

## THE GROWING OF CHRIST: UNDERSTANDING LUKE 2:40, 52 IN THE LIGHT OF THE STRUCTURAL PATTERN OF LUKE–ACTS

RICHARD A. SABUIN, PH.D.

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, PHILIPPINES

*Jesus' growth in Luke 2:40, 52 has been interpreted as personal growth only. However, in the context of the structural pattern of Luke–Acts, those references to Jesus' growth should be seen as part of a series, a growth pattern that characterizes the birth of John the Baptist, the birth of Jesus, Jesus' childhood, Jesus' ministry, the continuation of his ministry by his disciples after his ascension, and the growth of the early church. The way Luke closes the Book of Acts indicates an expectation for the continuous growth of Christianity. A Christian child or individual should be taught to grow according to this missiological pattern of church growth.*

*Key Words: Jesus' growth, unity of Luke–Acts, mission, church growth*

### 1. Introduction

Luke includes more data on Jesus' growth than the other Gospels do,<sup>1</sup> including the prenatal incidents. He mentions the time when Mary conceived Jesus: the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (Luke 1:26). He also mentions that Mary came to visit the mother of Jesus' forerunner and stayed there for about three months (vv. 39, 56). In addition to the birth account (Luke 2:1–20), Luke mentions what happened to Jesus at the age of eight days (2:21–40), the visit of Jesus to the temple when he was twelve years old (2:41–52), and his baptism by John when he was thirty (3:21–23).

"Having investigated everything carefully from the beginning" (1:3), Luke does not include a record of Jesus from when he was eight days old to his twelfth year (a twelve-year period), and again the time between his twelfth and thirtieth years (roughly, an eighteen-year period). Luke describes both periods of time with statements about Jesus' growing. For the

<sup>1</sup> Mark does not include the birth account. He begins with Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:9–11), skipping many years of the life of Jesus. John the Baptist mentions Jesus' coming to him at the Jordan (John 1:29–34), but does not say anything about Jesus being baptized. Matthew includes the birth account (Matt 1:18–2:12). He also mentions the escape to Egypt (1:13–23) and return to Nazareth, but then jumps directly to the baptism of Jesus (3:12–17).

twelve-year period of Jesus' growth, Luke says, "And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him" (2:40). For the circa eighteen-year period, Luke states, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (v. 52 NIV). It seems that what Luke would like to emphasize about Jesus during those periods is Jesus' growth. This is what other gospels do not emphasize.<sup>2</sup>

Biblical scholars explain the two statements (2:40, 52) differently. Some scholars suggest that the two statements describe "the fullness of wisdom" and "the outstanding stature and appearance" of Jesus just like the growth of Samuel and Moses of the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> Others explain the statements as the "concluding summary" of the display of Jesus' wisdom in the temple (2:46–47).<sup>4</sup> Luke 2:40 and 2:52 have been considered as the enclosing statements to the story depicted in vv. 41–51 that emphasizes the wisdom of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Some scholars argue that the statements about Jesus' growth serve to highlight Jesus' superiority over John the Baptist.<sup>6</sup> Luke 2:40, 52 has been also called "the brief record of His [Jesus] early life."<sup>7</sup>

- <sup>2</sup> Matthew, for example, emphasizes the fulfillment of the OT prophecies in marking Jesus' childhood in Egypt and in Nazareth (Matt 2:15, cf. Hos 11:1; Matt 2:23).
- <sup>3</sup> Christopher F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (TPI New Testament Commentaries; London: SCM / Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990), 227. Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke* (trans. David E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox, 1973), 64, sees the emphasis more on the growth in wisdom and grace than in physical stature. Josephus explains about the growth of Moses: "His growth in understanding was not in line with his growth in stature, but far outran the measures of his years; its maturer excellence was displayed in his very games, and his actions then gave promise of the greater deeds to be wrought by him on reaching manhood." Cf. Flavius Josephus, *A.J.* 2.9.6 (trans. Henry S. J. Thackeray; LCL 242; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 265.
- <sup>4</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere, *Luke* (New Testament Message; Wilmington: Glazier, 1980), 39. David L. Tiede, *Luke* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), calls those statements "the concluding growth refrain."
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. Henk J. De Jonge, "Sonship, Wisdom, Infancy: Luke 2:41–51a," *NTS* 24 (1978): 317–54. De Jonge suggests a chiasmic structure of Luke 2:41–51a that positions Jesus' encounter with the teachers of the law (vv. 46b–47) as the center of the structure.
- <sup>6</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50* (BECNT 3A; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 274, compares the growth statement of John (Luke 1:80) and that of Jesus (2:40, 52): "That Jesus receives two such notices while John the Baptist receives only one suggests Jesus' superiority." So also William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 186.
- <sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1952), 289. The author describes Jesus' growth in the light of a balanced Christian life: "As He grew in years He grew in knowledge. He lived temperately; His precious hours were not wasted in dissipating pleasures. He had a truly healthy body and true powers of mind. The physical and mental powers could be expanded and developed as yours or

It seems that most scholars consider Jesus' personal growth to be the main thrust of Luke 2:40, 52. The immediate context of the texts does not deny this fact.<sup>8</sup> However, questions arise: do the statements about Jesus' growth in Luke 2:40, 52 serve the immediate context only? Could it be that they serve a certain function within the wider context, namely, Luke–Acts?<sup>9</sup> This article seeks to understand the meaning of Jesus' growth in Luke 2:40, 52 in light of the structural pattern of Luke–Acts and as part of a larger pattern of church growth.

## 2. The Structural Pattern of Luke–Acts

The connection between Luke and Acts may be demonstrated by the use of the word *καθεξῆς* "in order," "in sequence."<sup>10</sup> In the New Testament this word is used exclusively by Luke, twice in the Gospel of Luke (1:3; 8:1), and three times in Acts (3:24; 11:4; 18:23). The word *καθεξῆς* in Luke 1:3 explains the nature of Luke's writing, as Luke himself says, "It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order (*καθεξῆς*), most excellent Theophilus."<sup>11</sup> The other four occurrences of *καθεξῆς* echo what Luke has stated at the beginning of his gospel. Theophilus might recall the introduction every time he encountered the word.

The literary parallels between the closing of Luke and the opening of Acts also indicate the idea of the continuity in Luke–Acts, as shown in the following table:

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any other youth's. The Word of God was His study, as it should be yours." Cf. Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1961), 59.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 2:40 is the end of vv. 21–40, and 2:52 is the end of vv. 41–52. This makes vv. 21–40 the immediate context of v. 40, and vv. 41–52 the immediate context of v. 52.

<sup>9</sup> This study presupposes Lukan authorship and the unity of Luke–Acts. For further explanation regarding the common authorship of Luke and Acts, see Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke–Acts* (Studies in the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 3–23. See also Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1–12; Walter L. Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 21–48.

<sup>10</sup> L&N 1:610, define *καθεξῆς* as "a sequence of one after another in time, space, or logic."

<sup>11</sup> Unless specifically notified, all Bible texts are taken from the NASB.

<i>Luke 24:36–53</i>	<i>Acts 1:1–12</i>
Jesus appears personally several times (ch. 24)	"To these he also presented himself alive, after his suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days" (v. 3)
"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (v. 49)	"And gathering them together, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised" (v. 4)
"[...] should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (vv. 47, 48)	"You shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (v. 8)
"[...] and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came about that while he was blessing them, he parted from them" (vv. 50, 51)	"And after he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (v. 9)
"And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (v. 52)	"Then they returned to Jerusalem" (v. 12)

*Table 1: Luke–Acts Continuity*

The table above may function as the bridge or transition from Luke to Acts. The parallels suggest that Luke has not finished telling Theophilus everything that is necessary for him. Moreover, when Luke started writing Acts, he referred to his Gospel with the statement: "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:1). Luke employed the verb ἄρχομαι "to begin" in the phrase περὶ πάντων [...] ὧν ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν "about all that Jesus began to do and to teach." This phrase refers to the Gospel of Luke. It is said in Luke 3:23, "And when he began his ministry, Jesus himself was about thirty years of age." Here, Luke also uses the verb ἄρχομαι. Therefore, since the Gospel of Luke provides the beginning of what Jesus has done and taught, then the book of Acts would be a continuation of the account of Jesus—the enlargement of his kingdom. The argument above suggests not only the unity of Luke–Acts but also the continuity of Luke–Acts.



Since Luke 1:1–4 provides the introduction for Luke–Acts,<sup>12</sup> one may expect to see not only a similar pattern in Luke–Acts,<sup>13</sup> but also a united and continuous pattern that has been overlooked.<sup>14</sup> Analyzing the structural pattern may help the reader of Luke–Acts to see the plot of these books as well as the purpose.<sup>15</sup>

As a continuation of Luke, Acts is rich in structural patterns. Scholars have suggested several: a geographical pattern,<sup>16</sup> a socio-ethnic and cultural frontiers pattern,<sup>17</sup> a Peter–Paul pattern,<sup>18</sup> and a pattern of summary state-

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Schuyler Brown, "The Role of Prologues in Determining the Purpose of Luke–Acts," in *Perspectives on Luke–Acts* (ed. Charles H. Talbert; PRSt 5; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), 99–111, who suggests that Luke 1:1–4 provides the purpose of Luke–Acts.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Donald R. Miesner, "The Missionary Journey Narrative: Patterns and Implications," in *Perspectives on Luke–Acts*, (ed. Charles H. Talbert; PRSt 5; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), 199–214, sees that Luke and Acts have a similar pattern, based on the missionary journey motif: the gospel focuses on the missionary journey of Jesus and Acts focuses on the missionary journeys of Paul. Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 61, says that the journey pattern of the Gospel of Luke is to express Jesus' ministry. Similar also Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 80–82. Miesner, "The Missionary Journey Narrative," 201, argues that the similar structure between Luke and Acts is "to serve corresponding thematic purposes."

<sup>14</sup> For example, none of the fifteen scholars in Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on Luke–Acts* (*Perspectives in Religious Studies* 5; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), has discussed the unified and continuous structural pattern of Luke–Acts, nor any of the nineteen scholars in Richard P. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips, eds., *Literary Studies in Luke–Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, 22–30, proposes a methodology for determining the purpose of Acts: (1) Analyze the introduction; (2) identify the historical or implied reader; (3) follow the plot; (4) observe the conclusion; (5) consider the literary characteristics; and (6) give weight to dominant themes. Based on this methodology, several purposes have been suggested. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke–Acts*, 20–23, for example, notes seven different purposes of Luke–Acts suggested by scholars: (1) to present the progress of evangelism; (2) to defend Paul at his trial; (3) to defend Christians before the Roman authorities; (4) to preserve the memory of Paul; (5) to discuss theology; (6) to provide a defense against Gnosticism; and (7) to confirm the gospel. On the various purposes of Acts, Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, 32, suggests, "Not only is it unnecessary for the interpreter to discover one single dominant purpose, to decide on one single purpose could well obscure ancillary purposes and the diverse emphases of the book."

<sup>16</sup> This pattern is based on Acts 1:8. See I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (NTG; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 29.

<sup>17</sup> This is only a revision of the geographical sequence, but puts more emphasis on people than on locations.

ments.<sup>19</sup> These patterns can be subsumed under the more encompassing topic of growth. There is growth in terms of geographical expansion from Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 1:8; cf. 28:31); growth from reaching only people of the Jewish culture to reaching people of other cultures (9:15); growth from the ministry done only by Peter and Jesus' other disciples to the ministry performed by Paul who is not among the twelve. Many summary statements of Acts indicate the concept of growth (Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 9:42; 11:21; 12:24; 13:48; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31).

The pattern of growth in Acts begins with the mass baptism of believers into Christianity during Pentecost (Acts 2:40) after Jesus' ascension (1:9-11). Looking back to the Gospel of Luke, one may expect to see the initial growth. In this light, Acts could be the continuation of a structural pattern in Luke—forming a united and continuous pattern.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Growth Pattern in Luke–Acts

The statement in Acts 1:1 recalls the things that Jesus began *to do* and *to teach*. Although he began his ministry when he was thirty years old, it is notable that Jesus' first teaching-related activity is described in Luke 2:41–52,<sup>21</sup> where the statement about his growth is given (v. 52). Furthermore, it is in that setting that Jesus indicates his awareness of the mission his Father gives him to complete.<sup>22</sup> In other words, as Jesus was growing up, he realized the mission his father had given to him and began his ministry after his baptism which he continued until his ascension to heaven. Before going to

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<sup>18</sup> Michael D. Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London: SPCK, 1964), divides Acts into a Petrine Section and a Pauline Section.

<sup>19</sup> Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, 41–46.

<sup>20</sup> John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (WBC 35A; Dallas: Word, 1989), iv, suggests that “Acts provides us with an invaluable aid to working out how Luke would have us read his Gospel text.”

<sup>21</sup> Jesus is described as “sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions” (v. 47). Also, “all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (v. 48).

<sup>22</sup> In responding to his mother's question, Jesus replied: “Why is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in the things of my Father?” (v. 49, my translation). The word *δεῖ* “it is necessary” indicates purposeful action which suggests that Jesus was not accidentally remaining in the temple, but did so realizing that he must be in the things of his father. The reason Jesus remained in the temple was in relation to his father. See L&N 1:670–71, and 672. In Luke, the word *δεῖ* occurs most of the time in direct discourse by Jesus—eight of twelve occurrences indicate his awareness of his mission (2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 17:25; 19:5; 22:37; 24:7, 44). Interestingly, the first use of *δεῖ* is in Jesus' statement in the temple when he was twelve years old (2:49). Luke might have intended to emphasize Jesus' initial awareness of his mission in the temple's account (2:41–52).

heaven, he commanded his disciples to continue the mission (Luke 24:46–49; cf. Acts 1:8). This is what the Gospel of Luke is all about, and is summarized by Luke in Acts 1:1, before he continues with the expansion of the gospel and the Kingdom of God in the book of Acts. In this case, Acts may be seen in the context of the continuation of Jesus' growth in the sense of his work. Therefore, Luke–Acts may be read in the context of Jesus' growth, from his birth (Luke 1–2) to the unhindered spreading of his kingdom (Acts 28:31), even after he had already ascended to heaven. This idea of growth might be part of Luke's intention to write about Jesus "in consecutive order" (1:3).

The verbs that convey the idea of growing in Luke–Acts are προκόπτω "to advance, progress, grow" and αύξάνω "to grow, spread, increase." In addition to these, the verb περισσεύω "to increase, abound," (e.g., Acts 13:48; 16:5), the verb προστίθημι "put to, add to" (e.g., 2:41, 47; 5:14), and the verb πληθύνω "to be multiplied, to increase" (9:31; 12:24) are used to describe growth in number. These are the verbs used to give the idea of growth in the summary statements of Luke–Acts. In the absence of any of those verbs, the concept of growth is described by the use of the noun ἀριθμός "number, total" (e.g., 4:4; 11:21).

The word προκόπτω is only used once in Luke–Acts, namely in Luke 2:52. This word may suggest a progress in learning, religious knowledge and spirituality, culture, virtue, intellect, and moral education.<sup>23</sup> Although προκόπτω plays an important role in describing Jesus' growth in Luke 2:52, one needs to consider that the description of his growth is introduced earlier in 2:40, with the verb αύξάνω. Even the growth of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, is described with the same verb (1:80).

Of the twenty-two occurrences of αύξάνω in the NT, eight occur in Luke–Acts (Luke 1:80; 2:40; 12:27; 13:19; Acts 6:7; 7:17; 12:24; 19:20). The verb emphasizes the physical growth of a person.<sup>24</sup> Luke, however, uses this verb to also describe the growth of the Christian church (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20).<sup>25</sup> Outside of Luke–Acts, the verb αύξάνω is used in the context of the growth of the body of Christ—the church (1 Cor 3:7; 2 Cor 10:15; Eph 2:21; 4:15, 16; Col 1:10, 16; 2:19; 1 Pet 2:2; 2 Pet 3:18).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gustav Stählin, "προκοπή," *TDNT* 6:705. Stählin gives the basic meaning of προκοπή as "to make headway in spite of blows" (*ibid.*, 6:704). The meaning may be also "to make one's way forward by chopping away obstacles." Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans / Carlisle: Paternoster, 1978), 230.

<sup>24</sup> Stählin, *TDNT* 6:713.

<sup>25</sup> In Acts 7:17 the verb is also used to describe the increase of the Israelites in Egypt. The Israelites are also called the "church" (cf. 7:38).

The concept of growth in Luke–Acts may be outlined as follows:<sup>26</sup>

<i>Luke</i>	<i>Growth Concept</i>
1:80	"And the child [John the Baptist] continued to <b>grow</b> [αὐξάνω], and to become strong in spirit [...]"
2:40	"And the Child [Jesus] continued to <b>grow</b> [αὐξάνω] and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him"
2:52	"And Jesus kept <b>increasing</b> [προκόπτω] in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"
4:37	"And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area" (NIV)
7:17	"This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country" (NIV)
<i>Acts</i>	<i>Growth Concept</i>
2:41	"So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added [προστίθημι] that day about three thousand souls"
2:47	"[...] and the Lord was adding [προστίθημι] to their number day by day those who were being saved"
4:4	"But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number [ἀριθμός] of the men came to be about five thousand"
5:14	"And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added [προστίθημι] to their number"
6:7	"And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase [αὐξάνω] greatly in Jerusalem [...]"
9:31	"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, [...], it continued to increase [πληθύνω]"
11:21	"And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number [ἀριθμός] who believed turned to the Lord"
12:24	"But the word of the Lord continued to grow [αὐξάνω] and to be multiplied [πληθύνω]"
16:5	"So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew [περισσεύω] daily in numbers [ἀριθμός]"
19:20	"So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing [αὐξάνω] in number daily"

Table 2: Growth Concept in Luke–Acts

All above references have a couple of things in common: (1) they are summary statements that mark the border of one passage to another; (2) they convey the concept of growth. The above outline of this concept of growth suggests a unity in the structural patterns of Luke–Acts. It starts with the growth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus (1:80), and is followed by

<sup>26</sup> Especially in relation to the book of Acts, this study is indebted to Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, 41–46, who sees the growth-related summary statements in Acts as a structural pattern of the book. The Greek verbs for growth are inserted in their lexical form (present, active, indicative, first, singular).



the personal growth of Jesus (2:40, 52): growth in stature and in wisdom, and in favor with God and man.<sup>27</sup>

After the summary of Jesus' personal growth is given in Luke 2:52, there is a gap of about eighteen years without any account of Jesus until he appeared for his baptism and began his ministry.<sup>28</sup> As Jesus began his ministry, "the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area" (4:37; 7:17).<sup>29</sup> There is a switch from personal growth to the growth in ministry and mission. The remaining references in the table above demonstrate a growth in the ministry and the mission of Jesus as given by his father. Even after he died, was resurrected, and ascended to heaven, the mission was carried on by the apostles.

This motif of growth is also presented by Luke as he retold the account of Moses in the speech of Stephen (Acts 7:1–53),<sup>30</sup> as demonstrated by the table below:

<sup>27</sup> Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 274, sees how the growth of Jesus is described carefully by Luke. Jesus is first described as βρέφος "baby, infant" (Luke 2:16). Then he is called παιδίον "child" (2:40), and παῖς "boy, child" (Luke 2:43)—a young person normally below the age of puberty (cf. L&N, 1:110).

<sup>28</sup> This study does not discuss why Jesus was baptized when he was already thirty years old, and not younger as practiced by many Adventist young people today. Perhaps, this may be explained in light of the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist, his forerunner. John was born about six months ahead of Jesus (Luke 1:26–38, 56–57). It is conceivable that John might have begun his ministry only a short time before Jesus was baptized (3:1–3, 21–22).

<sup>29</sup> Although these two references are not included in the table, they also suggest the concept of growth, in which the news about Jesus expanded to many places.

<sup>30</sup> It is self-evident that the speech of Stephen in Acts 7:1–53 focuses on the comparison between the mission of Moses and the mission of Jesus. The speech of Stephen is a response to the false accusations that—according to the Jews—are compelling enough to bring him before the religious council (6:8–14). The accusations include two main elements: (1) Stephen spoke blasphemous words against Moses and against God (v. 12), and (2) Stephen confirmed Jesus' changing of the traditions delivered by Moses (v. 14).

<i>The Growth of Moses (Acts 7:1–53)</i>	<i>The Growth of Jesus (Luke–Acts)</i>
Preparation for Moses (vv. 2–19) <sup>31</sup>	Preparation for Jesus (Luke 1, 3)
The birth of Moses (vv. 20–21)	The birth of Jesus (Luke 2)
The personal growth of Moses (v. 22) <sup>32</sup>	The personal growth of Jesus (Luke 2:40, 52)
Gap of twenty-eight years (between v. 22 and v. 23)	Gap of eighteen years (between Luke 2:52 and Luke 3)
Beginning of the mission given by God (vv. 23–34)	Beginning of the mission given by God (Luke 3:23)
The continuation of the mission by Joshua after Moses went to heaven (v. 45; cf. Deut 34:6; Luke 9:30)	The continuation of the mission by the apostles after Jesus went to heaven (Luke 24:36–53; Acts 1:1–12)

Table 3: *Parallels between the Growth of Moses and the Growth of Jesus*

The motif of personal growth as a preparation for the growth of mission is not presented only in Luke–Acts. It is also indicated in the life of the OT Samuel. Samuel was presented to God just like Jesus was (1 Sam 1:27–28; cf. Luke 2:22–23). The personal growth of Samuel is mentioned four times (1 Sam 2:11, 21, 26; 3:19). After the last mention of his personal growth (3:19), the story of Samuel is presented in the context of the growth of his mission: “And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. [...] Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel (3:20; 4:1; cf. Luke 4:37; 7:17) [italics are mine].”<sup>33</sup> Luke, who mentions Samuel twice in Acts,<sup>34</sup> might have been familiar with the account of Samuel and his growth.

<sup>31</sup> Acts 7:2–19 seems to be a background for the coming of Moses, as indicated by the conjunctive phrase Ἐν ᾧ καιρῷ ἐγεννήθη Μωϋσῆς “and it was at this time that Moses was born” (v. 20). The mention of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph leads to the introduction of Moses.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 7:21: “Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action” (NIV).

<sup>33</sup> Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 72, makes a careful observation on the growth of Samuel: (1) In 1 Sam 2:11, Samuel is mentioned in the context of Eli’s supervision; (2) In 1 Sam 2:21, there is no mention of Eli’s influence. Samuel grew “in the presence of the LORD”; (3) in 1 Sam 2:26, Samuel grew “in favor both with the LORD and with men.”

<sup>34</sup> Samuel is mentioned only three times in the NT, once in Heb 11:32, and twice in Acts (3:24; 13:20).

#### 4. Conclusion: A Proposal for Reading Luke 2:40, 52

Luke must have had a purpose in placing the information about Jesus' growth as summary statements in Luke 2:40, 52, and skipping over a period of twelve and eighteen years without any information about Jesus. By presenting Jesus' missionary work after the final mention of his personal growth (2:52), Luke emphasizes that Jesus' personal growth is a preparation for his mission. As Luke continues the motif of growth in Luke–Acts, he pictures Jesus' personal growth is continued with the growth of his mission. Even after Jesus' ascension, the growth goes on through the ministry of the apostles. In this sense, Luke–Acts outlines the growth of Christianity, from the birth and growth of Christ's forerunner, to the birth of Christ, the personal growth of Christ, and the growth of Christ's missionary work until he ascended to heaven, and the growth of Christianity through the ministry of Christ's disciples and later apostles. The way Luke ends Luke–Acts, with an openness for further growth (Acts 28:31), suggests that Christianity—the gospel work—has been growing, is growing, and must be growing until Christ comes to harvest the result of that growing. Therefore, Luke 2:40, 52 should be read not only in the context of Jesus' personal growth, but as a wider growth pattern outlined in Luke–Acts, namely, the growth of the gospel work. Personal growth must contribute to the growth of the church.