

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

### THE BANQUET TYPE-SCENE IN THE PARABLES OF JESUS

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Biblical narratives abound in ancient literary and oral conventions. One such convention is the type-scene. The study of the type-scene originated in 1933 with Walter Arend, who studied compositional recurrent patterns and variations in the epics of Homer. Later, the study was developed by Robert Alter in his treatment of biblical narratives. The type-scene was a narratorial device used by ancient orators and writers in which traditional elements of repetitive compositional patterns were told and retold in innovative ways to an audience, raising their expectation and sometimes causing surprise. Conventional elements that made up the type-scene were catchwords, motifs, characters, and themes. This study investigated the banquet type-scene in the parables of Jesus in order to discover whether Jesus, and by extension, the Gospel writers were in dialogue with the fixed literary and oral banquet type-scene convention of their time.

Narrative criticism provided the framework for the study. Though narrative criticism implies a synchronic approach (the text in its final form) to the exegetical task, the diachronic approach (the text in its historical evolution) was also employed, demonstrating that both approaches are complementary. Banquet narratives, banquet images, and general information about banquets in antiquity (ca. B.C.E. 1500 to 300 C.E.) were examined in Egyptian, Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, Ugaritic, Greco-Roman, OT, Jewish Intertestamental, NT, Early Christian Noncanonical, and Rabbinic literature of Tannaim. It was discovered that at the time of Jesus all banquet-type scenes bore two basic structural elements: the preparation of a banquet and selective invitation. From that point in the structure, the plot of the banquet type-scene branched off into three other plot sequences resulting in the Eminence of Guests type-scene, the Guests and Host Response type-scene, and the Wise and Foolish type-scene.

Seven parables were amenable to the banquet type-scene analysis: the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), the Narrow Door (Luke 13:24-30 [cf. Matt 7:13-14]), Places at a Feast (Luke 14:7-11 [cf. Matt 23:6 = Mark 12:39 = Luke 20:46]), the Choice of Guests (Luke 14:12-14), the Great Supper (Matt 22:2-10 = Luke 14:15-24 // *Gos. Thom.* 64), the Wedding Garment (Matt 22:11-14), and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). The type-scene analyses of these parables revealed similar conclusions, especially in terms of their themes, to their diachronic critical analyses. This testified to the mutual relationship that exists between the historical and literary approach to the study of the Scripture.

The common theme shared by the parables was exclusion/inclusion: exclusion from and inclusion into God's eschatological banquet. Exclusion from the kingdom was the inevitable fate of those who rejected Jesus' invitation: the unbelieving Jewish people, opponents of Jesus (especially the leaders), and the

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unprepared disciple. Inclusion in the kingdom meant acceptance and honor for the Jewish outcasts, the despised Gentiles, and the faithful disciple. In Matthew's program the emphasis was exclusion; in Luke's inclusion.

The study showed that Jesus interacted with the banquet type-scene convention of his day and used it in inventive ways to teach his message in the context of his ministry and mission. The study also showed that the Gospel writers used the banquet type-scene in deliberately creative ways to emphasize themes commensurate with the theology and audience of their respective Gospels. The study demonstrated the value of type-scene analysis as a literary tool for an approach to the exegetical task.