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# Acts 4:19-20—An Overlooked First-Century Clue to Johannine Authorship and Luke's Dependence upon the Johannine Tradition

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In lecturing on a Bi-Optic Hypothesis in a variety of settings around Europe this summer, the most common questions related to the Johannine-Lukan relationship. Because the Fourth Gospel was finalized last among the canonical Gospels (I believe 100 CE is a plausible inference), it is assumed that John borrowed from Luke rather than Luke's drawing from the oral stages of the Johannine tradition. This view, however, is highly problematic. Just because John may have been finalized late, its tradition did not originate late. John contains a good deal of primitive material, and thus the Johannine tradition would have been available to Luke as a gatherer of gospel material long before the finalization of either Gospel.

The answer to this issue, however, depends on the questions one asks. Indeed, the Fourth Evangelist expands on biblical themes and events within the narrative, but does this mean that all contacts with Luke imply Johannine dependence and expansion? Not necessarily. Three questions seem important in considering the Johannine-Lukan relationship: why are Luke's most characteristic features missing from John, why does Luke side with John against Mark at least six dozen times,<sup>1</sup> and what might the discovery of an overlooked first-century Lukan clue to John's authorship contribute to a critical rethinking of scholarly approaches to the longstanding riddles of the Fourth Gospel?

I. *First*, while scholars correctly note that the Fourth Evangelist often expands upon features of a biblical text or on details emerging from the story of Jesus' ministry, the assumption that Johannine-Lukan contacts reflect John's dependence on Luke falls flat when considering the particulars. If one were to catalogue the ten most memorable features of Luke, for instance, these would have to include the likes of shepherds, angels, and the birth narrative; the hymns of Zechariah, Mary, and Simeon; perhaps a genealogy; baby Jesus and young Jesus in the temple; the threefold temptation of Jesus in the wilderness; the Nazareth inaugural address of Jesus; the Lord's prayer and the beatitudes (with an emphasis on the poor); the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son; the story of Zachaeus; Jesus' agony in the garden and his appearance before Herod; and postresurrection

encounters on the road to Emmaus. *None* of these distinctive Lukan features, however, appear in John.

Put another way, the twelve chapters in Luke that are most distinctively Lukan (Lk. 1-2 and 10-19) show very few contacts with the Gospel of John. So, if the Johannine evangelist knew and used the Lukan tradition, he drew only from incidental details and not from the most characteristic of Luke's features or sections. Such an inference is thus highly unlikely from a literary analysis standpoint.

II. A better way to assess the relationship is to move from most likely inferences to others. Given that Luke depended on Mark, as nearly all biblical scholars believe was the case, the question is better put: why did Luke *depart from Mark* at least six dozen times and *side with the Johannine tradition*? Lamar Cribbs, Mark Matson, and Barbara Shellard have argued this case,<sup>2</sup> and the literary evidence favors this approach over Johannine dependence on Luke. While I do not believe Luke had access to the Johannine written tradition, either in its first-edition or final forms (after all, Luke does not change the order of the temple cleansing, and he locates the great catch of fish at the beginning instead of the end of Jesus' ministry), it does seem that familiarity with the Johannine oral tradition would best account for the presence of Johannine details and emphases in Luke's "orderly account." Noting Luke's multiple departures from Mark and sidings with John becomes *a second* and the strongest basis for ascertaining the character of the Johannine-Lukan relationship.

While the present essay cannot take the space to lay out the full extent of the parallels, consider these notable instances, where Luke appears to draw from the Johannine tradition in both his gospel narrative and Acts:

### 1) **Johannine detail is included in Luke-Acts:**

- The beholding of Jesus' glory (*doxa*) is added to the Transfiguration scene (Jn. 1:14 Lk. 9:32)
- Bethlehem is described as the city of David only in John and Luke (Jn. 7:42 Lk. 2:4)
- Jesus is described as the son of Joseph only in Luke and John (Jn. 1:45; 6:42 Lk. 3:23; 4:22)
- Stoning and fear of stoning by Jewish leaders or the crowd (especially in Jerusalem) is mentioned only in John and Luke-Acts (Jn.8:59; 10:31-33; 11:8 Lk.

13:34; 20:6; Ac. 5:26; 7:58; 14:5, 19)

- The *Ioudaioi* seek to kill Jesus and his followers (Jn. 5:18; 7:1 Ac. 9:23; 26:21)
- The crowd acclaims Jesus as “king” at the triumphal entry (Jn. 12:13 Lk. 19:38)
- The place Jesus went to on the Mount of Olives was known and frequented (Jn. 18:2 Lk. 21:37, 22:39)
- The “right” ear of the servant was severed by Peter (Jn. 18:10 Lk. 22:50)
- The court/house of the high priest was entered by Jesus (Jn. 18:15 Lk. 22:54)
- Annas is uniquely mentioned in John and Luke-Acts, as is his association with Caiaphas (Jn. 18:13, 24 Lk. 3:2; Ac. 4:6)
- Pilate’s instructing the words to be written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin is a detail common only to John and Luke (Jn. 19:20 Lk. 23:38—in some mss.)
- The tomb is one in which no one had ever been laid (Jn. 19:41 Lk. 23:53)
- Two angels in white or two men in dazzling clothes are mentioned at the empty tomb (Jn. 20:12 Lk. 24:4)

## 2) The Johannine presentation of John the Baptist is replicated in Luke and

### Acts:

- People question outwardly or in their hearts about John the Baptist, regarding whether he was the Christ (Jn. 1:20 Lk. 3:15)
- John declares himself *not* to be the Messiah in John and Acts (Jn. 1:20; 3:28 Ac. 13:25)
- John has a more extensive itinerant ministry (Jn. 1:19-42; 3:22-4:3; 10:40-42 Lk. 3:1-22; 7:18-35; 11:1) than portrayed in Mark
- In both John and Acts, spiritual birth involves not just water but the Spirit (Jn. 3:5 Ac. 8:12-17; 18:24-19:7)

## 3) Luke adds Johannine narrative and content:

- The age of Jesus is alluded to (albeit differently) in John and Luke (Jn. 8:57 Lk. 3:23)
- The “law of Moses” is referred to distinctively in John and Luke-Acts (Jn. 1:17; 7:23 Lk. 2:22; 24:44; Ac. 13:39; 15:5; 28:23)
- Mary and Martha are mentioned as sisters and are presented as having similar roles (Jn. 11:1-45; 12:1-11 Lk. 10:38-42)

- A man named Lazarus is presented in both John and Luke and in both cases is associated with death and the testimony of after-death experiences—Luke expands a narrative into a parable (Jn. 11:1-12:17 Lk. 16:19-31)
- A distinctive story about a dead man being raised by Jesus is included in John and Luke (Jn. 11:1-45 Lk. 7:11-17)
- Pilate declares Jesus' innocence three times (Jn. 18:38; 19:4, 6 Lk. 23:4, 14, 22)
- The crowd desires to give tribute to Caesar in their double demand for his crucifixion (Jn. 19:1-16 Lk. 23:2-33)
- The day was the day of Preparation for the Sabbath, explaining the haste of the burial (Jn. 19:42 Lk. 23:54)
- The great catch of fish is climactically mentioned as something of a calling narrative (Jn. 21:1-14 Lk. 5:1-11)
- Concern is expressed at whether the nets might break (Jn. 21:11 Lk. 5:6-7)
- Jesus eats fish and bread with the disciples after the resurrection (Jn. 21:9-13 Lk. 24:28-43)

#### **4) Presentations of Jesus' teachings and ministry in John are replicated in**

##### **Luke:**

- The "word of God" is an embellished Lukan theme (Jn. 1:1-2; 10:35 Lk. 3:2; 5:1; 8:11, 21; 11:28; Ac. 4:31; 6:2, 7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 46; 17:13; 18:11)
- Only in John and Luke-Acts is Jesus referred to as "savior" (Jn. 4:42 Lk. 1:69; 2:11; Ac. 5:31; 13:23)
- Double questions are asked regarding Jesus' Messiahship and Sonship (Jn. 10:24, 33-36 Lk. 22:67, 70)
- The ascension is alluded to or mentioned (Jn. 20:17 Lk. 24:51; Ac. 1:9-11)
- Jesus suddenly appears to his disciples after the resurrection, standing among them (Jn. 20:19 Lk. 24:36)
- Jesus invites his followers to see and touch his hands (Jn. 20:20, 27 Lk. 24:39-40)
- Jesus bestows peace upon his followers after the resurrection (Jn. 20:19, 21 Lk. 24:36)
- Luke uniquely connects the beginning of feeding of the multitude with Bethsaida, the home of Philip, whom Jesus in John asked to find the crowds something to eat (Jn. 1:44; 6:5; 12:21 Lk. 9:10)

The citation of Isaiah 6:9-10 is distinctively associated with the reaching of the Gentiles in John and Acts (Jn. 12:20-41 Ac. 28:25-28)

- "Israelites" are portrayed as people in whom there is nothing false and amongst whom God is at work in John and Acts (Jn. 1:47 Ac. 2:22, 29; 3:12; 5:35; 13:16; 21:28)
- Jesus is presented explicitly as the prophet predicted by Moses (Deut. 18:15-22) in John and Acts (Jn. 5:46; 6:14 Ac. 3:22; 7:37; 26:22-23)
- Jesus refers to "my kingdom" only in John and Luke (Jn. 18:36 Lk. 22:30)
- Jesus prays for his disciples, that they might not fail during the time of trial (Jn. 17:15 Lk. 22:31-32)

#### 5) Presentations of disciples in John are repeated in Luke-Acts:

- The disciples question who would be the betrayer (Jn. 13:22-24 Lk. 22:23)
- Satan enters Judas (Jn. 13:27 Lk. 22:3)
- Only John and Luke mention a second Judas who is *not* Iscariot (Jn. 14:22 Lk. 6:16; Ac. 1:13)
- Mary Magdalene becomes a link between the risen Lord and the Apostles (Jn. 20:18 Lk. 24:10)
- Peter runs to the tomb after Mary's report (Jn. 20:4 Lk. 24:12)
- Peter arrives at the tomb and sees the linen cloths lying there (Jn. 20:5 Lk. 24:12)
- Peter is reported as having returned to his "home" (Jn. 20:10 Lk. 24:12) after seeing the empty tomb
- The unbelief of Thomas in John 20:24-28 is alluded to as the unbelief of the apostles in Luke 24:11 following Mary's report
- Simon Peter is the primary disciple associated with the great catch of fish (Jn. 21:2-11 Lk. 5:3-8)
- Philip is presented as one who evangelizes aliens, including Hellenists, Samaritans, and Ethiopians (Jn. 12:20-22 Ac. 8:5-40)

#### 6) Luke follows John's order and presentation several times, *against* Mark:

- Luke begins Jesus' ministry in ways reminiscent of John's rendering: the countryside of Galilee in the area around Nazareth (Jn. 1:43-2:11 Lk. 4:14-16)
- Only one sea-crossing is used in Luke rather than Mark's two (Jn. 6:16-21 Lk.

8:22-26)

- Only one feeding is mentioned in Luke, and this is the feeding of the 5,000, as it is in John (Jn. 6:1-15 Lk. 9:10-17)
- Luke relocates the confession of Peter after the feeding of the 5,000 as a contrast to its following the feeding of the 4,000 as it does in Mark (Jn 6:68-69 Lk. 9:20)
- Luke moves the servanthood discussion to the last supper, where it is in John (Jn. 13:1-17 Lk. 22:24-30)
- Jesus extols and exemplifies the greatness of servant leadership at the *table*(Jn. 13:1-17 Lk. 12:37; 22:24-30)
- Luke moves the prediction of Peter's denial to the last supper (Jn. 13:38 Lk. 22:34)
- Jesus' post-resurrection appearances begin in Jerusalem (Jn. 20:19-29 Lk. 24:13-53.)

#### **7) At times Luke conflates John's and Mark's presentations together:**

- Peter's confession is "the Christ of God" conflating "the Christ" with "the Holy One of God" (Mk. 8:29 & Jn. 6:69 Lk. 9:20)
- Luke departs from Mark's presentation of the anointing of Jesus' head, and presents the event as the anointing of Jesus' feet—an unlikely move to make without a traditional basis; John provides such a basis (Mk. 14:1-11 & Jn. 12:1-8 Lk. 7:36-50)

#### **8) Sometimes associative links (not strong contacts, but distinctive similarities nonetheless) appear between John and Luke-Acts:**

- "Levites" are mentioned only in John and Luke-Acts (Jn. 1:19 Lk. 10:32; Ac. 4:36)
- The claim by Jerusalem leaders that Jesus or his disciples lack of formal education is mentioned in John and Acts (Jn. 7:15 Ac. 4:13)
- "Siloam" is only mentioned in John and Luke (Jn. 9:7, 11 Lk. 13:4)
- Speaking against Caesar is used rhetorically against Jesus and his followers by surrogates of Jewish leaders (Jn. 19:12 Lk. 23:2 Ac. 17:7)
- Jesus is described as a "king" and a threat to Caesar before Pilate (Jn. 19:14-15 Lk. 23:2)
- Solomon's portico in the Jerusalem Temple is mentioned only in John and Acts (Jn.

10:23 Ac. 3:11; 5:12), and this is one of the places Jesus and his followers witnessed to Jewish leaders

### 9) The Holy Spirit references emphasized in John are repeated in Luke-Acts:

- The Holy Spirit will teach believers what they need to know and say (Jn. 14:26 Lk. 12:12),
- The Holy Spirit is presented distinctively as "wind" (Jn. 3:8 Ac. 2:2)
- The work of the Holy Spirit is described as "comfort" (*paraklēsis*) provided by the Comforter (*Paraklētos*) in John and Luke-Acts (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7 Lk. 2:25; Ac. 9:31)

### 10) Women are presented in similar ways in John and Luke-Acts:

- Jesus enters the home of Mary and Martha and is served by Martha (Jn. 12:1-8 Lk. 10:38-42)
- The mother of Jesus is featured prominently in John and Luke (Jn. 2:1-12; 19:25-27 Lk. 1:26-2:51)
- Women make confessions in John and Luke (Jn. 11:27 Lk. 11:27)
- Women are reported as having seen angels/men in radiant clothes at the empty tomb (Jn. 20:12 Lk. 24:23)

### 11) Samaritans are presented in similar ways in John and Luke-Acts:

- "Samaria" is only mentioned in John and Luke-Acts in the New Testament (Jn. 4:4, 9 Lk. 17:11; Ac. 1:8; 8:1, 5, 9, 14; 9:31; 15:3)
- Jesus ministers in Samaria as well as Galilee (Jn. 4:4-42 Lk. 17:11)
- Jesus' followers (versus Jesus' instructions in Matthew 10:5) are reported as traveling through Samaria (Jn. 4:8, 27-38 Lk. 9:51-56; Ac. 8:1-25; 15:3)
- A Samaritan person is presented as a favorable example for later audiences (Jn. 4:39-42 Lk. 10:25-37; 17:11-19)
- Jews having no dealings with Samaritans is declared or suggested (Jn. 4:9 Lk. 10:33-37)
- Samaritans are reported as believing that Jesus was the Messiah or receiving his ministry with gratitude (Jn. 4:39-42 Lk. 17:16; Ac. 8:7-8, 13-17)



## 12) Events reported only in John are alluded to in Luke-Acts:

- The “idle tale” told by Mary Magdalene to the apostles in Luke 24:10-11 appears to be a reference to the account in John 20:2, where she reported the empty tomb to Peter and the Beloved Disciple
- The disciples’ visit to the tomb in John 20:3-9 is alluded to in the disciples’ report on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:24
- The Lord’s post-resurrection appearance to Simon Peter in John 21:2-21 is alluded to in Luke 24:34

While many of these similarities may be only incidental and might not reflect direct contact between traditions, the preponderance of these features do imply some sort of intertraditional contact between the Johannine and Lukan traditions. John Bailey<sup>3</sup> argued that Luke and John may have shared a common, unavailable source, but there is no evidence of such a document. What we do have are the Gospels of Mark and John, and Luke clearly departs from Mark in Johannine directions at multiple times and in multiple ways.

While Lamar Cribbs also noted that where John is silent with relation to Mark, Luke omits some of those Markan sections,; argument from silence is a weaker form of reasoning. Nonetheless, Luke *does* appear to include Johannine material in his incorporation of Mark, although it is doubtful that he had a full text available, as he clearly did with Mark and likely Q. Luke’s prologue might even acknowledge his use of the Johannine tradition in expressing appreciation to what was “handed on to us by those who from the beginning were *eyewitnesses and servants of the word*” (Lk. 1:2). This is all the more likely, as Luke also provides an overlooked first-century clue to Johannine authorship.

III. The *third* consideration is that Luke explicitly connects the apostle John with a Johannine saying in Acts 4:19-20—a fact that has been totally overlooked on all sides of the debate. Of course, Johannine authorship has been a knotty problem among scholars for two centuries, but one reason for excluding John the apostle from authorship is the view that Irenaeus was the first to make the connection, which he apparently does around 180 CE. This is problematic for two reasons: first, there is no other person connected with the authorship of the Johannine Gospel other than John the apostle, except, perhaps John the elder, both of whom Papias and others claim were buried in Ephesus. Hence the distinctions:

“the elder” and “the disciple” (or even “the beloved disciple”) identifying two leaders sharing the same name. Irenaeus may be the clearest one to connect John the apostle with the Fourth Gospel, but he is not the first, as Charles Hill demonstrates.<sup>4</sup> Second, the only time John the apostle speaks in Acts, he says something with an unmistakably Johannine ring, and this connection is made *a full century before Irenaeus*.

More specifically, “Peter and John” speak in Acts 4:19-20, but it is in the form of two statements, not one. The first statement appears to be made by Peter, and it is echoed by two other Petrine statements in Acts 5:29 and 11:17.

“Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to *you rather than to God*, you must judge.” (Ac. 4:19)

“We must obey *God rather than any human authority*.” (Ac. 5:29)

“If then *God* gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, *who was I that I could hinder God?*” (Ac. 11:17)

Whether the historical Peter actually spoke this way, he is presented as speaking in characteristically Socratic rhetoric, appealing to divine authority rather than human authority. One could also argue the case that Peter likely employed loaded rhetoric, and the power-oriented legacy of Peter and his leadership style would not have been far off from such a presentation. Such, however, is not the present claim. Whatever the case, it must at least be acknowledged that Peter is presented several times in Acts, including 4:19, as appealing characteristically to divine authority rather than human authority. Luke presents Peter knowingly in a characteristic way.

The next statement, in verse 20, however, is *thoroughly Johannine*; this fact has been totally missed within larger discussions, critical and otherwise. While Luke uses seeing verbs over 250 times and hearing verbs over 150 times, this is the only time he does so in this particular order, in the first person plural, and in the past tense, and the closest parallel in the New Testament is 1 John 1:3. When Acts 4:20 is considered in the light of the Johannine writings, Luke's connecting of John the apostle with a characteristically Johannine saying is unmistakable.

“For we cannot keep from speaking about what we have *seen and heard*.” (Ac. 4:20)

“We declare to you what we have *seen and heard* so that you also may have fellowship with us.” (1 Jn. 1:3)

Jesus “testifies to what he has *seen and heard*, yet no one accepts his testimony.” (Jn. 3:32)

Of course, this does not prove that John the apostle spoke in these terms or that Luke was correct in connecting him with a Johannine saying. Indeed, there are many other reasons scholars have excluded an eyewitness, one of the twelve, and particularly the son of Zebedee from eligibility as the Fourth Evangelist, and these are laid out (along with thirty-six theological, historical, and literary Johannine riddles) in my forthcoming book with Fortress Press, *Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John*. However, given the facts that Luke appears to have drawn from the Johannine tradition in addition to Mark, and that he acknowledges his indebtedness to those who were “*from the beginning eyewitnesses and servants of the Logos*,” the fact of his connecting of John the apostle with a distinctively Johannine phrase in Acts 4:19-20 calls for a critical reopening of an otherwise “open-and-shut” case.

Given the additional facts that there is no compelling evidence for either John’s dependence on alien sources (à la Bultmann) or the Synoptics (à la Barrett), Luke’s testimony regarding the Johannine witness calls for a new paradigm for addressing the Johannine riddles.<sup>5</sup> The Fourth Gospel is neither a derivative narrative nor a fictive imitation of reality. While theologically developed and engaged, it represents an autonomous and dialogical Jesus tradition deserving of critical consideration within the historical quest for Jesus. This is what a Bi-Optic Hypothesis seeks to provide and what the John, Jesus, and History Project seeks to explore. Perhaps this new century and millennium will avail a way forward for that to happen—both critically and reflectively—posing new approaches to the Jesus of history, the Christ of faith, and the Gospel of John.

## Notes

1 I laid out three dozen times where Luke follows the Johannine tradition against Mark in Part III of Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest For Jesus; Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (London: T & T Clark, 2006, p. 102); this list may grow as I continue the analysis.

5 My analyses of Bultmann's and Barrett's approaches, as well as others, are laid out in *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel (With a New Introduction, Outlines, and Epilogue)* (Eugene: Cascade Books 2010); Appendix VIII argues the implications of Acts 4:19-20 for Johannine authorship (pp. 274-77).