

Article

Intratextuality in Luke: Connecting the Emmaus Road with the Boy in the Temple

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Abstract

The story of the boy Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–51) and of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35) are compared and are shown to be likely to be a deliberate piece of intratextuality on the part of the author of the Gospel of Luke. Four main agreements between the stories are examined. A motive for the intratextuality is also proposed in that it fits in very well with Luke's overall theological approach to the poor and the powerless.

Introduction

The story of the Road to Emmaus from Luke 24:13–35 is one of the most well-used and well-known stories from the Gospels. It is not difficult to see why this should be. It is a story with many layers of meaning and it is a story which can be applied to the Christian's own faith. The story of walking with Jesus, only not realising that it is so, of suddenly glimpsing him, only to see him vanish is the story of faith for many Christians. Faith is rarely about always seeing clearly. It is so often about moments of clarity, which vanish as soon as they are perceived. And yet, just as for Cleopas and the other, unnamed, disciple in Luke 24, these moments of clarity are what compel the faithful to tell others. However fleetingly, however imprecisely, the risen Jesus is seen, perceived, glimpsed. Such a momentary realisation of faith is enough to see the Christian through long periods of doubt and long periods of confusion. Someone of Christian faith

probably maintains themselves in that faith because it is impossible to be apathetic towards faith after glimpsing such a truth as the risen Jesus and thus, even in the darkest of times, the memory of it will still shine. This is why Luke 24 is so well used by Christians: in some way it is every Christian's, story. In contrast to this, although Christians know the story of Jesus as a boy in the Temple from Luke 2:41–51 in outline, it is not such a well-known or well-used text as that of the Road to Emmaus. However, there are some striking similarities between the two texts, one at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke and the other at the end. It is the argument of this paper that it seems likely that an attentive reader is supposed to recall one as the other is read. In what follows, we will lay the stories

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side by side and analyse what the author of this Gospel may have intended to be drawn from these texts taken as two parts of one story rather than as two separate stories. We will begin by considering why the story of the boy Jesus in the Temple is likely to be a deliberate insertion into a second edition of Luke's text. Next, we will look at a series of similarities between the two stories before noting wider similarities with other themes from the gospel. We will conclude by suggesting that there is sufficient evidence to make the case that the author intended the reader to notice that the home of God on Earth was no longer the Temple in Jerusalem but was instead the hearts and homes of Christian believers.

The Prequel to the Sequel

That Luke 2:41–51 is a self-contained unit has long been noted by textual critics. Any reader of the text can readily see the clear edges that this story has at verses 41 and 51. Not only is the story the only part of the narrative set when Jesus is a boy, but also the beginning and the end of the story mirror one another with Jesus' 'parents' activities being mentioned in verse 41 and Jesus' 'obedience' to them being mentioned in verse 51, along with Mary's thoughts and feelings. This particular part of Luke is a distinct narrative episode. Critics tend to follow Bultmann's lead in thinking it most likely that this story existed in some form before its insertion into the rest of the text of Luke 1 and 2.¹ However, B. van Iersel also goes on to show that if this pericope was indeed inserted into the text of Luke, an analysis of the words used makes it overwhelmingly likely to be by the author of the rest of the gospel. At the very least, the same author has rewritten it in his own idiom rather than merely copying it from elsewhere.²

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 300. Also see B. Van Iersel, "The Finding of Jesus in the Temple: Some observations on the original form of Luke II 41–51a", in *Novum Testamentum*, 4: 3 (1960), 161–73, on 163f.

² Van Iersel, "The Finding of Jesus in the Temple", 167.

Although Iersel's main conclusions are around the likely insertion into the rest of the pericope of verse 47, for our purposes, it is useful to see his considered opinion that this pericope as a whole is indeed by Luke, but that it is also an insertion into the rest of the text. Raymond Brown, in his wide-ranging study of the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke concurs with this view. Brown says that this story 'seems to have been appended late in the process of composing the infancy narrative.'³ This story, with its clearly defined edges, seems to have been placed here by the author as an edited piece. If that is so, then it was placed here for a purpose. It is our contention that considering the story of Jesus as a boy in the Temple to be the first part of a two-part story, with the road to Emmaus as the sequel, makes very good sense. At the very least, such a suggestion accounts for the apparently deliberate insertion of a story into his text by the author rather than by a subsequent editor. The suggestions in this paper do not contradict the other recently proposed thesis that Jesus is presented as having great knowledge at the age of 12 more for the Roman audience than for the Jewish one (based on the tales of all that Emperor Augustus achieved at the age of 12).⁴ It is entirely possible for this suggestion and for the suggestion of this paper both to be correct.

There is nothing unusual in the human habit of storytelling to write the prequel after the sequel; any number of films have been written this way in recent years. Having written the story of the road to Emmaus, it would be a very natural thing for Luke to have then added the story of Jesus in the Temple with very deliberate references to the story at the end of his text. Moreover, Elisabeth Fiorenza, among others, has pointed out the intratextuality that is employed by Luke. In the context of the story of the boy

³ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (New York: Image Books, 1977), 247.

⁴ Bradley S. Billings, "'At The Age of 12': The Boy Jesus in The Temple (Luke 2:41–52), the Emperor Augustus, and the Social Setting Of The Third Gospel", in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 60: 1 (April 2009), 70–89.

Jesus in the Temple she notes that the Temple begins and ends Luke's gospel in what can only be a deliberate ploy by the author. Furthermore, Fiorenza speculates that the Temple being such a prominent feature of the end of Luke 2 also signals a change, ending the infancy part of the gospel and moving into the public, adult ministry of Jesus.⁵ In a sense, the conclusion towards which the ideas in this paper point are an extension of Fiorenza's observation. What we do here is to extend the Temple imagery earlier into chapter 24 of Luke's gospel. The Temple features explicitly in the last sentence of the gospel when the disciples are said to be there 'continually' to praise God, but we will be suggesting that there are good reasons for thinking that the Temple is also implicit in the story of the Road to Emmaus, carried there by the similarities between this story and the story of Jesus in the Temple from Luke 2.

Three Initial Points of Connection

We will now turn our attention to three points of connection between Luke 2 and Luke 24: the setting of the story, the assumptions made by travellers in the stories and an identical phrase used in the stories. On their own any one of these points of connection would not conclusively demonstrate that intratextuality was being employed on the part of the author. However, taken together, they are strongly suggestive of this, and this conclusion will be further bolstered by other evidence later in this paper.

The first connection between the two stories is not an especially theological one. It is merely the setting of the scene within which more theological connections can be made. In both cases people intimately connected with Jesus are travelling away from Jerusalem. In Mary and Joseph's case, the text says that they

have travelled for one day (Luke 2:44). In the case of Cleopas and the other, unnamed, disciple, they are travelling to Emmaus, which the text tells us is about seven miles from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13). Thus, in both stories, we find two people travelling a significant distance from Jerusalem, at least a significant distance when the mode of transport is walking. Then, in both stories, they return to Jerusalem (Luke 2:45 and 24:33). This basic pattern sets up a very similar narrative structure between the two stories within which the other connections become clearer and more interesting.

The second connection between the two stories is the opposing assumptions of the pair who travel away from Jerusalem. In the first story, Mary and Joseph are part of a larger group who are travelling together. They assume that Jesus is with them and only turn back when they realise that this is not the case. The complete opposite is true for Cleopas and his companion in Luke 24. They travel away from Jerusalem convinced that Jesus is not with them. They only turn back to Jerusalem when they are proved wrong and see that Jesus has indeed been with them on the road. Both pairs of characters from the stories are wrong about the presence of Jesus. This connection is insightful in terms of the spiritual life of Christians and we will return to this point below as it will make more sense after a consideration of the other connections between the story and a consideration of the author's motive in making these connections.

The third connection between Luke's stories can be found by examining the detail of the texts. It is striking that the phrase *ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ* (Luke 2:45 and 24:33), 'they returned to Jerusalem,' is followed in Luke 2:45 by the word *ἀναζητοῦντες*, 'seeking' and, in Luke 24:33 by the words *καὶ εὑρον*, 'and found.' It is true that the object of the seeking and the finding are not identical. That which is sought in Luke 2 is Jesus. That which is found in Luke 24 (at least in the strict sense of the grammar of the sentence) is the core group of Jesus' disciples. However, the eleven tell the two who have returned from Emmaus that they

⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Luke 2.41–52", in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, 36:4 (1982), 399–403, on 399ff.

have seen Jesus and that he has risen (verse 34). Although grammatically ‘finding’ relates to the eleven disciples, in terms of the story, it is the risen Christ who is discovered. If it is historically correct to assert that Luke 2:41–51 has been inserted into the text, as Bultmann and those who follow his lead assert, it is possible to imagine the author of the Road to Emmaus looking at the text he had written and deliberately adding the concept of ‘seeking’ to the story now in Luke 2 following the same words found in Luke 24 as a counterpart to the concept of ‘finding’ which he had already placed into the Emmaus story. A potential objection to this is that although Mary and Joseph seek for Jesus in Luke 2, they find him, thus closing off that particular search. But there is no reason to suppose that the occurrence in Luke 2 of the concept of seeking has but one *telos*. The fact that the preceding words are identical in Luke 2 and Luke 24 before we are presented with the concepts of seeking and finding is indicative of deliberate intratextuality on the part of the author. In laying the two stories side by side, the imperative to seek and find Jesus jumps out of the text.

Three Days

There is one more connection to consider before thinking about what motive the author of Luke may have had for such intratextuality. A moment’s thought by anyone who knows the story of the Road to Emmaus will tell them that it occurs on Sunday, on the day of Jesus’ resurrection itself. But in case anyone is in any doubt, the text confirms this. Cleopas’ speech with the stranger, who turns out to be Jesus, contains the phrase ‘it is now the third day since these things took place’ (Luke 24:21). In the story from Luke 2, it is stated that Mary and Joseph found Jesus ‘after three days’ (Luke 2:46). The author may well be making a point with some force. Namely, if you are to find Jesus, it will be only after three days. In other words, Jesus is found in the most definitive way only after his vindication in the resurrection and even this story of

his boyhood points towards this ultimate reality. But there is more than this in the comparison between the texts. Clearly in Luke 2, Mary and Joseph search for Jesus. But although Cleopas and his companion are confused, they too are seeking for what the truth of Jesus might be, for they do not simply think he is dead. They have questions in their minds about the fact that they had already heard that his tomb was empty and that the women had seen angels who had told them that Jesus was alive (Luke 24:22–23). Even before they had heard of these things, everyone in the Jesus movement must have been facing all sorts of questions of the meaning of Jesus and the meaning of their lives and their movement now that Jesus was dead. So the three day period is a period of seeking, searching, in both stories.

Karen Chakoian has noted the idea that the three days of searching in Luke 2 may well be a reference to the resurrection. She also suggests that there may be a connection between the question that Jesus asks, ‘why were you searching for me?’ (Luke 2:49) and the question the angels ask the women who go to the tomb in Luke 24, just before the Emmaus Road story, ‘why do you look for the living among the dead?’ (Luke 24:5).⁶ It is certainly the case that any reference to ‘three days’ in the Bible or any other Christian text is likely to resonate with the idea of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Chakoian makes a good case that the questions, both rhetorical, in Luke 2:49 and Luke 24:5 are similar in their nature. However, given the other connections with the story of the Emmaus Road, and given the explicit reference to three days by Cleopas, the three day link seems stronger with this specific story than does the link between the questions.

Luke’s motive

In a sense, all we have seen so far are several comparisons between the two stories. For this

⁶ Karen Chakoian, “Luke 2:41–52”, in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, 52:2 (1998), 185–90, 187.

to be a deliberate act on the part of the author, it needs a motive. The motive comes at the end of the stories. In the NRSV rendering of Luke 2, Jesus says to Mary and Joseph ‘Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ (Luke 2:49). The Greek of Luke 2:49 lacks actual mention of a house, the more literal rendering of οὐκ ᾔδειτε ὅτι ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Πατρὸς μου δεῖ εἶναι με me being ‘about the business of my father.’⁷ P. W. van der Horst proposes that the likely original Aramaic of Luke 2:49, in which Jesus answers Mary and Joseph’s question, could well have been a *double entendre*, meaning both the physical Temple, but also ‘I must be in/about the things/affairs of my Father.’⁷ In any event, the business of Jesus’ father is being conducted in the Temple in Luke 2. After three days in Luke 24, Jesus is not found in the Temple. Instead, he reveals himself in the breaking of the bread in a house in the village of Emmaus (Luke 24:30–31). In common with the other post-resurrection encounters with Jesus, the setting is domestic and certainly not grand. In setting these two stories side by side, we see the likely intention of the intratextuality as being that in the coming of Jesus, and in particular in his resurrection (implied by the reference to three days) God moves from the Temple to the homes of believers. ‘My father’s house’ has become the home of Cleopas and the home of every believer. The Temple is no longer the primary place where one goes to meet God and, if we accept van der Horst’s proposal and the more literal rendering of Luke 2.49, nor is it the place (or at least not the only place) where the business of God is conducted any more. The business of God is out in the world and God is met wherever the faithful gather, which could be the Temple, but could be around a simple table. Such seems to be the message of putting these stories side by side and it is a good motive for the author constructing the plot in this way.

⁷ P. W. van der Horst, “Notes on the Aramaic Background of Luke 2.41–52”, in the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 7 (1980), 61–66, on 63.

A brief consideration of the overall theology of Luke’s gospel will show compelling evidence that this message is one that the author would have wanted to convey and that he had a more than adequate motive for producing such a plot. It is well accepted that Luke has a special interest in the poor.⁸ Although still a contentious matter, a growing body of biblical scholars accept that Luke had access to Matthew’s text and editorial decisions on the part of Luke seem to have been made to adjust the text to represent and encourage the poor. Mark Goodacre, among others, has made this a large part of the argument allowing for the apparent alternating primitivity of the texts of Matthew and Luke and thus against the existence of the putative Q document, a supposed written source for both Matthew and Luke.⁹ But even if one accepts the existence of Q, the interest of Luke in the poor, as compared with, say Matthew’s interest, is easily noticeable. Not that care for the poor is absent from Matthew’s text, but that it is even more present within Luke’s. Where Matthew has the Magi, Luke has shepherds. Where Matthew records Jesus as promising a blessing to ‘the poor in spirit’, Luke’s Jesus promises this blessing simply to ‘the poor.’¹⁰ Jesus’ first statement at the start of his public ministry is a quotation from Isaiah promising good news to the poor (Luke 4.18). Moving God out of the Temple and into the homes of the people is entirely consistent with Luke’s overall theological program. Indeed,

⁸ For instance, see J. O. York, *The Last Shall be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke*, JSNTSup 46, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

⁹ Mark Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze* (Sheffield: Continuum, 2001), esp. 113ff and also his *The Case Against Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), esp. ch. 7. For a detailed analysis of how Luke probably used Matthew’s text (if the Q hypothesis is incorrect), see Thomas J. Mosbø, *Luke the Composer: Exploring the Evangelist’s Use of Matthew*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007).

¹⁰ For instances of Luke’s use of parables to present his view of wealth and possessions, see Matthew S. Rindge, ‘Luke’s Artistic Parables: Narratives of Subversion, Imagination and Transformation’, in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, 68: 4 (2014), 403–15.

it is exactly what we should expect towards the end of this Gospel. God is no longer in a place controlled by (and largely for) the rich and the powerful. The life, the death and (especially) the resurrection of Jesus means that God is present in the homes of the poor and powerless, dignifying them above those whom the world regards.

Temple and Table in Luke

In further support of what we are suggesting in this paper, it is possible to locate similar comparisons made by the author of Luke-Acts elsewhere in his work. John H. Elliott argues that for Luke, in contrast with the prevailing opinion of Judaism of the period, 'the household, in contrast to the Temple, represents. . . familial organisation and solidarity'.¹¹ Furthermore, in these writings meeting together for food in domestic settings displays the ideal of 'an inclusive community of brothers and sisters under one heavenly Father.'¹² Scott McKnight also discusses table fellowship in comparison with the Temple rituals. He suggests that Jesus taught a radical form of purity that took the Temple out of the equation, instead focusing on the purity before God that is derived from fellowship, exemplified in table fellowship.¹³ Certainly, if one considers some of the most well known stories of Jesus and about Jesus from Luke's text, meals play a vital function. The response of the father of the Prodigal Son in Luke 10 is not to go to the Temple to make a sacrifice, but to kill the fatted calf in order that a party might be held. In Luke 19, Jesus does not tell Zacchaeus to go to the Temple to make a sacrifice. Instead, he invites himself to supper. This is not to say that Jesus is portrayed

as disregarding the Temple or its systems for in chapters 5 and 17 he instructs lepers whom he had healed to go to the priest and to make the appointed sacrifice. But it is to say that another form of fellowship and of communion with God was also possible, found around a table.

In thinking about the way in which Luke tackles ideas about the Temple, N. H. Taylor makes the point that Luke make sure that his readers realise that John the Baptist is of priestly heritage and thus is a priest. He comments that 'John's baptism was a ritual of repentance, and by implication of atonement, outside of the Temple cult.'¹⁴ Taylor notes that this does not mean that John was totally opposed to the Temple, but that there is, within his baptismal practice, a relativizing of that cult. Thus, there are indications that the Jesus movement, whilst not seeking utterly to replace the cult of the day, was in the business of offering additional points of connection with the divine, in novel ways.

In Luke's account, the link between the sharing of food and the novelty of Jesus as the supreme connection to the divine is underlined by what follows from the feeding of the 5000. In Mark 9, this miracle is followed immediately by the story of Jesus walking on the water. At the end of Mark's account, it is apparent that the disciples have still not understood the significance of their master. Matthew 16 also follows the Markan order, but radically changes the end of the story of walking on the water, for in this account the disciples worship Jesus. The Lucan story of the feeding of the 5000 (Luke 9) is different, for walking on the water has been removed. Immediately after the feeding miracle, Jesus asks the disciples who he is and Peter says that Jesus is the Messiah. For Luke, the realisation (or revelation) of Jesus as the Messiah follows most obviously from a miracle to do with food, including the breaking of bread. Little wonder that the two disciples in Emmaus recognised Jesus at a meal, for in Luke's gospel this meal at Emmaus has resonance well before the Last Supper, although it naturally includes

¹¹ John H. Elliott, "Household and Meals Versus the Temple Purity System: Patterns of Replication in Luke-Acts", in *Hervormde Teologische Studies* 47:2 (1991), 386-99, on 390.

¹² Elliott, "Household and Meals", 390.

¹³ Scott McKnight, "Jesus and James on Israel and Purity", in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; *Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 9-8.

¹⁴ N. H. Taylor, ' on 455.

this too. For Luke, God is revealed in Jesus especially in domestic settings and around the table in particular.

Travelling with incorrect assumptions

We will now return to the idea that both pairs of travellers leaving Jerusalem have incorrect assumptions about the presence of Jesus with them, our second point of comparison, above. We return to it as it not only bolsters the argument that has gone before but also because it shows even deeper connections between the two stories. In short, in both stories it is likely that there is something deliberate being said about faith, doubt and the resurrection. Mary Chapman points out that the resurrection narratives are full of occasions of doubt. She classes the Road to Emmaus among those instances of the characters in the story being blind to their own experiences.¹⁵ Chapman points out that the doubts are resolved in various different ways. In the case of the road to Emmaus, 'resolution of doubt is associated with food' and in this and similar instances, 'it is not the Lord's consumption of food Himself that is the convincing factor. Belief comes when He offers it to His beholders.'¹⁶ Work by Brigid Frein provides a useful corroboration of Chapman's ideas. Frein points out that misunderstanding is a recurring motif in Luke's Gospel. It is through misunderstandings on the part of various characters that the author is able to portray the real message of who Jesus is. She points out that in Luke 2 'Mary and Joseph did not understand Jesus' enigmatic assertion that he must be involved in the things of his Father' and also lists 9:45, 18:34 and 24:16 as places in the text where the disciples are 'prevented from perceiving.'¹⁷ In a similar vein, Brown notes a 'real failure to grasp revelation'

at three points, including Frein's 18:34, but also 8:10 and 24:45 (although in the case of 24:45, he has chosen the verse where Jesus explains the scriptures and it is the corollary of 24:16, the verse noted by Frein).¹⁸ The verses from chapter 24 are from the story of the Road to Emmaus, providing another link between the two stories we are particularly interested in. However, there is further significance in the other two examples cited by Frein. These are both instances of Jesus predicting his death, coupled with his resurrection in chapter 18.

The theme of misunderstanding that follows from the boy Jesus in the Temple, through talk of his death and resurrection, to meeting Jesus as the stranger on the road is a theme that points us directly towards the overturning of expectations about the location of the Father's house and business. Mary and Joseph may well wonder at Jesus being in the Temple. The disciples may well wonder how their Lord can suffer, die and rise again. The disciples on the road may well assume that Jesus is not with them. And yet, in all these things expectations are inverted. This points the reader towards the fact that it should come as no surprise that Jesus brings about the relocation of the home of God on Earth, away from the Temple and into the homes of believers.

Conclusion

We have considered two stories from the Gospel of Luke, the story of the boy Jesus in the Temple from Luke 2:41–51 and the story of the Road to Emmaus from Luke 24:13–35. It has been the contention of the article that these two stories were intended to be intratextual by the author. Evidence for this comes from several different angles. Firstly, the earlier passage is a later insertion into the extant text, but probably by the original author. Secondly, there are four particular connections between the stories. These are, the distance of one day's journey that is made followed by a return to Jerusalem, the opposing assumptions of Jesus' presence on the road away from Jerusalem, the

¹⁵ Mary Louise S. S. Chapman, "The Theme of Doubt in the Resurrection Narratives", in *Saint Luke's Journal of Theology*, 12:1 (1968), 23–31, on 24.

¹⁶ Chapman, "The Theme of Doubt", 28.

¹⁷ Brigid Curtin Frein, "The Literary and Theological Significance of Misunderstanding in the Gospel of Luke", in *Biblica*, 74: 3 (1993), 328–48, on 329.

¹⁸ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 480.

concepts of seeking and finding located after identical phrases in the two stories and the fact that Jesus is found after three days in both stories. The force of reading these stories together is to suggest a real change that Jesus brought about in the ability to access God and the things of God. In the story from Luke 2, God is firmly in the Temple and Jesus is found there. In the story from Luke 24, post-resurrection, Jesus is found instead in the homes and hearts of believers. God is shown to be 'for' the ordinary person and the poor person, in complete agreement with the overall theology presented by Luke.

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