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LUKE-ACTS AND EXEMPLAR PROPHETS: LUKE'S USE OF
THE ELIJAH-ELISHA NARRATIVE AND THE
ROLE OF THE SPIRIT

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For God, Vanessa, Ransom, and Dr. Thomas Schreiner.

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PREFACE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study of exemplars and imitation in the New Testament is not new. Christians as early as Augustine and the Venerable Bede have recognized the role of moral exemplars in virtue formation.¹ Indeed, one of the clearest explanations of exemplars comes from Basil the Great. Basil wrote,

“And in general, just as painters in working from models constantly gaze at their exemplar and thus strive to transfer the expression of the original to their own artistry, so too he who is anxious to make himself perfect in all the kinds of virtue must gaze upon the lives of the saints as upon statues, so to speak, that move and act, and must make their excellence his own by imitation.”²

Basil’s observation demonstrates an early recognition of exemplars’ place in the Christian life. It likewise shows how exemplars provide practical examples of how to apply their virtues to one’s own life. This recognition of exemplars, however, is not only found from the post-apostolic church to the present day. In fact, there are many sections of the New Testament itself that present Christ as an example for believers to imitate in their relationships with one another and in their responses to the trials they face (Phil 2:5–11; 1 Pet 2:21). The New Testament even describes other believers as models of faith and obedience for Christians to imitate (Jas 2:22; 1 Cor 11:1).

Among the New Testament texts that use exemplars, Luke-Acts particularly stands out. My thesis is that a critical element of Lucan discipleship is the Spirit-empowered imitation of exemplars. I will specifically address this element by focusing

¹ Ian Christopher Levy, *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation: The Senses of Scripture in Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group), 22, 53.

² Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, trans. Roy J Deferrari and Martin R. P McGuire (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 16–17.

on Luke's use of the Elijah-Elisha Narratives of 1 and 2 Kings.

The Scope of this Thesis

This study will focus on Luke's use of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative through his Elijah-Elisha Cycles.³ By Elijah-Elisha Cycles, I refer to the moments in Luke-Acts in which Luke mirrors elements of the relationship between Elijah and Elisha in the relationship between characters in his own narratives. These parallels, which are used to emphasize various theological points, occur in the relationships between the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus, Jesus and his disciples, and the disciples and subsequent believers. Luke uses his cycles to emphasize Christ's supremacy as an exemplar and the believers' call to continue his ministry by imitating him and those who reflect him.

This thesis assumes the literary connection of Luke-Acts. Because the literary unity of Luke-Acts is widely accepted, I will not address it.⁴ I will likewise not focus on the typological connections between Moses, the EEN, and Jesus. Instead, this thesis will center on the EEN and Luke-Acts. Lastly, I am not arguing that Elijah and Elisha are the only types or parallels that Luke uses in Luke-Acts.⁵ Instead, I contend that Luke-Acts

³ I am drawing these terms from Brodies' discussion of Luke's use of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative and David Peabody's response to Brodie. However, I define the Elijah-Elisha Cycles differently than them. While cycles are parts of narratives, I am using cycle to identify a repeating use of typology where the figures of the old covenant represent different figures in the new covenant, depending on the pairing. Thus, there is a Jesus and John cycle, Jesus and the disciples cycle, and the disciples and subsequent generations cycle. From this point forward, I will refer to the Elijah-Elisha Cycles as EEC and Elijah-Elisha Narratives as EEN. See Thomas L. Brodie, "Luke's Use of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative," in *The Elijah-Elisha Narrative in the Composition of Luke*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Joseph Verheyden, Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 6-7, 37; David Peabody, "A Response to Thomas L. Brodie's Proto-Luke as the Earliest Form of the Gospel," in *The Elijah-Elisha Narrative in the Composition of Luke*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Joseph Verheyden, Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 37-38.

⁴ See Robert Stein for a discussion of Lucan authorship. Robert A. Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1993), 23-24. For a discussion of the literary unity of Luke-Acts see I. H. Marshall. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1978), 39. While John Nolland finds that the assertion that Luke-Acts is "part one and part two of a single work" is an "exaggeration," he still affirms the continuation of the Gospel of Luke in Acts. See John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 35A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), xxxiii.

⁵ Robert J. Miller, "Elijah, John, and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke," *New Testament Studies* 34 (4): 1988): 621.

emphasizes parallels between the EEN and his narrative for didactic purposes and to provide examples for his readers to imitate.

Previous Studies of the EEN

Recent scholarship has noted the imitative qualities in Jesus's ministry as a philosopher.⁶ Others have seen parallels between the ministries of Jesus and his disciples.⁷ Authors, including Octavian Baban, have also noticed the mimetic aspects of Luke-Acts. Baban's work *On the Road Encounters in Luke-Acts: Hellenistic Mimesis and Luke's Theology of the Way* has addressed similar topics to this thesis. These similarities are a shared recognition of the mimetic aspects of Luke-Acts and an identification of how Christ reflects Old Testament types.⁸ However, I will argue for more continuity between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament and focus less on Luke-Acts' travel narratives.⁹

Scholars, such as Thomas L. Brodie in particular, have likewise addressed the parallels between 1 and 2 Kings in Luke-Acts. However, my study will differ from Brodie's in two main ways. While Brodie's interest focuses on proto-Luke's literary dependence on the EEN, this study strives to understand the mimetic and pneumatological aspects of the EEN/EEC of Luke-Acts. Furthermore, I do not find all of Brodie's parallels convincing, and I will not argue for literary dependence. Instead, I will argue for what I call "emphasized parallels" and address the Spirit's role. By emphasized

⁶ Jonathan T. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher: Rediscovering the Wisdom Needed for the Good Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2020), 4–7.

⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 13.

⁸ Octavian Baban, *On the Road Encounters in Luke-Acts: Hellenistic Mimesis and Luke's Theology of the Way* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 45, 73.

⁹ Octavian Baban writes, "'on the road' encounters of Luke-Acts need to be assessed more consistently from a Hellenistic literary perspective, with reference to the available literary theories and to the narrative models provided by both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. This will take the quest for Luke's narrative paradigms into a more detailed consideration of Aristotle's *Poetics*, where a key concept is μίμησις as literary imitation or narrative representation of life." See Baban, *On the Road Encounters in Luke-Acts*, 18.

parallels, I mean that although the events recorded in Luke-Acts are historical events, Luke emphasizes specific moments in his character's lives to draw parallels between them and the EEN.

Other writers like Charles Passant Baylis have written theses on Elijah-Elisha parallels in the Gospel of Luke. My examination will differ from Baylis's approach by focusing on the mimetic and exemplary elements of this connection. In contrast, Baylis's thesis primarily focuses more on the parallels between Luke and Old Covenant saints.¹⁰

Mapping this Study

This study will begin by surveying the exemplars of Luke-Acts. This survey will show us how Luke uses his exemplars and which virtues and themes he values. This broad survey will then transition into focusing on the specific exemplar parallels of this thesis. These parallels are those drawn between the Elijah-Elisha Narrative of 1 and 2 Kings and the Elijah-Elisha Cycles of Luke-Acts. This study will demonstrate how these cycles reflect their old covenant parallels while surpassing them. I will demonstrate this by addressing the EEC between John and Jesus and those between Jesus and his disciples. These cycles in turn reveal Christ to be the greater Elisha whose ministry is continued through his disciples who imitate him.

We will then address Christ as the greater Elijah. Though Christ's disciples openly recognize him in this role, we will examine how his miracles provide compelling parallels between his ministry and Elijah's. From here, we will then focus on how the disciples in their turn function as Elisha's in their EEC with Christ.

¹⁰ Baylis argues that "Contextually, the use of Elijah comparisons demonstrates the nature of Christ's ministry compared to the nature of the ministry of Elijah in Chapter 7... The allusions to Elijah/Elisha return, as the disciples learned about their ministry. It was one which was superior to the old order which was led by Moses and Elijah. Not only was the message of mercy superior, but the leader was superior, and the requirements for service superior. The references to Elijah form a comparison which demonstrated the superiority of the new message of mercy." While this thesis will inevitably address similar points recognized by Baylis, Baylis primarily focuses on Luke and is less concerned with virtue formation. See Charles Passant Baylis, "*The Elijah/Elisha motif in Luke 7-10 as related to the purpose of the book of Luke*," (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985), 50.

The final EEC we will examine is between the disciples and subsequent generations of believers. We will conclude by addressing the relevance of this study for believers today.

CHAPTER 2

EXEMPLARS IN LUKE-ACTS

Luke-Acts contains a plethora of exemplars. However, Luke does not present his exemplars uniformly throughout his narrative. These exemplars emphasize virtues that should be imitated and provide tangible examples of how one applies God's law to their life. However, Luke also contrasts models of virtue with those whose actions should be avoided. This chapter will reveal the variety of ways that Luke uses exemplars, and it will address the virtues that he values. We will briefly address three individuals from Luke and five from Acts. These figures are Zachariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Stephen, Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira, and Lydia.

Exemplars in Luke-Acts

Zachariah and Elizabeth

Zachariah and Elizabeth are exemplars who parallel the righteous patriarchs of the Hebrew Bible. From the start, Luke depicts them as righteous individuals before the Lord when he states that they “walked blamelessly in all the commandments and regulations of the Lord” (πορευόμενοι ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐντολαῖς καὶ δικαιώμασιν τοῦ κυρίου ἄμεμπτοι) (Luke 1:6).¹ Luke's use of “blameless” (ἄμεμπτοι) addresses their ethical conduct as those who conformed their lives to God's law.² To further understand this, I. Howard Marshall suggests that we should read Luke's descriptions of Zachariah and

¹ Scriptural citations with the original language included will be my own. Otherwise, scriptural quotations will be taken from the New English Translation.

² Joseph Fitzmyer. *The Gospel According to Luke 1-9*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 323.

Elizabeth against the backdrop of the Hebrew Bible. He notes that while Luke's statements that these figures "walked" (πορεύομαι) blamelessly is "found in Classical Greek, the usage here reflects the language of the OT (1 Ki. 8:61) and Judaism."³ Indeed, the Hebrew Bible often identifies whether one is worthy of imitation or avoidance by using the language like walking "in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord blamelessly" (πορευόμενοι ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐντολαῖς καὶ δικαιομασιν τοῦ κυρίου ἄμεμπτοι) (Luke 1:6; 1 Kgs 16:26; 22:43; 2 Kgs 8:18).⁴

With the references to "blameless" walking in mind, authors like Robert Stein interpret Luke 1:6 as emphasizing that Zachariah and Elizabeth's childlessness was not a result of sin.⁵ While I agree that this is part of Luke's intention, I believe that he is doing more than this. By presenting Zachariah and Elizabeth as saints struggling with infertility, Luke draws from themes from the LXX where there are patriarchs who were childless despite their righteousness (1:7).⁶ This bareness is most notably seen in the narratives of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel.⁷

Patriarchs, such as Abraham, were viewed as figures to be imitated in the ancient world.⁸ This view is especially seen in the writings of the first century Jewish

³ I. H. Marshall. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1978), 52.

⁴ Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 9.

⁵ Robert Stein has noted about this verse, "Luke used this verse to explain to his readers that Zachariah and Elizabeth's childlessness, as mentioned in the next verse, was not due to sin." See Robert A. Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1993), 74.

⁶ Marshall has noted that Luke's Greek reflects "that of an author whose mind is saturated with the language of the LXX and draws on it almost unconsciously as well as making conscious use of typological patterns based on the lives of particular characters." Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 53.

⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 53.

⁸ Annette Yoshiko Reed, "The Construction and Subversion of Patriarchal Perfection: Abraham and Exemplarity in Philo, Josephus, and the Testament of Abraham," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 40, no. 2 (2009): 186–187.

philosopher and exegete Philo and the book of Sirach.⁹ In Philo’s *On Moses*, he addresses the exemplary qualities of the patriarchs. When speaking of God telling Moses what to tell the Israelites, Philo writes, “tell them not only that I am God, but also the God of the three men whose names express their virtue, each of them the exemplar of the wisdom they have gained—Abraham by teaching, Isaac by nature, Jacob by practice” (Philo, *Moses I*, XIV:75-76).¹⁰ Thus we can see how Philo’s identification of the patriarchs with the virtues he values demonstrates an early practice of reading the biblical figures as models of virtue. After attributing these virtues to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he then explains how each models his specific virtues.

The author of Sirach likewise views the patriarchs as figures for imitation. In Sirach 44:19–21 the author writes,

“Abraham was a great father of many people, and there was not found (anyone) resembling him in glory, who kept the law of the Highest/Most High, and became in covenant with him, and in his flesh stood the covenant, and when tested, he was found faithful (Ἀβραὰμ μέγας πατήρ πλήθους ἐθνῶν, καὶ οὐχ εὐρέθη ὁμοίος ἐν τῇ δόξῃ, 20 ὃς συνετήρησεν νόμον Ὑψίστου, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν διαθήκῃ μετ’ αὐτοῦ, 21 καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ ἔστησεν διαθήκην, καὶ ἐν πειρασμῶ εὐρέθη πιστός.)

This passage speaks of Abraham as a glorious one who observes the law of YHWH. It demonstrates that Abraham’s story continues to not only be the grounds for the Israelites’ covenant with God, but also to be an example of faithfulness to YHWH. Therefore it is evident that Sirach, too, views the patriarchs as exemplars.

As we return to Zachariah and Elizabeth, we can see how Luke presents them as models for imitation through his allusions to old covenant saints. The trials that they face in common with old covenant figures connects them to a narrative that will reach its zenith in Luke-Acts. Since the patriarchs were recognized as figures for imitation in the

⁹ Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 66.

¹⁰ See Philo, *On Moses*, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 315; Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, abridged ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 245.

ancient world, Luke’s connection of them to Zachariah and Elizabeth gives us confidence that he is likewise presenting them as models for imitation.

Mary

Similarly to how Zachariah and Elizabeth function as exemplars, Mary serves as an exemplar of virtue. She models faithful obedience to the will and mission of God. Interpreters, including the Venerable Bede and Bonaventure, see her as an example of one who “does the will of God.”¹¹ Luke’s account of the annunciation and her continual faithfulness at Pentecost demonstrate this point.

Luke is unique among the gospels in that it records the account of the annunciation. After hearing Gabriel’s announcement that she will conceive after the “power of the most high overshadows” her (*δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει*), Mary ultimately responds in obedience by stating, “I am a servant of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word” (1:35–38). Her obedient response is one of the virtues that makes her a moral exemplar in the narrative of Luke-Acts.

Stein has likewise noted the exemplary function of Mary in Luke’s gospel.

When speaking of Mary he writes,

“Mary serves as an example for the believer. Indeed Luke sought to maximize Mary’s role as a model believer. For example, in 8:19 he omitted the “outside” (*heksō*) of Mark 3:31; in 4:24 Luke omitted “in his own house” (cf. Mark 6:4); and in Acts 1:14 he mentioned that Mary and her other children were among the inner core of disciples. Mary is “blessed” here for her faith but is “most blessed” in Luke 1:42 for the privilege of being the mother of God’s Son.¹²

Stein’s comments aptly summarize key reasons for Mary functioning as a model figure in Luke-Acts. When Luke describes Jesus’s mother and brothers coming to him, Luke

¹¹ Bede notes “Imitating her voice and mind to the best of our abilities beloved brothers, let us recall that we are Christ’s servants in all our actions and intentions. Let us subject all the members of our body in service to him, and let us direct the whole gaze of our mind to the fulfillment of his will.” Venerable Bede, *Homily 1.3*, in *Homilies on the Gospels*, trans. Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, Cistercian Studies Series, No. 110 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 27. Found in David L. Jeffrey, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 30.

¹² Stein, *Luke*, 92.

provides a reason why they were not able to enter the house to see Jesus while Mark states that Jesus's family waits outside the house and sends someone in (Luke 8:19; Mark 3:31). Rather than presenting her as an outsider, Luke gives a reason for her inability to be with Jesus at this point.

In a similar way, when Stein refers to Acts 1:14 he calls attention to how Mary continues to be a presence in the early church. The significance here is that Mary continues to be an active member of the early church after the death and resurrection of Christ. She takes part in the believers' commitment to being "single mindedly devoted to prayer" (*προσκαρτεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν τῇ προσευχῇ*) (Acts 1:14).

From her introduction as an example of obedience to God's will and plan, to her continued faithfulness as an active member of the early church, Luke presents Mary as an example of pious obedience.

Stephen

Perhaps one of the most compelling exemplars in all of Acts is Stephen the martyr, for he reflects Christ as a model of faithfulness in the midst of martyrdom. Luke connects the narratives of Stephen and Christ to show how Stephen exemplifies obedience to Christ. Like Jesus, Stephen is seized, brought before the Sanhedrin, and has false witnesses brought against him (Acts 6:12–13). In addition to this, Stephen's final words and subsequent death echo Jesus's. After being condemned, Jesus states, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (*Πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν*). He then looks to heaven and dies (Luke 23:34). Stephen likewise looks to heaven, calls out to God "Father, do not hold this sin against them" (*Κύριε, μὴ στήσης αὐτοῖς ταύτην τὴν ἁμαρτίαν*), and dies (Acts 7:55, 60). While these statements are not linguistically the same, their mirrored requests for God to be merciful to the people persecuting them resounds.

While there are textual reasons to question the reliability of Jesus's

pronouncement of “Father forgive them the parallel nonetheless shows the connection that ancient interpreters drew between the sacrifice of Jesus and the martyrdom of Stephen.¹³ Luke presents Stephen as a model of one who is willing to give his life for the sake of the gospel’s message. He is an exemplar for all believers, particularly those who face persecution.

Lydia

Luke’s emphasis on hospitality is exemplified in the response and ministry of Lydia. In Philippi, God opens her heart to the proclamation of the gospel (Acts 16:14). After she believes she and her household are baptized (16:15), she then invites Paul and his companions to her home (16:15). We see her service to others later in this chapter as Paul and Silas are released from prison. Luke states that Paul and Silas “entered Lydia’s house, and when they saw the brothers, they encouraged them and then departed” (16:40).

Theologian David Peterson recognizes the significance of Lydia’s hospitality when he writes,

“As well as acknowledging her conversion, this visit marked the beginning of a distinctly Christian fellowship in Philippi. Luke highlights the importance of this by concluding the narrative about Philippi with another reference to a meeting of the believers in Lydia’s house (v. 40). The importance of practicing hospitality, especially to encourage Christian ministry and fellowship, is stressed in Romans

¹³ Metzger finds that Luke 23:34’s absence from “such early and diverse witnesses as p⁷⁵ B D* W Θ it^{a, d} syr^s cop^{sa, bomss} is most impressive and can scarcely be explained as a deliberate excision by early copyists.” He continues to argue that although it is probably not original to Luke, it has “self-evident tokens of dominical origin” and was kept with “within double square brackets” early in the transmission of the text. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2005), 180. Thomas Bolin has argued that there is equal external evidence to support the verse’s inclusion and “with Luke 23:34a playing such a central role in the development of this prevalent theme (repentance and forgiveness) in Luke-Acts, it is difficult to see how this can be a later scribal addition.” Thomas M. Bolin, “A Reassessment of the Textual Problem of Luke 23:34a,” *Proceedings* 12, (1992): 132–44. Johnson follows Metzger from a slightly different angle. Johnson has stated that despite the verse’s omission from significant manuscripts, there is strong support for its inclusion on thematic grounds. This is primarily seen in the verse’s depiction of Christ as a “Sophos who demonstrates virtue,” its reflection of the version of Lord’s prayer in Luke, its themes of the prophet being rejected out of ignorance, and its connection to Jesus’s call to preach “repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 376.

12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; and 3 John 5–8. In her open-hearted generosity, Lydia demonstrated the reality of her conversion.”¹⁴

Peterson’s recognition of the joining of Lydia’s conversion with action emphasizes the call of all believers to imitate her by practicing their faith with good works. Lydia is a model of one who continues to act in hospitality to serve others and help advance the church’s mission.

Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira

Just as Luke draws parallels between Jesus and old covenant figures like Adam, he also draws parallels between figures confined to Luke-Acts (Luke 4:1–13). Interestingly, while Luke uses parallels to present figures as worthy of imitation, his parallels also function to provide warnings against judgment. The juxtaposition of righteous exemplars with unrighteous exemplars is perhaps most manifest between Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira. Barnabas serves as the model exemplar while Ananias and Sapphira exemplify vices that should be avoided.

Luke consistently describes the early church as having “everything in common” and states that they began selling their “property and possessions and distributing the proceeds to everyone, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:42–45). This text addresses the great generosity of the early church and the unity that God was accomplishing among them. These themes of generosity continue throughout the narrative of Acts, as generosity is continually commended as a positive trait (4:32-35; 16:15; 20:35).

After addressing the general giving of the early church, Luke focuses on Barnabas as a model of this churchwide generosity. Luke describes Barnabas’s actions by stating “So Joseph, a Levite who was a native of Cyprus, called by the apostles Barnabas (which is translated “son of encouragement”), sold a field that belonged to him and

¹⁴ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids; Nottingham: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 462.

brought the money and placed it at the apostles' feet.”(Acts 4:36–37). Barnabas' generosity typifies the giving of the early church as a whole. His donation of the profits from the purchase of his field demonstrates a care for other saints and a desire to see the kingdom advance through the establishment of the church and the provision for fellow believers. Therefore, Barnabas serves as an exemplar for the good works that were being accomplished throughout the church.

Ananias and Sapphira, on the other hand, harbor greed and deceit that directly oppose the virtues seen in Barnabas's offering. While Barnabas gave all the proceeds from his field, Ananias and Sapphira serve as negative exemplars of deception whose hearts and actions should be avoided. Luke follows Barnabas' account with the statement, “Now a man named Ananias, together with Sapphira his wife, sold a piece of property. He kept back for himself part of the proceeds with his wife's knowledge; he brought only part of it and placed it at the apostles' feet” (5:1–2). Peter condemns Ananias for lying about the amount he brought to the apostles (5:3–4). After Peter's pronouncement, Ananias is struck dead and young men take him out to bury him (5:5–6). Like her husband, Sapphira lies to Peter about the amount of money given to the apostles and meets the same fate as her husband (5:7–10).

The accounts of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira literarily parallel one another. They both follow the description of the church's overwhelming generosity towards each other. Furthermore, after selling plots of land, both Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira bring the proceeds to the apostles. Their outcomes, however, are completely opposed, just as their hearts turn out to be upon closer examination. Therefore, it is evident that Luke not only invites his readers to compare these three figures, he more significantly intends for his audience to take encouragement and inspiration from one and warning from the others.

Conclusion

Luke-Acts's exemplars provide tangible examples of how the virtues Luke values are applied to life. Therefore, believers of all generations can see and learn from the piety these exemplars demonstrate. Luke demonstrates this piety by the paralleling of his exemplars with models of virtue from the Hebrew Bible. Green has noted that in the early chapters of Luke, his characters,

“are for the most part exemplars of the piety of Israel in the period of Second Temple Judaism. As the character references given Zachariah and Elizabeth (1:5–7) and especially the presentation of Jesus in the temple (2:22–39; esp. v 39) underscore, Luke is concerned to show the importance of faithful obedience. This obedience is directed to the law, the validity of which is thus assumed in the birth narrative, even if this perspective will receive further development later in the Gospel.”¹⁵

Green's comments aptly summarize Luke's concern with the “faithful obedience” of his readers.¹⁶ Luke parallels his characters with faithful believers of the past who were model observers of Torah. These parallels demonstrate the strengths of these exemplars and emphasize the importance of obedience in the Christian life.

61. ¹⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997),

¹⁶ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 61.

CHAPTER 3

1 AND 2 KINGS IN LUKE-ACTS

We have addressed several of Luke's exemplars and how they function in Luke-Acts. However, Luke's use of the Elijah–Elisha Narrative is where the genius of his exemplars is put on full display. Throughout Luke-Acts, Luke parallels the relationship between Elijah and Elisha with various figures, from Christ to Paul. I will refer to these multiple applications of the EEN's relationship between Elijah and Elisha to figures in Luke-Acts as Elijah-Elisha Cycles (EEC). These EECs allow Luke to use the EEN to emphasize the different virtues each exemplar models. By the end of this chapter, we will not only see how Luke threads the EEN throughout his texts to highlight key virtues for saints to emulate, we will likewise see how these cycles demonstrate the supremacy of Christ as the greater Elisha.

Overview of the EEN in 1 and 2 Kings

Before addressing how Luke uses the EEN in his narrative, we will address the EEN in its original context. This section will provide an overview of the ministries on Elijah and Elisha. I am not striving to provide an exhaustive account of the EEN. Rather, this overview will address some of the major events that I will reference in my examination of how Luke uses the EEN in his EEC.

Elijah and Elisha were two prophets to the northern kingdom during the reign of Ahab and Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1:1-2). Elijah began his prophetic role during the reign of King Ahab (1 Kgs 17:1). Some of the most notable miracles in his ministry include first his causing the rain to cease and return during the reign of Ahab. Elijah also hid in Kerith Ravine, where the Lord fed him by sending ravens carrying food before his journey to

meet a widow in Zarephath in Sidon, at the Lord's direction (17:3–6, 9). Once Elijah met the widow, she provided him with water and bread, despite the current drought and famine (17:15). During this time Elijah performed two miracles. The first miracle was the multiplication of food. Elijah multiplied the widow's flour and oil that she used to feed him. 1 Kings explains that the flour and oil supernaturally did not run out until the rain returned (17:14–17). Elijah also raised the widow's son from the dead (17:19–22). Later, in a very public scene, Elijah prays and a sacrifice he made to the Lord is consumed with fire from heaven, demonstrating that he was a servant of the true God (18:36–39).

After these events, Elijah found Elisha and called him to follow him (19:19–20). Elijah permitted Elisha to return home to kiss his parents goodbye before following him (19:19–21). Elijah later called down fire from heaven on men sent to bring him to the king (2 Kgs 1:1–12). Before the Lord took Elijah up in a whirlwind, Elisha requested that a double portion of Elijah's Spirit would be poured out on him (2:1–9). Elijah informed Elisha that if Elisha saw him taken up, Elisha's request would be answered (2:10). Elijah was then taken up to heaven in a Chariot of Fire (2:11–12). After this, Elisha parted the Jordan's waters with the cloak Elijah gave to him and crossed over (2:13–14). At this point, prophets from Jericho see Elisha and state that the "spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha" (2:15).

As Elijah's ministry continues through Elisha, there is an amplification of the miracles initially done by Elijah. Elisha multiplies a woman's oil to the extent that it fills multiple vessels with oil (2 Kgs 4:1–7). This saves her two children from becoming slaves to her creditor (4:1). Elisha likewise revives a woman's son, makes a poisonous pot of stew edible, and multiplies twenty loaves of bread to feed a hundred men (4:8–41; 5:42–43). The reviving of the widow's son reflects the account of Elijah's raising of the child.¹ However, the ministry on Elisha continues to surpass that of Elijah. While Elijah

¹ Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The

is taken up in a chariot, Elisha sees an army of horses and chariots of fire (6:17). Whereas Elijah raised the widow's son from the dead, Elisha too raises a Shunamite woman's son. However, a dead man too is raised after coming into contact with the bones of Elisha (4:8–36; 13:20–21).

The EEN demonstrates several themes: discipleship, imitation, and the Spirit's enabling. Elijah calls Elisha to follow him and Elisha learns from him. After Elijah is taken away Elisha imitates Elijah's ministry with parallel works to those of Elijah. However, all of these works are only possible because the same power that enabled Elijah enables Elisha. This allows Elisha to continue Elijah's ministry, even accomplishing greater works than Elijah.

How Elijah and Elisha Themes Are Used in Luke-Acts

Luke does not simply create a one-to-one comparison between the relationship of Elijah/Elisha and two other figures in Luke-Acts. Rather, Luke presents cycles of the EEN throughout the narrative of Luke-Acts, constantly placing new characters in the positions of Elijah and Elisha, or even both. The cyclical nature of Luke's use of the EEN allows him to emphasize different aspects of the EEN depending on the characters under focus. Ultimately, Luke draws parallels between his characters and the EEN to emphasize Christ's role as an exemplar of righteousness who is doing a greater work than any prior prophet. In this section, we will examine the EEC parallels that Luke draws between the ministries of Jesus and John. This EEC allows Luke to present Christ as the greater Elisha specifically and the exemplar prophet whose ministry surpasses those of all who came before him generally.

John and Jesus

From the outset of Luke's narrative, John and Jesus's stories reflect one

Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 432.

another. Indeed, some authors have noted up to nine parallels between their birth narratives alone. Theologian Joel Green categorizes these nine parallels as follows: “(1) Introduction of Parents; (2) Specification of Obstacles to Childbearing; (3) Encounter with an Angel, Gabriel; (4) Response to the Angel; (5) “Do Not Be Afraid,” with Address by Name; (6) Promise of a Son; (7) Objection; (8) Giving of a Sign; and (9) Departure of Gabriel.”²

Indeed, the birth narratives present the most explicit parallels between Jesus and John.³ Unlike the other Gospel authors, Luke adds an account of both Jesus and John’s conception and birth. Luke first introduces Zachariah and Elizabeth and Mary before addressing the issues that would hinder them from having children (Luke 1:5–7, 26–27). Elizabeth, John’s mother, is unable to naturally conceive until God intervenes (1:7–25). After God opens her womb, Elizabeth gives birth to John (1:57). Jesus’s birth narrative likewise involves divine intervention (1:35). Mary informs Gabriel that she has not known a man (1:34). Gabriel responds saying that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her, she will conceive, and give birth to a son (1:35). Zachariah likewise encounters the angel Gabriel who tells him that his wife will have a son despite their barrenness (1:11–13). Gabriel promises both Zachariah and Mary specific signs to show the truth of his words (1:18–20, 34–37). After the sign is given to each person, Gabriel leaves (1:21–23, 38).

Whereas John’s supernatural birth consisted of one who was barren being able to conceive, Jesus’s supernatural birth consists of a virgin conceiving. Indeed, Jesus is conceived by the Spirit rather than with the aid of a natural father. Additionally, Gabriel speaks of John as one who is going in the power of Elijah (1:17). However, Gabriel

² Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 90.

³ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke 1-9*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 314.

makes it clear that John (identified with Elijah) will serve as the one preparing the way for Jesus (Elisha) (1:17). This has led scholars like Joseph Fitzmyer to conclude that Luke uses these parallels to do more than present John and Jesus as “twin agents of God’s salvation on the same level.”⁴ Instead, Luke uses parallels that emphasize the superiority of Christ to John.⁵ The superiority seen in these birth accounts reflects the EEN’s narrative of Elisha being the greater prophet. While Elijah was a great prophet of the Lord, Elisha’s ministry reflected and surpassed his. In the same way, these narratives demonstrate that both of these prophets have miraculous birth narratives. However, Jesus’s (Elisha) surpasses that of John (Elijah).

Jesus as Elisha

While Luke parallels the EEN in his presentation of Christ as greater than John, he also emphasizes the parallels between the miraculous works of Jesus and Elisha. One clear instance of this is how Luke uses the EEN’s accounts of the multiplication of food to parallel the ministries of Elisha and Jesus. In 2 Kings 4 Elisha multiplies a few loaves of bread to feed a hundred men. 2 Kings explains that a man from Baal Shalishah brought Elisha twenty loaves of bread and new grain (2 Kgs 4:42). However, there were a hundred men to feed (4:42). Elisha told the man to give the bread to the people to eat because the Lord says that “they will eat and have some leftover” (4:43). After the man gave the bread to the people, the people ate, and there was some leftover “according to the word of the Lord” (4:44).

There are several components to this narrative: a lack of food, a provision of food, a feast, and food left over. Each component is directly reflected in Jesus’s feeding of the multitude. When the crowds come to hear Jesus teach, they are in a remote place

⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke 1-9*, 314.

⁵ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke 1-9*, 314.

with neither food nor lodging (Luke 9:12). Rather than sending the crowds away, Christ tells them to sit down. He multiplies five loaves and two fish to feed the five thousand (9:13–17). After the five thousand ate the disciples “picked up twelve baskets of broken pieces” (9:17).

In both cases, the amount of food needed was exceeded. However, whereas 2 Kings states there was some leftover, Luke specifically records twelve baskets of bread being gathered. The connections between these two events have been noted by scholars, including I. Howard Marshall. Marshall notes that “[t]he motif of the left-overs appears in 2 Ki. 4:44. The twelve baskets signify the great amount, and incidentally point to the activity of the twelve disciples who did the work.”⁶ Marshall likewise notes the connections between these events and the EEN as well as Luke’s literary emphasis on the excess provided. Jesus’s miracle reflects that of Elisha, clearly pointing to the parallelism and superiority of Christ through the use of the EEN in this text. However, Christ’s miracle extends beyond the old covenant type, demonstrating how his multiplication of food not only exceeds Elisha’s in the moment, but also leaves more after.

Luke also parallels the ministries of Jesus and Elisha through their healing of those with leprosy by sending them to accomplish a task. In Naaman’s case, Elisha sends him to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River (2 Kgs 5:10). Naaman obeys, and his flesh is restored (5:14). In Luke, Jesus sends ten lepers who come to him to show themselves to the priests (Luke 17:11–14). As the ten lepers go, they are likewise healed (17:11). While Elisha heals Naaman of leprosy, Jesus does the same work in a greater way. He heals ten men instead of one, and rather than using washing as the means of healing, he speaks and it takes place. Joel Green, too, has recognized this parallel. He writes,

⁶ I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1978), 363.

“Our understanding is assisted by the account of Naaman in 2 Kings 5, an account to which the Evangelist has already alluded with reference to Jesus’ ministry in Luke 4:27. Because Luke has already directed our attention to the story of Naaman, the following echoes are all the more vibrant.⁷

He does well to point out the significance of Luke’s previous allusion to Naaman in Luke 4:27. Jesus’s earlier reference to this account shows how this miracle parallels an event that Jesus used to define his ministry from its outset. However, this is not the only allusion that Luke makes to 2 Kings 5’s account. Jesus’s healing of the centurion’s servant parallels this account of Naaman as well. In this account, Jesus is asked to go to the house of a centurion whose servant is sick (Luke 7:15). Jesus agrees to follow the men (7:5). Shortly before he arrives, the centurion sends his friends to meet Christ with a message (7:5–6). He tells Jesus that he is not worthy to have Christ under his roof and that Jesus has the authority to heal his servant by his word (7:7–8). Jesus marvels at the centurion’s answer and heals the servant without going into the house.

Luke’s record of the healing of the centurion’s servant reflects the EEN, specifically 2 Kings 5, in multiple ways. The first consists of a healing done from a distance. Secondly, both of these accounts speak of gentile leaders, recording them appealing to a man of God by a representative and resulting in the prophet healing from a distance.⁸ However, Luke’s account of Jesus healing the centurion’s servant surpasses that of Elisha healing Naaman. This superiority is seen in the response of the one seeking healing and the means of healing. Naaman ridicules Elisha’s instructions for him to bathe in the Jordan seven times to be cleaned (2 Kgs 5:10). However, he ultimately obeys Elisha and is healed (5:14). His obedience, though, only comes after his servants encourage him to do as Elisha says (5:13–14). Whereas Naaman was once unclean, he is

⁷ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 284.

⁸ David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 295–96.

now restored with gratitude (Lev 13; 2 Kgs 5:13–16).⁹ In contrast, the centurion recognizes Jesus as one with authority and the power to heal (Luke 7:7–8). This is why he has a faith that Jesus describes as greater than what he has found in all of Israel (7:9). The centurion’s obedience is founded on a faith in Christ’s ability to heal his servant rather than on the coaxing of a servant to obey the prophet’s command. Another way that Jesus’s healing surpasses Elisha’s concerns the means of healing. Jesus heals the centurion’s servant by his word and not by using an instrument. In contrast, Elisha instructs Naaman to wash in the Jordan seven times (2 Kgs 5:10). Rather than using ritual washing, Jesus speaks with authority, showing that he has the authority to heal by his divine word.¹⁰ While there are parallels between the ministries of Christ and Elisha, it is clear that Luke demonstrates the superiority of Christ’s work to that of Elisha.

The parallels between Christ and Elisha extend beyond the account of the healing of the centurion’s servant. After Elisha dies, his bones raise a man from the dead. 2 Kings 13:21 records this event by stating, “One day some men were burying a man when they spotted a raiding party. So they threw the dead man into Elisha’s tomb. When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the dead man came to life and stood on his feet.” This account consists of the raising of a man from the dead after the one who performs the miracle has died. This event is mirrored and eclipsed by the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ dies, taking on himself the sins of his people and establishing the new covenant that was promised by Jeremiah (Luke 23:44-49; Jer 31:34).¹¹ Jesus is later raised – vindicating him as the righteous prophet and the son of God who has triumphed over the power of death and provided a way of resurrection for those believing in him (Luke 23:47; Acts

⁹ Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings: A New Translation*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 64–65.

¹⁰ See Omanson and Ellington for a discussion of washings. Roger L. Omanson and John E. Ellington, *A Handbook on 1 & 2 Kings*, ed. Donald Slager (New York: United Bible Societies, 2008), 808.

¹¹ John Kimbell, *The Atonement in Lukan Theology* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2014), 36.

2:24, 4:2).¹² Elisha brings someone back from the dead when he himself is dead. In contrast, Jesus dies and through his death and resurrection brings physical and spiritual life to his people. Once again we can see that while there are parallels between the work of Elisha and Jesus, Jesus's work surpasses Elisha's.

Conclusion

Peter Leithart too has observed many of the parallels between Luke-Acts and the EEN in regards to Christ and Elisha. Leithart summarizes these points, stating that Jesus,

“provides healthy food for the sons of the prophets (4:38–41), multiplies loaves to feed a multitude (4:42–44), feeds Aramean soldiers who come to capture him (6:20–23), and provides food for besieged Samaria (7:1, 18–20). The Gospels end at an empty tomb, and Elisha’s story ends with his life-giving grave (13:20–21).”¹³

Leithart’s comments aptly summarize what was previously argued. Jesus functions as a type of Elisha. Luke uses this parallel to demonstrate the superiority of Christ to John and all other prophets before him. Jesus is the promised prophet like Moses that God would raise up (Acts 3:22). As the exemplar prophet, Jesus trains his disciples to continue his ministry and provides them with an example to follow (Deut 31:1-13; 2 Kgs 2). In the following chapter, we will address another cycle in which Luke uses the EEN. In this cycle Jesus is a type of Elijah whose disciples reflect Elisha as they continue his mission.

¹² Garland, *Luke*, 944.

¹³ Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 179.

CHAPTER 4
THE SPIRIT AND IMITATION IN LUKE-ACTS

We have now come to the crux of the matter: the necessity of the Holy Spirit in the continuation of the ministry of Christ. While the exemplary nature of Christ is clear, the ability to truly imitate him and continue his ministry is dependent on his Spirit. Many scholars have noted the cycles of the outpouring of the Spirit in the EEN and others have seen Luke-Acts's EECs. However, this study will now examine how these are all connected. As we will see, Luke parallels Jesus and his disciples' ministries with the ministries of Elijah and Elisha respectively to show the continuation of Christ's ministry through his Spirit-empowered disciples. The disciples in turn parallel Elijah by taking the gospel to the nations. Subsequent generations of believers then function in the Elisha role as those who have received the Spirit to continue the expansion of the good news.

These EECs will be demonstrated in two parts. We will begin by establishing the Elijah/Elisha relationship that is paralleled between Christ and his disciples. In this relationship Christ is the exemplar prophet whose Spirit is poured out on his followers. The second part of our study will examine the effects of the Spirit and how the EEC informs our understanding of subsequent generations of believers' mission.

Christ as the Greater Elijah

Just as Jesus is the greater Elisha, he is also a greater Elijah. As previously noted, Jesus's description of his ministry in light of the EEN in Luke 4:25–27 provides a literary connection between Jesus, Elijah, and Elisha.¹ Jesus states,

¹ Miller has stated that 4:25-27 "explicitly relates Jesus to Elijah and Elisha." See, Robert J. Miller, "Elijah, John, and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke," *New Testament Studies* 34, no. 4 (1988): 622.

“But in truth I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s days, when the sky was shut up three and a half years, and there was a great famine over all the land. 4:26 Yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to a woman who was a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 4:27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, yet none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” (Luke 4:25–27)

This quotation comes at the outset of Jesus’s ministry. He begins by pronouncing the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy and then turns his attention to addressing his ministry. In doing so, he references the narratives of Elijah and Elisha, suggesting that his ministry will follow a path laid out in theirs.

This section will examine the particular connections of Christ and Elijah. Luke parallels Christ and Elijah in four main ways. First through the disciples drawing of connections between him and the EEN; secondly, by the miracles Jesus preforms; thirdly, by paralleling the ministries of Jesus and his disciples; and finally by Jesus’s dispensing of the Spirit on his disciples.

The Disciples Identification of Christ as Elijah

Jesus’s disciples recognize the connections between Christ and Elijah by making a clear literary reference to it. At the commencement of Luke’s travel narrative, James and John draw upon an account from the EEN (Luke 9:54). Luke records a Samaritan villages’ rejection of Jesus (9:52–53), and then he states, “Now when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do you want us to call fire to come down from heaven and consume them?’” (9:54). This request reflects the account of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:10 which reads, “Elijah replied to the captain, “If I am indeed a prophet, may fire come down from the sky and consume you and your fifty soldiers!” This event happens multiple times as more men come to Elijah.

In 1 Kings, the reason for the fall of the fire is to both demonstrate that God is the one true God as well as show that Elijah is God’s servant. In Luke, Jesus is rejected as he sets out for Jerusalem; the Samaritans do not welcome him (Luke 9:53). Scholars like

Luke Timothy Johnson, have noted the connection between the two narratives. Johnson describes Luke 9:54 as “[a] clear reference to 2 Kgs 1:10, when Elijah threatens fire to fall on his enemies and then delivers on the promise. James and John want to practice similar vengeance on their opponents.”² While I agree with Johnson’s recognition of the vengeance that can be brought on those opposing Christ, we would be remiss if we did not recognize how the work of Elijah also vindicates the prophet by demonstrating that he is a true prophet of God. This second aspect of Elijah’s miracle is reflected in the disciples’ desire to call down fire on the Samaritans. Their calling down fire would have both functioned as a sign of judgement upon the Samaritans and vindicated Christ as the true prophet of God. Indeed, this connection was so clear to ancient authors that there are textual variants that explicitly point to this EEN allusion.³ Such copies added, “as Elijah did,” to their manuscripts making these allusions explicit in their copies.⁴

However similar these accounts may be, Jesus is not presented as an exact copy of Elijah. Indeed, Jesus and the disciples’ encounter with the Samaritans provides a unique instance in which Luke emphasizes a great difference rather than a similarity between the EEN and this EEC. Whereas the EEN presents fire consuming many men, Jesus rebukes his disciples at their request to call down fire on the Samaritans (2 Kgs 1:9–14; Luke 9:55). Rather than allowing fire to be called down, Christ stays his disciple’s hands. Christ’s followers are called to reflect him as they continue his ministry.

Green notes the exemplary elements of this account and the relation of Christ to the EEN. Green states,

“The affinity between the Elijah-story and the Samaritan rejection of Jesus may have been obvious to the disciples so that their proposed action against the Samaritans would seem to have had scriptural sanction. However, Luke’s

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 162.

³ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 162.

⁴ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 162.

presentation of Jesus uses Elijah both as type and antitype. In this case, Jesus' refusal to act according to the script provided by the ancient presentation of Elijah signals a serendipitous extension of clemency and mercy that will be matched both by the exemplary behavior of other Samaritans in the journey narrative (10:25–37; 17:11–19) and, in Acts, by the proclamation and reception of the message of the kingdom of God in Samaria (Acts 1:8; 8:5–26)."⁵

Green's observations capture the type and antitypes between Jesus and the EEN, reminding us again that while Jesus functions as both Elijah and Elisha, he is ultimately greater than both. Unlike these two prophets, Christ alone ushers in the kingdom of heaven. This moment also anticipates the later belief of the Samaritans and their reception of the Holy Spirit as Green notes (Acts 8:12), which is part of yet another EEC as we will see later.

The Miracles of Christ and Elijah

Another way that Christ parallels Elijah in Luke-Acts is through the wonders he performs. The first parallel with the EEN that we will examine concerns Jesus and Elijah's multiplication of food. We saw how Jesus's feeding of the 5,000 reflected Elisha's feeding of the 100 in our previous section. However, just like Elisha's work also reflected Elijah's, Jesus's multiplication of food reflects Elijah's as well. In the EEN, Elijah requests food from a widow because he needs to eat. This request is made during a drought when food is scarce. The widow is concerned because it is the last of her food (1 Kings 17:12). However, Elijah promises her that they will not run out of food. 1 Kings 17:14 records Elijah telling the widow, "The jar of flour will not be empty and the jug of oil will not run out until the day the LORD makes it rain on the surface of the ground." After she feeds Elijah, the food is multiplied until the end of the drought (17:16).

There are three key elements to this narrative. The first is that a man of God requires food. Second, the possessor of food provides it in faith for the man's use. Finally, the food is multiplied to meet the need in the face of famine. Each of these elements is

⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 406.

reflected in Luke's account of Jesus's feeding of the 5,000. Jesus and the crowds are in a remote place (Luke 9:12-13). Despite the disciples telling Jesus to send the people away, he takes the five loaves and two fish the disciples have and multiplies them so that not only are the crowds fed, but 12 baskets are taken up as well (9:12-17). While there are contextual differences between these events, the narratives consistently emphasize the need of food, the provision of it in faith, and the multiplication of the food to meet the need.

Jesus's and Elijah's calls to discipleship mirror one another as well, while showing the greater cost of following Christ. Jesus's call to his disciples mirrors Elijah's call of Elisha. However, while Elijah grants Elisha's request to return home before following him, Jesus places a higher demand on those who would follow him (1 Kgs 19:19-21). Luke recounts a man who comes to Jesus and requests to bury his father. The narrative reads, "Jesus said to another, 'Follow me.' But he replied, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'" (Luke 9:59-60). This event is immediately followed by another individual offering to follow Christ (9:61). However, this man asks Jesus to allow him to return to say goodbye to his parents (9:61). Jesus does not allow this man to turn back either. In both cases, Jesus demands immediate and total devotion. Robert Stein notes this EEN connection, explaining the new urgency when he writes that "God's kingdom has come, and the summons to follow Jesus takes precedence over everything else. The old family relationships are part of what one must leave behind to follow him" (5:11, 28).⁶ Not only are Christ's wonders superior to that of Elijah, but the call to follow him has a greater price as well.

Another way Luke presents Christ as the greater Elijah is by drawing parallels

⁶ Robert A. Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1993), 301.

between the EEN and Luke's accounts of children being raised from the dead. 1 Kings tells of Elijah raising his widow tenant's child from the dead (1 Kgs 17:17–24). In this account, Elijah encounters a mourning widow, takes the son to his room, stretches over the son three times, and prays for the son to be restored. The son is restored, Elijah returns the son to his mother, and the mother states that she knows he is a true prophet (17:17–24). Many of these elements are paralleled in Jesus's healing of the widow's son (Luke 7:11–17).⁷ As with Elijah, Jesus encounters a widow whose only son died (1 Kgs 17:12; Luke 7:12). Like Elijah, Jesus shows compassion on this woman, raises her son from the dead, and returns her son to her (1 Kgs 17:19–23; Luke 7:14–15). As with Elijah, Jesus's miracle results in his recognition as a true prophet of the Lord (Luke 7:16).

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences between the healing narratives of Elijah and Jesus. First, Jesus's healing surpasses that of Elijah. In 1 Kings Elijah stretches himself across the son three times and prays for the son to be restored (1 Kgs 17:21). Rather than appealing to the Lord for healing, Jesus speaks with authority and heals the young man (Luke 7:14).⁸ David Garland has likewise noted this. As he states,

“Jesus' ministry is reminiscent of Elijah and Elisha, but Jesus raises a corpse by the power of his own authoritative word, which is emphasized in the previous incident (7:7)... God is the one who raises the dead (Acts 26:8; John 5:21; 2 Cor 1:9), and Jesus has authority over death.”⁹

Garland summarizes this point with clarity. Jesus both reflects the EEN and demonstrates

⁷ Brodie has argued for these accounts being an example of ancient *Imitatio*. While I agree that there are parallels between these accounts, I do not believe these parallels are strong enough to imply dependency of imitation. Rather, they are more consistent with literary echoes that present Christ as a great prophet. Luke also presents Christ as a greater Moses and David. Therefore, we are not restricted to attributing these similarities to *Imitatio*. Thomas L. Brodie, “Towards Unravelling Luke's Use of the Old Testament: Luke 7:11-17 as an *Imitatio* of 1 Kings 17:17-24,” *New Testament Studies* 32, no. 2 (1986): 247–67.

⁸ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018), 238.

⁹ David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 304.

the superiority of Christ. Furthermore, while the widow recognizes Elijah as a prophet of the Lord in 1 Kings, Luke states that word of Jesus as a great prophet circulates throughout all of Judea and the surrounding lands (1 Kings 17:24; Luke 7:17). Thus, Luke records a great recognition of Christ as the great prophet of the Lord that goes beyond only those who were eyewitnesses. Once again, Jesus eclipses his Old Testament type.

Paralleling Ministries

We saw how Jesus functions as the Elisha figure in the cycle between him and John the Baptist. Now we will address how Christ is the Elijah figure whose followers serves as Elisha's that continue his ministry. Thomas L. Brodie has noted one of the clearest structural parallels Luke-Acts draws between Christ and his disciples ministries in his article "Luke's use of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative" in *The Elijah-Elisha Narrative in the Composition of Luke*. Brodie asserts that Luke-Acts begins with the infancy narrative of Jesus (Luke 1–2), addresses Jesus's early ministry (3:1–4:22a , excluding 3:7–9; 4:1–13; 7:1–8:3), journeys to Jerusalem (9:51–10:20; 16:1–9,19–31; 17:11–18:8; 19:110), and concludes with Jesus's death and resurrection (22–24, excluding 22:31–65).¹⁰ The church parallels Jesus's ministry as they expand out from Jerusalem. The church reflects Christ's birth narrative as it is born out of and commences from Jerusalem (Acts 1:12:42).¹¹ As with the ministry of Christ, Luke describes the ministry of the early church (2:43–5:42), its expansion from Jerusalem (6:19:30), and the transformation of the church and the integration of gentiles (9:31–15:35).¹²

¹⁰ Thomas L. Brodie, "Luke's Use of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative," in *The Elijah-Elisha Narrative in the Composition of Luke*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Joseph Verheyden, Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 9.

¹¹ Brodie, "Luke's Use of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative," 9.

¹² Brodie does well to observe the parallels drawn between the narratives of Jesus and his followers and also recognizes the Elijah-Elisha themes that are reflected within them. However, as we will later address, Brodie does not address the implications that the EEN presents in our study of imitation in

Luke's pattern of Jesus's mission journeying to Jerusalem and the disciples' ministry expanding from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth serves two purposes. First, this chiasmic journeying shows how the mission of the disciples reflects the ministry of Christ. Therefore they are imitating Christ in their actions as they imitate Christ's journey to Jerusalem as they advance the gospel. It secondarily demonstrates the continuity of the work of Christ through his disciples. This is particularly seen in how the ascension and Pentecost parallel the outpouring of the spirit of Elijah on Elisha.

Christ as the Sender of the Spirit

Though we have already seen how parallels to the EEN abound in Luke-Acts, these similarities are still most clearly seen in Luke's record of the outpouring of the Spirit across the narrative of Luke-Acts. While many aspects of this account could be addressed, we will focus on Pentecost's relationship to the EEN and other parallels that Luke draws between the EEN and Luke-Acts. In commenting on these parallels, Peter Leithart notes:

“At the beginning of 2 Kgs. 2, Elisha doggedly follows his master, refusing to stay behind, until Elijah is taken from him in a whirlwind. Because he follows Elijah, Elisha becomes like his master, and after Elijah departs he immediately begins to replicate his ministry. Having received the promised double portion of Elijah's Spirit, Elisha is a “reincarnation” (or “reanimation”) of Elijah, as the church is the body of Christ in the Spirit of Jesus. The sons of the prophets recognize the family resemblance between Elisha and his predecessor, just as the Jews perceive the courage of Peter and the apostles and remember they have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).”¹³

Leithart astutely recognizes the depth of the connections between the expansion and mission of the church and the EEN. Luke uses these parallels to emphasize the church's call to imitate Christ through the empowering of his Spirit. Luke's narrative of the ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit on the disciples reflects and surpasses the

Luke-Acts. See Brodie, “Luke's Use of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative,” 9.

¹³ Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 171.

taking away of Elijah and the pouring out of the Spirit on Elisha. 2 Kings 2:11 states, “As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a fiery chariot pulled by fiery horses appeared. They went between Elijah and Elisha, and Elijah went up to heaven in a windstorm.” After Elijah’s departure, a double portion of Elijah’s Spirit is poured out on Elisha (2 Kgs 2:9–11, 15). The outpouring of the spirit of Elijah allows Elisha to continue his teacher’s ministry.

The EEN’s ending with the ascension of a leader and the outpouring of the Spirit that empowered him is reflected and expanded on in Luke-Acts.¹⁴ At the close of Luke and the beginning of Acts, Jesus is taken away into the clouds (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Before his departure, Jesus tells his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they are baptized with the Spirit (Acts 1:5). This is fulfilled at Pentecost. As the disciples meet to pray, the Holy Spirit pours out upon them. Johnson has noted,

“The use of the Elijah-Elisha cycle is most obvious in the distinctive Lukan rendering of the ascension and giving of The Spirit. The prophet Jesus departs and leaves his prophetic followers with a “double-share” of The Spirit so that they can do deeds as great as or even greater than his, just as Elijah did for Elisha when he departed in a fiery chariot (cf. Luke 24:51–53; Acts 1:9–11; 2:1–13, with 2 Kgs 2:1–14).”¹⁵

Johnson’s observation calls our attention to how Luke emphasizes the EEN to demonstrate the continuity of Jesus’s ministry to the earth’s ends. This event was previously established in the John and Jesus EEC. John’s statement that one is coming who “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” references this event and demonstrates that Luke’s narrative presents the disciples as the recipients of the promised Spirit (Luke 3:16, Acts 1:5). This fulfillment begins when Jesus tells his disciples to wait

¹⁴ Some scholars have sought to connect the account of Philip’s transportation to Jesus being taken up (Acts 8:26-40). While both are taken up, I am not convinced that there are sufficient parallels to connect it to the EEN. The Spirit is not poured out in the same way as in the other narratives, and Philip is seen again after he is taken up. See James R. Edwards, “Parallels and Patterns between Luke and Acts,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 27, no. 4 (2017): 489.

¹⁵ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 13.

in Jerusalem until they are baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), a promise that is fulfilled at Pentecost. As the disciples meet to pray, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them.

As it pertains to the EEN, Pentecost ties into the emphasis on imitation and the continuation of Christ's ministry. The narrative of Elijah's being taken up and the outpouring of his Spirit on Elisha, provides us with several literary features to remember when examining the ascension and Pentecost. 2 Kings records a prophet promising their follower that they will have the same spirit that enabled the leader. The leader is taken up to heaven before the eyes of their followers. After they are taken, the Spirit that enabled the leader is poured out on the followers so they are able to continue the ministry of the leader. These elements are present in Luke's account of Jesus's ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit. However, the ascension both reflects the catching up of Elijah and emphasizes that Jesus is greater than Elijah.¹⁶ As with the previous EEC between John and Luke, however, this account does more than strengthen the connection between Jesus and Elijah and the Spirit's outpouring that equipped Elisha and Jesus's followers.¹⁷ These accounts address the continuation of their ministries through their followers, beginning another EEC. As the disciples are empowered by the Spirit, they go out and imitate Christ. This imitation is demonstrated through their preaching, works, and the progression of the gospel.

Not everyone shares this understanding of parallels between Jesus and Elijah's ministries. Scholars, such as Steve Walton, have argued against this understanding.

¹⁶ Steve Walton has noted "Jesus, now at God's right side, the place of authority, [39] has been given the Spirit to pour out—he is doing what YHWH alone can do. Jesus is not said to be mediating the Spirit from God, but Christ pours out the Spirit himself. He is thus 'Lord of the Spirit' (cf. 2:36 'God has appointed him as Lord and Messiah.'" Steve Walton, "Jesus's Ascension through Old Testament Narrative Traditions," in *Ascent into Heaven in Luke-Acts: New Explorations of Luke's Narrative Hinge*, ed. David Bryan and David Pao (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 38.

¹⁷ Joel Green also recognizes parallels between these passages. See Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 123

Walton states,

“Some are features that take a different shape in the two stories (who gives the s/Spirit to Elisha and Jesus’s disciples, the mission of the “successors” and the nature of their “succession”—Elisha takes over Elijah’s role, whereas the disciples proclaim Jesus, and he remains, “Lord”). By this portrait, Luke signals that the exalted Jesus is and is not a “new Elijah”: he is not less than Elijah—he is far, far more as “Lord of all” (Acts 10:36).”¹⁸

While I agree with many of Walton’s points, I believe that his appraisal of the connections between the continuations of Jesus and Elijah’s ministries is deficient.

Walton rightly recognizes that Jesus is not less than Elijah but more. However, the distinction between the continuation of both of these figures’ ministries is not as different as Walton assumes. Walton is correct that the disciples proclaim Christ as Lord (Acts 3:11–16). However, their ministry still resembles and reflects Jesus’s too. Just as Jesus preaches the coming of the kingdom of God, the disciples likewise make this proclamation to the world (Luke 24:47–48; Acts 1:8). Like Jesus, the disciples proclaim a gospel of repentance accompanied by signs and miracles (Luke 4:14–37; Acts 2:22–24, 37–43). These parallels make Jesus’s ascension reflect and exceed the EEN.

Walton also argues that the natures of Jesus and Elijah’s ministries are different.¹⁹ However, this difference does not negate the “Elijah model” that is present between these texts.²⁰ Instead, it recognizes the historical events surrounding the resurrection while emphasizing the connections between the events of Christ’s ministry and that of Elijah’s. Jesus’s disciples testify to what he has done (Acts 2; 5; 28). However, they also imitate him and take his message to the ends of the earth (28:30–31). Therefore, Jesus is both a

¹⁸ Walton, “Jesus’s Ascension through Old Testament Narrative Traditions,” 39.

¹⁹ Walton, “Jesus’s Ascension through Old Testament Narrative Traditions,” 39.

²⁰ Walton states “Nevertheless, the Elijah model is only partial: there are real and significant distinctions in Luke’s portrait of Jesus’s ascension by contrast with that of Elijah. Some are features that the Elijah story has and that Jesus’s story lacks (the fiery horses and chariots, the whirlwind). Some are features that the Jesus story has and that Elijah’s story lacks (the appearances over forty days, Jesus’s teaching ministry during that period, the worship of Jesus, Jesus’s place at God’s right side).” Walton, “Jesus’s Ascension through Old Testament Narrative Traditions,” 39.

new Elijah in the same way that he is the new Adam and a new Moses.²¹ Christ's newness includes his superiority to his old covenant shadows. Luke presents Jesus as a new Elijah whose ministry is continued by his Elisha-like followers as they imitate him.

The Church as Imitators and Exemplars

As we saw in our examination of the EEN in Luke-Acts, Luke describes Jesus as the giver of the Spirit. This enables his disciples to continue his ministry and obey the commission of Christ. Just as Jesus had the Spirit poured out on him at the outset of his ministry at his baptism, so Jesus's disciples are baptized in the Holy Spirit so they can continue Christ's ministry (Acts 2:1–4). While the miracles the disciples perform reflect Christ's and the EEN, even more EEN themes are present in the book of Acts. This section will now examine Luke's EEC between the disciples and subsequent generations of believers. Indeed, the disciples not only function as Elisha in relation to Christ's Elijah, they also function as Elijah figures themselves, exemplary wonder-workers and agents in the further outpouring of the Spirit on subsequent groups of believers.

Stephen as Exemplar

Stephen is perhaps the most obvious exemplar for other believers. Indeed, we have already addressed how he reflects Christ. However, upon closer examination one can see that Stephen exhibits faithful characteristics beyond his imitation of Christ that other believers should adopt. Luke presents Stephen as a prophet who is willing to die for the sake of the Gospel. He proves steadfast as Jesus's promises of persecution and division take place.

Earlier in Luke, Jesus speaks of his followers suffering for his sake. He states that "when they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not

²¹ Brant James Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary: Unveiling the Mother of the Messiah* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2018), 42.

worry about how you should make your defense or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you must say.” (Luke 12:11-12). Later on in the same chapter, he points to the coming division when he says,

“Do you think I have come to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! For from now on there will be five in one household divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” (Luke 12: 51–53).

These quotes point to a daunting reality of upcoming conflict; however, Jesus promises that the Spirit will give them the words to say in those moments (Luke 12:12). Stephen is an example of Christ’s words coming to pass. In his testing, he recounts the fulfillments of God’s plan of redemption in Christ (Act 7:1–53). After recounting the events culminating in Christ, Luke states that Stephen was “full of the Holy Spirit” (ὕπαρχων δὲ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου) (7:55). Stephen is steadfast in his testing, and he can proclaim the gospel boldly to those around him (7:54–60). Therefore, he serves a double function. Stephen demonstrates the truthfulness of Jesus’s words and sets an example for other believers to follow.

Stephen functions as a prophet through his rhetoric and mirroring of Old Testament types. J. B. Polhill has noted that Stephen’s speech in Acts 7:51-52 “is an ancient form of argumentation found in both Greek rhetoric and Hebrew prophecy. The function of the peroration of Stephen’s speech was not simply to malign his Jewish audience. In Christian terms his ultimate goal was their remedial action, their repentance.”²² Indeed, one of the specific examples of this in Stephen’s speech is how he describes the Jews as “stiff-necked” and having “uncircumcised hearts,” for these words call to mind Israel’s past idolatry with the golden calf as he continues to speak of their unfaithfulness to their covenant with God (Acts 7:39–42,51–52; Exod 33:3; Deut 9:6).²³

²² J. B. Polhill, *Acts* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 205.

²³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids:

Thus we can see how Stephen's speech reflects the old covenant prophets at the same time that it demonstrates the fulfillment of Christ promises. He furthermore reflects an old covenant prophet through his suffering and call for unfaithful Israel to turn from their sin (Luke 6:23, 26; Acts 7:51–60).

Paul as Exemplar

As the gospel expands from Jerusalem, it is clear that these themes of the outpouring of the Spirit are central to understanding how the disciples continue the ministry of Jesus. The ministry of Paul in particular becomes the primary subject of Acts, and as it unfolds Luke emphasizes many parallels between the ministries of Paul and the EEN. However, like Christ's reflection of the EEN, Paul's ministry is presented as greater than Elisha's.

Luke uses the EEN in his EEC between Jesus (Elijah) and the Apostle Paul (Elisha). One of the clearest linguistic parallels between Paul and Jesus's ministries is seen in their rejection by the people. After Jesus tells the Jews a parable concerning how the word of God affects different individuals, Luke records Jesus's asking him the meaning of the parable (Luke 8:10). Jesus tells his disciples, "You have been given the opportunity to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that although they see they may not see, and although they hear they may not understand" (8:10). Jesus's reference to Isaiah 6:9–10 addresses the revealing of the gospel to his followers while it is hidden from those outside of the community. Therefore, Jesus's words serve two functions. They reveal the kingdom to some and blind others from understanding.

The specific language used in this account of Christ's ministry finds its parallel in the end of Acts as Paul speaks in Rome. At the end of Paul's mission, he argues that

Baker Academic, 2008), 520.

Jesus is the Christ from the law and prophets (Acts 28:23). Paul mirrors Jesus's statements by stating,

“The Holy Spirit spoke rightly to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah when he said,

‘Go to this people and say,
“You will keep on hearing, but will never understand,
and you will keep on looking, but will never perceive.

For the heart of this people has become dull,
and their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have closed their eyes,
so that they would not see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.” ’

“Therefore be advised that this salvation from God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen!” (28:25–28)

These statements are concluded by Luke's statement that, “For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!” (28:30–31). As in the account of Jesus's teaching in parables, Paul references the prophet Isaiah (Is 6:9–10). However, in Paul's case, it emphasizes the expansion of the gospel to the Gentiles after the Jews' rejection of the gospel. Indeed, earlier in Acts there were two other accounts of Paul turning from the Jews to take the gospel to the Gentiles (13:46; 18:6). In this, we see a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that the nations will be blessed through his seed (Gen 22:18).

The similarities between Christ and Paul are not limited to their references to the Hebrew Bible. Many theologians, including William Kurz, have noticed the similarities between Acts 20:17-38 and Luke 22:14-38. There are evident parallels between the “farewell addresses” of Paul and Jesus.²⁴ Despite differences between Jesus

²⁴ William S. Kurz, “Narrative Models for Imitation in Luke-Acts,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J Malherbe*, ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1991) 174–175 .

and Paul's ministries, these parallels present both Paul and Jesus as exemplars worthy of imitation.²⁵ Paul's identification as an exemplar is most clearly seen in his comparison with false teachers. In Acts 20:32–35, Luke writes,

“And now I entrust you to God and to the message of his grace. This message is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have desired no one's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine provided for my needs and the needs of those who were with me. By all these things, I have shown you that by working in this way we must help the weak, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Paul calls other Christians to imitate his practice of not burdening others through dependence.²⁶ Scholar David Peterson has noted that “in this speech, Paul sets himself as a moral exemplar for the people of God. Paul's own behavior is then presented as a practical example of how to put this into practice.”²⁷ Paul's ministry is marked by holy conduct, self-provision, and faithfulness to the commands of Christ. In these ways, he serves as an exemplar for other believers to imitate. Rather than taking advantage of others, he imitates Christ in looking to others' needs before his own (Acts 20:35; Phil 2:5–8).

Key aspects of Paul's ministry likewise reflect Jesus's. Luke consistently attests to Jesus's proclamation of the kingdom, teaching in the synagogues, and performing signs and wonders that demonstrate the arrival of the kingdom (Luke 4:43–44, 11:20, 17:21). These same themes are seen throughout the ministry of Paul. Luke's account of Paul's ministry concludes with descriptions of Paul testifying to and proclaiming the kingdom of God (Acts 28:23, 31). Furthermore, Luke records Paul's proclamation of the gospel as often accompanied by miraculous signs.

²⁵ Kurz, “Narrative Models for Imitation in Luke-Acts,” 174–175.

²⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, 429.

²⁷ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids; Nottingham: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 573.

Paul's miraculous healings in Ephesus in particular are worthy of note, for they reflect and exceed Elisha's healing of the Shunamite woman's child. In both cases, objects that come in contact with a prophet/apostle are used when healing individuals. In the account of Elisha raising the Shunamite woman's son, Elisha tells her, "Tuck your robes into your belt, take my staff, and go! Don't stop to exchange greetings with anyone! Place my staff on the child's face" (2 Kgs 4:29). Despite Elisha's instructions for his staff to be laid on the child's face, the child is not raised until Elisha arrives (4:31). Whereas the child is not raised until Elisha goes in person, Paul successfully heals from a distance. Luke records these miracles during his ministry in Ephesus when he writes, "God was performing extraordinary miracles by Paul's hands, so that when even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his body were brought to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them." (Acts 19:11–12). This event depicts Paul as following in Jesus's footsteps.²⁸ Like Jesus, Paul's ministry reflects and surpasses what is seen in the EEN. His ministry provides a foundation for understanding how the apostles reflect Christ as they act as Elisha figures in the narrative of Acts.

The Disciples and Later Generations

One of the questions that will inevitably arise from this study concerns its relevance to subsequent believers. As we have seen, there is the reflection of the EEN in the continuation of Christ's ministry by his Spirit-empowered disciples. However, does this mean that this same principle applies to the followers of Jesus after the disciples' time?

Spirit-empowered Believers

Just as Jesus is at once a greater Elisha and Elijah, the disciples too function in

²⁸ While Acts' record's Peter's shadow healing people, I do not believe it is a strong enough reflection of the EEN to include in the main body of this thesis (Acts 5:15). Since it is Peter's shadow and not an object that heals, I do not believe that it parallels the EEN enough.

both the Elisha and Elijah roles. As we have seen, the disciples serve as exemplars for subsequent generations of believers. This is demonstrated through their role as those who are used to dispense the Spirit on all peoples. This allows other believers to follow in their footsteps as imitators of them as they imitate of Christ (the greatest Elijah) (1 Cor 11:1–2). We will now examine how the disciples function in this aspect of the EEC.

At the end of Luke’s gospel, Jesus commissions his disciples to start in Jerusalem and take the gospel to all nations (Luke 24:47). Luke expands on this statement in Acts 1:8 when he records Jesus stating, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This text presents the gospel’s expansion that begins in Jerusalem and expands out to the earth’s ends (Joel 2:28–32; Zech 12:10; Acts 2:1–4, 38–39; 28:30).²⁹ As the gospel progresses, the Spirit is poured out upon different people.³⁰ An example of this expansion is seen in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Samaria, Caesarea, and Corinth/Ephesus (Acts 2:1–4; 8:9–25; 10:44–48; 11:8–15; 19:1–7).³¹ Our interest concerns the outpouring of the Spirit as Samaria.

The outpouring of the Spirit at Samaria connects the EEN’s themes of the reception of an empowering Spirit from a spiritual leader. This outpouring through the laying on of hands reveals the disciples’ imitation of Christ as they function as Elijah figures for other Elishas. Luke records John and Peter going down to Samaria after hearing that Samaria had “accepted the word of God” (δέδεκται ἡ Σαμάρεια τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) (Acts 8:14–15). After arriving, they are informed that those in Samaria were baptized in Jesus’s name but had not received the Spirit (8:16). Peter and John then place their hands on them, and these believers receive the Holy Spirit (8:17). While there is not

²⁹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 107.

³⁰ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 83.

³¹ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 83.

the same ascension seen in the EEN's account of Elijah being taken away or Jesus's being caught up to heaven, literary parallels still exist. Like Elijah, disciples are prophetic figures who serve as God's representatives. Through a means, the Spirit that equipped them for ministry is also poured out on their followers. This Spirit also equips their followers to continue their ministry. Therefore, subsequent generations of believers have the Spirit that empowered the disciples living within them. Acts' record of God "pouring out his Spirit upon all flesh" (ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα) gives later believers the confidence that they too will be used to continue the ministry of Christ and that his Spirit is for people from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους) (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17; Rev 5:9).

The continuation of Christ's ministry by subsequent generations of believers is also seen in the dispensing of various gifts to the church. An example of this is the gift of prophecy. Luke records figures, such as Agabus and Philip's four virgin daughters, using these gifts to build the church and advance Christ's mission (Acts 11:27; 21:9).

While Luke-Acts ends in Rome, this does not insinuate that Christ's mission is complete. John Polhill has noted that the events and difficulties faced by the apostles and Paul demonstrate,

“how the gospel is effective in accomplishing what it is set to do. It was not the apostles who triumphed in Acts—it was the gospel that triumphed. Stephen is the prime example. He gave his life for that witness. But out of the tragedy of his death, the gospel triumphed—spread to Samaria, and all Judea, and ultimately to the ends of the earth. There is a triumphalism in Acts, but it is not a human triumphalism. It is a God-triumphalism, a triumph of his word in Christ.”³²

Rather than relying on exemplars, subsequent generations of believers can trust in the effectiveness of the gospel and imitate other believer's faithfulness in their advance of the gospel.

³² Polhill, *Acts*, 512.

Conclusion

This section demonstrated the parallels between the ministries of the disciples and the EEN. Luke parallels the EEN in his cycle between the disciples and their followers. This paralleling provides examples for further generations of believers, as well as the assurance that the same Spirit that empowered the apostles is at work in them. Stephen and Paul, in particular, reflect the ministry of Christ as exemplars of righteousness. This shows us that believers can likewise function as exemplars in their reflection of Christ and obedience to his commandments (1 Cor. 11:1). A consistent theme in the imitation of Christ and other believers is the need of the Spirit. The Spirit enables believers of every generation to continue the ministry of Christ.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis argued that exemplars are a key aspect of Lucan discipleship. We accomplished this by examining the parallels between the Elijah-Elisha Narratives of 1 and 2 Kings and the Elijah-Elisha Cycles of Luke-Acts. These parallels demonstrate that Luke intended to provide his audience with tangible examples of how one applies the virtues he posited in his narrative to their lives. They also demonstrate the necessity of divine enabling. Just as Elijah's spirit was poured out on Elisha so he could continue the ministry of Elijah, so too the Holy Spirit is sent by Christ to enable believers to continue his ministry.

We began our examination by addressing the variety of exemplars in Luke-Acts. These exemplars serve as models of virtue and warnings against vices. Some, such as Ananias and Sapphira, are clear examples of what should be avoided (Acts 5:1–11). Others, such as Stephen, provide examples of how one imitates Christ in the enabling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:12–13; 7:60).

We then took a close look at some of the key themes and events of the EEN to provide a foundation for our study of Luke-Acts. This foundation gave us grounds to address the EEN of 1 and 2 Kings, which Luke emphasizes throughout his work. After establishing the presence of the EEN in Luke-Acts, we examined how Luke utilizes it through his Elijah-Elisha Cycles. Rather than using the EEN's figures as the basis for Luke-Acts, Luke uses this narrative to emphasize theological points throughout his work. This is why Jesus can function as both an Elijah and Elisha. In one case he is presented greater than John the Baptist and as the exemplar prophet to whom all his followers should look. In the other places Christ is presented as the one whose ministry the

disciples will continue after he is taken to heaven.

As we close our study, it is important to step back and consider why Luke spends so much time emphasizing the EEN in his text. The answer to this question lies within his emphasis on the role of the Spirit within the EEN and his subsequent EECs. As we have seen, the Spirit plays a vital role in the Christian life. By emphasizing the Spirit's work the lives of Christ's followers, Luke ensures that his readers do not become shackled to an empty moralism, in which one must imitate the exemplars in order to achieve the good life. Rather, Luke reveals that to follow Christ is to live a divinely enabled life in which the believer is continuously being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Luke did not intend for his audience to look at his exemplars for wooden examples of how to appear to be good or provide a rigid approach to moral formation from virtue ethics. Rather, Luke recognizes that Christ's followers need to be empowered to obey and continue his ministry (Luke 24:29). Therefore, Luke provides his audience of any generation with a view of imitation that emphasizes the redeemed's union with God as they strive to continue the mission of Christ in the power of the Spirit (Acts 2:4).

The EEN and Luke's EEC also encourage us by demonstrating the continual faithfulness of God to his people. Luke-Acts's EECs show that God is unchanging and continues to be committed to his people. Luke enables his readers to see that just as God led and enabled Elijah and Elisha, God continues to sustain and empower his people. This faithfulness gives all believers confidence that they do not simply have examples to look to, but they also have examples of the Lord's faithfulness across generations as they strive to continue the mission of Christ in the power of the Spirit.

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ABSTRACT

LUKE-ACTS AND EXEMPLAR PROPHETS:LUKE'S USE OF THE ELIJAH-ELISHA NARRATIVE AND THE ROLE OF THE SPIRIT

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This thesis examines Luke's use of exemplars with a focus on his utilization of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative (EEN) in his Elijah-Elisha Cycles. My first chapter introduces the topic of the thesis and sets the scope of my study. Chapter two examines the lives of various figures from Luke-Acts to show the variety of ways that Luke uses exemplars to shape the virtue of his readers. Chapter three provides an overview of the EEN in 1 and 2 Kings and introduces how Elijah and Elisha themes are used in Luke-Acts. Chapter four examines how these themes are paralleled in the giving of the Spirit and the disciples' imitation of Christ as they continue his ministry. Chapter five concludes my thesis by addressing the relevance of exemplars and Luke's use of the EEN to the Christian life.

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