning the temple in the NT revolve around the theological issues to the neglect of the literary or narrative aspects.¹ In the same way, narrative analyses of Luke-Acts typically focus on characters: Jesus in Luke and the early church or Paul in Acts. Rarely is a character or literary theme traced through the double work as a whole. This results in an unintentional negation of the supposed unity of Luke-Acts. This article will trace the temple throughout all of Luke-Acts, demonstrating that Luke contains a drive toward the temple and Acts describes motion away from and then back to the temple. Thus, the temple functions as the literary center of Luke-Acts in a geographical sense, with the followers of Christ firmly anchored there. While scholars have dealt broadly with NT treatments of the temple,² with one arguing that Jesus is the fulfillment and replacement of the temple in the Gospel of John,³ this article will concentrate on the temple's narrative function. This study of the temple will first examine Luke and Acts. Rather than citing every mention of the temple and Jerusalem, only the major relevant passages will be considered in order to show the general concept.⁴ Next this author will argue that Jerusalem and the temple are closely interconnected, thus exploring Jerusalem in Luke-Acts as well. Finally, this article will suggest some possible implications and avenues for further study.

*Ron C. Fay just completed his Ph.D. at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.

¹Klaus Baltzer ("The Meaning of the Temple in the Lukan Writings," *HTR* 58 [1965]: 263-77) introduces the idea of looking at the narrative use of the temple, but he leaves this idea behind for a brief theological analysis.

²For an example linking the church to the temple, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004). Beale lumps all of the Gospels together, however, and therefore misses the links in Luke-Acts and fails to differentiate adequately the Synoptics from each other.

³Paul Hoskins, "Jesus as the Replacement of the Temple in the Gospel of John" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002). This is also mentioned in passing by Baltzer, "Meaning of the Temple," 271.

⁴By author's count, there are 45 total occurrences of ναός (6) and ἱερόν (39) in Luke-Acts, 64 total occurrences of Ἱερουσαλήμ and 26 occurrences of Ἱεροσόλυμα. This article will not distinguish between these terms.

I. THE TEMPLE IN LUKE

The temple figures prominently in the first two chapters of Luke's gospel. The birth announcement of John the Baptist occurs in the temple, as the angel visits Zechariah in Luke 1:21-22. In fact, the only location explicitly mentioned within the pericope is the temple itself. Immediately after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph take him to the temple in 2:22-52; note particularly 2:27 and 2:37. The next pericope deals with the celebration of the Passover Feast, after which Jesus remains at the temple in order to discuss the Torah.⁵ These early narratives of John and Jesus clearly delineate the temple as a focal point of their coming. With John's birth foretold at the temple and with Jesus' only childhood stories centering around the temple (with the exception of his birth and flight to Egypt), the gospel seems to anticipate the temple as an important place in the coming narrative.⁶ Simeon's prophecy of salvation coming from Jesus gives narrative significance as it occurs in the temple itself.⁷ The temple appears as a literary thread binding together the birth narratives of Jesus and John and serving as a focal point for their respective ministries.⁸ The temple as "my Father's house" foreshadows the future role the temple will play in Luke.⁹

The next set of passages that refer to the temple appears immediately after the triumphal entry, with Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, and extends to the betrayal and death of Christ. As presaged by Luke 2:49, Jesus clears out the temple in Luke 19:45-46. This is not limited to anticipating the destruction of the city as it also serves as an implicit declaration of God's absence from the temple. The cleansing of the temple by Jesus allows the presence of God once

⁵Peter Bohlemann, *Jesus und der Tauffer: Schlüssel zur Theologie und Ethik des Lukas* (SNTSMS 99; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 35. Bohlemann speaks of the "positive assessment of the Temple in Luke 2," due to the way it is presented by Luke.

⁶J. Bradley Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), 48. Chance notes, "Omitting the prologue (1:1-4) from consideration, fifty-two of the 128 remaining verses describe activity which is taking place in the Temple (Lk. 1:2-25; 2:22-38, 41-51). Thus, almost forty percent of the first two chapters is devoted to the setting of the Temple."

⁷I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 114. Marshall talks about the power of the declaration by Simeon, whereas the point here is also the location of where this declaration takes place.

⁸Allan J. McNicol, "Rebuilding the House of David: The Function of the Benedictus in Luke-Acts," *ResQ* 40 (1998): 25. McNicol notes the tie, but makes the link the "note of triumphalism" instead of the temple alone, though the triumphalism is associated with the temple since these births announce "a golden age of a political and spiritual restoration for Israel." For the link between John and Jesus in Luke's gospel, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 102-10.

⁹McNicol, "Rebuilding," 32. Referring to this story, McNicol says, "Here Luke's account anticipates the future course of Jesus' ministry. Later, Jesus the son will make a momentous journey to Jerusalem to claim his right to the father's house (Luke 19:46)."

more to fill the holiest place in Israel.¹⁰ Luke's cleansing, instead of breaking the link between God and the temple, creates a new link between the temple and Jesus as Messiah or ruling king.¹¹ Portrayed in 19:47, Luke explicitly presents Jesus teaching in the temple καθ' ἡμέραν, or "daily." Thus, one must not consider the temple as the focal point of God's rejection of Israel, but instead as the "house" for Jesus that he invokes in 2:49.¹² Chance argues,

Lk. 19:38, which makes reference to Jesus as the King, indicates that it is as Messiah that Jesus takes possession of the Temple. The Temple, therefore, is the *Messiah's* place. It is the proper place for Jesus to carry out his important messianic work of teaching. Unlike Mark, Luke does not condemn the Temple because the Messiah has arrived. Rather, the Messiah *restores* the Temple, rendering it fit to fulfill its eschatological role as a decisive center of God's saving work.¹³

If the temple had in fact functioned as the place of rejection, one would expect Jesus to teach either outside the temple or somewhere completely separated from the temple in order to represent the contrast between his ministry and that of the cultus. The explication of the teaching accounts in 20:1-21:38 demonstrate the final defeat of Jesus' opponents occurring on the temple grounds, a point quite different from the parallel in Mark 11:11-13:37.¹⁴ This portion of Luke, from the triumphal entry until the point of the betrayal, revolves around the temple itself, and makes the reader aware of the temple as a place of personal significance to Jesus like no other place in the gospel since his visit in 2:41-50. Far from portraying it as a symbol of rejection, Luke's treatment represents a cleansing and reclaiming of the temple.

The act of betrayal by Judas integrates the concept of the temple in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 26:55; Mark 14:49; Luke 22:53),

¹⁰Peter L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 63. Walker makes a strong point in contrasting 19:46 with 13:35 and the inversion of to whom the temple belongs. See also Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple*, 56-57. Chance argues from the differences between Mark and Luke that Mark is stressing the problem of the entire temple cult whereas Luke is referring only to the abuse of the temple and not the temple per se, making it a cleansing. See also I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Devon: Paternoster, 1970), 155.

¹¹Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple*, 57-58.

¹²Contra McNicol, "Rebuilding," 34. He says, "All that is left is to state the reason for the rejection of the temple. This is now done when Jesus says it has become a den of robbers." Unfortunately, McNicol misses the point of 19:47-48 and in fact ignores the verses in his discussion.

¹³Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple*, 58, emphasis original.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 61-62. Chance makes a strong argument for this, noting the Lukan fascination with the temple as important. Marshall (*Historian and Theologian*, 155 n. 1) also notes the contrast between the Markan movement to and from the temple and how Luke keeps Jesus stationary at the temple.

but Luke places a stronger emphasis on it.¹⁵ The uniquely Lukan phrase ἀλλ' αὕτη ἐστὶν ὑμῶν ἡ ὥρα καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ σκότους creates a distinction between the temple and those in it, using ἀλλά as a disjunctive and ὑμῶν to show the darkness of the men and not the place.¹⁶ At the moment of the crucifixion, Luke also includes the reference to the temple veil being torn in two.¹⁷ While commentators debate which veil he has in mind and the actual significance of the event, the mention of the temple at the climax of the gospel is striking.¹⁸ Once again, the temple serves as a rhetorical reminder of the importance of Jesus and his connection to it. The last appearance of the temple in Luke's gospel occurs after the resurrection and ascension, and it marks the disciples' continuing presence at the temple. This is important in a narrative sense because it forms an *inclusio*, connecting the end of the story back to the beginning. While the *inclusio* is not fully satisfactory, due to the events which happened in Luke, it brings resolution to the book while still looking forward to the continuation of the story.¹⁹

The temple functions as a key location throughout Luke.²⁰ It occurred in the earliest passages, anticipating what was to come in the gospel. Luke, in a narrative sense, transformed the entrance into Jerusalem into a parade to the temple, once again putting the temple at the forefront of the activity, which culminated in its cleansing.²¹ Although one would not expect to find the temple central to the crucifixion, especially since the action takes place elsewhere, it is notable that Luke recalls it at Jesus' death and after the ascension. While this article has not discussed every passage dealing with the

¹⁵Luke 22:52 includes στρατηγός τοῦ ἱεροῦ, a phrase not occurring in Matthew and Mark.

¹⁶Marshall, *Luke*, 838. Marshall reflects on the importance of the insertion and darkness reference, but fails to note that it is the men who are being spoken of and not the place.

¹⁷Luke 23:45 has ἐσχίσθη δὲ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ μέσον, which is neither found in the parallel accounts at this spot nor worded this way.

¹⁸For a deeper look at this section, see Joel B. Green, "The Demise of the Temple as 'Cultural Center' in Luke-Acts: An Exploration of the Rending of the Temple Veil (Luke 23:44-49)," *RB* 101 (1994): 495-515. Green correctly points out that the larger issue of the temple in all of Luke-Acts needs to be understood before making a particular interpretation here.

¹⁹Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 64-65 (see especially 64 n. 36). Chance (*Jerusalem, the Temple*, 63) talks about how Luke's Jesus and disciples seem to offer an affirmation of the temple cult. See also N. T. Wright, "The Resurrection and the Postmodern Dilemma," *STRev* 41 (1998): 150-51. Wright says, "The last line of Luke's gospel picks up the fourth verse of Psalm 43: they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the Temple, praising God . . . the place where despair gives way to joy, and mourning to dancing."

²⁰Adolf Schlatter, *Das Evangelium des Lukas* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Gutmann: 1960), 149-52.

²¹Contra Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 63, this does not mean Jesus is cursing the temple since the disciples quickly return there after his death.

temple, the major portions covered make a compelling case for the geographic location of the temple as a narrative focal point.²²

II. THE TEMPLE IN ACTS

Acts begins with all the disciples of Jesus meeting together. Immediately after the ascension and Pentecost in the summary statement at the end of Acts 2, the temple once again enters the narrative. Just as Luke's gospel ends with the followers of Christ meeting in the temple, so Acts begins with the same meetings. Just as Jesus taught in the temple καθ' ἡμέραν (Luke 19:47), so also the believers meet in the temple καθ' ἡμέραν (Acts 2:46). Acts 3:1-10 presents an explicit example of some of the Twelve going to the temple to pray. In this way, it still stood at the center of their lives, even as it had stood at the center of Jesus' life.²³ Also of note is the lame man who went with Peter and John to the temple in order to tell others of his healing. After this event, the temple guard arrested and brought the two apostles before the leaders (Acts 4:1-21). It was a temple guard who took them, even as the guard took Jesus in Luke 22:52.²⁴ In another summary statement at Acts 5:12, Luke portrays the believers meeting at Solomon's Colonnade, a part of the temple.²⁵ After another arrest, the disciples escape and again teach in the temple (Acts 5:20-25). After being arrested yet again for teaching in the temple, they returned to teach in the temple daily (πάσαν ἡμέραν) according to Acts 5:42. This indicates not a rejection of the temple, but a continuance of the temple as a place of teaching for the early church, much as it was during Jesus' own ministry.²⁶ It is more likely that these stories show a rejection of the gospel by the Jewish leaders, and so they in turn are rejected.²⁷ According to Tannehill, the early missionary work directed toward the Jews in Acts was

²²The most notable passage not covered would be the temptation account in Luke 4, but the juxtaposition of the events as compared to Mark would in fact support the thesis put forth rather than hinder it.

²³Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple* (trans. Reginald F. Trevett; Westminster: Newman, 1962), 113-50.

²⁴The same phrase, στρατηγός τοῦ ἱεροῦ, is used in both instances, though singular in Acts.

²⁵See the description in Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministries and Services* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 45.

²⁶I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 124. Marshall talks of how the disciples for the time being did not fear any further mishandling in the temple environs.

²⁷See Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple*, 63-72, and John Goldingay, "Are They Comic Acts?" *EvQ* 69 (1997): 102-3. Goldingay notes the humorous back and forth of the Jerusalem leaders trying to find the once imprisoned disciples, which is probably a subtle form of poking fun at the leadership of the Jews, but not the Jews themselves.

successful, it just tapered off over time.²⁸ The function of the temple in this part of Acts is as the seat for the infancy of Christianity.²⁹

The next major portion of narrative in which the temple appears details Paul's arrest and the subsequent retellings.³⁰ Acts 21:26-30 tells of Paul going to the temple in order to fulfill a vow. The Jews accuse him of allowing a Gentile into the temple precincts, at which point a riot ensues. Paul is then taken by the Romans and imprisoned. The verses leading up to this cast the account ironically, since Paul took this vow to demonstrate his allegiance to the temple cultus (21:24). While the reaction of the Jews is obviously problematic, it is interesting to note that Paul's "downfall," much like that of Jesus, occurs at the temple.³¹ In his defense before the crowd in 22:1-21, Paul asserts that he received a vision while in the temple.³² That this vision occurs in the temple demonstrates its importance to the narrative, even though Luke places this out of chronological order by Paul's retelling of the near-riot and his defense. Note the recurrences in 24:5-18; 25:7-12; and 26:2-23, which also deal with the charges against him of violating the temple. The temple is then central in the trials before various officials, and the Jewish leaders repeated this allegation more than once in order to keep him imprisoned. The temple continues as a center of action throughout Acts, even as the narrative apparently moves away from Jerusalem.

²⁸Robert C. Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *JBL* 104 (1985): 75-77.

²⁹Gottfried Schille and Otto Bauernfeind, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1983), 157. They discuss how Christians seemingly take over the temple grounds.

³⁰This foregoes examining the uses of "temple" in 17:24, 19:24, and 19:27. In addition, due to the amount of ink spilt on Stephen's speech and the various controversies surrounding those verses, this article will not address that issue. Instead, the reader is referred to the following works for a summation of the issues: Robert T. Anderson, "The Use of Hebrew Scripture in Stephen's Speech," in *Uncovering Ancient Stones: Essays in Memory of H. Neil Richardson* (ed. Lewis M. Hopfe; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 205-15; Michael Bachmann, "Die Stephanusperikope (Apg 6,1-8,3): Ihre Bedeutung für die lukanische Sicht des jerusalemsischen Tempels und des Judentums," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; BETL 142; Leuven: University Press, 1999), 545-62; Johann Bihler, *Die Stephanusgeschichte*. (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1963); Peter Dschuligg, "Die Rede des Stephanus im Rahmen des Berichtes über sein Martyrium," in *Judaica: Beiträge zum Verständnis des jüdischen Schicksals in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (ed. Kurt Hruby; Basel: Stiftung für die Kirche und Judentum, 1988), 195-213; John J. Kilgallen, "The Function of Stephen's Speech (Acts 7,2-53)," *Bib* 70 (1989): 173-93; Franz Mußner, "Wohnung Gottes und Menschensohn nach der Stephanusperikope (Apg 6,8-8,2)," in *Jesus und der Menschensohn: Für Anton Vögtle* (ed. Rudolf Pesch and Rudolf Schnackenburg; Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 283-99; N. H. Taylor, "Stephen, the Temple, and Early Christian Eschatology," *RB* 110 (2003): 62-85; Huub Van De Sandt, "The Presence and Transcendence of God: An Investigation of Acts 7,44-50 in the Light of the LXX," *ETL* 80 (2004): 30-59.

³¹See the discussion above.

³²F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 418-19. Bruce goes on to place this vision in its most likely context, but harmonization is not necessary for the point to stand.

In Acts, the temple conveys many different thematic elements. It functions as the focus of the early church since it is central to the religious life of the church as a gathering place. As argued above, the first five chapters of Acts seem to revolve around the temple, with most of the major action occurring in the temple proper or in its immediate vicinity. One is unable to find any malice or lingering ill-will on the part of the believers against the temple itself, based upon Luke's narrative. In the Pauline sections, the temple returns to prominence after a significant narrative gap.³³ Throughout, the temple is a positive symbol for Paul, even though he is the "apostle to the Gentiles." Thus, the temple in Acts functions as a focal point, yet it seems to bookend Acts instead of playing a central role.

III. JERUSALEM IN LUKE

While the birth narrative of Luke contains no direct reference to Jerusalem, such references do occur in the surrounding narratives of Jesus' early years. Jerusalem serves as the backdrop for the stories of Simeon and Anna. These scenes announce the heart of the mission of Luke-Acts, the integration of the Gentiles into the people of God.³⁴ Thus Luke associates Jerusalem with the statement of the Christian mission. The next important usage of the word Jerusalem occurs just after this pericope with the story of the boy Jesus at the temple. It is noteworthy that Luke uses repetition to drive home the point of where Jesus was. Ἱεροσολήμ occurs in 2:41, 43, 45; giving a near-poetic feel to the beginning of the episode and a strong emphasis to the locale. In this episode, Luke claims the temple as Jesus' own natural home.³⁵ By focusing on Jerusalem in the early life of Jesus, while placing the statement of Jesus' mission, and the claiming of the temple in such close narrative proximity, Luke shows the important role Jerusalem will play.

Scholars agree that the middle section of Luke, namely chs. 9-19, focuses in part on Jesus' drive toward Jerusalem.³⁶ The transfiguration story of Luke 9:31 sets the stage for the rest of 9-19.³⁷ Both Elijah and Moses understand what is about to happen, so the path of the story is foreshadowed by this conversation. Walker says,

After only five chapters dealing with the Galilean ministry Jesus "sets his face towards Jerusalem" (9:51). Throughout the ensuing

³³The question of why there is a gap will be considered later in the article.

³⁴McNicol ("Rebuilding," 29) and Marshall (*Luke*, 114-15) both mention this as the mission of Jesus, which in turn becomes the focus of Luke's gospel as well as Acts (David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 111-46).

³⁵Craig A. Evans, *Luke* (NIBC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), 42.

³⁶R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 58-59. McKelvey talks about how all the gospels are in some part a drive toward Jerusalem.

³⁷Marshall, *Luke*, 385; and David Lenz Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 56-57. A few scholars, such as Walker in the following note, miss this connection.

“travel narrative,” Jerusalem is frequently mentioned as the goal of Jesus’ journey (13:33-5; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28).³⁸

The journey toward Jerusalem has two important features. First, it is the longest portion of the book, dwarfing the birth narrative and early ministry sections as well as the final week and crucifixion scenes.³⁹ Second, it causes the reader of the narrative to interpret events differently than one might otherwise. Jesus does not perform miracles for reasons unknown; he does not try to validate who he is at that moment. Rather, each pericope in Luke 9-19 must be understood in relation to this journey toward Jerusalem. The didactic elements and narrative asides should not distract the reader from the ultimate goal, nor do they detract from the narrative impetus.⁴⁰ In fact, some scholars argue that the various elements in Luke 9-19 actually build up the tension of the journey.⁴¹

Within the broad category of Jesus’ sayings, only two passages will be discussed: namely 13:33-35 and 21:8-28 (noting especially vv. 20-24).⁴² The first passage, 13:33-35, known as the “Lament Over Jerusalem,”⁴³ often is viewed as the first prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, for in it Jesus speaks of “your house being left desolate.”⁴⁴ Remarkably, Luke is the only evangelist to include 13:33, a unique defense of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem: specifically he goes in order to die.⁴⁵ In this pericope, Luke begins to utilize Jerusalem to refer to its people. It likely stands for the Jewish leadership and the opposition to Jesus’ own ministry especially in light of Jesus’ comments regarding the killing of the prophets.⁴⁶ The

³⁸Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 58. Unlike Walker, this paper breaks 13:33-35 off into a different section to be analyzed later.

³⁹Luke 1-2 has 132 verses, 3-8 has 276, and 20-24 has 265. By comparison, 9-19 contains 478 verses.

⁴⁰For some reflections on the narrative force of 9:51 and the debate over a possible parallel to Acts 19:21, see Armand Puig i Tàrrich, “Les voyages à Jérusalem (Lc 9:51; Ac 19:21),” in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; BETL 142; Leuven: University Press, 1999), 493-505.

⁴¹Mikael C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 58-59. However, one should not disregard the didactic material, just interpret it while understanding the role it plays in the narrative structure of Luke.

⁴²Here following the example of Chance (*Jerusalem, the Temple*, 115-17), who also closely links these two passages. See also Evans, *Luke*, 214. Evans links 13:31-35 with 19:41-44; 21:20-24; and 23:27-31 as the four laments over Jerusalem.

⁴³So Marshall, *Luke*, 573, and most Bible versions that contain headings.

⁴⁴Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple*, 115.

⁴⁵Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 70. This is a discussion that will be resumed later.

⁴⁶*Ibid.* Chance (*Jerusalem, the Temple*, 115-16) applies this to the temple by assuming that Jerusalem always refers to the temple. However, this seems an unlikely spot to be referring to the temple, especially when taking into account the mention of the prophets being killed, which points more toward the people than the temple or cultus itself. See John Nolland, *Luke* (WBC 35a-c; Waco: Word, 1993), 3:1002. Nolland argues that this is referring only to the leaders of the Jews and not the people as a

second passage relates to 13:33-35 due to the subject matter. In 21:8-28, Luke records his version of the Olivet Discourse. Both Mark and Matthew avoid specific reference to Jerusalem in their versions, but Luke mentions Jerusalem twice (21:20, 24) and uses it as a sign.⁴⁷ Luke places the name of the city on both sides of an allusion to Jeremiah 51, which refers to David's city.⁴⁸ Most commentators view this as a prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, generally assuming it refers to A.D. 70.⁴⁹ The destruction of the leading city of Israel links 13:33-35 with 21:20-24.⁵⁰ Thus, Jerusalem remains at the center of the narrative, even if in a poor light.

Obviously, the crucifixion itself and the events immediately leading up to it occur in and around Jerusalem.⁵¹ After the resurrection, however, one would assume that the narrative could move away from Jerusalem and back to Nazareth or Galilee (as in Matt 28:10 and John 21:1). Luke instead maintains Jerusalem as the setting for the post-resurrection accounts (note 24:13, 18, 47, 52), even though he likely knows of other appearances of the risen Christ.⁵² This suggests that he wishes to keep the location static, especially considering how he differs from Mark. While this presents no difficulty in terms of accuracy, it may indicate a deliberate choice on Luke's part, which in turn affects his narrative (and possibly theological) agenda.⁵³ Even the story about two men leaving the area is peppered with explicit references to the city (24:13, 18, 33). Thus Jerusalem begins and ends the story, forming an *inclusio* that keeps the reader focused on the city even when the story moves away from it.⁵⁴ The next mention of Jerusalem occurs in 24:47. While it anticipates the Gentile mission, it seems grammatically awkward due to the insertion of the phrase, "beginning at Jerusalem." Marshall states,

whole, though he does say that it very well could be the leaders should stand for the whole since they "will eventually take (the most part of) the Jewish People with them into opposition to Jesus and the Christian movement (see esp. 23:13, 18, 23; and developments in Acts)."

⁴⁷Mark does refer to the "desolation," which would have implications with respect to the Temple, but Judea is then mentioned without any specific reference to Jerusalem.

⁴⁸Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1001.

⁴⁹E.g., McKelvey, *The New Temple*, 159, and E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (The Century Bible; London: Thomas Nelson, 1966), 244.

⁵⁰Ellis, *Luke*, 245.

⁵¹Luke 23:28 will not be considered due to space limitations. It does not negatively affect the thesis of this paper, as per the discussion of it in John Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1137. For Jerusalem being the center of the action, see Joseph B. Tyson, *The Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 93-94.

⁵²Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple*, 65-66. At the very least, Luke would know Mark's account, if not Paul's listing in 1 Cor 15:5-8.

⁵³*Ibid.* Chance notes that the appearances cited by Luke may not occur in Jerusalem proper, but they all occur within "the city's immediate environs."

⁵⁴Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1208.

Luke may also have found scriptural backing for the thought of beginning in Jerusalem in Is. 2:2f. par. Mi. 4:1f. This phrase is generally taken with the preceding clause; it is loosely added and has adverbial force (BD 137³); WH mg and B. Weiss . . . took it with the following verse. In both cases the syntax is harsh, and suggests that Luke had not wholly mastered and revised his material. The difficulty led to textual emendation by scribes. ἀρξάμενοι, \aleph B C* L 33 pc sa bo, is the *lectio difficilior* . . . here the force is "beginning with" (BD 419³), and the implication is that the Christian mission was to commence in Jerusalem and possibly with the Jews themselves.⁵⁵

The reading which best explains the other variants is to be preferred generally, so keeping the phrase makes the most sense. Once more this sets up Jerusalem as the center of the action. The final mention of the city occurs in 24:52, leading the narrative back to Jerusalem for the conclusion of the gospel. This group of texts strengthens the idea that Jerusalem lies at the heart of the narrative flow of Luke's gospel.

Luke begins and ends in Jerusalem.⁵⁶ While the actual birth of Jesus does not occur in Jerusalem, his dedication does. Luke is the only gospel writer who includes the story of the dedication at the temple and the meetings with Simeon and Anna. The story of Jesus remaining at the temple when his parents had left uses Jerusalem three times, giving it a near-poetic feel, driving home the emphasis in Luke 2 on the city. The middle portion of Luke, chs. 9-19, tells the story of Jesus as he journeyed toward Jerusalem, with phrases such as Luke 9:53, "He was heading for Jerusalem," appearing over and over again. The two sayings about Jerusalem, given by Jesus, focus on the catastrophic events which would soon unfold, but both hold the importance of David's city in front of the reader. Finally, the accounts of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ to his followers are limited to the city and the immediate surrounding area. The gospel of Luke points Jesus toward Jerusalem and then keeps his followers there.

IV. JERUSALEM IN ACTS

One of the key verses in the entire book is Acts 1:8, which features the mission statement or outline of the book as a narrative.⁵⁷ These words of Jesus inform the reader from the beginning that the narrative will begin in Jerusalem and move out from there.⁵⁸ The reader expects, then, to find the beginning of the book dominated by

⁵⁵Marshall, *Luke*, 906. See also the discussion in Leon Morris, *Luke* (TNTC 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 374.

⁵⁶Tyson, *The Death of Jesus*, 90.

⁵⁷F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 71.

⁵⁸Marshall, *Acts*, 61.

Jerusalem, and Luke obliges.⁵⁹ The apostolic activity of the book begins in 1:12 (with a mention of Jerusalem) and remains in the city until 8:1.⁶⁰ Chapters 2-4 center on what the apostles, and especially Peter, do there. They preach the gospel message and heal people within the confines of Israel's most prominent city. Even when brought before the leaders for a trial, the work of the apostles springs forth from the lips of their adversaries.⁶¹ The last explicit mention of the city in this section occurs in 6:7, which contains a summary statement for the opening chapters of the book.⁶²

Acts 8:1 introduces the man who will become Paul the apostle, though it begins with the persecution of the church in Jerusalem, which causes the believers to scatter. The reader should expect the geographic location of the narrative to shift and for mentions of the city to diminish. Instead, one finds more references to the place of Jesus' death. While Acts 8:26-27 serves as the beginning of the story of the eunuch, 8:27 specifically mentions that he came to Jerusalem to worship. Although revealing the man as a God-fearing Gentile, it was an unnecessary detail since the city was also mentioned previously in 8:26.⁶³ The story of Saul's conversion and subsequent time with Ananias also draws upon the Jerusalem motif, as Saul seeks to take any prisoners he finds back to Jerusalem, and Ananias acknowledges Saul's persecution of the believers there. Other believers also mention his persecution of those in the city in 9:21. Later Saul goes to Jerusalem himself in order to meet with the leaders of the church. Throughout this section, the importance and leadership of the church in Jerusalem arises again and again.⁶⁴ Even as the narrative moves away from the city, it continues to play a role in the development of the plot.

Furthermore, the authority of the Jerusalem church emerges in 11:1-30, as the church leaders talk to Peter and send Barnabas from Jerusalem to see what is happening in Antioch.⁶⁵ Each step in the process regarding how this new faith is to be understood and practiced has ties to the decisions and locale of Jerusalem. This theme culminates in the council of Acts 15, where the various leaders of the church gathered to make decisions pertinent to and binding on the catholic church. That the Jerusalem church delivered a ruling

⁵⁹Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 1:295-7. Tannehill notes how Acts 1 parallels or even mirrors the end of Luke, with both structured around Jerusalem.

⁶⁰Acts 8:1 introduces Paul, which is the logical narrative time to begin moving the story away from Jerusalem, so that the "apostle to the Gentiles" has some Gentiles with which to work.

⁶¹Acts 5:28 reads, "'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.'"

⁶²Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 123. See also Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 84.

⁶³Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 191. Bruce calls the man a proselyte, God-fearer, or devout person.

⁶⁴Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 86.

⁶⁵Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 219-31.

cannot be doubted; the authority of Jerusalem over the church appears absolute.⁶⁶ Halfway through the book of Acts, the narrative still centers on Jerusalem even though the program of Acts laid down in 1:8 indicates that the story would move elsewhere.

From the Jerusalem council on, the book of Acts concentrates mainly on the character of Paul. His first journey, found in 13:4-14:28, ends with Paul in Antioch, but the story quickly drives Paul to Jerusalem. His next trip contained in 15:40-21:16 concludes with his arrival in Jerusalem, 21:17. His two major trips both start at Antioch and end with him in Jerusalem.⁶⁷ Acts 19:20-21 provides a turning point in the narrative, as 19:20 summarizes the conquest of the Word of God. After 19:20, the only mention of the Word of God occurs in Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders.⁶⁸ Presumably the Word of God has finished "conquering," so Paul now intends to return to the main stage of this drama, Jerusalem. From this point on, the tone of the narration changes, and one recalls Luke 9-19 where Jesus travels to Jerusalem. Just as Jesus went to Jerusalem knowing what was to come, so Paul journeys there with ample warning of his coming fate.⁶⁹ As with Jesus, Jerusalem becomes the narrative downfall of Paul, as his arrest there exemplifies. References to the city occur repeatedly in his defenses, and much of the action (such as the plot on Paul's life in 25:1-7) revolves around Jerusalem as the crux of the events. Even in the last chapter of the book, Luke records how Paul was arrested in Jerusalem. Although it is no longer the setting for the story, Jerusalem still functions as a place around which the narrative takes place.

It is clear now that the course of Acts hinges on the use of Jerusalem. The story begins in Jerusalem, and through the first half of the book it remains there.⁷⁰ The apostles feel no need to leave the city and continue to meet within Jerusalem. Not until the persecution arises at the hands of Saul and the Jewish leaders do the believers begin to spread out from the city. Even with that, the leadership of the fledgling church remains, sending its rulings to the Christian Diaspora. Paul, now a missionary, carries out his ministry, traveling all over the known world, though he consistently returns to Jerusalem at the end of his journeys. Paul is then arrested in the city and taken to trial, but even then Jerusalem lies at the center of the

⁶⁶Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* [ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995]), 415-80. Bauckham explains this through a parallel between Jerusalem Judaism and the Diaspora, in that the Diaspora would appeal to Jerusalem for rulings on matters of faith which would then become the norm for all practicing Jews the world over. Also note 16:4 which says, "As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey."

⁶⁷Pao (*Acts*, 156) notes the circular movements of the missionaries, as they go out from a place and come back to it.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 154-56.

⁶⁹For example, see Acts 20:22-23 and 21:11-13.

⁷⁰Dennis M. Sweetland, "Luke-Acts: An Overview," *TBT* 35 (1997): 337.

conflict that carries the story. Jerusalem serves as the narrative center of Acts with all of the activity either moving away from or drawing back to Israel's chief city.

V. A NARRATIVE THEME

This article has proposed that the temple functions as the narrative center of Luke-Acts, but while the temple serves as the hub of the cultus, the center point of God's presence on earth, Jerusalem, is the seat of the Davidic dynasty, the place where Jewish kings once ruled. Beale argues for a unity of thought here, noting that the function of ruler and of priest were often combined in ANE thought and therefore in ANE institutions.⁷¹ Some scholars lean toward Jerusalem and the temple as completely separate in Luke-Acts while others argue that the two are in fact synonymous.⁷² Since scholars diverge concerning this issue, one should examine the overlapping material in Luke-Acts to determine if the two locations are in fact interchangeable or distinct.⁷³ First one must look at the beginning of Luke, where Jerusalem functioned as a center of the early life of Jesus. When Jesus traveled to the temple to be dedicated, Jerusalem and the temple appear close together in the narrative. Luke 2:22 shows Jerusalem as the goal of the journey, but in truth the temple must be the focus since that is where the young Jesus was to be presented.⁷⁴ The repetition used in 2:41-45 strengthens the claim that Luke merges the temple and Jerusalem as one location, for once again the goal of the trip was to go to the temple. While many scholars have noted the parallel between Jesus and John according to Luke's gospel, Jesus emerges as the greater of the two, not because of his teaching, but because the temple is his true home.⁷⁵ John is dedicated to the Lord at the temple, but Jesus, when journeying to the temple, is coming home.

The central section of Luke is filled with teachings and miracles, but the narrative is pointed directly at Jerusalem.⁷⁶ After a few pericopae of teaching and events, Luke introduces a statement about heading toward Jerusalem. This may look like it refers to Jerusalem

⁷¹Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 29-122. Beale contends that the Edenic themes of kingship tied with priesthood are carried throughout the OT and into the NT (N.B. 81-87).

⁷²For the former, see Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 60, though he only assumes it while keeping them together in terms of the judgment and destruction to be visited upon them (p. 63). For the latter, see Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple*, 115, and he also does not argue for this position.

⁷³For the following discussion, see also Michael Bachmann, *Jerusalem und der Tempel: Die geographisch-theologischen Elemente in der lukanischen Sicht des jüdischen Kultzentrams* (BWANT 9; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980), 63-67.

⁷⁴Ellis, *Luke*, 82.

⁷⁵McNicol, "Rebuilding," 32. He says, "Jesus the son will . . . journey to Jerusalem to claim his right to the father's house. . . . the house of God in Jerusalem will play a central role in the story" (emphasis original).

⁷⁶Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 58.

only, but the ultimate destination of Jesus is not the city proper, but the temple. In fact, Luke seems to go out of his way not to mention the city during the triumphal entrance pericope.⁷⁷ Furthermore, while 13:33-35 predicts that people will declare "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," Luke omits the fulfillment from his account in order to keep the temple at the center.⁷⁸ Therefore, since Jesus' first act upon arriving in Jerusalem is the cleansing of the temple, it seems likely that when he turned toward Jerusalem, his thoughts were not chiefly of the city, but of his "Father's house."⁷⁹

In the opening sections of Acts, it seems clear that Jerusalem and the temple are synonymous for the narrative. The believers met in the temple courts. The apostles did much of their preaching and teaching there. The people saw them in the temple and did not react adversely. Acts 1:8 declares the mission to be to Jerusalem first, but the missionaries apparently never leave the temple.⁸⁰ Knowing the early believers held their gatherings in the temple courts, it is no stretch to view the temple as the place where much of the guidance for the church took shape. In fact, due to the conversion of many priests (6:7), ties with the temple become more likely.⁸¹ The mention in 8:27 of the eunuch who had come to "Jerusalem to worship" also shows an understood link between city and temple.⁸² Paul's trips always circle back to Jerusalem in general. He began his career partially in the temple. At the end of his first journey he met with the leaders of the church (Acts 15:2), and at the conclusion of his second trip he went to the temple courts (Acts 21:26). Throughout Acts, Jerusalem and the temple are closely linked.

Nevertheless, not all references to Jerusalem refer to the temple. For example, Luke 21:20-24 predicts the destruction of Jerusalem, but nothing within the content of those verses links it thematically with the temple. In fact, the differences compared to the Markan passage makes it more likely that Luke intentionally does not refer to the

⁷⁷Marshall, *Luke*, 720-21.

⁷⁸Robert C. Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts," 84-85. Tannehill notes the omission for a different reason.

⁷⁹McNicol, "Rebuilding," 32. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 490-93. Wright contends that Jesus' action in the temple constitutes a royal and priestly function, something that the Jews would have understood.

⁸⁰Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 64-65.

⁸¹Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 123. Bruce says, "The fact that so many priests were joining the community meant that the ties which attached many of the believers to the temple order would be strengthened. It is not suggested that these priests relinquished their priestly office; the logic of such a step would not be generally appreciated at this stage."

⁸²Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (17th ed.; KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 271. He links this with the charge against Paul in 21:28 in that it could be a destination without full participation. See also Friedrich Avemarie, *Die Taufzählungen der Apostelgeschichte* (WUNT 139; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 63.

temple and thus is only concerned with the city⁸³ Luke 23 28 builds on the passages where Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, a reference pertaining more to the people than to the temple⁸⁴ The setting of Jesus' death was Jerusalem and, by geographical necessity, not the temple In Acts one finds several mentions of Jerusalem denoting the people and not the place, such as in 13 27, 31 Thus Jerusalem is not always linked to the temple

From this investigation, one can now conclude that the temple is indeed the narrative center of Luke-Acts Jerusalem receives frequent mention but rarely without a close association with the temple⁸⁵ One must remain attentive, however, not to overplay this connection in every instance This article maintains that Luke's gospel begins in the temple and focuses on Jesus' movement back toward the temple Luke 19-24 concentrates on the temple and what occurs in and around it Acts then begins at the temple and slowly moves away from it, though never leaving it for long In some respects, Luke is movement toward the temple and Acts is movement away from the temple⁸⁶ A more nuanced statement is that Luke moves toward the temple while Acts remains centered on the temple, expressed in the movements of Luke's characters away from and then back to it This makes the temple the narrative center of Luke-Acts since the stories hinge on the temple and revolve around it

VI CONCLUSION

It was suggested at the beginning of this article that the temple is the narrative center of Luke-Acts It has been argued that Jerusalem and the temple both play important roles in the way that the story is told The temple and Jerusalem have been closely linked to one another, though this is not always a direct correspondence Rather it is a solid premise unless context dictates otherwise By tracing references to the temple and Jerusalem throughout the two books, one observes the use of the temple as the beginning and goal of Luke and as the center of Acts What is the theological significance of the temple? Is Luke necessarily critiquing the temple itself, or is it possible that he critiques only the leadership or misappropriation of the temple? How does Stephen's speech fit into this discussion?⁸⁷

⁸³Nolland, *Luke*, 3 1000, states, "The Markan equivalent (13 14) maintained the temple focus but, with its Danielic allusion concerned itself with the desecration rather than the destruction of the temple" Contra Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 64, who must be assuming that the desolation refers to the temple only

⁸⁴Nolland, *Luke*, 3 1137

⁸⁵I Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove InterVarsity, 2004), 140 With respect to Luke, Marshall states "with a kind of *inclusio* the Gospel begins and ends in Jerusalem with scenes in the temple"

⁸⁶Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 56

⁸⁷For an initial response, see James P Sweeney, "Stephen's Speech (Acts 7 2-53) Is It as 'Anti-Temple' as Is Frequently Alleged?" *TJ* 23 (2002) 185-210, and Michael Bachmann, "Die Stephanusperikope (Apg 6,1-8,3) Ihre Bedeutung für die lukanische Sicht des jerusalemischen Tempels und des Judentums," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed

What is the relationship between the church and Israel?⁸⁸ While a firm response to any of these questions is premature, this article should lead to a reassessment based upon the temple grounds as the center of the budding church, as the evidence seemingly points toward the temple as the rightful place or property of the church as the true heirs of the title "the people of God."

J. Verheyden; BETL 142; Leuven: University Press, 1999), 545-62. With respect to the charges against Stephen, and about Jesus, see Sasagu Arai, "Zum 'Templewort' Jesu in Apostelgeschichte 6.14," *NTS* 34 (1988): 379-410. On the distinctive issues tied to Hellenistic understandings of the Temple, see Alfons Weiser, "Zur Gesetzes- und Tempelkritik der Hellenisten," in *Das Gesetz im Neuen Testament* (ed. Karl Kertelge; QD 108; Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 146-68.

⁸⁸ Attempts to address this question without first dealing with the temple in Acts or Luke-Acts are unconvincing. For example, see Erich Grässer, *Forschungen zur Apostelgeschichte* (WUNT 137; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 37-43. Cf. works listed above.



Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.