Luke's Perspective on Paul's Jerusalem Visit in Acts 19–23

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Introduction

Commentators on Acts normally assume that Luke presented Paul's last visit to Jerusalem as God's will.[1] My thesis is that literary and narrative analysis can show that this assumption is wrong. Luke's narrative strategy to prepare for presenting Paul's last trip to Jerusalem evolves out of two narratives: (1) Stephen's Speech in Acts 7, and (2) the opening scenes of the Second Missionary Journey in Acts 15:35–16:10. In this paper, first the themes of the Stephen Speech are developed. Second, the opening scenes of the Second Missionary Journey are investigated for Pauline characterizations pertinent to the plot line of the last visit to Jerusalem. Third, a brief exegetical analysis is given of the six key passages related to Paul's last visit to Jerusalem and the issue of God's will for Paul.[2] Finally, implications of the study for Luke's portrait of Paul will be suggested.

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[1] As representative, cf. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn, rev. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 591; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts: Revised Edition* in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, F. F. Bruce, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 371, n. 43; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2: The Acts of the Apostles (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 2:239; James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* in Narrative Commentaries, Ivor H. Jones, gen. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 262; Howard Clark Kee, *To Every Nation Under Heaven: The Acts of the Apostles* in The New Testament In Context, Howard Clark Kee and J. Andrew Overman, eds. (Harrisburg: PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 233; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 31 in The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 677; Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 588.

[2] Acts 19:21; 20:22–23; 21:4, 11–12; 22:17–21; 23:11.

Several assumptions are made as a part of this study. First, "Luke" refers to the traditional authorship of Acts, the Pauline missionary associate (Col. 4:14; Philem. 1:24; 2 Tim. 4:11). However, results of the study should remain even without Lukan authorship. Second, the material in Acts is assumed to be historically reliable, even if tendentious in Luke's portrait of Paul. Subtle but significant narrative details about Paul's last visit to Jerusalem are contrary to aggrandizing Paul, and so should attract attention as transcending this tendentious proclivity. Third, Paul is the "hero" of Acts: the entire Luke-Acts narrative climaxes in Paul's story.[3] The negative Lukan portrait of Paul suggested in this paper would have been easy for Luke to avoid; the point is, he did not. The question is, if Paul is Luke's "hero," why did Luke put himself at odds with his hero right at the climax of his story? The answer lies in the overarching literary scheme.

Part 1: The Themes of the Stephen Speech

The themes of the Stephen Speech in Acts 7 provide a nice starting point on a note of some agreement. Scholars have shown a fair consensus on the themes of this speech.[4] The length alone indicates the narrative weight Luke has given to this speech. In content the speech is an overview of Jewish history from the call of Abraham to Solomon's temple. The purpose is apologetic: to answer the charges brought against Stephen in the Sanhedrin of speaking against Moses and the temple and against God. Verses 7:2–19 set up the themes. The overview of the patriarchal age (7:2–8) introduces the theme of God active outside the Promised Land. This theme in the narrative summary is played out with God speaking to Abram in Ur, to Joseph in Egypt, and to Moses in Arabia. That God is active in Gentile territory always has been part of Israel's own story. A monotheistic faith inherently proclaims God's claim on all earth's inhabitants. The

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[3] Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2:159.

[4] While stated variously, the themes are given their clearest portrayal in F. F. Bruce's commentary, *Acts*, 130–31. Bruce's approach and outline to the speech are followed in this presentation.

overview of Israel in Egypt (7:9–19) introduces the theme of God's people opposing God's plans. The theme in the narrative summary is played out in the rejection of Joseph by his brothers, the rejection of Moses by his fellow Hebrews, and the rejection of Yahweh by the idolatrous Israelites in the desert. In short, this speech provides the profile of the plot for Acts. One can review the narrative development and observe the themes of the Stephen Speech being played out. An overview of the episodes in Acts 1–12 should illustrate the significance of the Stephen Speech themes for plot development.

Theme 1: God Active

The positive side of the story line is God's activity outside of the land of promise on behalf of Gentiles. This positive, or "bright" side of the plot, is established early in the narrative in the episodes of prayer and Pentecost in Acts 1–2. Here, a new vision of the people of God of eschatological fulfillment begins to develop within the reflection of the earliest community of Jesus' disciples. That this new vision of the people of God will involve God's activity outside the land of promise on behalf of Gentiles is what we could call the "Gentile movement" of the plot. This movement in Acts already is prefigured at least two ways in Acts 1–2. One prefigurement is the programmatic command of Jesus in Acts 1:8. This command involves a mission whose outreach proceeds in ever-enlarging circles that inevitably include Gentile territories (καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς). Another prefigurement is Pentecost itself, and that in two ways. First, supernatural ability to speak the languages of the world inherently infers a mission to that world as the *raison d'etre* of the miracle. Second, the movement also is inferred in Peter's own declaration in his speech to the Jerusalem inhabitants. Peter indicated that the intent of eschatological fulfillment of the prophetic word is καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς εἰς μακρὰν (2:39). In the plot development, this statement is a proleptic pronouncement, even if Peter himself is not fully cognizant at this time of the *Gentile* implications of this promise.[5]

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[5] The burden for Peter of the Cornelius cycle in Acts 10–11. Even the infancy narrative at the beginning of the Gospel already hints at this element of the plot in Simeon's prophecy: φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν (Luke 2:32).

Ironically, the preparatory stages in Jerusalem of this Gentile movement are not within internal developments in the earliest days of the Jerusalem church or its leadership. The Hellenist cycle[6] has to be brought in by Luke at Acts 6 to launch this stage of the plot. Historically, the Hellenist leadership introduced in the disputation over table service is key to this Gentile movement, not Jerusalem's apostles. The Hellenist Stephen provides the controlling themes in his speech, but he is martyred. The narrative moves to the Hellenist Philip in Acts 8, whose activity with a Jewish proselyte infers the broadening circle of the church's mission.

The story of Saul then is introduced between narratives of Philip and Peter, involving a proselyte and a Gentile, as Luke frequently anticipates a major plot character by early introduction. The story of Saul will embody the very essence of the Gentile movement of the plot, as noted in the divine word to Ananias about Saul (9:15: τοῦ βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐνώπιον ἐθνῶν). Literary soundings also echo in the eunuch's question to Philip (8:37: τί κωλύει με βαπτισθῆναι;) and Peter's question to circumcised believers about Cornelius's household (10:47: Μήτι τὸ ὕδωρ δύναται κωλῦσαί τις τοῦ μὴ βαπτισθῆναι τούτους). Most importantly, the Damascus Road experience is told precisely in ways that allow the reader to establish parallels with the themes of the Stephen Speech. A new vision of the people of God is announced in the message about Jesus, but the zealous Pharisee Saul opposes God's activity violently (cf. 22:3). This is the dark side of the story. Just outside Damascus (that is, outside the Promised Land), however, this zealous Saul has an encounter with the Lord, similar to Abram in Ur, Joseph in Egypt, or Moses in Arabia, that changes the destiny of God's people. Here, close to Damascus in Gentile territory is where Saul finds God active, not in Jerusalem (nor the Sanhedrin). The blinding light on the road is the illuminating light of Gentile mission. This is the bright side of the story.

Since Saul and his mission are points of controversy for the Jerusalem church, Luke will mold the reader's orientation to Saul through relating the Cornelius episode in Acts 10–11, before launching out on the story of the Pauline mission. At the narrative level, Peter's initial resistence to God's

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[6] Haenchen, *Acts*, 234.

will concerning the "unclean," but eventual acquiescence, sustains two thematic points on the bright side. First, Peter's entrance into the home of a Gentile is one small step for an Israelite, but one giant leap for Israel. Second, Peter's positive response to the heavenly vision provides the apostolic blessing on Saul's mission. This blessing assures the reader that the burden of Saul's call and career plays out the heart of Jesus' own intentions in calling the original twelve disciples. Luke's Gentile movement involves the divine will, and Saul is the key to that movement.

Theme 2: God Resisted

The sequence of events and speeches in the lame man at the temple episode in Acts 3–4 sets the stage for the eventual rejection of the good news by Jerusalem's leaders, which is the dark theme of God's people resisting God's plans. The church, however, is not immune to this phenomenon, which is played out in microcosm in the story of Ananias and Sapphira. This episode has proven somewhat obscure to interpreters of Acts. At the narrative level, however, the purpose is transparent: this story is intercalated into the events transpiring with the Sanhedrin's rejection of early apostolic preaching of Jesus in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin has warned Peter not to speak in the name of Jesus (4:21), a warning Peter ignores, which precipitates the Sanhedrin's formal, public rejection of the apostolic message, sealed with a flogging (5:40). The resistence of the Jerusalem religious establishment to God's new activity in Jesus on behalf of God's people is clear. The stoning of Stephen and the persecution by Saul of Tarsus incarnates the Sanhedrin's rejection in the narrative (7:57–59; 8:1–3). Saul, brandishing official Sanhedrin letters of seizure, even seeks to extend this resistance to the Diaspora setting of Damascus (9:1–2).

The dark narrative theme actually is explicit in Gamaliel's counsel to the Sanhedrin: μήποτε καὶ θεομάχοι εὑρεθῆτε (5:39). This counsel to the Council, of course, is loaded with irony. Luke, however, has used the Sanhedrin resistence as foil to present the church's own resistence to God. Precisely for this reason, then, Luke has intercalated the Ananias and Sapphira story about resisting (testing) the Spirit of God (5:9: πειράσαι τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου;) right in the heart of Sanhedrin's rejection of Peter's preaching; Luke thus illustrates that not even the church is immune to resisting God. This ominous note will become true not only for the church, but for her most illustrious apostle to the Gentiles, Saul of Tarsus. The

double irony of Gamaliel's advice (and I think quite clever on Luke's part) is that Saul did not follow the advice of his own teacher (Acts 22:3), not as a Pharisee fighting the followers of the Way at the beginning of his story in Acts, nor as an apostle fighting the will of God toward the end of his story.

The reader of Acts is fully appraised of God's will for Gentile inclusion into the people of God by the end of the Cornelius cycle in Acts 10–11. The doublet nature itself shows Luke's emphasis and the importance of this Gentile movement to the plot development.[7] Curious for the reader, then, is the hesitation of some Jerusalem disciples to accept these developments (11:3: Εἰσῆλθες πρὸς ἄνδρας ἀκροβυστίαν ἔχοντας καὶ συνέφαγες αὐτοῖς). This hesitation, however, is allusive of future plot strategy related to Christian resistance to God's plans.

What is shocking in the conclusion to the Cornelius narrative is the stark juxtaposition by Luke of both a formal statement by the church acknowledging the divine will to include Gentiles into the people of God but then blatant disobedience to that very will. In Acts 11:18 the Jerusalem church concludes: Ἄρα καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὁ θεὸς τὴν μετάνοιαν εἰς ζωὴν ἔδωκεν. This is clear, and the reader knows the statement conforms not only to the view of the narrator but to the authoritative divine voice of God himself. What more confidence does the reader need? Yet, in the *very next verse*, Luke indicates that those dispersed by the persecution precipitated by Stephen's speech went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, but were μηδενὶ λαλοῦντες τὸν λόγον εἰ μὴ μόνον Ἰουδαίοις (11:19)! For the reader, after two chapters of hammering home the will of God for Gentiles in the Cornelius cycle, this forthright statement is nothing but blunt and shocking. God's will is known clearly, but violated impudently. This juxtaposition of known divine will and blatant disobedience to that will is not the last time Luke will use this narrative strategy in Acts.

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[7] Luke designed the Petrine speeches in Acts to trace this development. From the initial offer of forgiveness at Pentecost alluding to "those who are far off," to this climatic speech to the church on Gentile inclusion as the definitive statement of God's will (rephrased in the Jerusalem Council as a warning, 15:7–11), the reader can mark the successive stages of this narrative development. James's ratification of that will in the Jerusalem Council (15:19), then, the reader perceives as both anticlimactic and dilatory.

Thus, the reader of Acts by this point in the narrative perceives that the leadership for the Gentile mission will have to come from somewhere else besides Jerusalem. So, as is his narrative habit, Luke drops in the geographical notation about "Antioch" in 11:19 preparatory to shifting the center of gravity of the story of God active in the Gentile mission from Jerusalem to Antioch. Here in Antioch, "some" among the group of dispersed believers, who are from Cyprus and Cyrene Luke is careful to point out (i.e., not Jerusalem), also preach to the Hellenists (11:20). God's blessings on this effort are emphasized immediately (11:21: καὶ ἦν χεὶρ κυρίου μετ᾽ αὐτῶν, πολύς τε ἀριθμὸς ὁ πιστεύσας ἐπέστρεψεν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον). The story of the new vision of the people of God will shift from Jerusalem to Antioch for the crucial moments that were to become definitive for the future history of the church. Antioch is where the church's story intersects decisively with Saul's story and the two plots here merge into one.

Before Luke proceeds with that story, he has to finish the narrative business regarding target audiences for the message of Jesus in Jerusalem. Jerusalem's crowds have been offered opportunity to respond to the message of Jesus (2:41; 5:14; 6:7). Already decided by now is that the religious leadership represented in the Sanhedrin has definitively rejected the message of Jesus (5:40). What of the political arena? That sphere also will show resistance to God's new activity in Jesus. God is calling forth the people of God to respond to the new vision of the eschatological fulfillment of God's promises to Israel in Jesus. Crucial for catching the narrative significance of the Agrippa story in Acts 12 is the historical background. Many configurations of Jewish expectations for the coming of the kingdom of God in the first century were fundamentally political in character. Even the disciples of Jesus show a rather incredible obtuseness to this issue in their question to the resurrected Jesus at the beginning of the Acts narrative: (1:6: Κύριε, εἰ ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ ἀποκαθιστάνεις τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Ἰσραήλ;). Jesus' answer, while not explicitly rejecting the formulation, redirects the presuppositions to the question.[8] This political kingdom configuration crops

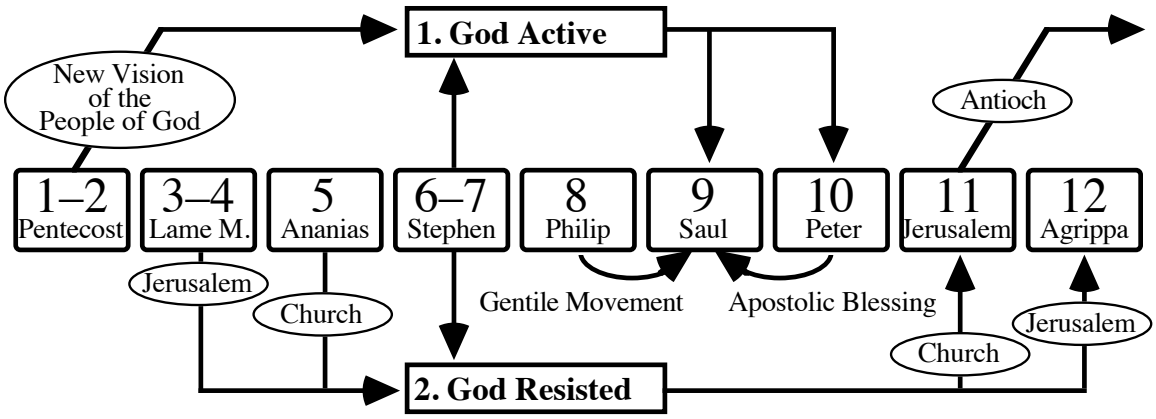
[8] The kingdom of God not as a political power exerted externally but as a spiritual power exerted internally through the presence of the Spirit within believers generating a witness to the world.

up in Gamaliel's observations to the Sanhedrin about recent disasters with messianic pretenders such as Judas and Theudas (5:36–37).[9]

Herod Agrippa represents the top levels of Jewish society and the authoritative voice of the political sphere in Jerusalem. The story of Agrippa's move against the church in Acts 12, a move intended to kill the sect by decapitating its leadership, was used by Luke to complete the story of the rejection of Jesus within significant strata of Jerusalem's society. The responsibility of witness to Jerusalem at all levels of society and in every arena of power has been fulfilled faithfully by the church. The narrative burden now is to move the plot along in the ever-increasing circles of witness according to reader expectation (Acts 1:8).

Below is a graphic depicting the plot development outlined above. Notice the chiasm binding the dark side of the plot development related to issues surrounding Jerusalem's inhabitants and leaders and the Jerusalem church and its leaders.

Figure 1: Stephen's Speech—Thematic Development



[9] At the narrative level, the historical problems of the Theudas reference do not impact plot development, in so far as the illustrative point of false messianic pretenders moves the speech along.

Part 2: The Beginning of the Second Missionary Journey

The themes of the Stephen Speech in Acts 7 promote the plot development in Acts and contribute to the context of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem. Another narrative development in Acts that contextualizes Paul's last trip to Jerusalem is the peculiar beginning to the Second Missionary Journey. The peculiar nature is partly due to the contrast to the narrative of the beginning of the First Missionary Journey.

At Antioch, harmony and unity prevail within the church's leadership, and the church flourishes. Saul and Barnabas have worked in Antioch among Gentiles successfully for a year (11:26). Then the Spirit inaugurates the Gentile mission as an intentional geographical thrust further into the Diaspora through these two leaders. Luke redundantly refers twice to the Spirit's initiative within the space of three verses (13:2: εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον; 13:4: ἐκπεμφθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος), making clear the divine will in the matter for the reader.[10]

The difference with the beginning of the Second Missionary Journey could not be more obvious. First, the initiative explicitly is Paul's, not the Spirit (15:36: εἶπεν πρὸς Βαρναβᾶν Παῦλος). Second, the mission team has lost harmony and concord over the issue of John Mark, Paul obviously interpreting John Mark's departure at Perga on the First Missionary Journey quite differently than did Barnabas (15:37–38). Then, Luke is clear, the mission team fragments over this argument, making most difficult the possibility of the Spirit's blessing: ἐγένετο δὲ παροξυσμὸς ὥστε ἀποχωρισθῆναι αὐτοὺς ἀπ᾽ ἀλλήλων (15:39). Notice that in terms of the posture of the Antiochene church, Luke says deftly only that Paul and Silas were παραδοθεὶς τῇ χάριτι τοῦ κυρίου ὑπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν (15:40). That is not a ringing divine endorsement of the mission. Antioch is noticeably passive this time. Narrative motifs to notice are Paul's initiative, stubbornness, and damage to God's work.

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[10] In terms of narrative strategy, observe that when Luke wants the reader to understand his reference is to the Spirit in a critical passage, he usually is explicit with the adjective ἅγιος.

That Paul actually is fighting the Spirit is evident in the way Luke characterizes the launching of this new initiative. The major difference with the First Missionary Journey is the absence of explicit divine intentionality: Paul simply moves through Syria and Cilicia on his own recognizance. To be sure, Luke indicates Paul's passing through "strengthens" these churches, because the Jerusalem Council's decrees are delivered, but no mission strategy is evident, no divine necessity is guiding the way.

The geography itself almost shows a note of humor: the Spirit hems Paul in. First, Paul apparently decides Asia (probably Ephesus) would be a good direction. That plan is vetoed by the Spirit (16:6: κωλυθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος λαλῆσαι τὸν λόγον ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ).[11] Well, if southwest will not do, how about northeast? Forbidden to head over to Asia, Paul has another idea, the opposite direction of Bithynia: ἐπείραζον εἰς τὴν Βιθυνίαν πορευθῆναι, καὶ οὐκ εἴασεν αὐτοὺς τὸ πνεῦμα Ἰησοῦ (16:7).

Two points to observe with this passage are the verb tense and the unusual phrasing. First, the verb ἐπείραζον is imperfect, so the action is durative, even if the syntax should be taken as inceptive; Paul is having an argument with the Spirit over a period of time, not a momentary passing thought. Second, Luke uses a most unusual phrase: instead of the normal τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, the reader hears τὸ πνεῦμα Ἰησου. This phrasing is unique to the entire corpus of Luke-Acts, and surely would grab the reader's attention. In Paul's story this name Ἰησοῦς is preeminent for the moment of revelation on the Damascus Road: Ἐγώ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις (9:5). This personal encounter is significant for the dramatic intensity of Saul's experience; Luke repeats the phrase in both of the other accounts of the Damascus Road (22:8; 26:15). Thus, to specify that the Spirit that Paul is resisting is not only the holy Spirit, but more personally and directly, the Spirit of Jesus, suggests that Paul's irreconcilability with Barnabas fracturing the mission team and his on-going stubbornness now with the Spirit about the direction he should go is at the point of damaging God's very purposes for Paul's call. The advice of Gamaliel to the Sanhedrin echoes hauntingly: μήποτε καὶ θεομάχοι εὑρεθῆτε (5:39).

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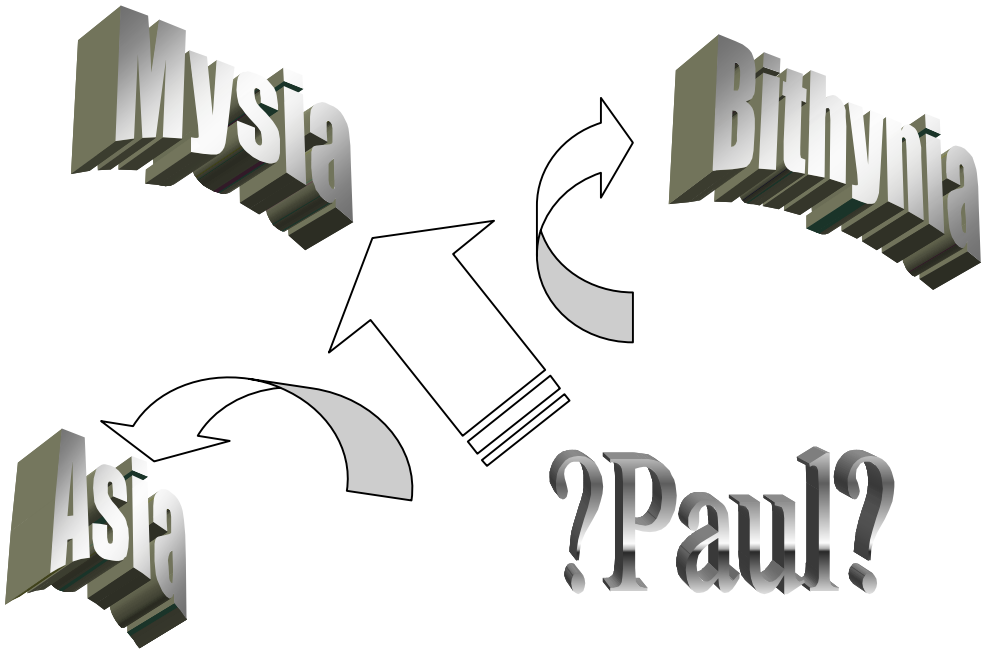
[11] Again, note that Luke makes the matter clear for the reader, using the adjective ἅγιος with the noun πνεῦμα.

Denied entrance into Asia, now denied entrance into Bithynia, where can Paul go? Hemmed in on the left, hemmed in on the right, he can go nowhere but to follow his nose, meandering forward to Troas in Mysia between the two "no's" of the Spirit.

Figure 2: Hemmed in by the Spirit



Fortunately, each time Paul gets off track on God's will in Acts, God graciously sends along a vision to pick him back up, dust him off, and send him on his way toward the divine will for his life. Paul's visions in Acts, that is, regularly seem to be rehabilitative and redirective. Earlier in the story, while Paul was fighting the disciples of Jesus, the rehabilitative vision was the Damascus Road that redirected Paul toward the Gentile mission. Here, while Paul is fighting the Spirit of Jesus about the direction of that Gentile mission, the rehabilitative vision is the Macedonian at Troas redirecting Paul toward the European mission (16:9–10).[12] In fact, Paul *does* get to go to Asia as he had wanted to at this time—his nearly three years at Ephesus on the Third Missionary Journey. There in the narrative Paul is back on track with the divine will. That Luke presents Ephesus as the crown jewel of the

[12] Significantly, the beginning of the first "we" section in Acts.

Pauline mission among the Gentiles is no accident of the Lukan literary strategy.

Part 3: Paul's Last Journey to Jerusalem

The exegetical burden of Luke's perspective on Paul's last journey to Jerusalem is borne by six texts: Acts 19:21; 20:22–23; 21:4, 11–12; 22:17–21; 23:11. Our purpose is to review these texts in the light of the narrative context provided by the themes of the Stephen Speech and the peculiar nature of the beginning of the Second Missionary Journey. Luke moves into this sensitive presentation of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem by carefully setting up the immediate literary context. The narrative antithesis of the Jerusalem disaster is in the outstanding success of the Ephesian mission immediately prior to this trip.

The Ephesian mission is presented by Luke as the crown jewel of the Pauline missionary enterprise. Nowhere else is Paul presented as directly laying on hands with the consequent reception of the Spirit (disciples of John the Baptist, 19:6). Nowhere else does Paul spend so much time or have such a reputation in the surrounding region (19:10). Nowhere else does Luke so emphasize the miracles Paul personally accomplished that even his very clothing and work cloths are imbued with power (19:11–12). Nowhere else does the world of evil so publicly acknowledge the reputation of Paul as on a level with Jesus: ἀποκριθὲν δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ πονηρὸν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Τὸν [μὲν] Ἰησοῦν γινώσκω καὶ τὸν Παῦλον ἐπίσταμαι, ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνες ἐστέ; (19:15). Nowhere else is such a gospel impact brought to bear that those practicing magical arts foreswear their practices and even burn their textbooks at great economic loss personally (19:19). Then, as if the point has not been made, Luke summarizes: Οὕτως κατὰ κράτος τοῦ κυρίου ὁ λόγος ηὔξανεν καὶ ἴσχυεν (19:19). Even an entire guild of artisans are affected by Paul in Ephesus (the reaction of Demetrius and the silversmiths).

Without any doubt, Paul in Ephesus is back on track with the divine will. Luke presents Ephesus as the crown jewel of the Pauline mission among the Gentiles. This presentation is no accident of the Lukan literary strategy. The contrast with what happens in Jerusalem simply could not be more obvious. The question is, how do you fall so rapidly, dizzily spinning down from the heights of such preeminent success to the depths of miserable chaos, confusion, and life-threatening disaster? You make a poor decision

contrary to the will of God and stubbornly insist on following through against the cumulative wisdom of prophets and believers everywhere, including the narrator of the story. You let life make the advice of your own teacher a warning that comes home to roost in your own rafters: μήποτε καὶ θεομάχοι εὑρεθῆτε (5:39).

1. Acts 19:21—Paul's Announcement of Mission Plans

Ὡς δὲ ἐπληρώθη ταῦτα, ἔθετο ὁ Παῦλος ἐν τῷ πνεύματι διελθὼν τὴν Μακεδονίαν καὶ Ἀχαΐαν πορεύεσθαι εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα εἰπὼν ὅτι Μετὰ τὸ γενέσθαι με ἐκεῖ δεῖ με καὶ Ῥώμην ἰδεῖν.

In this text Paul announces his mission plans. Two observations need to be made. First, the grammar is significant. The verb "resolved" (ἔθετο) is true middle voice. Luke already begins the process of isolating the decision as the result of the will of Paul. Paul resolved "for himself" to proceed to Jerusalem. Further, while the true middle voice already is a clue to Luke's meaning, the entire phrase is idiomatic: Louw and Nida indicate that the grammatical construction of τίθημι in middle voice followed by the preposition phrase ἐν τῷ πνεύματι is an idiom for "to make up one's mind."[13] Translating this phrase as "Paul resolved in the Spirit" seems to be in error—especially capitalizing Spirit—because this translation violates the idiomatic character of the Greek and the known style of the author. [14]

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[13] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., Rondal B. Smith, part-time ed., Karen A. Munson, assoc. ed., *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Second Edition*, vol. 1: Introduction and Domains (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989), 1:359 (30.76). While Louw and Nida did indicate in the same entry that the ἐν τῷ πνεύματι at Acts 19:21 could be reference to the Holy Spirit (1:360), this does not take into account the literary style of the author. See next note.

[14] If Luke wants the reader to understand the divine Spirit's involvement in an issue of strategic mission direction, he will clarify by using ἅγιος; cf. Acts 13:2, 4. The KJV translators left the word "spirit" in small case. Both RSV and NRSV, however, have "Paul resolved in the Spirit" with no note. The NEB has "Paul made up his mind," which gives due weight to the Greek idiom, but compromises the clarity of the grammar with a note, "*Or* Paul, led by the Spirit, resolved . . ." NASB has "Paul purposed in the spirit," with a note "Or, *Spirit*." Both NIV and NET have "Paul decided" with no note. While some English translations, that is, seem to indicate Lukan ambiguity on the role of πνεῦμα in this passage, later clear passages warrant the conclusion that Luke judges the

Finally, the weight of the narrative in Acts 19–23 is against capitalizing "spirit" in 19:21, as we hope to show, and translations that do so prejudice the reader's perspective and obscure Luke's narrative intentions.

Second, Luke's idiomatic verb of divine necessity, δεῖ, *he carefully limits here to seeing Rome:* δεῖ με καὶ Ῥώμην ἰδεῖν. The divine necessity is Rome, not Jerusalem. Luke does not use δεῖ with the verbal πορεύεσθαι εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα. He is dropping another hint, this time literary, about the human nature of the decision to go to Jerusalem. The absence of δεῖ should red flag commentators that Luke is *not* setting up this trip to Jerusalem by Paul on par with, or literarily parallel to, the mission of Jesus to Jerusalem.[15] Jesus' own trip *is* introduced with the divine necessity δεῖ to launch the Journey to Jerusalem motif of the Gospel at Luke 9:51.

2. Acts 20:22–23—Paul's Sermon to the Ephesian Elders

καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ δεδεμένος ἐγὼ τῷ πνεύματι πορεύομαι εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ συναντήσοντά μοι μὴ εἰδώς, πλὴν ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον κατὰ πόλιν διαμαρτύρεταί μοι λέγον ὅτι δεσμὰ καὶ θλίψεις με μένουσιν.

In this text Paul reiterates his plans for Jerusalem. Three observations need to be made. First, Luke here has another opportunity, if he had so desired, to use the divine necessity verb, δεῖ, with this expression πορεύομαι εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ, to indicate that the trip to Jerusalem is the divine will. He explicitly does not. This *is* an argument from silence, but the quietude is deafening against Luke's persistent use of δεῖ with Rome (19:21; 23:11).

Second, other passages will make clear that the expression, δεδεμένος ἐγὼ τῷ πνεύματι, Luke intends the reader to take as *double entendre*. Several elements indicate this double meaning. One element is style: Luke does *not* use ἅγιος to clarify for the reader that the holy Spirit is meant in Paul's words.[16] In other words, δεδεμένος ἐγὼ τῷ πνεύματι is Paul's own

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decision in 19:21 to be Paul's own and without divine approbation (21:12 with 21:4).

[15] *Contra* Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2:239; Dunn, *Acts*, 265; Polhill, *Acts*, 394. Other dissimilarities that have been pointed out include the lack of a death scene for Paul and that the narrative moves on beyond Jerusalem to Rome.

[16] For this stylistic observation, see notes 10, 11, 14, 17, and the discussion to

stubborn self-determination that will entangle him in his own yarn like a cat that does not know when to quit. God will have to "tie" Paul up to control him (the irony in the Agabus prophecy). This characterization of Paul parallels the narrative developments at the beginning of the Second Missionary Journey when the Spirit had to hem Paul in geographically, refusing to allow Paul to go where he stubbornly wanted to go. That stubbornness, significant as it was, was one from which Paul's purposes could be recovered by the Spirit (Troas); more significantly, Luke could use the episode as an ominous sign for future plot developments. Here, however, Paul's stubbornness is fatal to Paul's purposes. A final element is narrative: Luke will indicate clearly in the voice of the church (21:4) and of God himself (22:21) that Paul's insistence on going to Jerusalem is against the explicit, communicated will of God to Paul.

Third, at other critical and dangerous junctures of the Pauline mission, Paul has received divine protection. On the First Missionary Journey he is stoned and left for dead at Lystra, but life returns back to his body, to the amazement of some disciples (14:19–20). On the Second Missionary Journey an earthquake springs Paul and Silas from prison (16:26). Then, in Corinth, a vision of the Lord gave Paul a promise of divine protection for the difficult work in Corinth that would land him before the proconsul Gallio (18:9–10). Instead of divine protection, as on the First and Second Missionary Journeys, or supernaturally empowered witness with a region-wide reputation, as at Ephesus on the Third Missionary Journey, Paul now is promised by the Spirit[17] only that δεσμὰ καὶ θλίψεις await him, and Paul hears this everywhere (κατὰ πόλιν).

This, of course, could be read as the faithful Paul who has a powerful witness, which, Luke points out, is actually Paul's own take on the matter (cf. 20:24). Paul's own characterization of coming events is adopted without question in the commentaries to interpret the Lukan significance of Paul's last trip to Jerusalem, but that is not Luke's point; reading 20:24 as an expression of the *divine* perspective is too superficial at the narrative level.

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follow on 21:4.

[17] Again, note that Luke is careful when the context could be ambiguous: for Paul's own opinion, just τῷ πνεύματι; for the divine will explicit to and acknowledged by Paul, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.

Chaos and confusion is more the picture Luke actually presents of future events in Jerusalem, not powerful witness.[18]

Commentators, perhaps misdirected by their reading of 20:24, do not observe that in the entire episode of the disaster in Jerusalem not one story of coming to faith as a result of Paul's words or deeds in Jerusalem is narrated by Luke. If Paul in Jerusalem is to be characterized as a powerful witness on behalf of the mission to the Gentiles in this story, his positive impact on behalf of that mission at the narrative level is practically zero: no laying on of hands with dramatic reception of the Spirit, no evidentiary miracles of numinous powers, no sounding forth of reputation to surrounding regions, no direct comparisons with Jesus from the lips of the forces of evil, no expensive book burnings, no threat to entire guilds of local artisans dependant upon idolatrous pagan worship for their livelihoods. Paul might sincerely *desire* to witness in Jerusalem, almost as if he could bend the city into obedience to Christ by the sheer force of his own will. Yet, is not 20:24 eerily reminiscent antithetically of that earlier character Saul of Tarsus with regard to believers in Jerusalem prior to the Damascus Road? Here in this narative Luke again emphasizes Paul's own recalcitrance through the phrase "in every city" (κατὰ πόλιν). Inferred is that Paul is confronted by God over and over, but Paul stubbornly pushes ahead to Jerusalem, similar to Saul the Pharisee pushing on to Damascus. In any case, the narrator himself is not ambiguous on this issue: Jerusalem is *not* Ephesus in the Pauline mission. So 20:24 clearly has to be taken with a grain of salt at the narrative level.

3. Acts 21:4—The Spirit's Warning Through Tyrian Disciples

ἀνευρόντες δὲ τοὺς μαθητὰς ἐπεμείναμεν αὐτοῦ ἡμέρας ἑπτά, οἵτινες τῷ Παύλῳ ἔλεγον διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος μὴ ἐπιβαίνειν εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα.

In this text Luke is unambiguous: the Spirit said "no" to Paul's desire to go to Jerusalem. Two observations are made. First, the verb ἔλεγον is both plural and imperfect. The plural subject makes absolutely clear that the singular διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος is the holy Spirit, a grammatical clarity

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[18] *Contra* Polhill, *Acts*, 433, n. 105.

obviating any need for ἅγιος, as is Luke's normal literary pattern when the sense of πνεῦμα is ambiguous. On the imperfect tense, the action is durative: someone must disagree; I would suggest that would have to be Paul.

Second, the "not to go" (μὴ ἐπιβαίνειν) is the unambiguous divine command to Paul, and this command is left standing uncorrected by the narrator. That means, at the narrative level, the narrator positions Paul's continued insistence on going to Jerusalem as stubborn, rebellious, and out of God's will. The text is plain. Commentators are not.

The problem is whether 19:21 or 21:4 is the crux of this matter. Since 19:21 is ambiguous at best, and 21:4 is clear, which is the tail and which is the dog? That is, commentators who have already concluded from Acts 19:21 that the Spirit has inaugurated the trip to Jerusalem cannot abide this explicit indication in 21:4 to the contrary in Luke's narrative. Bruce is blunt:

> It should not be concluded that his determination to go on was disobedience to the guidance of the Spirit of God; it was under constraint of that Spirit that he was bound for Jerusalem with such determination (19:21; 20:22). It was natural that his friends who by the prophetic spirit were able to foresee his tribulation and imprisonment should try to dissuade him from going on . . .[19]

To begin with, nothing in the narrative (i.e., characterizations about these prophets) would urge the reader to expect such immediate efforts to "dissuade" Paul—in direct contradiction to the prophecy they had just spoken! Nothing would be "natural" (at the narrative level, read "in character") about such action.[20] Further, Bruce refuses to acknowledge what the text plainly says the prophets foresaw: *not* Bruce's gloss of "tribulation and imprisonment" (of which *this* text says nothing), but precisely that Paul should "not go down to Jerusalem." Clearly Bruce is fighting the plain sense of the text with such tendentious comments.

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[19] Bruce, *Acts*, 398.

[20] Polhill also took this psychologizing "natural reaction" approach, *Acts*, 433.

Fitzmyer seems simply contradictory on the matter. Commenting on 19:21, he wrote: "'put (it) in his spirit/mind,' which uses the middle voice of *tithenai* to indicate that it is a question of Paul's own *pneuma*. It does not mean, 'he purposed in the Spirit,' as Bruce (*Acts*, 393) renders it; nor does it mean that Paul decides 'under guidance of the Spirit,' *pace* Marshall (*Acts*, 312)."[21] Contradicting this insistence at 19:21, however, Fitzmyer later wrote concerning 20:22: "'bound in the spirit,' which could mean 'constrained in (my own) spirit,' but more likely means 'influenced by the (Holy) Spirit,' because elsewhere Luke has described Paul's missionary activity as guided by God's Spirit (13:2, 4, 9; 16:6–7; 19:21). Now Paul views his journey toward his city of destiny, Jerusalem, as imposed by God's Spirit."[22] These seem to be just plain contradictory statements. Further, at the crux verse under discussion here, 21:4, Fitzmyer, like Bruce, dilutes the message of the prophets to Paul as about "his coming troubles," completely obfuscating that the actual message warned Paul explicitly "not to go."[23] This obfuscating approach also is the tactic of Kee in his comments at this important verse.[24]

More forthright with the text, but still confused, is Dunn:

> One of the most striking features of the section is the confusion within the narrative as to what God's will for Paul actually was. Somewhat surprisingly, Luke has no hesitation in ascribing the prophecy telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem (21.4) to the Spirit, and apparently no qualms in presenting Paul as one who disregarded a clear-cut command of the Spirit (21.13–14; contrast 16.6–7)! Whether Luke saw any tension or even contradiction with 19.21 we cannot tell, although it could be significant that he does not repeat the reassurance of 19.21 at 21.13. On the other hand, *Luke surely cannot have thought*

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[21] Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 652.

[22] Ibid., 677.

[23] Ibid., 688.

[24] Kee, *To Every Nation Under Heaven*, 246.

or intended his readers to understand that Paul went on up to Jerusalem in defiance of the Spirit![25]

Our question is direct: why not? Even Tannehill observed, "Nevertheless, it is interesting that the narrator has allowed to surface at least a superficial contradiction in the divine guidance that Paul is receiving, . . ."[26] What is it about Paul that causes interpreters of Acts to be so reticent to indicate what Luke's narrative plainly indicates? [27] Paul stubbornly disobeyed the will of the Spirit.

The reader is not surprised by this characterization of Paul. Luke already has prepared the reader for this in several narratives about Saul/Paul. Prior to the Damascus Road, we have stubborn Saul the persecutor of the church. Subsequent to the Damascus Road we have stubborn Paul of the opening scenes of the Second Missionary Journey. He fights Barnabas to the point that Paul actually fractures the unity of the mission team; he fights the Spirit about where his part of the fractured team should go, to the point that the Spirit has to tie Paul up by hemming him in geographically until a vision at Troas relaunches the Gentile mission with a renewed sense of call. Such narratives of character development for Saul/Paul have set the stage for this plot development in Acts 19–23. As at Troas, Paul will require a similar rehabilitative vision in Jerusalem (23:11).

Witherington offered three possibilities for understanding Luke in this passage: (1) that δία could be used in an occasional sense (on an occasion of prophesying, some offered their opinion Paul should not go); (2) that Luke was attempting to conform prophecies about Paul to the pattern of earlier prophecies about Jesus; (3) that NT prophecy was distinct from the "Thus, says the Lord" definitive, absolute nature of OT prophecy, in that NT

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[25] Dunn, *Acts*, 280–81; emphasis mine.

[26] Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2:263. Tannehill must circumscribe his comment with "at least a superficial" because he has already decided that 19:21 is an indication of the Spirit's will.

[27] Centuries of aggrandizement as *the* apostle to Gentiles, or that scripture derives from his pen?

prophecy was of a character as to require Christians to sift through even the prophecies of true prophets. [28] After supplying reasons for passing on the first two, Witherington opted for the third. However, this option will not do, because it simply begs the question. Even if we grant Witherington's characterization of the nature of NT prophecy, what *explicit narrative indication* do we have either here, before, or after that Luke wanted the readers to conclude that these Tyrian prophets, while true Christian prophets, were wrong in this case? No other Christian prophecy in the entire narrative of Acts was falsified by the narrative! Why should the reader suddenly jump to that conclusion here?

4. Acts 21:11–12—The Spirit's Warning Through Agabus

καὶ ἐλθὼν πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ ἄρας τὴν ζώνην τοῦ Παύλου, δήσας ἑαυτοῦ τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χεῖρας εἶπεν, Τάδε λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, Τὸν ἄνδρα οὗ ἐστιν ἡ ζώνη αὕτη, οὕτως δήσουσιν ἐν Ἰερουσαλὴμ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ παραδώσουσιν εἰς χεῖρας ἐθνῶν. ὡς δὲ ἠκούσαμεν ταῦτα, παρεκαλοῦμεν ἡμεῖς τε καὶ οἱ ἐντόπιοι τοῦ μὴ ἀναβαίνειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ.

This is the text in which the "we" participant becomes involved in the business of Paul's trip to Jerusalem. This is an important narrative signal to the reader, for, whatever the source of the "we-section" materials, they have authoritative function in the narrative.[29] At the rhetorical level, Witherington captured the significance: "What is striking about the entire section is that Luke is perfectly willing to portray a deep difference of opinion between

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[28] Witherington, *Acts*, 630–31.

[29] Portraying the "we sections" as simply bringing verisimilitude and drama to the narrative ignores the literary function of the claims made by the author in the Prologue (Luke 1:1–4). Also, asserting that the "we" narrator is not omniscient and shares the limited insight of Paul's companions (Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 264, n. 5) begs the point: *the narrator does not have to be omniscient to be authoritative*; this too ignores the literary function of asservation of accuracy of the sources used in composing the document.

equally sincere Christian groups (even between 'we' and Paul or more notably between 'we' and God's will) on an important matter."[30]

In this text the prophet Agabus reiterates the Spirit's warning. Four observations need to be made. First, the expression Τάδε λέγει is a deliberate Septuagintalism that alludes to prophetic *judgment* contexts, usually negative. This can be seen, for example, in texts such as Judges 2:1; 6:8; Ex. 4:22; 5:1, 10; 7:17; 2 Sam. 12:7 (Nathan's daring public exposure of David, "You are the man!"); 1 Kgs. 21:19 (the bold judgment of Ahab); Amos, *passim*; Mic. 2:3; Obad. 1:1; Hag. 2:6; Zech. 1:4 and *passim*; Isa. 1:24; Jer. 4:27; Ezek. 2:4 (specifically note the problem of being "impudent" and "stubborn"); 3:11 (specifically note the vacillation of "hear" or "refuse to hear") and *passim*.

Second, the impersonal "The man" (Τὸν ἄνδρα) is confrontational in prophetic contexts. The most obvious illustration is Nathan's confrontation of David: σὺ εἶ ὁ ἀνὴρ! (2 Sam. 12:7, LXX). This mode of address emphasizes the human element. Observe how this mode of address distances the character addressed from any high messenger status or divinely commissioned act.

Third, the statement, ὡς δὲ ἠκούσαμεν ταῦτα, παρεκαλοῦμεν ἡμεῖς τε καὶ οἱ ἐντόπιοι τοῦ μὴ ἀναβαίνειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ, is loaded with narrative freight. Numerous points can be made. One point is that the narrator resurfaces as first person, a device which transfixes the reader's attention and provides authoritative weight to the opinion expressed. Another point is the rhetoric: rather than subordinated participles, two indicative verbs and a compound subject intensify the exhortation to Paul. No ambiguity or vacillation adheres to the opinion given or to lessen the narrative impact. A final point is that the opinion given lines up with the express will of the Spirit in 21:4 through deliberate repetition of the wording of the Spirit's command, μὴ ἀναβαίνειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ. When Luke wants to emphasize, he will repeat. Since this is a "we section" of the narrative, the text is clear: Luke himself[31] argued with Paul *against* going to

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[30] Witherington, *Acts*, 631, n. 291.

[31] Or the "we" narrator; the point is the same.

Jerusalem. Would the narrator align himself so openly and blatantly against the holy Spirit by arguing that Paul *not* go to Jerusalem if the Spirit had actually intended that Paul go to Jerusalem?

Finally, one cannot help but to hear in the wording of the response of the Tyrian believers an echo of the response of Antiochene believers frustrated, even bewildered, by Paul's stubborn spirit against Barnabas at the beginning of the Second Missionary Journey, when all the Antiochenes could do after the fracture of the mission team was to commend Paul and his group to the grace of the Lord (15:40: παραδοθεὶς τῇ χάριτι τοῦ κυρίου ὑπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν). A haunting pathos is heard in the Tyrians' final words when confronted by the same stubbornness: "May the grace of the Lord be with you!" (21:14: εἰπόντες, Τοῦ κυρίου τὸ θέλημα γινέσθω). Luke here deliberately evokes the beginning of the Second Missionary Journey, because the Pauline characterizations are parallel.

5. Acts 22:17–21—The Spirit's Warning Through Paul's Temple Vision

Ἐγένετο δέ μοι ὑποστρέψαντι εἰς Ἰερουσαλὴμ καὶ προσευχομένου μου ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ γενέσθαι με ἐν ἐκστάσει καὶ ἰδεῖν αὐτὸν λέγοντά μοι, Σπεῦσον καὶ ἔξελθε ἐν τάχει ἐξ Ἰερουσαλήμ, διότι οὐ παραδέξονταί σου μαρτυρίαν περὶ ἐμοῦ. κἀγὼ εἶπον, Κύριε, αὐτοὶ ἐπίστανται ὅτι ἐγὼ ἤμην φυλακίζων καὶ δέρων κατὰ τὰς συναγωγὰς τοὺς πιστεύοντας ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ ὅτε ἐξεχύννετο τὸ αἷμα Στεφάνου τοῦ μάρτυρός σου, καὶ αὐτὸς ἤμην ἐφεστὼς καὶ συνευδοκῶν καὶ φυλάσσων τὰ ἱμάτια τῶν ἀναιρούντων αὐτόν. καὶ εἶπεν πρός με, Πορεύου, ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰς ἔθνη μακρὰν ἐξαποστελῶ σε.

Luke uses an interesting technique regarding one particular vision of Saul: narrative delay for dramatic impact. This is Saul's vision in the temple in Jerusalem close on the heels of the Damascus Road experience. Now, in Acts 22, the reader learns that the Spirit already had communicated to Saul that his witness would not be accepted in Jerusalem, so his presence in that city would be nothing but problematic, hence, consistently undesirable in terms of mission strategy. Luke does not narrate the vision until now during this last trip of Paul to Jerusalem to provide sharp narrative relief to the words of the Spirit to Saul at that time that would interpret decisively the Spirit's counsel to Saul about Saul's relationship to Jerusalem. Saul's reaction at that time, stubbornness about the revelation, is parallel to Paul's reaction now, stubbornness about the Spirit's revelation.

In that Temple Vision, God's word to Saul is: Σπεῦσον καὶ ἔξελθε ἐν τάχει ἐξ Ἰερουσαλήμ, "Make haste and get out quickly from Jerusalem!" The reason is blunt and forthright: διότι οὐ παραδέξονταί σου μαρτυρίαν περὶ ἐμοῦ, "because they will not receive your testimony concerning me." Luke time-delays telling the vision as a brilliant narrative move: a way to tell the reader that God's word to Saul *then*, in fact is God's word to Paul *now*. Paul had that word directly from God already in a vision long ago. The reason never changed.

Significantly, the characterization of Saul/Paul never changes either. In that earlier episode with God in the temple, Saul argued with God that the value of his testimony has been underestimated by God, since his testimony is so dramatic: Κύριε, αὐτοὶ ἐπίστανται ὅτι ἐγὼ ἤμην φυλακίζων καὶ δέρων κατὰ τὰς συναγωγὰς τοὺς πιστεύοντας ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ ὅτε ἐξεχύννετο τὸ αἷμα Στεφάνου τοῦ μάρτυρός σου, καὶ αὐτὸς ἤμην ἐφεστὼς καὶ συνευδοκῶν καὶ φυλάσσων τὰ ἱμάτια τῶν ἀναιρούντων αὐτόν. God, however, remains unimpressed by this argument generated by a stubborn spirit, and still insists: Πορεύου. This is the definitive divine word to Paul about Jerusalem in Acts.

Brilliantly situated within this later literary setting, this vision's stark irony is apparent in the reason God gave then: ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰς ἔθνη μακρὰν ἐξαποστελῶ σε. Luke brings home the narrative value of mysteriously restricting the divine necessity δεῖ to Rome back at 19:21. The narrative value of God's will for Paul invested in the words εἰς ἔθνη μακρὰν in the Temple Vision long ago now is cashed in by the reader for its equivalent narrative currency—Rome—producing extraordinary dramatic tension. The tension exists because the reader knows Paul should not be in Jerusalem, and is out of God's will by stubbornly insisting on going, for whatever reasons Paul himself may have thought justified his fighting the Spirit on this. Paul should be in Rome, not Jerusalem. Saul/Paul's character does not change: he argues with God. He argued with God about the command to leave Jerusalem that he received in the Temple Vision soon after the Damascus Road; he argued with God about the direction of the mission at the beginning of the Second Missionary Journey; and now, completely in character, he is arguing with God about going to Jerusalem.

6. Acts 23:11—The Spirit's Grace Through Paul's Barracks Vision

Τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ νυκτὶ ἐπιστὰς αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος εἶπεν, Θάρσει· ὡς γὰρ διεμαρτύρω τὰ περὶ ἐμοῦ εἰς Ἰερουσαλὴμ, οὕτω σε δεῖ καὶ εἰς Ῥώμην μαρτυρῆσαι.

In this text God speaks a word of grace to Paul. This word of grace functions in a manner parallel to the Troas Vision during the crisis of mission direction in the Second Missionary Journey. At that time, Paul was seriously off course from God's will. The literary pattern then is parallel to the literary pattern now in the Jerusalem crisis. Paul in Jerusalem is seriously off course from God's will.

Once again, Luke uses irony: ὡς γὰρ διεμαρτύρω τὰ περὶ ἐμοῦ εἰς Ἰερουσαλὴμ. This is tongue-in-cheek. What Paul has done is created a riot. The context is total chaos! The contrast with Ephesus, the Pauline missionary crown jewel, where this journey's initiative on Paul's part began (19:21), could not be more stark. Once again, Luke also uses *double entendre*: ὡς γὰρ διεμαρτύρω. The significance of the "as" is no reference to any successful mission campaign; rather, this is allusion to the surrounding context of Paul's external circumstances: in the custody of Roman authorities.

For the second time Luke then gives the divine necessity over Paul's life that God will accomplish by his sovereign power: σε δεῖ καὶ εἰς Ῥώμην μαρτυρῆσαι. This is where Paul should be now. He is not, but he will be. God will get Paul to Rome in spite of Paul. Thus, Luke repeats in 23:11 the divine mission strategy given in 19:21, but the plot has thickened extraordinarily due to the extraordinary stubbornness of the apostle to the Gentiles. How God will get Paul out of this pickle is a story still to be told in Acts.

Conclusions

We draw conclusions of this study by way of summarizing and suggesting Luke's narrative strategy:

(1) Luke is blunt that Jerusalem was *not* God's will for Paul. The evidence of 21:4 on this issue is unimpeachable.

(2) Any explicit statement that Jerusalem is God's will is only from the mouth of Paul himself—and Paul continually is contradicted

on this by the Spirit all the way to Jerusalem ("in every city," 20:23), even by Luke himself (21:12).

(3) The divine necessity, δεῖ, Luke never used with Jerusalem, only Rome (19:21; 23:11).

(4) Luke carefully balances Paul's insistence (ἔθετο, 19:21) with the determined opposition of the Spirit (ἔλεγον, 21:4).

(5) What the Spirit *does* explicitly say about Jerusalem to Paul always is negative, often within a judgment context, with no immediate promise of protection, rather of bonds and affliction.

(6) In a brilliant literary move, Luke shows the reader Paul's earlier Temple Vision in time-delayed sequence to be unambiguous about where the problem with Paul in Jerusalem always will lie—Paul's stubborn will against a hardened audience, a sure guarantee of a tender box ready for conflagration.

(7) The point of narrating Paul's troubles at the beginning of the Second Missionary Journey is Luke's literary anticipation of the plot line to develop in the Jerusalem fiasco, for the Pauline characterizations are parallel.

(8) The themes of the Stephen Speech find their most stunning yet tragic illustration in all of Acts in the life of Paul himself, the dark side most poignantly in this last trip to Jerusalem.

(9) Luke never indicates why Paul is going to Jerusalem.

We have intentionally restricted our comments to the narrative in Acts. Our desire was to focus on narrative strategy and plot development. We have tried to avoid interpreting Acts at the narrative level using the Pauline correspondence, some of which closely dovetails this material at the historical level. When we do shift to the historical level, especially the Corinthian and Roman correspondence, we might venture to speculate on why Luke is so painfully silent on ever giving the reason, outside of an oblique reference in 24:17, that drives Paul so incessantly, even against all advice and the Spirit's instruction, that he simply bulls his way past everyone on his way to Jerusalem. With this historical curiosity in mind, we might venture to say that Luke viewed Paul's last trip to Jerusalem as:

(1) an *unintended detour* in the divine itinerary west to Rome from Ephesus

(2) an *unfortunate decision* in the matter of the collection on Paul's part that destroyed its impact.

That is, by the deft handling of this last trip to Jerusalem, with its dual perspectives in the will of Paul and the will of the Spirit, Luke wanted to shield as best he could Paul's most brilliant idea, the collection, from the shame of Paul's most baneful idea, that he personally should deliver that collection to Jerusalem. The end result of that insistence on Paul's part was an unmitigated disaster for Paul and the church. In terms of narrative strategy, Luke wanted to present Paul not only as "hero" but also as the preeminent paradigm of the Stephen Speech themes: while God always has been active outside the land of promise on behalf of Gentiles, the story of Paul's mission to Gentiles, God's people characteristically have resisted God's plans, the story of Paul's misery in Jerusalem. This negative, dark side to the story of the early church, even with its most illustrious apostle, Luke does not avoid telling. The longest speech in Acts justifies its unusual length because it provides the profile for this entire plot development.