

Women in Luke's Gospel

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ABSTRACT

Writing for a Jewish synagogue community in the Roman east, Luke uses his gospel narrative to address the theological, social and political questions facing his community.

Luke's narrative is set within the gendered social and cultural framework of first century Mediterranean society. Women are written into the narrative. They tell of a God who acts outside the recognised institution of Temple to announce the salvation Israel has been anticipating. Women are recipients of God's favour, widows are given a prophetic voice within the Lucan narrative. Women come to Jesus in faith. They are healed and forgiven. Women are disciples and full members of the new community of faith. They are partners with Jesus in mission and witnesses to the crucifixion, empty tomb, the angelic announcement of the resurrection and resurrection appearance. They are commissioned by Jesus as witnesses and are to receive the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

The stories of women are critical as they present a narrative that confronts the symbolic universe of Temple and temple system, purity and exclusivity, to reveal a God who becomes present with the outsider and creates community with those who come in faith to Jesus. Luke creates two competing symbolic conceptions of reality - the Temple and the household. Through the narrative he affirms the symbolic reality of household as the place of God's presence and reveals the Temple and temple system as failing to recognise Jesus as the prophet from God.

New symbols of presence create new means of belonging and new patterns of religious, social and economic life for the Lucan community. In contrast to the temple system of purity and exclusivity, Jesus, the prophet from God, now sets the boundaries of the new community - those of inclusivity, faith and forgiveness. Individuals, women and men, who recognise Jesus to be the prophetic word of God, who come in faith and are healed and forgiven, become the new community, the household of faith. The new community adopts the social and economic relationships of household, marked by relationships of reciprocity, mutuality and trust.

For first century readers, who are struggling to interpret their relationship with God following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, Luke's gospel narrative provides assurance and legitimation that those who have chosen the path of Christianity are the true Israel.

PREFACE

This thesis aims to explore Luke's theology of God's disclosure and human response from the presentation of women in the Lucan narrative. The stories of women, read within their narrative context, both embrace the symbolic world of the first century Judaism but also stand over against it. They present a narrative in which Luke creates new symbols of God's presence and new patterns of human response. Through this Luke articulates a theology of God's disclosure and human response to address the particular issues facing the Lucan community in the late first century.

The thesis is written in two Parts with a Conclusion. Background issues are addressed in Part One. Chapter 1 addresses issues regarding the narrative - approaches to reading Luke, author, date, sources and redactional issues, purpose, and audience. Historical perspectives are explored in Chapter 2 and cultural perspectives in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 reviews the roles and place of Hellenistic, Roman and Jewish women of the period. Part Two forms the main argument and focuses on the presentation of women in the narrative. The five chapters in this Part, Chapters 5 to 9, relate to women in the birth narratives, widows, women who were presented as sick or sinners, to women as disciples and as members of the new community of faith and to women and the cross. The Conclusion summarises the position and role given to women in the Lucan narrative and the ways in which these stories transmit Luke's theology of God's disclosure and human response. A final word is given to articulating gospel hermeneutics for the Lucan community.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JFSR</i>	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNTSS</i>	<i>Journal for Study of the New Testament – Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSR</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Religion</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>RelSRv</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>SNTSMS</i>	<i>Society for New Testament Studies Mongraph Series</i>
<i>TToday</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift fur die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>AJ</i>	<i>Antiquitates Judaicae, Josephus</i>
<i>Con Ap II</i>	<i>Against Apion, Josephus</i>
<i>Leg. Spec</i>	<i>On the Special Laws (De Specialibus Legibus), Philo</i>
<i>Mor</i>	<i>Moralia, Plutarch</i>
<i>Virt</i>	<i>On the Virtues (De Virtutibus), Philo</i>
<i>Wars</i>	<i>The Wars of the Jews, Josephus</i>