David E. Malick

Introduction: A hermeneutical prologue

Biblical narratives are constructed word after word and line after line without the aid of tables, mechanical layouts, or images that show patterns to the reader. Even though the medium is linear by necessity, the resulting narratives have contours. Even though the narratives have progression in thought, the pathway is not always straight. Narrative writers provide textual, literary clues to the structure of their works through the employment of embedded patterns such as repetition, lead words, summary statements, the arrangement of units, intercalations, and the editing of known material.

One such pattern places two narratives in proximity to one another so that the reader will compare and contrast the accounts and arrive at conclusions beyond those contained in either particular narrative. The author uses duality and balance to show his theology as he invites the reader to weigh the paired stories and consider what they have to say when viewed together. Not everything is explicitly stated in the text.

By modern analogy, author Ernest Hemingway employed a theory of omission, often referred to as an “ iceberg theory,” where only a small portion of a story is explicitly expressed, and the reader senses the larger portion implied beneath the surface. The pressure of implication moves the reader so that she or he probes the narrative for clues to the implied world from what is explicitly shown on the surface. Present-day novelist and short-story writer Tobias Wolff specifically expresses his trust in the reader to find what is not out in the open, but present through particular clues in the text:

I like my stories to the degree that I have felt that I have trusted my reader. That the reader is able to apprehend, perhaps even at an intuitive level, those things which I’m hoping the reader will understand without being told.

Even though the canonical gospels and the Book of Acts are not modern short stories, their writers often employ omission in their writings. For instance, the logical connections between individual units in narratives are not explicitly stated, as in Paul’s epistles, with the use of conjunctions such as and, but, because, and therefore. Nevertheless, the writers “trust the reader” to seek out the implied connections actively. So, too, when the narrative clues include stories aligned with one another, the writer intends for the active reader to compare the stories and arrive at conclusions that would not be present if the stories were read in isolation.

First-century readers may have been better at recognizing these literary expressions than the average modern reader. Today, a Westerner is more adept at seeing narratives than reading them. However, explanations that make the implicit explicit can liberate readers to view the biblical narrative as more than a news account of what happened, but as an artful expression of narrative theology that calls the reader to engage fully. These narratives are not plain glass windows to be looked through, but stained-glass windows to be looked at.

This study will examine three examples of joined stories in New Testament narratives: Gabriel’s announcements to Zacharias and Mary (Luke 1:5–38); Jesus’s conversations with Nicodemus and the woman at the well (John 3:1–12; 4:1–21); and Peter’s healings of Aeneas and Tabitha (Acts 9:32–42). These three narratives each include an implied comparison between a man and a woman, and none of them is controversial in terms of biblical gender studies. Like all writers, biblical authors were selective in their material (see John 20:30–31; 21:25). Men could have been compared with men just as easily as with women. Therefore, it is significant that the biblical writers often chose to align narratives involving men and women to show their narrative theology.

Each narrative discussion will be preceded by charts that attempt to show the narrative whole before its particulars are discussed.

Gabriel’s announcements to Zacharias and Mary (Luke 1:5–38)

Luke’s use of interchange, or duality and balance, in chapters 1 and 2 of his gospel invites the reader to compare and contrast parallel narratives (see table on the following page).

A historical setting introduces each main character: (a) Zacharias, the Jewish priest, and his wife, Elizabeth, from the daughters of Aaron, through Herod, the “King of the Jews”; (b) Mary through Nazareth of racially mixed Galilee; and (c) Joseph through the secular, international setting of Caesar Augustus, ruler of Rome, and Quirinius, governor of Syria:

The placement of the characters is conspicuous: the one who cannot receive the message in Jerusalem, the one who can receive the message outside of Jerusalem, and the one to be the Savior of the world born under Roman rule.

A life setting also describes significant aspects of each main character. Zacharias and Elizabeth are “both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord” (Luke 1:6), but they are without children and advanced in age (1:7). Mary is a virgin, engaged to Joseph (1:27); and Joseph is of royal lineage—of the descendants, house, and family of David (2:4–5; cf. 1:27).

Already, differences and similarities are apparent between Zacharias and Mary, most of which are explicitly stated for Zacharias:

DAVID E. MALICK has a ThM and completed PhD coursework at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). He was an assistant professor at DTS and Southeastern Bible College (SEBC). He does doctoral work at the University of South Africa, practices law, and continues to teach the Scriptures at his church in Birmingham, Alabama. He is married to Lynn Gannett-Malick, the Education Chair at SEBC.
arias and implicitly apparent for Mary. He is old, advanced in days; she is young, at least by implication, since she is a virgin and engaged to be married. Both are righteous. The term “righteous” (dikaios) is explicitly used of Zacharias (and Elizabeth), and they are described as walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. Mary is implicitly righteous in that she is a virgin (parthenon) in her engaged state. Finally, both are without children. Elizabeth is explicitly described as barren, and Mary is once again impliedly childless because she is a virgin.

The abundant, explicit descriptions of Zacharias as an older, married, righteous priest set up a high expectation for the reader—perhaps higher than those for a young, engaged, single woman from the small town of Nazareth. But, there is one flaw in the fabric of Zacharias and Elizabeth’s lives: they are without children. This might be felt as a personal disgrace for the couple (Luke 1:25), but it was also an opportunity for God to show his powerful hand for the benefit of them and the nation of Israel.

Even though Mary is without children in the narrative, it is expected, because she is a virgin. The giving of a child to the two couples will have an inverse effect—blessing for Zacharias and Elizabeth and potential cursing for Mary and Joseph because of Mary’s unwed status. It is at this desolate intersection of Zacharias’s forlorn dreams and Mary’s unimaginable expectations that the Lord sends a messenger with direction. How these two righteous, but disparate, individuals respond to the message surprises the reader with new insight.

Gabriel’s announcements to Zacharias and Mary contain numerous, repetitive parallels which invite the reader to compare the characters (see table at right).10

Comparisons in Gabriel’s two appearances yield similarities and differences. Gabriel comes to Zacharias in the holy place of the temple, to the right of the altar of incense, in the holy city of Jerusalem (1:11). Gabriel shows himself to Mary in what may have been her home,11 in the racially mixed northern region of Galilee, in the disdained city of Nazareth.12 These contrasting locations (one holy, the other common) and contrasting recipients (a male priest, a young woman) capture the reader’s curiosity. One might expect an angel to appear to a priest in the temple, but not to a woman at home in Nazareth of Galilee. Even though Gabriel’s message will be good for each of the recipients, its effect will turn expectations upside down.

Gabriel’s announcements to Zacharias and Mary have many similarities, with a progression of thought between them.13 Each begins with a personal exhortation to stop being afraid (1:13, 30).14 The quelling of their apprehension is then followed with a reason: for Zacharias, it is because his petition has been heard; for Mary, it is because she has found grace before God.15 Each reason appears to be tied to God’s presence in the individual’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical setting</th>
<th>Zacharias and Elizabeth</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Mary and Elizabeth</th>
<th>Zacharias and Elizabeth</th>
<th>Joseph and Mary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life setting</strong></td>
<td>Righteous, no children, old (1:6–7)</td>
<td>A virgin, engaged (1:27)</td>
<td>Of the house of David, engaged (2:4–5)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Announcement</strong></td>
<td>To Zacharias (1:18–20)</td>
<td>To Mary (1:28–37)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Response to the announcement</strong></td>
<td>Zacharias (1:21–23)</td>
<td>Mary (1:38)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Birth</strong></td>
<td>John (1:57)</td>
<td>Jesus (2:6–7)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Response to the birth</strong></td>
<td>Neighbors and relatives (1:58)</td>
<td>Angels and shepherds (2:8–20)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Circumcision</strong></td>
<td>Fact (1:59–64)</td>
<td>Simeon (2:25–35)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Child’s growth</strong></td>
<td>Zacharias (1:67–79)</td>
<td>Anna (2:36–38)</td>
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life situation. In the giving of a child, the Lord shows that he has heard Zacharias’s prayer, and that Mary has found grace before him in this unimaginable work.

Gabriel announces to each that they will have a son (1:13, 31). Then the characteristics and ministries of the children are described with the younger, through Mary, being greater than the older through Zacharias (see 1:36). Zacharias is to name the child John (1:13), and Mary is to name the child Jesus (1:31). Both children are prophesied to be great (1:15, 32). John will be separated unto the Lord (as a priest? Lev 10:9; as a Nazirite? Num 6:3), a prophet (1 Sam 1:11) and filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb (1:15). On the other hand, Jesus will be called son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the Davidic throne (1:32; cf. Ps. 110:1). John will prepare the way for the King as the new Elijah (1:16–17; cf. Mal 4:5–6), but Jesus will be the King who will rule over the people of Israel (the house of Jacob) forever (1:33). Clearly, the son of this woman from Galilee will be much greater than this older, magnificent son from Zacharias. The character and ministries of these children reverse the readers’ expectations with an effect that the reader looks more closely at Mary in her response to Gabriel’s message.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zacharias’s response</th>
<th>Elizabeth’s response</th>
<th>Mary’s response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Troubled, fearful (1:12)</td>
<td>Confused, wondered what this would mean (1:29)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Prove it” (perhaps a spirit of suspicion or doubt due to old age and being hardened) (1:18)</td>
<td>Questioned how this could occur since she had not known a man; yet she agreed (1:38)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is made mute (1:22)</td>
<td>Receives God’s word</td>
<td>Went to Elizabeth (1:22) and home to Elizabeth (1:23)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responded in a quiet way; kept herself in seclusion for five months (1:24)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responded in a joyful way (1:41–45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s Servant?</td>
<td>God’s Servant!</td>
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Zacharias’s response to this wonderful, joyful, fulfilling answer to prayer is to request proof: “According to what [how] will I know this, (κατὰ τί γνῶσομαι touto)” because they are old (1:18)? Mary, too, asks a question in response to this incomprehensible announcement, but it is not for a sign, but for an explanation about how this is physically possible for her as a virgin: “How is this, since I do not know a man (πῶς εσται touto, τειπὶ andra ou ginōsko)?” (1:34).

Gabriel’s reply is tailored to each question, but parallel in function. Because of the many parallels between the announcements up to this point, it is logical to assume that Gabriel’s reply to each party is functionally the same, even if the content is necessarily different. The clear affirmation to Mary informs the reader of the function of Gabriel’s words to Zacharias—they are to affirm him in the message that he is having difficulty believing, not simply to rebuke him. For Mary, who receives the word (1:38), the message is affirmed through an explanation and confirmation (1:35–37). For Zacharias, who seeks proof of Gabriel’s word, the message is affirmed through a confirmation that Gabriel brings this good news from God and a physical sign—Zacharias’s inability to speak (1:19–20). Because of Mary’s belief, she is told that the child will be supernaturally begotten by the Holy Spirit, that her barren relative, Elizabeth, is in her sixth month of pregnancy, and that with God everything ([spoken word] ῥήμα) is possible. Therefore, Mary says, let it be to me according to your word (ῥήμα). The surprise for the reader is that, even though Zacharias had all of the appearances of being the servant of the Lord as he ministered as an elder priest in the temple, in the Holy Place, and heard a message from an angel about a son who would prepare the way for the Davidic King, Mary is actually the one who is the servant of the Lord, and this identity is placed upon her very lips: “Behold, the servant of the Lord, may it be to me according to your word.”

That Mary was “greater than Zacharias” may be obvious, and even mundane, from the distance of history. However, from the narrative world of Luke’s gospel, from the reader’s first encounter with these characters, this outcome is shocking. Nevertheless, the narrative architecture of duality and balance constrains the reader to compare these accounts and arrive at this conclusion: it is not the male priest serving in the Temple who is the servant of the Lord, even though he bears all of the outward appearances to that position, but it is the young women in Galilee who is the true servant of the Lord because she welcomes an incomprehensible word from the Lord. This is but one example of where the narrative structure implicitly exalts a woman over a man—even one who is a leader in the community.

Jesus’s conversations with Nicodemus and the woman at the well (John 3:1–12/21; 4:1–21)

As with Luke’s accounts with Zacharias and Mary, John’s accounts with Nicodemus and the woman at the well involve unique stories not included in the synoptic gospels. One difficulty in comparing Jesus’s discussions with Nicodemus in John 3 and the woman in John 4 is that there is an intervening narrative with John the Baptistizer and his disciples in John 2:22–36. Even though these two narratives are not immediately juxtaposed spatially, they are conceptually. Jesus has spoken to individuals in brief sentences previously in John (cf. John 1:38, 39, 42, 47, 48, 50; 2:4, 8, 16, 19). These two discourses mark the first extended discussions Jesus has with individuals. Therefore, they invite the reader to compare the interactions of Jesus with a named man who is a religious leader in Jerusalem and an unnamed woman of difficult circumstances in Samaria. The parallels are primarily characterized by contrasts (see table on the following page).

The beginning of each narrative introduces the minor characters in dialogue with Jesus as a man and a woman (3:1; 4:7). Nicodemus is immediately set apart as a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews (3:1). Nicodemus is explicitly named, but the woman is anonymous and only described as coming “from Samaria” (4:7). This lo-
Nicodemus makes a statement to Jesus (3:2) and asks two explanatory questions (3:4, 9), speaking a total of forty-six words. When Jesus responds to Nicodemus about the need to be born again (from above), Nicodemus turns the conversation into a physical topic: “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” On the contrary, the woman responds to Jesus’s physical request by asking a spiritual question regarding why he, a Jew, is speaking to her, a Samaritan woman (4:4), whereupon Jesus responds with a spiritual statement: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water” (4:10).

Nicodemus is perplexed and appears to fixate on the physical explanation of birth even after Jesus offers an extensive explanation of the regenerative work of the Spirit (3:5–8) when he asks, “How can these things be?” (3:9). The woman at first responds to Jesus’s statement in a way similar to Nicodemus when she observes that Jesus does not have anything with which to draw physical water (4:11), but then she begins to open the door to a broader, spiritual discussion when she asks whether he is greater than the patriarch Jacob (4:12). This movement by the woman to open the conversation beyond his physical ability to draw from the well causes Jesus to explain more about the spiritual water that he is offering: “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (4:13–14). The woman, not fully grasping the spiritual dimensions of Jesus’s offer, nevertheless asks for the water Jesus is offering: “Sir, give me this water, so I will not thirst again” (4:15). Her response then appears to prompt Jesus to identify an area of spiritual thirst in the woman’s life that he has offered to satisfy when he states:

“Go, call your husband and come here.”

The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.”

Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband;’ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.” (4:16–18)

The woman does not pursue a detour of personal defense or explanation, but directly engages in a spiritual conversation that results in Jesus identifying himself as Messiah (John 4:19–26). In other words, the conversation with the woman ends with a confirmation of Jesus’s identity—the very thing that Nicodemus was seeking at the beginning of his encounter with Jesus (see 3:2). The woman received this revelation because she embraced the spiritual dimensions of Jesus’s words, whereas Nicodemus resisted them.

Finally, at the end of the first conversation, Nicodemus is rebuked: “‘Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?’” (3:10). However, at the end of the second conversation, the woman leaves her waterpot and goes into the city to testify to the woman “living water” (udōr zōn), she focuses on the sense of running, fresh, spring water rather than the metaphorical reference to the Holy Spirit.49

Nicodemus begins his conversation with Jesus on a spiritual topic: “Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (3:2). However, Jesus begins his conversation with the woman on a physical topic: “Give me a drink” (4:7).

After Jesus responds to Nicodemus about the need to be born again, the woman leaves her waterpot and goes into the city to testify to the repetitive, temporal sense.38 When Jesus offers the woman “living water” (udōr zōn), she focuses on the sense of running, fresh, spring water rather than the metaphorical reference to the Holy Spirit.49

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the people about Jesus as the Christ (4:29). She appears to be the initial evangelist of Jesus to the Samaritans, and the disciples will follow in her footsteps as they bring in the harvest that she has planted (4:30, 35–42).

Clearly, Jesus’s conversation with the woman is greater than his conversation with Nicodemus—in length, content, and result. The unnamed, troubled woman from Samaria is not only more engaged and more receptive to Jesus’s words than the esteemed teacher of the Jews, but she also becomes Jesus’s emissary leading the way for the disciples in the evangelization of the Samaritans, while Nicodemus lies silent under Jesus’s criticism for being spiritually dull. This outcome surprises the reader as the author uses the technique of duality and balance to elevate the spiritual sensitivity and ministry of a woman over a man—even a Pharisaic teacher of Israel.

Peter’s healing of Aeneas and Tabitha (Acts 9:32–42)

Some commentators have not found much use for these unique narratives in Luke’s gospel beyond affirming Peter’s ministry and providing a geographical progress from Samaria to Caesarea. However, there are numerous textual parallels between Aeneas and Tabitha that invite the reader to compare the two narratives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Aeneas (9:32–36)</th>
<th>Tabitha (9:37–42)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>“Now it came about . . .” (9:32)</td>
<td>“And it came about . . .” (9:37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Lydda (9:32)</td>
<td>Joppa (9:36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>“A certain man—Aeneas” [a man] (9:33)</td>
<td>“A certain disciple—Tabitha” [a woman] (9:36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Bedridden and paralyzed (9:33)</td>
<td>Sick and died (9:40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter’s Words</td>
<td>“Arise” (9:34)</td>
<td>“Arise” (9:40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>“He arose” (9:34)</td>
<td>“She sat up” (9:40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Many “turned to the Lord” (9:35)</td>
<td>“many believed in the Lord” (9:42)</td>
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</tbody>
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There is also an intensification with the second miracle. The healing of Aeneas consists of four verses and sixty-two words (Acts 9:32–35), but the healing of Tabitha consists of seven verses and one hundred fifty-one words (Acts 9:36–42). The law of proportion emphasizes the Tabitha narrative over the Aeneas narrative by giving more than double the amount of space to her account.

In addition, the magnitude of the miraculous increases across the narratives. Aeneas’s healing is significant. He is paralyzed and has been bedridden for eight years (9:33). Peter’s words enable him to rise and immediately engage in making his bed (9:34). But Tabitha has died (9:37). Peter’s words bring her back to life (9:40–41).

The narrator tells us little about Aeneas, focusing on his malady. But the narrator abounds with additional information about Tabitha. It is hard to know for sure the origin of the name Aeneas; it may be Greek, but Craig Keener argues for it being Jewish. The name of his city, Lydda, is Greek for Lod, a Jewish town approximatively twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem on the road to Joppa. The Jewish-Gentile nature of this account is implicit in the Aeneas narrative. However, the ethnic mixture is made more explicit with the Tabitha account. Her Aramaic name, Tabitha, is explicitly given a Greek equivalent, Dorcas (9:36). And her city, Joppa, was far more Gentile in its makeup than Lydda. This movement of Peter from Lydda to Joppa is part of Luke’s narrative trajectory to bring Peter into a Gentile region.

We are not told anything about the character of Aeneas. On the other hand, Tabitha’s character is explicitly set forth. She was full of good works and charitable giving (9:36) and made tunics and garments (9:39). Perhaps the making of clothing was a particular expression of her good works and mercy. In addition, because her Greek name, Dorcas, is used with the description of the clothing she made (9:39), it may be implied that she made these items for Gentiles in her community. She was apparently loved by the widows who were weeping over her death (9:39), and her body was honored by being washed and set out in the upper room (9:37). This expansion of the Tabitha narrative enhances her in the reader’s eye by elevating her into the realm of a three-dimensional character over two-dimensional Aeneas.

In addition, one of the character descriptions given to Tabitha is later attributed to Cornelius, the Gentile who is the focus of this larger unit. Just as Tabitha abounded in charitable giving (eleēmosynē, 9:36) to the Gentiles, so, too, Cornelius gave many alms (eleēmosynē) to the Jewish people (Acts 10:2). From both sides of a cultural divide, these characters are performing acts of mercy—Tabitha toward the Gentiles and Cornelius toward the Jews. The lead word for “alms” (eleēmosynē) is a textual clue that draws the Cornelius narrative alongside the Aeneas and Tabitha accounts. Together, the miracle narratives function as stepping-stones to confirm, prepare, and bring Peter to Cornelius. Therefore, it is not surprising that the textual parallels from the two miracles extend into the Cornelius account (see table on the following page).

Peter is being prepared in the physical realm through the healings of Aeneas and Tabitha for the spiritual need of Cornelius (a Gentile) and sojourningly brought to Cornelius through the physical need of Aeneas and Tabitha. Together, the narrative healings picture Cornelius as one who does good works, but is spiritually dead, unable to walk with God, and in need of God’s miraculous deliverance. The Lord is going to bring Cornelius to spiritual life just as he brought Tabitha to physical life, and he is going to enable Cornelius to walk with him spiritually just as he enabled Aeneas to conduct his life physically. Through a permutation of the sign-sermon structure (where here there are two signs, not just one, prior to the sermon with Cornelius), Luke has provided physical foreshadows to Cornelius’s spiritual condition that begin to open Peter, and the reader, to God’s outreach to the Gentiles.

Geographically, the two miracles move Peter in the direction of Caesarea. This is the city where the narrator left Philip (Acts 8:40) after his involvement with one who might have been a Gentile (the Ethiopian eunuch). It is also the city from which Saul, the future apostle to the Gentiles, was sent to Tarsus (9:30). Luke uses this common city to bring to fruition the earlier foreshadows of Gentile inclusion.
The Tabitha narrative is the tipping point in the flow of the gospel story. This might have been accomplished through another narrative involving a man, but that was not Luke’s choice. Instead, he places a narrative involving a woman at the center of two other narratives involving men. There is something about her female-ness that contributes to the progression of Luke’s larger story. The Tabitha narrative is greatly expanded over the Aeneas narrative to show the progression of the gospel. Luke chooses the story about Tabitha to emphasize her shared giving of alms with Cornelius and to foreshadow the new life about to be given to Cornelius through Peter’s mediation. More than Aeneas, Tabitha is the halfway house to the Gentiles. Her name is given in Aramaic and Greek, and she is identified as a female disciple (mathētria). She appears to be a physical emblem of Luke’s expanding gospel. She is not a Jew (Acts 1—7); she is not a Samaritan (Acts 8); she is not a Hellenistic Jew (Aeneas) and she is not a Gentile (Cornelius), but she is a woman, a female disciple showing mercy to Gentiles. The gospel is radically crossing ethnic and racial barriers, and the breakdown of the male gender preference in the Tabitha narrative demonstrates how expansive this transition is becoming. In Tabitha, Luke shows the reader that the gospel is also reaching into the lives of women who are deeply loved and who serve those outside of their own community with good works and charitable giving. For the reader, the question arises: How far, then, will this gospel expansion go? The answer is revealed as the gospel reaches Cornelius, a Gentile brought to new life.

**Conclusion**

This study is not based on a feminist hermeneutic, but a literary sensitivity to narratives involving men and women that have intentional structures already embedded in the text. 

Reading, like listening, is a linear progression that cannot be comprehended if interrupted. A visual medium enables the viewer to see the whole at once, but the whole must be constructed piece by piece when words are employed. This study has been an attempt to display visually the whole to the reader without interruptions by traditional barriers such as changes in subject matter, chapter divisions, and assumptions about the text. As in all literature, ideas are often covered up in a work. However, once a reader shows what is there, it appears to subsequent readers that it has always been there—and it has, because the writer put it there. What has been presented here is part of what is already present in Luke, John, and Acts, even if it has sometimes escaped the reader’s attention.

These readings do not resolve the larger biblical question regarding the relationship of men and women, but do provide pictures that show the prominence of women—even over a male priest named Zacharias, a male teacher in Israel named Nicodemus, and a healed man named Aeneas. In other words, these narratives provide an additional weight of evidence in biblical gender studies as they unveil the significant contributions of Mary, the woman at the well, and Tabitha that may have been covered up in the biblical narratives. All of these stories touch on the mission of God in salvation, setting forth reflections of the plan of God. Just as one woman played a part in taking the first step away from God, so is it that these women take first steps back to God—Mary in receiving the revelation and the Son, the woman at the well in receiving and communicating Jesus as Messiah to the Samaritans, and Tabitha in preparing the way for the Gentiles. These great reversals honor God.

**Notes**

1. "If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water." Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1932), 116.


3. For example, in discussing John 2:13—3:21, Charles Talbert provides two reasons for the common feature of gaps, or lack of explicitness, in narratives: "(i) There are gaps in all artful narratives. Gaps, deliberate ambiguity, and reticence assist the narrative to avoid being boring by serving as invitations for readers or hearers to fill in the narrative according to their expectations as fostered by literary conventions or community convictions. The ancient rhetorician Demetrius puts it thusly: Not everything should be given lengthy treatment with full details but some points should be left for our hearer to grasp and infer for himself. If he infers what you have omitted, he no longer just listens to you but acts as your witness, one too who is predisposed in your favor since he feels he has been intelligent and you are the person who has given him this opportunity to exercise his intelligence. In
fact, to tell your reader everything as if he were a fool is to reveal that you think him one. (On Style 222)

(2) A foundation document of a group that embodies the corporate traditions and that has evolved over a lengthy period of time within the community would be telling a story that is already known to its hearers. It is not as though the readers know nothing except what has come before in the Gospel’s narrative.” Charles H. Talbert, Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992), 103.

4. As experienced movie viewers, we intuitively grasp a flashback without the need for text that states: “Ten Years Earlier.” However, when directors such as Terrance Malick juxtapose large sections of a movie beside one another without explanation, as in The Tree of Life (2011) or To the Wonder (2012), the implied world/meaning is more difficult for the modern audience to grasp.

5. See Abraham Kuruvilla, Mark: A Theological Commentary for Preachers (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), xiv.

6. Some might protest that the narratives with Zacharias and Mary had to be told together because that is what happened—Gabriel appeared to both of them. However, the other gospel writers did not feel a need to express this information. Mark completely omits any background information about Jesus; both John the Baptist and Jesus first appear as adults in his gospel (Mark 1:14–15). John has more of a theological prelude to his gospel than a historical account (John 1:1–18), and Matthew does not identify Gabriel’s appearance to Mary, but the appearance of an angel of the Lord to Joseph (Matt 1:18–21). We only specifically know about Gabriel’s appearances to Zacharias and Mary through Luke’s pairing of the stories in his narrative setting to the gospel. Luke not only chose what to include, but also how to arrange the material—by placing the stories of Zacharias and Mary next to one another.


a Declarat the birth of John the Baptist (1:15–25)
 a' Declarat the birth of Jesus the Messiah (1:26–38)
 b Meeting between Mary and Elizabeth (1:39–56)
 b' Birth of John the Baptist (1:57–80)
 c' Birth of Jesus the Messiah (2:1–40)


9. Often in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Lord overcame barrenness so that, when a child finally was born, there was no question that the Lord was the source of blessing and that the child was to be significant in the life of the nation. See Abraham and Sarah, who gave birth to Isaac (Gen 18:9–14; 21:1–3); Isaac and Rebekah, who gave birth to Jacob (Gen 25:20–21); Jacob and Rachel, who gave birth to Joseph (Gen 29:31; 30:1–8, 22–24); Judah and Tamar, who gave birth to Perez (Gen 38); Manoah and his wife, who gave birth to Samson (Judg 13:2–24); Boaz and Ruth, who gave birth to Obed (Ruth 4:14; Ps 113:17); Elkanah and Hannah, who gave birth to Samuel (1 Sam 1:20; 5, 11, 19–20); and Psalm 113:9.

10. This table is adapted and adopted from Malick, “Birth Narratives,” 96–97. These announcements are very similar to Robert Alter’s “annunciation type-scene,” which “points to the weighty role in history for the child who is to be born, since only for such portentous figures is this sort of divine intervention in the natural order of conception required.” The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1981), 85. Alter sets forth the fixed pattern of the annunciation type-scene as including “the barren wife’s being vouchsafed an oracle, a prophecy from a man of God, or a promise from an angel, that she will be granted a son, sometimes with an explicit indication of the son’s destiny, often with the invocation of the formula. At this season next year, you will be embracing a son.” There are permutations in the pattern of these announcements: the oracle is to Zacharias instead of Elizabeth; Mary is not barren, but a virgin; and there is no formula setting forth the time of the birth. Nevertheless, the echoes of this pattern portend to the greatness of these children. See the announcements of the birth of Ishmael (Gen 16:10–12); Isaac (Gen 17:1–21; 18:1–15); Samson (Judg 13:20–25); and Samuel (1 Sam 1).

11. The text says, “and entering to her” (ai eisethōn pros autēn, Luke 1:28). Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis astutely observes a significant distinction in the John and Jesus stories: “The events surrounding the birth of John, we notice, are heavily publicized; that is, many are involved—the multitude perplexed at the temple, the neighbors and kinsfolk marveling at the circumcision, the countryside gossiping about ‘what then will this child be?’ By contrast, the events surrounding the birth of Jesus are private and isolated: Gabriel appears to Mary when she is alone, her news is shared only with Elizabeth and presumably with Joseph, the narrative takes Joseph and his family away from their home town, and therefore away from their neighbors and kinsfolk, to be enrolled in Bethlehem; and even in that town, there is no room at the inn and the child must be born in a manger, out of sight, unnoticed by those who fill the inn.” “The Jesus Birth Stories” in Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, vol. 2, ed. Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1982), 282–83.

12. As Nathanael said to Philip, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Frederick W. Danker observes, “That Gabriel, one of the eminent members of the heavenly council, should come to insignificant Nazareth and present himself before this undistinguished villager is a miracle of the new Age. This event presages the announcement of the Magnificat, that the mighty are brought low and the humble exalted. (v. 52).” Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel, rev. and expanded (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988), 35. Although the Western manuscript D omits “which is named Nazareth,” it is attested in the Alexandrian and Byzantine texts.


14. Greek μή θεωρῆσαι, Zacharias (v. 13); μή θεωρῆσαι, Mariam (v. 30). The imperative verb plus the negative μή allows for the idea of cessation of activity in progress. As Wallace states, “Here the idea is frequently progressive and the prohibition is of the ‘cessation of some act that is already in progress.’ It has the idea, Stop continuing. μὴ φασί [μή θεωρῇ] is thus naturally used as the formula to quell someone’s apprehensions.” Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 724.

15. Many manuscripts add “blessed are you among women.” However, it is probable that a抄ist inserted these words from 1:42 where they originally appear from the mouth of Elizabeth. It is easier to see how these words were added than to explain why they were removed.

16. The announcement in each case is given with respect to the woman bearing a son. To Zacharias, Gabriel states, “and your wife Elizabeth will bear a son to you.” To Mary, Gabriel states, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son.”

17. The theme that the younger will be greater than the older has its origins in Genesis where Abel was over Cain (Gen 4), Shem was over Japheth (cf. Gen 5:32; 7:5; 9:24; 10:21; 11:10); Abram was over his brothers (cf. Gen 11:26; 32; 12:4); Isaac was over Ishmael (Gen 16:11–12); Jacob was over Esau (Gen 25:23); Rachel was loved over Leah (Gen 29:21–26, 31); Joseph was over his brothers (Gen 30:22–24; 37:5–11); Perez was over Zerah (Gen 38:27–30); and Ephram was over Manasseh (Gen 46:8–19). For blessing to come through the younger was against the natural custom of life in favor of the progenitor. However, the Lord turns social custom upside down so that people will know that he is involved in the blessing. God can bless and use people from outside the paths of society’s expectations. Even though John and Jesus are not from the same parents, the narrator is employing an intense comparison so that the reader will correlate them with one another and see that the younger (Jesus) is greater than the older (John). Even in the Genesis accounts, there is a deviation from the pattern of preference when Ishmael is born of Hagar while Isaac is born of Sarah. Here there are two sets of parents, instead of only two mothers as with Ishmael and Isaac, but the children are both from the Lord with an intensity placed upon the younger, who, unlike John, is su-
18. These Hebrew names contribute to the message of the unit. John (镱nēn/yēhōhānān) includes the sense of “grace,” Jesus (iēsoun/yēšū’a) has the sense of “Yahweh is salvation,” Zachariah (zacharia/zēkaryah) means “Yahweh remembers,” and Elizabeth (elisabet/ĕlîšeʼa) means “covenant of God.” The gracious God who remembers his covenant is now moving to save his people. See Malick, “Birth Narratives,” 105 n. 19. Commenting on the name “John,” Fitzmyer contends, “Whether Gentle converts would have grasped the nuance may be missing the point; the implication is that God’s grace or favor is now to come to humanity in a new form.” The Gospel according to Luke, 318.

19. John will be “great before the Lord” (1:15). Jesus is described as being great with no qualifier—“this one will be great” (1:32). As Fitzmyer observes, “Laurentin (Structure, 36) calls attention to the absolute use of megas “great,” there and to the fact that in the LXX the absolute megas is an attribute of Yahweh himself (see Pss 48:2 = 145:3; 86:10; 135:5) whereas the adjective is qualified when it is used of human beings (see 2 Sam 19:33 LXX; Sir. 48:22). So it is here in the case of John. John’s greatness (see Luke 7:28) is here measured in terms of Kyrios, who in this context is to be understood as Yahweh.” The Gospel according to Luke, 325.

20. An anomaly in the parallel structure is that, before John is described as being great, Gabriel tells Zacharias that the child will bring him joy and gladness and that many will rejoice at his birth (1:14). The lack of perfect symmetry between the announcements to Zacharias and Mary does not invalidate the overall parallel structure. Charles H. Talbert notes well that perfect symmetry was not always valued in Greek and Ancient Near Eastern cultures. Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1974), 78–79. Perhaps Luke’s insertion about joy over the birth of John heightens the reader’s expectation concerning Zacharias over Mary, but this is about to change with what follows in Gabriel’s revelation to both parents.

21. As Fitzmyer observes, “Yahweh’s spirit will fill him instead of the drink from which he is to abstain.” The Gospel according to Luke, 326.

22. The following chart is adopted and adapted from Malick, “Birth Narratives,” 100.

23. Elizabeth “is highlighted as both Zechariah and Mary travel to her. . . . Unlike Zechariah and Mary, Elizabeth only heard of the angel’s visits; she had not seen the visions. Thus she stands in the place of the reader, who also is ‘hearing’ a report of what happened. In each case she was able to respond appropriately; she chose to be quiet with her husband (vv. 24–25) and to rejoice with Mary (vv. 41–45).” Malick, “Birth Narratives,” 100–01.

Zacharias’s question, “according to what [or how] shall I know?” is similar to Sarah’s laughter after the Lord announced to Abraham that he would have a son (Gen 18:1–15). Sarah laughed because both she and Abraham were old (Gen 18:12). Zacharias raises the very same issues (Luke 1:18). Just as the Lord addressed Sarah’s laughter (Gen 18:13–14), so Gabriel addresses Zachariah’s request for proof so that he will know the truth of this message (Luke 1:19). Of particular interest in the Lucan birth narratives is that the gender roles are reversed from the account in Gen 18. In Genesis, it was the woman who laughed, but, in Luke, it is the man who asks for proof.

25. Contrary to many who view Zachariah’s silence as punishment or discipline, I. Howard Marshall understands the sign to be both a punishment and “a confirmation of his prophecy.” The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 60–61. (“We should not, therefore, regard Zechariah’s request simply as a punishment for unbelief. . . . These elements are certainly present (1:20), but in fact a sign is given, and it serves the deeper purpose of concealing the wonder of what was to happen until the due time.”)

26. Zacharias is first reminded that the angel is Gabriel who stands before God and was sent by God to speak this good news (euangelisasthai). This statement can be scanned as though it communicates outrage, but the words themselves place this understanding in question. If this is a rebuke to Zacharias for disregarding a message from an angel of such high rank and esteem, then why emphasize that he was sent by God (implied from the passive form of apostēlēn, “to send”), to communicate good news? It is entirely possible that Gabriel’s words are meant to answer Zacharias’s question by confirming the source and nature of his message. Then, as another affirmation of how Zacharias can know that these words are true, he will be silent and unable to speak until the time that these prophetic words come into being. In other words, he is not punished for his request for proof, but given evidence that he will comprehend so that he will believe that the child is all that the angel has promised—the answer to his prayer for Elizabeth and himself and for the nation of Israel.

27. Once again, this appears to be an echo from the Lord’s word to Sarah: “Is anything too difficult for the Lord?” (Gen 18:14). The Septuagint translation of the Hebrew into Greek is nearly identical in word choice to Gabriel’s words in Luke 1:38. With Sarah, this statement was placed as a question because she, like Zacharias, questioned the truth of the prophecy in their old age. However, with Mary, it is stated as an affirmation confirming the most amazing message that she will conceive a child as a virgin outside of marriage.

28. Unlike Zacharias, who says, “According to what (kata tî) shall I know this?” (1:18), Mary says according to your word (kata tî rhēma sou)
let it be to me (1:38). Ben Witherington correctly observes, "Mary's reaction to Gabriel's explanation is the classic expression of submission to God's word and will: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word' (1:38). The meaning of 1:38 is toned down by the translation 'handmaiden,' for the actual meaning is 'Behold the slave of the Lord.' Thus, Luke portrays Mary as binding herself totally to God's will, giving up her plans and desires for the future. Her response was one of submission in full recognition of what effect this act of God could have for her social position and relation to Joseph. We see the Evangelist presenting Mary as one who is willing to give up betrothal and reputation for God's purposes, the sort of self-sacrifice which, in Luke's Gospel, is the mark of a disciple." *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, ed. Ann Witherington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 205.

30. "The servant of God is not determined by gender, age, position, function, or location, but by the one who can receive the Word of God." Malick, "Birth Narratives," 101.

31. As Raymond Brown notes, "John consistently recalls this detail (xix 39) because of its symbolic import. Darkness and night symbolize the realm of evil, untruth, and ignorance (see ix 4, xi 10). In xiii 30 Judith leaves the light to go out into the night of Satan; Nicodemus, on the other hand comes out of the darkness into the light (yss. 19–21)." The Gospel according to John, 130. Likewise, Keener writes that, even though Jewish teachers often studied at night, "[m]ore likely, he comes at night to avoid being seen (cf. 7:51–52; 12:42–43; 19:38); night was the time for secret (sometimes antisocial) deeds and whether one wished not to be known. Nicodemus remains a secret believer at this point, not a disciple. . . . in the story world, fear accounts for Nicodemus coming by night, but John probably also mentions 'night' on a more symbolic level for his audience (cf. 13:30), bracketing the narrative with Nicodemus coming "by night" (3:2) and true believers leaving darkness to come to Jesus's light (3:21)." The Gospel of John, 336.

32. If Jewish reckoning of time is employed, the sixth hour was noon. Frederick W. Danker, Walter A. Bauer, William Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) (hereafter BDAG), s.v. "ἐκτὸς" (ektos). It is also significant that Jacob met Rachel seeking water about noon (Gen 29:7), and Moses may have also met Zipporah at the well about noon (Exod 2:15–17; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 2:257).

33. As W. Hall Harris writes, "Such a detour through Samaria was not geographically necessary. Although the main route from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria, Jesus, as many Jews did, could easily have gone up the Jordan valley into Galilee through the Bethshan gap, avoiding Samaria. Whenever John uses the impersonal verb ἦσεν [ēse] the necessity involves God's will or plan: 3:7, 14, 30; 4:4, 20, 24; 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; and 20:9." Commentary on the Gospel of John, http://www.netbible.com/docs/nb/books/joh/harris/gjohn-07.htm.

34. Whether this account meets the elements of a betrothal type-scene, as described by Robert Alter, is debated. Alter sets out the following elements:

- The betrothal type-scene, then must take place with the future bridegroom, or his surrogate, having journeyed to a foreign land.
- There he encounters a girl—the term "nācarah" invariably occurs unless the maiden is identified as so-and-so's daughter—or girls at a well. Someone, either the man or the girl, then draws water from the well; afterward, the girl or girls rush to bring home the news of the stranger's arrival (the verbs "hurry" and "run" are given recurrent emphasis at this juncture of the type-scene); finally, a betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in the majority of instances, only after he has been invited to a meal.

35. The Art of Biblical Narrative, 52. Although speaking in the context of Paul's writings, N. T. Wright states a principle about the narrative dimensions of thought that may be applicable here: "understanding how stories worked in the ancient world, and how a small allusion could and did summon up an entire implicit narrative, including narratives within which speaker and hearer believed themselves to be living, is a vital tool." *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 8. Therefore, Keener seems to be correct when he states, "This passage also evokes the rich biblical imagery and themes. Allusions to the cross gender well scenes of Gen 24, and secondarily to Gen 29 and Exod 2, are difficult to miss. That Jesus meets the woman at "Jacob's well" (4:6) plainly alludes to a different well in Mesopotamia where Jacob met the future matriarch Rachel and provided water for her (Gen 29:10), as Jesus provides this Samaritan woman living water. But this Jacob scene in Gen 29 recapitulates in some measure the scene in Gen 24, in which Abraham's steward finds a wife for Isaac." *The Gospel of John*, 586.

Perhaps this scene portends to a fulfillment of the betrothal type-scene imagery. This woman, who has known so much disruption in her married life and thirsts for resolution (4:16–18), meets the One at the well who will satisfy her thirst as her true, spiritual husband (see Jesus's words about the Spirit in 4:23–25). Then, instead of returning home, she goes to the people of the town to tell them about the one she has met at the well (4:28–29). When she speaks to them, she specifically emphasizes the conversation with Jesus about her married life: "Come, see a man who said to me all things which I did" (4:29; see 4:16–18). Just as the character of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses is made manifest through the particulars of each type-scene (see *Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 52–80), so, too, Jesus's character is revealed in his conversation with the woman as a prophet and Messiah who truly understands the ways of people and God (John 4:16–26). The metaphor of Christ's relation to the church as a husband to his bride will then be explicitly made by the Apostle Paul (Eph 5:25–27) and the Apostle John (Rev 19:7–8). Perhaps this expression of the type-scene is the narrative source of the later image.


38. "Nicodemus concentrates on the demand for a 'bith' and, as was usual in the scholastic exercises of the rabbis, raises objections which are couched as paradoxically as possible. His two questions are meant to bring out the senseless nature of the doctrine (cf. 6:52) and force Jesus to admit to an absurdity (cf. Mk. 12:20–23 par.)." Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, 368.


then explains, “He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (NASB). Leon Morris reports that the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated with certain festival rituals, one of which was the procession each day from the temple to Gihon Spring where a priest filled a gold pitcher with water while the choir sang (Isa 12:3). Then they returned to the altar and poured out the water. The Gospel according to John, International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 420–21. Supposedly, this ritual reminded Israel of water from the rock (Num 20) and the coming days of Messiah (Zech 14:8, 16–19). It is in this setting on the Feast’s greatest, last day before a large gathering (Lev 23) that Jesus stood and pronounced his offer of spiritual salvation for the nation as Yahweh, the source of water. What he is offering is not physical water, but the life-giving source of the Holy Spirit (7:39; cf. Isa 12). Jesus is offering to satisfy their unsatisfied spiritual thirst. He makes the same offer to the woman at the well in John 4.

41. Schnackenburg insightfully writes, “There is a masterly transition from the outward situation to the inner confrontation of man with the believer. If the woman knew the ‘gift of God’ and the stranger who asks her for a drink of ordinary water, the roles would be exchanged. She (the ἕν τοῦ οὖν, second person singular pronoun) is emphatic) would do the asking and become beneficiary. According to the chiastic structure of the sentence, which goes from the ‘gift of God’ to the person of the speaker, and from the speaker back to the ‘living water,’ the ‘gift of God’ must be the ‘living water’ which Jesus can give, the true ‘water of life’ which is not a gift on the natural, earthly plane but a heavenly gift from God.” The Gospel according to St John, 426.

42. R. Alan Culpepper seems to observe correctly, “As the light of understanding begins to break, the Samaritan woman shows herself at each stage ready to receive it: ‘Sir, give me this water’ (4:15); ‘Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet’ (4:19); ‘Come, see a man . . . the Christ?’ (4:29).” Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 137. Likewise, Ben Witherington states, “the Samaritan woman wins the reader’s admiration because of her openness to the revealing word of Jesus even when she does not understand. Her attitude is one of inquiry, not rejection, and it is this that makes her a suitable subject for faith.” Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 59.

43. That “thirst” describes more than physical thirst is evident on its face from the fact that the Spirit is being described as the “water” that quenches thirst. Jesus himself identified himself with the spiritual thirst of humankind when on the cross he stated, “I thirst” (John 19:28). This is signifying that the 

44. Jesus’s description of the woman’s married life is usually interpreted to mean that she is an immoral person. However, Janeh Norflee Day offers a different reconstruction of the woman’s status as a person who is a victim of ancient, oppressive patriarchy rather than taken up in personal sin. The Woman at the Well: Interpretation of John 4:1–42: In Retrospect and Prospect, Interpretation Series 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 169–75. Day surveys literature and art prior to the Reformation and finds that it is not until the reformers that the woman is portrayed as immoral. Accordingly, there may be room to reconsider presuppositions about the character of the woman. Rather than assuming from the gaps in the narrative that the woman has been the initiator of an immoral lifestyle, it is possible that she had outlived her husbands or was divorced by men due to no particular fault of her own (such as the inability to bear children—since no children are mentioned). Day notes that Jewish thought allowed a maximum of three marriages for a woman; the fact that she had been married five times indicates that her life had been especially difficult, and probably meant that she was an object of either pity or ridicule, perhaps both. The Woman at the Well, 70. The fact that she is now living with a man who is not her husband may not be a matter of choice so much as of cultural necessity in order to have the protection of a man and a place to live. She may be advanced in age (five marriages); she may not be able to support herself, so the man may have been her only means of survival culturally. The man may be unwilling, or unable financially, to marry her, but willing to extend to her the protection of his household. Perhaps the man was a relative in the kinsman-redeemer tradition, but unwilling to raise up children (like Judah with Tamar in Gen 38). There are numerous ways to understand the gaps in this Scripture. The response from the people whom she tells about Jesus raises a question about whether they saw her as sinful. If so, they more than likely would have laughed and ridiculed her for her testimony. But, they respond readily with no resistance; the people appear to be eager to believe her testimony.

45. Of significance is that her testimony is about her own personal life, which Jesus highlighted in their conversation: “Come, see a man who told me all the things which I did; is this one not the Christ?” (4:29); see also 4:39). In other words, she appears to testify to the One who can satisfy her personal, spiritual thirst for life. Perhaps this is an implied significance of her leaving behind her waterpot. She now has spiritual, living water and not the physical water she initially sought.

46. The elevation of the woman over the disciples is also hinted at in the placement of their suspicious attitude toward her against her departure to tell the Samaritans about Jesus: “At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, ‘What do you seek?’ or, ‘Why do you speak with her? ’ So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, ‘Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?’” NASB (John 4:27–29). While the Twelve are concerned that Jesus would be talking to this woman, she is proclaiming the good news about Jesus to the Samaritans. Then, as the Samaritans are coming to see Jesus, Jesus is instructing his disciples “to reap that for which others have labored,” perhaps having a direct reference to bringing the coming Samaritans to faith in Jesus (John 4:31–38). See Keener, The Gospel of John, 626 (“In the most immediate context, Jesus may refer to himself and the Samaritan woman . . . who brought the town to him [4:29–30, 39]”). Likewise Ben Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 61 (“Who then are the ἄλλοι [‘alloi,’ ‘them’] of verse 38? Perhaps the most likely answer is, Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Jesus has sown the Word in her and, in turn, she has sown the word in the other Samaritans”). As Culpepper observes, “She precedes the disciples, laboring where they are sent. They will enter into her work (4:38). True to her traditional name, therefore, the ‘Samaritan woman’ is a model of the female disciple and possibly a model of Samaritan believers also.” Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel, 137. As Keener observes, “The narrative thus places her on a par with Jesus’ other disciples who brought his message to the world (cf. 17:20).”


48. As Joseph Ruis-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger state, “Aeneas is a representative character (‘a certain, τινά [tīna], . . . and man (ἀνήρ [anthrōpos]), which establishes him as a universal character (as opposed to ἄνηρ [anēr, meaning male], one with a specific function).” They also identify this sense with the use of τίς with the introduction of Tabitha (9:36), Simon the tanner (9:43), and Cornelius (10:1). The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition: Vol. 2, Acts 6:1–12:25: From Judea and Samaria to the Church in Antioch, ed. Mark Goodacre (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2006), 209, 212, 216, 244. Regarding the use of characters as types in narratives, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg affirm, “In every case, whenever we consider a character as a type, we are moving away from considering him as an individual character and moving toward considering him as part of some larger framework. This framework may be moral, theological, referable to some essentially extra-literary scheme; or it may be referable to a part of the narrative situation itself. When we consider characters . . . we are thinking of them not as characters in themselves but as elements which contribute to the whole, as part of the plot or meaning of a work.” Robert Scholes, James Phelan, and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative, 40th anniversary ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 204.
THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM OF GENDERCIDE

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49. The term used in each case is an imperative form of anistēmi, namely, anastēthi.

50. BDAG, s.v. “Αἰνέας” [Aineas]. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger are of the opinion that “His name is Greek, indicating he was a Hellenist, possibly one of those who had to flee from Hierosoluma (8.4).” The Message of Acts, 2:209–10.


52. Cf. 1 Chron 8:12; Ezra 2:33; Neh 7:37, cf. 11:35.

53. Keener notes, “It was Sharon plain’s most significant Jewish city, added to Judea from Samaria (1 Macc 11:34 [cf. 10:30; 11:28]; Jos. Ant. 13.127). It had long been a Jewish city (1 Macc 11:34) whose men attended Jerusalem’s feasts (Jos. War 2.515).” Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, 1705.

54. Darrell L. Bock writes, “It was the center of toparchy, one of ten administrative districts in Judea (Josephus, J.W. 3:3.58§52–56; Johnson 1992:177). It was a predominantly Jewish town of mixed population.”


56. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger correlate the two names given for this woman (Tabitha/Dorcas) as symbolizing the Hebrew-Greek nature of this community when they write, “The fact that her name is given in Aramaic indicates that she was not of Hellenistic origin but the translation of her name and the use of it a second time (cf. 9.39) would imply that the community of believers included Greek as well as Aramaic speakers.” Continuing, they write, “The reference to the gazelle in this context occurs three times in the course of the reformed laws in the book of Deuteronomy, and could be a way of indicating here that Tabitha represented a community of both Hebrews (clean) and Hellenists (unclean); the use of her name in Greek suggests as much.” The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae, 212.

57. Bock notes, “The region was partly Gentile, as Sharon comprised the coastal plain extending from Joppa to Carmel and to Caesarea.” Acts, 377. Keener argues that Joppa was Jewish, but clearly identifies its Hellenization: “Once a Philistine city, it was later Hellenized and used by Ptolemies and Seleucids.” Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, 1714.

58. Both individuals are described by the same Greek term, elēmosynē, describing alms, or charitable giving. BDAG, s.v. “ἐλεημοσύνη.” Interestingly, this same term is also used to describe the lamen man in Acts 3:2. Even though Bock identifies the use of the term with Tabitha and Cornelius, he does not connect the two figures any further. Acts, 386; see also Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, The Message of Acts, 2:212.

59. Barrett sees many of the parallels between Aeneas and Tabitha, but he does not continue the correlations to Cornelius. The Acts, 1:477.

60. Peter was traveling through the region and found Aeneas in Lydda (9:32–33); then he was called by the people of Joppa to come quickly for Tabitha (9:37–38). Then Cornelius (at God’s command) called Peter to Caesarea (10:3–8). Peter appears to be an actor on the stage, but he is in fact just an instrument in God’s hand. After describes this dual aspect well in his discussion of Hebrew scriptural narrative when he states, “The Hebrew Bible is animated by an uniting, shrewdly perceptive fascination with the theater of human behavior in the textual foreground, seen against a background of forces that can be neither grasped nor controlled by humankind.” Robert Alter, The World of Biblical Literature (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1992), 22.


62. Leland Ryken identifies this literary device as the functional use of geography to communicate a message in the Gospel of Mark: “Sometimes the geography is used for structural purposes. The Gospel of Mark, for example, is structured on a grand contrast between Galilee, place of acceptance, and Jerusalem, which symbolizes rejection of Jesus.” Words of Life: A Literary Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 33.

63. In other words, the ethnic nature of the people in these two miracles also foreshadows a movement to the Gentiles in the Cornelius narrative. Ironically, Caesarea will also be the place where the antagonist to Peter and the gospel, Herod, will be sovereignly slain (Acts 12:19–23). God will vindicate Peter, and the expansion of the movement, through the events played out around Caesarea.

64. I am grateful to my good friend Drew Gentile of Campus Crusade for Christ International for bringing this final observation to my attention.