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Household and religion in Luke: Socio-rhetorical reading of Luke 4:38–41

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Abstract

The household is a significant setting for Jesus' ministry activities in the Gospel of Luke. Luke 4:38–41 demonstrates an ancient household where in-laws form part of the individuals in the household and the significance of religion to the health needs of the householders and others. The interpretations of Luke 4:38–41 have concentrated on the miracles of Jesus, discipleship, and Sabbath regulations. This study engages the socio-rhetorical interpretation propounded by Vernon K. Robbins to re-interpret Luke 4:38–41 to argue that households in the ancient Mediterranean society served both private and public spaces in the context of religion. The implied narrator of Luke 4:38–41 intends to persuade implied readers to emphasise religion in households by inviting Jesus to their homes to provide solutions to health needs.

Keywords

Luke 4:38–41; household; healing; exorcism; women; Jesus

Introduction

The Gospel of Luke dedicated attention not only to individuals but to households as a group. Besides the narrative under interpretation, the implied author of Luke presented narratives of Jesus in the home of a Pharisee (Lk 7:36–50); Jesus in the home of Jairus to raise the daughter back to life (Lk 8:49–56); Jesus in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (Lk 10:38–42); and Jesus in the home of Lazarus (Lk 19:1–10). These events captured a certain image of varied households in the ancient

Mediterranean society portrayed in the Gospel of Luke. They mentioned certain compositions of households that are critical to this study. These households serve as a haven for the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. The heads or owners of these households were either mainstream disciples of Jesus or sedentary disciples of Jesus, whose homes served as the initial venues for the start of the early Church.[1]

Luke 4:38–41 is a synoptic narrative that can be found in Mark 1:29–34 and Matthew 8:14–17. The preference for the Lukan version for this study is based on the identity of Jesus as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (the son of God) and τὸν χριστὸν (the Christ/the Messiah) (Lk 4:41) that is unique to the Lukan version. It gives detailed identity of the religious figure (Jesus) in the home of Simon and the persuasive argument it conveys to the implied readers. The Gospel presents a certain composition of a household that is portrayed in Luke 4:38–41. The narrative presents a household that included a member of the extended family – Simon's mother-in-law, who benefited from the religious activity of Jesus in the home. The home also served as a venue for others (members of the community) to benefit from the religious activities in the home of Simon. This is of particular interest to the study, where religious activities in a nuclear family/household can be extended to others. It portrays a household that is not limited to persons who regularly share in the same dwelling house, having biological relationships, or marriage, but also makes room for the temporary adoption of others for religious reasons.

This study engages socio-rhetorical interpretation to re-interpret Luke 4:38–41 to demonstrate the persuasive elements of the implied narrator to appeal to implied readers to offer their homes to Jesus and invite others to Jesus in their homes. In other words, the implied narrator is making a missional argument to persuade others to give their homes to Jesus' religious activities of healing and exorcism if there is a need.[2]

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1 Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, Discipleship as Empowerment for Faith-Sharing and Healing Theory. *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2020):43–68.

2 Giovanni Battista Bazzana, Early Christian Missionaries as Physicians Healing and its Cultural Value in Greco-Roman Context. *Novum Testamentum,* Vol. 51, No. 3 (2009): 232–251; Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, "Fathers and Householders in the Jesus Movement: The Perspective of the Gospel of Luke," *Biblical Interpretation* Vol. 11, No. 2 (2003): 211–238; Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Missionary Strategy of the Didache,"

Households in the ancient Mediterranean society

The composition of a household in the ancient Mediterranean society is complex and eclectic. Religion is a critical component of household activities for moral, ethical, and the provision of health needs of the family. Households are a critical component that contributes to communities and societies at large. They are a social setting for the nurture of individual family members of either the nuclear or extended family. The context of the ancient Mediterranean society or the Greco-Roman world of Jesus and the disciples is pluralistic. There are mainly the Judaism constituency and the Greco-Roman (Hellenistic) constituency that compete for dominance and recognition. Therefore, the determination of households and religion at home must relate to how these two major groups' households are constituted and what and how Luke 4:38–41 is narrated to reflect them. Households of both Greco-Roman and Jewish communities have a unique and similar composition of members, religion, domestic activities and obligations, education, economic system and status, inheritance, and ceremonies related to birth, maturity,[3] and release. This study will concentrate on aspects that are reflected in Luke 4:38–41 to effectively identify the persuasive leanings of the presence of Simon's mother-in-law and the religious activities of healing and exorcism in the home.

Households in rural and urban cities differed in the ancient Mediterranean world. Luke referred to Capernaum as Καὶ κατῆλθεν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ πόλιν τῆς Γαλιλαίας (a city in Galilee) (Lk 4:31a). Hence, the study of households will be concentrated on households in cities, not rural communities. This would help narrow down assumptions that may not be relevant for the study in the context of the household in Luke 4:38–41. Mark A. Chancey has demonstrated the existence of buildings in some communities in

Transformation Vol. 28, No. 2 (2011): 77–92; Martin S. Jaffee, "A Rabbinic Ontology of the Written and Spoken Word: On Discipleship, Transformative Knowledge, and the Living Texts of Oral Torah," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 65, No. 3 (1997): 525–549.

3 Harry O. Maier, *New Testament Christianity in the Roman World* (New York: Oxford Academic, 2018), 134–173.

Capernaum and Galilee that could be described as estates for the wealthy and elite in society.[4]

Jewish households

Jewish households or dwelling houses between the first and fourth century CE vary according to geographical location, economic, and social status of the family. "Domestic spaces vary along geographical but especially socio-economic lines. Wealthy households lived in large mansions while poor families crammed into small rooms in high-rise buildings. Elite and non-elite domestic spaces doubled as areas for work and business."[5] Jewish homes in cities are often four (4) rooms with a sizable courtyard for outdoor activities by the family and other visiting members of the community. The homes had flat roofs with parapet walls to harvest rainwater due to the general water problem in ancient Palestine.[6] Issues of luxury are not part of the main concerns of homes owned by biblical Jews. The houses are expandable or expanded to accommodate additional members of the households or members who have matured to have their private rooms.[7] The patriarchal nature of biblical Jewish communities makes it imperative that houses were owned by males who were fathers or husbands.

The human composition of the household depends on the economic status of the family, reflected in the head or owner of the house, and its relationship with other members of the community, including the extended family members. Jewish households are composed of members of the nuclear family, slaves, and some members of the extended family. Biblical Jews believe that next to YHWH is honour to one's parents. Parents who

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4 Mark A. Chancey, "Disputed Issues in the Study of Cities, Villages, and the Economy in Jesus' Galilee," in Craig A. Evans (ed.). *The World of Jesus and the Early Church: Identity and Interpretation in Early Communities of Faith* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 53–68.

5 Meredith J.C. Warren, "Domestic Spaces," in Naomi Koltun-Fromm and Gwynn Kessler (eds.). *A Companion to Late Ancient Jews and Judaism: Third Century BCE to Seventh Century CE* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2020), 339–351.

6 Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, "An Exegetical Discussion of Mark 2:1–12: Lessons for Forgiveness and Healing in Contemporary Christianity in Ghana," *Conspectus* Vol. 25 (2018): 1–20.

7 Fred H. Wight, *Manners, and Customs of the Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 118–120; Samuel L. Adams, *Social and Economic Life in Second Temple Judea* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 10–22.

are not too old help with the household chores, while those who are aged live with the family for care.[8] Where parents were helping with household chores, slaves were not engaged, or they were limited in their involvement in household activities. That notwithstanding, parents also care for newly born children; hence, the female parents were often made part of the household.[9] Since biblical Jews marry early, the mother-in-law helps to establish the couple in the household and serves as a source of reference for counselling in difficult matters of the couple. The problem with this system is that where a female in-law has more than one daughter, she needs to rotate among them, which could affect her marriage if the husband (father-in-law) is living. It also does not allow the new couple to chart a completely new course due to the influence of the mother-in-law as an experienced member of the household.

Religion is critical in the daily lives of many biblical Jews. Heads of household dedicate a room where the family meets to worship YHWH. A dedicated room for worship and sacrifices to YHWH is what critically distinguishes a home/household from a house.[10] It is a concept that originated with the ancient Hebrew patriarchs of biblical Jews, where the father or head of the household serves as a priest during the household worship service.[11] "During the Patriarchal era, many Hebrew homes had an altar to offer sacrifices where the husband and father was the priest of the family, until the institution of the priesthood by Moses, when their duties were transferred to the tribe of Levi."[12] It differs from the household gods

8 Craig S. Keener, "Family and Household," in Craig S. Keener and Stanley E. Porter (eds.). *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 353–368.

9 Katherine Aron-Beller, *Jews on Trial: The Papal Inquisition in Modena, 1598–1638* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 87–124; Barbara E. Reid, "'Do you see this Woman' A Liberative look at Luke 7:38–50 and Strategies for Reading other Lukan Stories against the Grains," in Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff (eds.). *A Feminist Companion to Luke* (London/New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 106–120.

10 Wight, *Manners, and Customs of the Bible Lands*, 118–120.

11 Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, "Domestic Religion and Home Churches in the Ancient World: The Role of Women in E-Worship at Homes by Charismatic Churches in Ghana due to Covid-19," in Helen A. Labeodan, Rosemary Amenga-Etego, Johanna Stiebert & Mark S. Aidoo (eds.) COVID-19: *African Women and the Will to Survive* (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2021), 201–214.

12 Aryeh, "An Exegetical Discussion of Mark 2:1–12," 7.

(*teraphim*) of Laban (Gen. 31:19) in terms of the object of worship, but it reflects the idea of worship being part of household activities among the biblical Jews, which continued to the period of Jesus and later converted to worship places for the early Christians. Although there are archaeological challenges, the home of Simon has been argued as one of the homes that provided space for the meeting of some early church members.[13] The emergence of Christianity in the first four (4) centuries CE saw biblical Jewish Christian heads of households convert from the worship of YHWH in households to Christian worship services that were not limited to members of the household but were opened to others in the community to join. In addition, the rooftops and the courtyards were converted to Christian worship places to accommodate more people.[14]

Greco-Roman households

Households in the Greco-Roman period vary in architecture and the sizes of buildings. The Greco-Roman houses in urban dwellings are more luxurious than the Jewish houses.[15] The size of the house and the household are determined by the economic status of the head of the family/household/owner of the house. A change in the economic fortunes of the head of the household critically affects its composition and activities.[16] It partially reflects the households of biblical Jews. Greco-Roman households in this study are the amalgamation of Greek and Roman household concepts. Greco-Roman households are largely varied, but this study considers Greco-Roman households that might be available in Capernaum, Galilee, during the first four (4) centuries CE.

The Greco-Roman context of the third and fourth centuries CE used Greek terms such as *oikos* and *oikia*, and the Latin *domus* to describe dwelling homes in cities. The *domus* appears to be the modern version of the *oikos* and *oikia*. "A domus was any place where a property owner

13 Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Children in House Churches in the Light of New Research on Families in the Roman World," in Craig A. Evans (ed.). *The World of Jesus and the Early Church: Identity and Interpretation in Early Communities of Faith* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 69–86.

14 MacDonald, "Children in House Churches," 69–86.

15 Lisa C. Nevett, *Ancient Greek Housing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 217–256.

16 Nevett, *Ancient Greek Housing,* 186–216.

(a *paterfamilias*) resides. Often, the term *familia* is employed to refer to all the persons and objects under the legal power (*patria postesta*) of the *paterfamilias* rather than the nuclear group implied by the English term 'family'."[17] Households have a legal definition in the Greco-Roman context, which requires the active presence of the head or owner of the house. It distinguishes households from houses – *oikos* and *oikia*. When the *paterfamilias* is present in an *oikos* and *oikia*, it becomes a *domus* by law. A *domus* is composed of the head or owner of the house, who is usually a male, wife, children (if any), slaves, and children of slaves.[18] In-laws and out-law individuals are part of the household as long as the head of the household lives with them. A similar case can be made for rented dwelling accommodations where the owner of the house does not live in the house, but if the tenant (head) is present with their composition, it is a *domus*. The Greco-Roman household is relatively large due to the *domus,* which has more rooms to accommodate a good number of slaves and their children in cities. Unlike biblical Jewish households, where in-laws play critical roles in the upkeep and nurture of the family members, the *domus* households have more slaves to undertake these assignments, although in-laws were not prevented.[19]

Religious activities are central to Greco-Roman households. A room in the *domus* is dedicated to family gods. There is a range of gods, but households select gods based on the needs, hopes, and aspirations of the household. Some of the gods are inherited properties. The selection of gods could be polytheistic, but central to household gods often includes a genius (protective spirit). The *paterfamilias* offers food and sacrifices to the gods periodically for protection and favour on behalf of the household.[20] The

17 MacDonald, "Children in House Churches," 73. Italics in original.

18 Keener, "Family and Household," 353–368.

19 Cheryl Anne Cox, *Household Interests. Property, marriage strategies, and family dynamics in ancient Athens* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998); D. B. Martin, "The construction of the ancient family: Methodological considerations," *Journal of Roman Studies,* 86 (1996): 41–60; R. Osborne, *Demos: The discovery of classical Attika* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985); Riet Van Bremen, "Family structures," in A. Erskine (ed.). *A companion to the Hellenistic World* (Malden MA, Blackwell, 2003), 313–330; David Whitehead, *The demes of Attica 508/7 – ca. 250 B. C.: A political and social study (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1986).*

20 B.W.R. Pearson, "Domestic Religion and Practices," in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2000),

participation in worship of these household gods is greatly limited to the head of the household. In other words, members of the households do not often participate in religious activities as a group. There are secrets of the worship of the gods that are only known to the head of the household.[21]

To sum up, households during the first four (4) centuries included in-laws, and religious services were central to many activities. Specific rooms are set apart for YHWH/gods/spirits who are considered the spiritual heads of the household.[22] Biblical Jews' households allow for mass participation in religious activities than the Greco-Roman households. Both the biblical Jews' households and Greco-Roman households invite itinerant religious persons to their homes to deal with issues that need specialist attention and solutions.[23] A household without religious activities is considered a mere house or building. With time, the *domus* households of the Greco-Roman context became attractive to biblical Jews. Hence, Jews in the early centuries CE began to build homes like the *domus*. It is believed that "(i) the rich man (16:1–13); (ii) host of the great dinner (14:15–24); (iii) the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–21); (iv) Zacchaeus (19:2–10); and (v) the two Pharisees who invited Jesus (11:37; 14:1–7)"[24] have *domus* and the heads are sedentary disciples of Jesus who accommodated the disciples when they were sent on a mission by Jesus (Lk 9:1–6; 10:1–12). Therefore, households in ancient Mediterranean society continued to improve/increase in architectural design and the size of the household.

208–302.

21 Pieter J. J. Botha, "Houses in the world of Jesus," *NEOTESTAMENTICA* 32(1) (1998): 37–74.

22 Aryeh, "An Exegetical Discussion of Mark 2:1–12," 1–20.

23 Anna-Katharina Rieger, "This god is your god, this god is my god: local identities at sacralized places in Roman Syria," in Valentino Gasparini, Maik Patzelt, Rubina Raja, Anna-Katharina Rieger, Jörg Rüpke and Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli in cooperation with Elisabeth Begemann (eds.). *Lived Religion in the Ancient Mediterranean World: Approaching Religious Transformations from Archaeology, History and Classics* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2020), 351–384.

24 Aryeh, "Discipleship as Empowerment for Faith-Sharing," 55.

Method for the study

The socio-rhetorical interpretation by Vernon K. Robbins is employed for the study. Socio-rhetorical interpretation is composed of five (5) main textures: (i) inner-textures; (ii) inter-textures; (iii) socio-cultural textures; (iv) ideological textures; and (v) sacred textures. The inner textures consist of repetition, progression, narrational, opening-middle-closing, argumentative, and sensory aesthetic textures.[25] The narrational texture of the inner textures has been selected to exegete Luke 4:38–41 to demonstrate how the implied narrator engaged concepts of households in his context and the context of the audience and receptors to persuade them to welcome Jesus to impact religious activities in their households.

Narrational texture: Ancient Mediterranean household routines as key concepts in Luke 4:38–41

The narrational texture examines critical concepts of how the implied narrator engaged key concepts of household personnel and religion in the composition of Luke 4:38–41. Narrative texture attempts to lead to the disclosure of seemingly concealed information by the implied narrator and provides some tangible reasons for the concealment. Narrative texture in this study is focused on the event and setting of the narrative, characters engaged by the implied narrator, either passive or in active voice, and discourse. These building blocks of narrative texture will not be deduced separately from the text but will be emphasised through the narrative texture exegesis of Luke 4:38–41 to appreciate the flow of the text from the perspective of the implied narrator. In other words, the event and setting, characters, and discourse will not be selected from the text and placed under each subheading, which may distort the logical flow of the narrative.

The narrative focuses on a person – Jesus; an action – exorcism and healing of Simon's mother-in-law and the multitudes; time – when he entered the house of Simon, and during sunset; manner – rebuke and laying on of hands;

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25 Vernon K. Robbins, *Beginnings and Developments in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 2004), 2; Vernon K. Robbins, Robert H. von Thaden Jr., and Bart B. Bruehler eds. *Foundations for Socio-Rhetorical Exploration: A Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Reader* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), xvii.

and the reason was that they besought him. The pattern satisfies Theon's criteria for a "'complete' elaboration rather than a "chreia" elaboration."[26] A sharp story told for its significance or need, originating from a person or situation. It is a short write-up that praises the author and shows the usefulness of the story. The text for the study is a complete, brief narrative. "Lukan text exhibits skill with the composition of brief narratives."[27] The text fits the μυθικὸν πρᾶγμα due to the presence of terms and phrases such as Synagogue, Jesus, Son of God, and Messiah.[28] These terms and phrases resonate with biblical Jewish religious personnel and places of meeting. In the Gospel of Luke, the author depicts that the Synagogue was the first point of call when Jesus entered a community (Lk 4:15, 16, 20, 28, 33, 38, 44; 6:6; 7:5; 8:41; 13:10), due to its availability[29] and the centripetal nature of drawing many people.

The implied narrator of the narrative began the narration with ἀναστὰς δὲ (after) to indicate that the present happening is premised upon the immediate previous situation in the Synagogue in Capernaum (Lk 4:31–37). This is reinforced by the participle aorist active form of ἀνίστημι. It suggests that the implied readers may have a clue concerning what had happened earlier, or the implied narrator was drawing the attention of the implied readers to a previous incident: a reference to exorcism in the Synagogue (4:31–37). It implies that the narrator was painting a picture to the implied readers that the ministry of Jesus in the house of Simon was an extension of the miracle that took place in the Synagogue. Hence, implied readers must acknowledge the power and authority of Jesus over demons and sicknesses. Simply put, the interpretation of the present event ought to

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26 Robbins, "Narrative in Ancient Rhetoric," 376.

27 Robbins, "Narrative in Ancient Rhetoric," 374.

28 Vernon K. Vernon, "Narrative in Ancient Rhetoric and Rhetoric in Ancient Narrative," *Society of Biblical Literature 1996 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1996), 368–384; Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, "Ethnicity, Miracle, and Lepers in Luke: Inner Texture Analysis of Luke 17:11–19," in Roberta Sterman Sabbath (ed.) *Troubling Topics, Sacred Texts: Readings in Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Qur'an* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2021), 493–516.

29 Jacob Ashkenazi and Mordechai Aviam, "Monasteries, Monks, and Villages in Western Galilee in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 5.2 (Fall, 2013): 269–297; Strange and Shanks, "St. Peter's House," 71.

be partly understood by using the immediate previous event as a rhetorical conceptual location for ideas for possible reasoning.

The participle aorist – ἀναστὰς shows that a premise of an action that took place earlier has a bearing on a present happening. In the sentence: Ἀναστὰς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς συναγωγῆς εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν Σίμωνος (after leaving the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon), the implied narrator intends to show proximity between the Synagogue and Simon's house. It is an appeal to the rhetorical framework of ancient rabbinic rules that a Synagogue should be sited on a high apex (hill, mountain) in the community.[30] It means that the implied narrator is using the Synagogue, a Jewish religious venue of meetings, as his "point of view" to narrate the event in the house of Simon. Religio-rhetorically, it implies that the miracle that happened in the Synagogue could also take place in the house of Simon.

The house of Simon was a concentric octagonal building with a statue of a peacock that depicts immortality among early Christians. It was used as a meeting place for the early Church in Capernaum, Galilee.[31] Rhetorically, the implied narrator is pointing to the implied reader's conceptual reasoning of Jewish houses and their socio-religious functions. Houses could vary in size and design based on the economic status and social worldview of house owners. In first-century Palestine, the average simple home of a biblical Jew was a one-room dwelling house measuring about 3m sq., with a courtyard, and minimal architectural decoration.[32] An extended family living together may have three to four rooms each measuring 3m sq. around a courtyard.[33] In other words, the rooms are situated on the three sides of the courtyard.[34] A building of more than three rooms is considered a complex because, at each stage when the need arises for accommodation,

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30 James F. Strange and Hershel Shanks, "St. Peter's House: Has the House Where Jesus Stayed in Capernaum Been Found?" in *Ten Top Biblical Archaeology Discoveries* (Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2011), 72–73.

31 Strange and Shanks, "St. Peter's House", 73.

32 William L. Coleman, *Today's Handbook of Bible Times & Custom* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), 12.

33 Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of the Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 35.

34 Refer to Strange and Shanks, "St. Peter's House," 74–75 for sketches.

a room will be extended and attached to the last room constructed.[35] Conversely, Greco-Roman homes were quite elaborate. Both biblical Jews and Greco-Roman households dedicated a room in the home for religious purposes.[36] In that regard, the implied narrator was pointing to the implied reader, who is possibly a Roman official (Theophilus), that the incident took place in a setting that the implied reader is familiar with. It creates a social location for any reader to follow towards understanding the narrative. The narrative setting in the text is geographical and has physical, religious, and cultural significance.[37]

The presence of Simon's mother-in-law, her service after being healed, and Jesus' presence in the house of Simon till δύνοντος δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου (sunset) show that the implied narrator was suggesting that the building comprises of more than one room. Possibly four rooms (for biblical Jews); this is emphasised by the Markan version where the two brothers of Simon: Andrew and James were mentioned as members of the household (Mk 1:29). The presence of Jesus in Simons' house till sunset was to suggest to the implied reader that there is a relationship between Simon and Jesus prior to the healing of the mother-in-law. Or the healing incident established a relationship between Simon and Jesus, which led to the long stay of Jesus in the house, a relationship that might have begun earlier in the Synagogue. The phrase δύνοντος δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου (sunset) suggests a biblical Jewish point of view for the observance of sabbath rules.

Courtyards are critical to many homes owned by biblical Jews. Many activities of the homes take place in the courtyard.[38] A complex building of about four rooms may have a courtyard which varies between 60 feet sq. and 50 feet sq. (approximately between 18m sq. and 15m sq.).[39] The mode of

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35 Eric M. Meyer, "The Problem of Gendered Space in Syro-Palestinian Domestic Architecture: The Case of Roman Period Galilee" in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 44–72.

36 B. W. R. Pearson, "Domestic Religion and Practices," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background,* Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter eds. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 208–302.

37 Robert B. Chisholm Jr. *Interpreting the Historical Books: An Exegetical Handbook*, David M. Howard Jr. ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 26.

38 Coleman, *Today's Handbook of Bible Times & Customs*, 18.

39 Strange and Shanks, "St. Peter's House", 79.

narration shows that the multitudes that came to the house of Simon in the evening were hosted in the courtyard. The courtyard may be open or roofed based on the financial status of the owner of the house. In view of Simon's having his mother-in-law as a member of the household and hosting Jesus after the Synagogue service suggests that he is wealthy enough to have a roofed courtyard.

The implied narrator was not interested in when or the form of relationship that existed between Jesus and Simon before Jesus entered the house. This is expressed in the aorist form – εἰσῆλθεν. However, the prologue of Luke indicates that the Gospel was addressed to someone who had already been introduced to some available literature concerning the gospels (maybe proto-Mark).[40] Hence, the implied narrator expects that the implied reader would have known by proto-Mark that there was a prior relationship between Jesus and Simon. Alternatively, in the invitation of Jesus to the house of Simon, the implied narrator might have engaged in a laid-down hospitality that is expressed for guest preachers in the Synagogue.

The coming of the multitudes into the house of Simon at sunset was for the implied narrator to indicate that they were biblical Jews, who observe Sabbath regulations and considered seeking healing and exorcism on the Sabbath day as work. There was no indication in the text of what attracted the multitudes to the house of Simon. Perhaps, it was the report of the exorcism in the Synagogue that was widely circulated by those present (Lk 4:37). By the presence of the multitudes, the implied narrator wished to indicate the importance that Jesus had assumed after the exorcism in the Synagogue and the healing of Simon's mother-in-law to the implied reader. Further, the implied narrator was drawing the attention of the implied reader to how famous philosophers and miracle workers were sought after. Miracle workers in the Greco-Roman world (Palestine) were highly sought after due to the belief in malevolent spirits that may inflict sickness on their victims, to demonstrate their power above other gods, spirits, and deities, and to present themselves as formidable.[41] Here, religious activities as a

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40 Carl Joachim Classen, *Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2002), 82.

41 Stephen H. Travis, "Form Criticism," in I. Howard Marshall ed. *New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Principles and Methods* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1977):

central activity in both biblical Jewish and Greco-Roman households can be deduced.

Although the three (3) branches of rhetoric can be deduced from Luke 4:38–41, the focus of this study finds it fit for epideictic rhetoric.[42] It shows narrative cohesion as follows:

Epideictic rhetoric	Corresponding reference in Luke 4:38–41
Case: Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. People were suffering from various forms of sickness and diseases	Verse 38 Verse 40
Result/Case: Jesus stood over her and rebuked the fever, and the fever left her. He laid his hands on them and cured them	Verse 39a Verse 40b
Result: She got up and began to serve Demons came out of them and began to confess that Jesus was the Messiah.	Verse 39b Verse 41a, b
Result: Jesus rebuked and stopped the demons from making him known as the Messiah.	Verses 41c

The narrative demonstrates the sequence and accumulation of the actions of Jesus as a character that is focused on liberating humans from the oppression of demons and sicknesses: an uncompromising, open-ended character in terms of healing and exorcism, who had assumed indispensable significance in Capernaum of Galilee. Jesus had assumed a character which

153–164.

42 Vernon K. Robbins, "Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of Miracle Discourse in the Synoptic Gospels," *Miracle Discourse in the New Testament. (*Ed.) Duane F. Watson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012): 17–84.

is free and independent rather than a closed character. The implied narrator's use of συναγωγῆς (Synagogue), δύνοντος δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου (sunset), and τὸν χριστὸν (the Messiah, the Christ) leads the implied reader to study biblical Jewish religious places for meetings, Sabbath regulations, and messianic expectations in Judaism. Not only did the implied narrator direct to Judaism but also to Greco-Roman religions. This is vivid in the use of χεῖρας ἐπιτιθεὶς (hand laying). Hand laying to cast out demons and heal the sick was not attested in Judaism but was in Greco-Roman religions.[43]

The rhetoric of the implied narrator is to present Jesus to the reader as a healer and exorcist worthy of participating in household religious activities. This liberating act is because he is the Messiah. The reliability of the narrative can be traced to the prologue of the narrator. The narrator acknowledged the presence of other gospels (probably, proto gospels). Although having many sources to choose from can be confusing and a daunting exercise, the use of πολλοὶ (many, much) demonstrates that Luke might have checked and re-checked his information for reliability.[44] It is a hermeneutical premise for the interpretation of Luke's narratives. Subsequently, the narrator also recognised that the implied reader had been instructed earlier concerning the activities of Jesus (1:4). In that regard, it can be observed that πεπληροφορημένων, perfect passive participle of πληροφορέω and compound of πληρόω (fill) and φέρω (bring) is to bring to satisfaction or full measure.[45] An implied narrator's plain recognition of the knowledge of the implied reader concerning certain aspects of what he is writing establishes the dependability of the implied narrator as one who sets off to fill gaps in the earlier information received by the implied reader.

Concerning holism and context, the implied narrator leaves gaps for the reader to speculate and fill. The narrator points out that Simon has a house in Capernaum, Galilee. However, Capernaum of Galilee is a large area, and the implied narrator does not give any indication of the exact location

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43 Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (revised edition). (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 121.; Craig A. Evans, "Apollonius of Tyara," in Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter (eds.) *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 80.

44 Richard J. Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1–4)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43.2 (1981): 205–227.

45 Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project," 211.

of the house. An indication of the actual location would help the implied reader to effectively appreciate the specific social setting in which the event took place. The implied narrator suggests that the house was big enough to host multitudes. He implied to the reader that Simon has a wife, or the reader would have to conjecture that Simon had a wife (1 Cor. 9:5), or he was a widower[46] and the mother-in-law lives with him to render menial domestic services, which may include attending to the needs of guests. The name of Simon's mother-in-law was not mentioned. It was left for implied readers to conjecture. The multitudes who came to the house at sunset suggest that they were Jews who observed Sabbath regulations. However, the reader could speculate that since there are no Sabbath rules against travelling,[47] the multitudes could have come to the house of Simon and waited till the Sabbath period was over for Jesus to heal their illnesses, though the narrator did not give any clue to that effect. Hence, the reader could imagine that Jesus was committed to healing sicknesses at any period, including the Sabbath, due to the non-Jewish background of the implied reader. The issues left out by the implied narrator suggest that they are not critical to his argument to persuade implied readers to invite Jesus to the household's religious activities.

Conclusion

The rhetoric of the implied narrator in the composition of Luke 4:38–41 is eclectic to attract dominant groups in the ancient Mediterranean society to make Jesus a guest during household religious activities. There are similarities between the religious activities of healing and exorcism in Luke 4:38–41 and religious activities when religious guests are invited to household religious routines. This argument will appeal to most people in the ancient Mediterranean society without socio-ethnic reservations. However, the composition of a household to include a mother-in-law

46 Fred W. Burnett, "Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels," in Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Adele Berlin (eds.). *Characterization in Biblical Literature*, Semeia 63 (Georgia, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 3–28; Adams, *Social and Economic Life,* 42–57.

47 Sharon H. Ringe, "Holy, as the Lord Your God Commanded You: Sabbath in the New Testament," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology,* Sabbath (2005): 17–37.

reflects more of biblical Jewish ideologies. The implied narrator drew on concepts from the household of the extended family system and religion in ancient Mediterranean society to attract both biblical Jews and Greco-Roman households to Jesus. It is a narrative composition that would receive attention from the households of both biblical Jews and Greco-Romans.

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