

Paul the True Prophet: Synkrisis in Acts 27

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Abstract

The links between Acts 27 and Jonah's story and, more specifically, between Jonah and Paul have been recognized. There are more, but I will only list six similarities and six differences between the two protagonists, Jonah and Paul, respectively. This contrasting type of comparison is known as synkrisis. By comparing the two stories and the two protagonists, this paper will demonstrate how Acts 27 portrays Paul as God's reliable and obedient prophet as opposed to Jonah. Finally, Richard Hays' seven criteria of intertextuality will be listed, and the synkrisis will be evaluated according to them.

Keywords: Paul, Jonah, Jewish prophet, Acts of the Apostles, presentation in the Acts of the Apostles

Introduction

The links between Acts 27 and Jonah's story have been recognized, not verbal links but rather motifs common in both narratives.¹ Witherington (1998, 756) claims that Luke "is much more indebted to Greek traditions of historiography than to Roman or even to Jewish ones." Then, in a footnote (1998, 756, n. 7), he adds, "Paul is not being portrayed here as the reluctant prophet that Jonah was. To the contrary, he seeks to rescue his pagan fellow travelers by, among other things, good advice and prophecy." The treatments by Roloff (1988, 360) and Pervo (2009, 652; he highlights the allusion to Acts 27:19 in Jonah 1:5, 659) are similar. Keener (2015, 382) considers the Jonah typology "a very minor Jonah subtext in Luke-

1 E.g. Bruce 1990, 508, without elaboration though.

Acts.” In the *Commentary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, discussing chapter 27, Marshall does not even refer to Jonah (2007, 599).²

This short overview indicates New Testament scholarship’s judgment of whether or not Acts 27 alludes to Jonah. Keener (2015, 382-383) aptly represents the state of affairs. He wavers as to whether Acts 27 alludes to Jonah. If it does, “it could belong to a larger subtext” (2015, 382). Then, he lists six possible parallels, noting that they “are not very compelling if we are trying to demonstrate Jonah as the narrative’s single literary grid, since many of the parallels fit sea scenes in general” (2015, 383). He concludes, “There may be some value, however, especially in contrasts, so long as we do not make a literary imitation of Jonah Luke’s primary purpose” (2015, 383). In his 2020 commentary, Keener does not refer to Jonah.

There is, however, more to the stories when compared than commentaries and individual studies have realized. This essay argues that Luke presents Paul as God’s reliable and obedient prophet as opposed to Jonah witnessing God’s mercy. In his commentary, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Luke Timothy Johnson (1992, 458-459) views the apostles as prophets and discusses how Paul is depicted as one of them. Paul speaks in prophecies which are fulfilled; this portrays Paul as God’s spokesman amongst others (Acts 27:10, 21, 24-25, 34, 44); sees God in a vision, in which he offers assurance; Paul serves this God (Acts 27:23-25); encourages others by sharing this assurance with them and witnessing to God’s saving power (Acts 27:24-37); is intent on reaching Rome to bear witness to the gospel (Acts 27:24). More recently, David Moessner analyzed Paul’s portrayal in Acts. Tellingly, Moessner’s chapter is titled “Paul Uniquely Parallels and Completes Jesus’s Calling as ‘the Prophet like [but greater than] Moses’” (2016, 262). Moessner emphasized how Luke uses various motifs of Jesus’s transfiguration when depicting Paul’s calling (2016, 263-264). He has demonstrated several parallels between the ministries of Paul and Jesus and their respective fates as rejected prophets (2016, 262-269).

In what follows, I shall compare Jonah and Paul as seen in Acts 27, then focus on some characteristics of prophets before briefly revisiting the broader context of Acts 27.

1. A Comparison of Paul and Jonah

1.1. *Why Jonah?*³

Arguably, Paul can be compared to other ancient heroes, such as Odysseus, who was also shipwrecked. Luke draws the parallel between Jonah and Paul because,

2 Nor do Marshall 1980; Johnson 1992; Barrett 2004; Pelikan 2005; Schnabel 2012; Dunn 2016; Cho and Park 2019.

3 Comparing Paul and Jonah may seem obvious, still this aspect has been missing in studies. Several links between Jonah and Acts have been noticed, see e.g., Oxley 2004. One may ask

for him, Paul, as a prophet, is of importance. He uses Jonah as a person of comparison because he is depicted in the Old Testament as the most successful (cf. Ackerman 1997, 238-239) and, simultaneously, the most disobedient prophet.⁴ I am not aware of a commentary seeing Jonah differently. Just a sample of views will hopefully illustrate this.

Allen (1976, 194) speaks of “Jonah’s meanness and malevolence.” Stuart (1987, 431) views Jonah as “an ardent nationalist, pro-Israel and anti-foreign; at least, anti-Assyrian. [...] also capable of being peevish and stubborn, even against God.” As for the book’s message, “On one level, the message of Jonah is simply ‘Do not be like Jonah’” (Stuart 2012, 463). “All around him, the Israelite prophet Jonah sees pagans acknowledging G—d, but he, a prophet of Yhwh who presumably has more immediate contact with and understanding of G—d, has difficulties in coming to terms with Yhwh’s demands and actions,” Sweeney observes (2000, 326). Timmer claims that, as for his prophetic role, “Jonah first avoids the role entirely (chs. 1–2), then performs it perfunctorily (chs. 3–4). More striking still is how the book consistently portrays him as a prophet who delivers Yahweh’s words while being fundamentally in conflict with him.” He adds, “As a result, the reader is encouraged to consider Jonah’s role in the book that bears his name as a representative of unrepentant Israel” (Timmer 2011, 62).

1.2. *Similarities*

Although there are more, I will list six similarities and six differences between the two protagonists, Jonah and Paul, respectively. This contrasting type of comparison is known as *synkrisis*, which designates “parallelisms or contrasts between protagonists in a narrative” (Sciberras 2015, 55).⁵ The most apparent examples of similarity between Paul and Jonah are:⁶

1. The protagonist departs with a mission.

In both voyages, the protagonist is charged with a mission. Jonah is ordered to “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wick-

whether this comparison of the apostle and the prophet through the similarities and differences were intended by the author. My answer would be in the positive. But one should bear in mind that narratives have their own lives; cf. Paul Ricoeur’s famous dictum, “A literary work is the orphan of the author, adopted by the reading community.”

4 In addition, the New Testament often compares its characters to Old Testament forerunners, see, e.g., Jesus and Moses, Jesus and Samuel, or John the Baptist as the voice calling in the desert.

5 Wall (1987, 84) calls narrating against the backdrop of an OT precedence “comparative midrash.”

6 For more parallels, see Yates 2016; Wittkowsky 2020, 95-96. Beresford (2016) suggests that as early as in Paul’s time, the book of Jonah was recited on the day of Atonement, referred to in Acts 27:9, which was an obvious point of reference.

edness has come up before me” (Jon 1:2), while Paul is encouraged not to be afraid for “you must stand before the emperor” (Acts 27:24).⁷

2. The destination is the conqueror’s capital.

As the quotes above indicate, both of them are to travel to the empire’s capital (Jonah, by a detour). Note that Nineveh in the 8th century BC and Rome in the 1st century BC conquered the Jewish capital, Samaria and Jerusalem, respectively.

3. A storm threatens the life of the hero and those aboard.

A storm threatens the mission, the ship, and all aboard. Both ships’ cargo is jettisoned (Jon 1:5; Acts 27:18).

4. Voyage on the Mediterranean.

Even though there are different suggestions as to the location of Tarshish,⁸ Jonah’s voyage was clearly on the Mediterranean. The ordeal Paul and the company went through also took place in the Mediterranean.

5. The protagonist’s fate is decided by others, but he initiates the good outcome.

In both stories, the people on the ship determine the protagonist’s fate. The sailors of Jonah’s ship “cast lots” and then ask Jonah, “What shall we do to you?” before, at Jonah’s suggestion, throwing him into the sea, causing it to cease raging (Jon 1:7, 11, 15). Despite Paul’s advice to the centurion, the pilot and the owner of the ship decide to sail on (Acts 27:10-11); then later, “The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners [...]; but the centurion, wishing to save Paul [having witnessed to the rightness of Paul’s view and behavior], kept them from carrying out their plan” (Acts 27:42-43). Both protagonists contribute to a fortunate outcome with their respective suggestions.

6. The protagonist nearly perishes but is saved.

The sailors reluctantly agree to throw Jonah overboard, but he is subsequently saved by a big fish sent by God. Due to the centurion’s decision, Paul’s life is threatened but saved by God’s miraculous assistance (Acts 27:24, 44) and the

7 Bible quotes are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted. Unattributed Bible references are to Acts. It is noteworthy that whereas in the MT of Jon 1,9, Jonah responds, “I am a Hebrew” (heb. *ibri anoki*), the LXX reads, “I am the Lord’s servant.” The original Hebrew of this reading, *abdi jhwh anoki*, and its implication (a servant fleeing from his deity) is a more dramatic and understandable cause for the sailors’ consternation than what the MT implies (see Börstinghaus 2010, 197-198). In Acts 27:23, Paul, too, introduces himself as the Lord’s servant.

8 Modern research has suggested that “Tarshish” might refer to Tartessos in Hispania, Tarsus in Cilicia, or to Sardinia (based on the Nora Stone).

centurion's action (Acts 27:42-43), so he is declared innocent.⁹ Both Jonah (Jon 1:14-16) and Paul (Acts 27:34-36) give God credit for the rescue.

1.3. Differences

To be sure, there are differences between the two protagonists, Jonah and Paul as well that highlight the correspondence even more:

1. Jonah brings storm and calamity – not heeding Paul's warning brings storm and calamity.

In reaction to Jonah's decision to head in the opposite direction (Jon 1:3), God sends a storm which nearly sinks the ship (Jon 1:4). Since the voyage is dangerous at that particular time of the year, Paul warns the centurion, who does not heed the warning (Acts 27:9-11); the ship is endangered in the subsequent storm (Acts 27:14-41). Paul is instrumental in God's saving act (Keener 2015, 383).

2. Jonah does not want to reach the capital and thus flees. The sailors throw him into the sea to save the ship (Jon 1:15). On the other hand, Paul wants to reach the capital, the destination of his mission (Acts 27:24), and is nearly killed by the soldiers (Acts 27:42-43).

Both are instructed to travel to their respective capitals (Jon 1:2 and Acts 27:24). Paul obeys (Acts 27:1-44), while Jonah does not (Jon 1:3).¹⁰

3. Jonah is selfish and concerned only about himself, with the only exception being his suggestion to be thrown overboard.¹¹ For a prophet, he demonstrates startling indifference to the sailors and his mission – Paul intends to have everyone saved, including the selfish sailors, to fulfill his mission.

This aspect demonstrates most clearly the difference between the two prophets. In his selfishness, Jonah displays anger but never anguish, to the extent that Jonah's portrayal is the caricature of a prophet. In contrast, Paul demonstrates great care for all those on the ship. Jonah is challenged to call on his God to bring deliverance (Jon 1:6), but we do not read of him doing it. We are told that Paul prayed (27:23-24) without specifying what he prayed for (Keener

9 Yates (2016, 451) discusses the ancient belief that gods punished evildoers, murderers in particular (cf. Acts 28:4), on sea voyages. Through his escape, Paul was declared innocent in Julius's eyes. Yates (2016, 452-453), citing ancient sources, interprets the reference to the ship's name, Dioskyroi, protectors of innocent seafarers, as highlighting this motif.

10 "And of course part of Luke's point is precisely that Paul is *not* Jonah; he is not running away; he is being faithful to his calling to preach in the great imperial capital to which he is bound," Wright notes (2008, 228; his emphasis).

11 This might be just another instance of his selfishness though – he wants to die, to exit (cf. Jon 4:8).

2015, 383). Indeed, Marshall claims (1980, 410) claims that Paul was praying for those aboard, and Acts 27:24, “God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you,” is a response.¹² Even though the text cannot substantiate Marshall’s interpretation, it is typical of the apostle: he does his best to save all lives on the ship. From the story’s beginning, he is portrayed as a caring person.¹³

4. Jonah waits for Nineveh’s destruction outside the city – Paul is on the ship during the whole ordeal and wants to see all those aboard saved.

Jonah’s selfishness and aversion are shown by going outside the city (Jon 4:5), where he can watch Nineveh’s destruction from a safe distance. In contrast, Paul stays on board throughout, throwing in his lot with all the voyagers in danger; his concern is not to save his own life (as would be the instinct of everyone) but of all those on the ship.¹⁴ While Jonah demonstrates his angry and merciless attitude toward Nineveh, Paul shows compassionate concern and God’s mercy.

5. Jonah delivers a message of doom – Paul proclaims God’s saving love, *soteria*.

We are not told what Jonah is supposed to proclaim, but his sermon is terse: “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” As opposed, when “all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned” (Acts 27:20), Paul announces to them the angel’s encouragement (Acts 27:24), “God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you.” I shall presently elaborate on this.

6. God loves everyone: that causes Jonah’s distress – and it compels Paul to save others.

The books of Jonah and Acts are about God’s saving love proclaimed to the nations, the respective ruling empires in particular. Jonah’s angry reaction to that message is startlingly contrasted to that of Paul, who embodies the message through words, actions, and behavior. To the message, I shall now turn.

12 It is tempting to consider Jonah as a *homo apathetikos*, Paul a *homo sympathetikos* with reference to Heschel (1962, 395). He, however, uses the terms describing the prophet’s consciousness of God’s pathos, i.e., a rather vertical aspect.

13 To the extent that in Acts 27:21 Paul must have appeared to the sailors at least as speaking incompetently, indeed, self-importantly. Cf. Schnabel (2012, 2311) who claims that Paul’s words “should not be understood as those of a smart aleck who insists on having been right, but as establishing his credibility (*ethos*), which was a standard feature of speeches.”

14 The potential significance of this aspect is not diminished by the fact that Paul is not free, he cannot leave the ship at will. Solidarity is not dependent on circumstances but on making the decision of sharing the fate of others even when it is dangerous.

2. The Prophet's Message

In his narrative, Jonah makes little effort to accomplish his mission but does his best not to fulfill it: he flees God and disobeys his order by finding a ship heading in the opposite direction (Jon 1:3); in the storm, he lays down and manages to fall asleep in a ship tossed by the waves (Jon 1:5).¹⁵

Jonah is portrayed as distinct from the Gentiles. In the storm he caused, he is in the ship's hold, fast asleep while the sailors try to save the ship (1:5). Upon arriving at Nineveh, Jonah preaches the city's doom (3:4), "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Having accomplished his mission, he leaves the city waiting at a distance for its judgment to come (4:5) – he does not want anything in common with the Ninevites nor to share their fate.

It would be quite different had Jonah proclaimed, "Repent, for forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Jonah 3:4 is a summary of the prophet's message, giving a sense of its main thrust. However, seeing it as a message "faithfully transmitted" (Timmer 2011, 97) can only be done by ignoring Jonah's characterization, i.e., even though he obeys God and goes to Nineveh, his attitude is not transformed. Timmer (2011, 97, n. 23) qualifies his remark by saying "that Jonah was not terribly willing to elaborate on the topic of repentance, but was more than willing to emphasize God's holiness, justice, and power against the offending city." As we have it in the text, the prophet seems not to have preached repentance nor referred to God's attributes but only announced Nineveh's doom. "Jonah hardly preaches at all," McConville (2002, 192) aptly remarks.

Jonah's persisting unwillingness to obey God and preach repentance may be seen in the sequence of reported actions. God tells Jonah (3:2), "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." This time, Jonah obediently does what he was told (3:3): "So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." Then, 3:4 summarises his message, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" The narration suggests that Jonah follows God's word, in contrast to 1:3, only when entering the city. What he proclaims does not seem to be "according to the word of the Lord" – it is a curtailed message of doom (similarly Walton 1992, 54). But what Jonah wants to see is doom. The Ninevites' repentance (3:5-9) is the more astounding.

15 Apart from Jonah, this has been possible probably only by Jesus in recorded history (Lk 8:23). Having mentioned the story of calming the storm (Lk 8:22-25), there are a number of verbal parallels between that and Jonah 1: ἐμβαίνω "to step into" (Jon 1:3 - Lk 8:22), πλοῖον "ship" (Jon 1:3 - Lk 8:22), καταβαίνω "to go down" (Jon 1:3, 5 - Lk 8:23), κινδυνεύω "to be in danger" (Jon 1:4 - Lk 8:23), κλύδων "rough water" (Jon 1:4 - Lk 8:24), φοβέω "to fear" (Jon 1:5, 10, 16 - Lk 8:25), προσέρχομαι "to come" (Jon 1:6 - Lk 8:24), ἀπόλλυμι "to destroy" (Jon 1:6 - Lk 8:24) and interestingly ἀνάστα "to arise" (Jon 1:6) which word might be reflected in ἐπιστάτα "master", a Lukan phrase in the New Testament (8:24).

Seeing Nineveh's repentance and God's relenting, Jonah gets angry (4:1). God disagrees with him (4:4), "Is it right for you to be angry?" As mentioned above, Jonah never demonstrates anguish, only anger. "If we are to understand prophetic criticism, we must see that its characteristic idiom is anguish and not anger. The point of the idiom is to permit the community to engage its anguish, which it prefers to deny," Brueggemann claims (2018, 81; drawing on Heschel 1962, *passim*). Brueggemann's concern here is more with the audience and the community than with the proclaimer and the prophet. My concern is instead with Jonah, an angry prophet without anguish. He accomplishes his mission against his will and through God's extraordinary grace.

Paul's attitude and message are different from those of Jonah. The apostle is surrounded by Gentiles. He travels aboard a crowded Mediterranean ship. In the storm, he takes action and the initiative. Indeed, in his effort to have everyone saved, he seems to take charge of the ship (27:10, 21-25, 31, 33-34).¹⁶ Even though Paul is not portrayed as anguished, but rather as determined and in control, his solidarity with his fellow believers authenticates his message and person.

His message starts with a somewhat unnecessary reminder of who was right (Acts 27:21). Then, he urges them "to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship" (Acts 27:22).¹⁷ The most crucial information everyone around him must be eager to hear is that there will be no loss of life. This, however, needs substantiating - how does Paul know? So, he presents his credentials: it was a messenger/angel of the deity of Paul "to whom I belong and whom I worship" (Acts 27:23), assuring him (Acts 27:24), "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you." The assurance is essential for his audience because it implies that Paul's deity will keep him safe so that he can reach his destination. This means he is innocent of the charges against him and is no threat to those with him.¹⁸ Indeed, Paul's guardian God is concerned not only about Paul but also with everyone aboard the ship. "The focus here is clearly on Paul's safety, but there is benefit to the others who are traveling with him" (Witherington 1998, 769). Paul rounds off his message with a personal note of encouragement and more specific detail of what awaits them (Acts 27:25-26), "So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we will have to run aground on some island." The gist of Paul's message is that God will deliver all on

16 "Paul, by now, seems to have more or less taken charge" (Wright 2008, 229).

17 Paul is quite specific in foretelling that each and every person on board will be saved, but the ship is lost. I do not think this last remark or that of 27:26, they will "crash on some island," is bad news (so Johnson 1992, 449). These qualifications serve to specify Paul's encouragement to authenticate it.

18 Cf. Schnabel (2012, 2288) who claims that demonstrating Paul's innocence is no major emphasis.

board. Despite the danger they all face, “During the voyage, Paul never speaks of death but only of salvation” (Sciberras 2015, 55; see Acts 27:24, 26, 34).¹⁹

Note also that Paul’s words come true as God grants “safety to all those who are sailing with” him (Acts 27:24; cf. 27:34). Paul is thus portrayed as a prophet who conformed to and by his mission’s message. Jonah’s words, in contrast, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jon 3:4), come to nothing, marking him as an unreliable prophet.²⁰ He dislikes his mission, hence his disobedience and unreliability. He does not fulfill his prophetic role of being an intermediary between God and humans (see Petersen 2000), while Paul does an excellent job in this respect.²¹

3. Broader Context

Here, I will limit my discussion of the broader context of Acts 27 to only a few general remarks. At his call, Paul is said to be “an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (9:15-16). In chapter 27, he is on his way to bring God’s name to the Gentile emperor. The very voyage is a demonstration of “how much he must suffer” for Christ’s sake. “It is a passion that provides salvation to all on board the ship, similar to Jesus’ passion providing salvation to all humankind, albeit a different kind of salvation” (Sciberras 2015, 55). In this way, another *synkrisis* is introduced. The Gospel of Luke reaches its climax in Jesus’s passion narrative where Jesus dies – to save humanity. Paul, too, appears in a savior role in Acts 27:23-24 (see Sciberras 2015, 55; Pervo

19 The story emphasizes both the hopeless situation, the sailors’ futile efforts to save the ship, and divine rescue, especially in vv. 20, 31, 43-44 (see Wright 2008, 233). Needless to say, *soteria* and related words refer to any sort of help and rescue. Suk Fong Jim (2022, 237) argues that Greeks expected their gods to provide rather this-worldly *soteria* like well-being, deliverance, immediate help, protection. As opposed, the Christian notion was eschatological, other-worldly. Here, I cannot give a thoroughgoing critique of her book. *Soteria* in chapter 27 is definitely of the Greek type but the Christian concept, though eschatological, is all-embracing, not just after-life oriented (see the works of, e.g., N.T. Wright). So, I wonder, if *soteria* was understood in these very different senses in early Christianity, how on earth the Christian message could appeal to Greeks. In this context, Praeder (1984, 700) rightly remarks “that the losing of life and the saving of life are at the heart of the concerns of Christian existence and Christian community.”

20 “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quieten down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you,” Jonah says (Jon 1:12), which might be his only true prophecy (cf. McConville 2002, 190).

21 After listing and critiquing different definitions of what a prophet/prophecy is, Petersen (2000, 41) suggests that the most essential characteristic of prophets is that they are intermediaries between God and human beings.

2009, 664). An angel who appears to Jesus in Gethsemane strengthens him (Lk 22:43-44).²² Similarly, in Acts 27:23-24, an angel encourages Paul.²³

Johnson (1992, 12-14) discusses the prophetic structure of Luke-Acts. In the Gospel, Jesus is depicted as a prophet like Moses (cf. Deut 18:15-18). “The Gospel is the time of the first sending of the prophet. The Book of Acts continues the story of the prophet’s second and more powerful sending to the people, with the offer of a second chance at accepting ‘God’s visitation,’ and thereby salvation” (1992, 13). Thus, at the very end of the book, Paul is seen as an apostle and prophet “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (28:31).²⁴ Like Johnson, Moessner (2016, 28-33) argues that the Book of Acts follows the Gospel of Luke, each consisting of five scenes. In Acts, Paul’s fate parallels his Savior’s in the Gospel.

4. Hays’s Criteria Applied

In his ground-breaking monograph, Richard Hays (1989, 29-32) suggests that exegesis is no “exact science” but rather “a modest imaginative craft” (1989, 29). As for the NT references to the OT, there are varying degrees of certainty in identifying them. For testing claims about intertextuality, or “echoes,” Hays proposes seven criteria, “tests,” or “rules of thumb.” Even though in his book, Hays applied his criteria to Paul’s letters only, they have come to be applied to other NT books. Let me now list Hays’s criteria and, one by one, briefly evaluate the *synkrisis* suggested above.

1. *Availability*. “Was the proposed source of the echo available to the author and/or original readers?” We can respond in the affirmative to this question, as the canonical books of the prophets had long been used as scripture by the time Luke penned his work.
2. *Volume*. The volume of intertextuality “is determined primarily by the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns, but other factors may also be relevant.” In Acts 27, the volume of intertextuality is primarily not determined by “explicit repetition of words or syntactical

22 Johnson (1992, 449) and Pervo (2009, 649) refer to Lk 22:43 even though the two verses probably are later interpolations by scribes. See also Moessner (2016, 203): “Paul undertakes a final journey to Jerusalem toward the end of his prophetic call that both recalls and imitates Jesus’s final journey to receive the ‘prophet’s reward.’”

23 Moessner discusses 19:21–28:31, Paul’s longest journey section “in which a number of extraordinary parallels to Jesus’s passion journey have long been noted” (2016, 264; for further bibliography, see n. 71 there).

24 Ho (2022, 108) argues that, by the end of the sea voyage, the centurion comes to believe in Paul’s God.

patterns.” Instead, parallel or contrasting motifs are used to create the *synkrisis* between Paul and Jonah as I studied them.

3. *Recurrence*. How often does the author “cite or allude to the same scriptural passage?” In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus refers to Jonah’s sign (11:29-32). Therefore, references in Acts 27 to Jonah come as no surprise (see more under #4).
4. *Thematic Coherence*. “How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument” that the author is developing? Acts narrates how the apostles, particularly Paul, fulfill Jesus’s initial command to be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the end of the world (Acts 1:8). For Luke, it is essential to portray Paul as a faithful witness to God’s life-giving gospel and plan of redemption. To drive home this portrayal, this *synkrisis* comes in handy.
5. *Historical plausibility*. Could the author “have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could his readers have understood it?” As I argued above, Luke intended to portray Apostle Paul in contrast to Prophet Jonah, recounting Paul’s mission as faithful and blessed. Luke’s readers, arguably familiar with Jonah’s story, had no difficulty seeing the comparison between the apostle and the prophet.
6. *History of interpretation*. “Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes?” I am not aware of pre-critical interpretations drawing attention to the *synkrisis*.²⁵ I have, however, referred to modern interpreters who have seen the intertextuality between Jonah and Acts.
7. *Satisfaction*. “With or without clear confirmation from the other criteria listed here, does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? Does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation?” In my view, my proposed reading makes sense and illuminates Acts 27 as a whole, Apostle Paul’s mission, and some of the motifs in the book. Satisfaction, however, must be experienced by the reader of my interpretation.

Conclusion

I have tried to point out both the similarities and the differences between the prophets in the Jonah story and Acts 27 before discussing their respective messages and the broader context. As many commentators have noticed, the length of Paul’s story seems out of proportion to that of the book.²⁶ In contrast to Jonah, Luke’s depiction of Paul as a true prophet may partly explain this.

²⁵ Note though that pre-critical interpretation used very different methods and means from those of the modern era.

²⁶ E.g., Marshall 1980, 401.

In the shipwreck episode, Paul acts as God's faithful and obedient prophet, proclaiming not judgment but rather, as Christ's ambassador to the nations, God's saving act, redemption: "There will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship" (Acts 27:22) because "God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you" (Acts 27:24). Like his Master, Paul does not make accusations but accepts suffering, thus witnessing to God and eventually saving his fellow travelers. All this contrasts startlingly with how the prophet Jonah acts and speaks. He is reluctant, to say the least, to reach the destination of his mission, and because of his hatred of Assyria, we may have legitimate doubts about whether he delivers God's entire message to Nineveh. Jonah stands for Israel, his failure for that of Israel – Paul represents the messianic movement's obedience and God's rescue and blessing.

To Luke, preaching the gospel to and including the Gentiles is paramount. To make his point, he uses Jonah as the backdrop character against whom to portray Paul as the reliable prophet. "Paul is a prophetic figure whose words convey God's assurance of survival and whose actions demonstrate the grace of God" (Schnabel 2012, 2289). "On the way, he manages to save many other lives through his obedience and prayer to the true God" (Keener 2015, 378).

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Tamás Czövek

Pavao, pravi prorok: Synkrisis u Djelima 27

Sažetak

Novozavjetni stručnjaci uočili su neke poveznice između Djela 27 i Jonine priče, konkretnije, između Jone i Pavla. Iako postoje i neke druge, namjeravam navesti samo šest sličnosti i šest razlika između ta dva protagonista, govoreći najprije o Joni, a zatim o Pavlu. Ovaj kontrastni tip usporedbe poznat je kao synkrisis. Uspoređujući dvije priče i dva protagonista, ovaj će članak pokazati kako Djela 27 opisuju Pavla kao Božjega pouzdanog i poslušnog proroka koji stoji u suprotnosti s Jonom. Na kraju ću navesti sedam kriterija intertekstualnosti Richarda Haysa te na temelju njih procijeniti synkrisis.