

BOOK REVIEW

Kenneth Duncan Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke–Acts: Telling the History of God’s People Intertextually* (JSNTSup, 282; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2005). xii + 234 pp. Hdbk. US\$120.00.

In *Echoes of Scripture in Luke–Acts*, Kenneth Duncan Litwak responds to what he believes is an inadequacy found in previous studies of the Scriptures of Israel in Luke–Acts. In his view, the quotation-oriented approach fails to do justice to what a competent first-century reader would have heard in Luke’s text (p. 100). Litwak’s thesis instead focuses on the scriptural echoes placed within the text by Luke to help his reader to properly interpret the text. As a result, Litwak believes that Luke’s use of the Scriptures of Israel plays a hermeneutical role and acts as a discourse framing to the different sections of the text.

In the first chapter, Litwak begins by laying out a series of definitions and the outlines of his focus. Litwak spends significant time distinguishing his theory from the traditional Prophecy-Fulfillment model for interpreting Old Testament references and quotations. Litwak accomplishes this by evaluating different authors’ theories regarding Luke’s use of the Old Testament and distinguishing them from his own. This critique and comparison is very useful for understanding the subtle differences between the different theories and for better understanding his assertions regarding discourse framing.

In the second chapter, Litwak outlines his assumptions, specifically regarding the different unities, narrative, authorship and genre within the book of Luke. After this, Litwak delineates his understanding of intertextuality within Luke, contending that the Scriptures of Israel are woven throughout the fabric of Luke–Acts, regardless of whether there are any specific quotations. This is followed by a succinct outline of his underlying tenets regarding framing in discourse, showing that Luke

uses traditions, allusions and quotations to provide interpretive clues to his audience about the narrative they are encountering.

In the third chapter, Litwak begins to apply his theory to Luke 1–2. Litwak believes that the opening chapter in a work is especially important for the overall direction of the book. As a result, Litwak highlights Luke's many echoes within the birth narrative as a way Luke used Old Testament references to shape the understanding of the reader. Therefore, by echoing the Old Testament narratives of Abraham and Sarah and Hannah with Samuel, Luke is informing his readers that the son born to Elizabeth should be viewed as in continuity with God's covenantal character and redemptive nature. Consequently, he believes that Luke's strong use of echoes within Luke 1 is significant for setting the interpretive tone of the remainder of the narrative, especially in the lives of Jesus and John the Baptist.

At the conclusion of Chapter 3, Litwak includes one of two excursuses. Litwak evaluates Lk. 4.1-13, where Jesus quotes Scripture for the first time and therefore highlights its importance for understanding Jesus' own hermeneutic, and, consequently, how the reader also should interpret the Scriptures. This is an interesting and insightful interpretation.

In the fourth chapter, Litwak focuses on Luke 24 and Acts 1–2. It is in this chapter that Litwak centers on Jesus as a hermeneutical key for understanding the Old Testament. Luke says that Jesus opened his disciples' minds to understand the Old Testament in light of his suffering and did not use a proof-from-prophecy model. Litwak believes that it is significant that Luke did not use specific scriptural references within Luke 24, and that Luke was intentionally dissuading his readers from seeking out specific Scriptures that address Jesus, indicating to them that the whole of Scripture speaks about Jesus. Litwak frames this idea well, but does not discuss the idea that some parts of Scripture might be more important than others in addressing Jesus.

Also in Chapter 4 is Litwak's reinterpretation of Joel 3 in Acts 2. Litwak disagrees that this quotation should be interpreted as a fulfillment of prophecy, but instead provides a hermeneutic for understanding the remainder of Acts. He believes that this event characterizes the people of God within Acts as those who can prophesy, because they are empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is an interesting interpretation; however, in this section Litwak would benefit from a more detailed critique of the prophecy-fulfillment theory.

Following the conclusion of the chapter is the insertion of the second excursus evaluating the use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2. In this section, Litwak addresses a traditional prophecy-fulfillment text, but interprets it as Peter applying his new hermeneutical vision to an old verse regarding the Messiah. This section is not totally convincing.

Litwak, in his fifth chapter, emphasizes that Acts 28 is important, as the closing chapter, for providing the emphasis of Luke's work. In this chapter, Litwak cites Paul's use of Isa. 6.9-10 as an analogy of the rejection by the people of his words, and believes that this quotation brings the obstinate history of Israel into the reader's memory.

There are a number of strengths of this book. First, Litwak is clear in his ideas and definitions, which allows the reader also to have a clear idea of his concepts. Secondly, Litwak is very conscientious about not imposing modern concepts and categories on the text. He allows the echoes to speak for themselves and, as a result, all aspects of the Old Testament connections can be incorporated into his theory.

One weakness is that Litwak does not always expand on his statements in which he identifies echoes, but occasionally is content merely to identify them. In his defense, there are a lot of echoes and not all of them can be expanded on, but an extra sentence of support would be advantageous. Secondly, Litwak tends sometimes not to fully disprove the prophecy-fulfillment viewpoint before presenting his arguments. Both of these could be addressed, although they are not seriously detrimental for the overall quality of the work.

Overall, Litwak presents a solid work for understanding Luke's subtle uses of the Scriptures of Israel in providing a hermeneutic for interpreting Luke's narrative. These ideas provide new insight into understanding the text and can be particularly useful for the exegesis of Luke–Acts.

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