

LUKE AND THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

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The rise of the state of Israel in 1948 continues to pose a theological problem for Christian theology in both its liberal and conservative expressions. Within the conservative wing the issue has become highly charged with clear lines of demarcation between opposing viewpoints. Usually millennial views are intertwined in the debate, or at least impinge upon the discussion.¹

The purpose of the present paper is quite modest vis-à-vis the larger question of whether the reconstitution of a Jewish state in its ancestral homeland fulfills, or is beginning to fulfill, OT prophecy. The paper will focus on Luke-Acts and inquire whether the author believed that there would be a future, national restoration of Israel.² We begin with that

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¹ From the liberal perspective see P. M. van Buren, *A Christian Theology of the People Israel: Part II, A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality* (New York: Seabury, 1983); J. Parkes, *Prelude to Dialogue: Jewish-Christian Relationships* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1969). *Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation on Scripture, Theology and History* (ed. M. H. Tanenbaum and M. Wilson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) provides a survey of evangelical opinion. See also G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), esp. chap. 2, as opposed to J. Walvoord, *The Millennial Question* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959). M. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), and *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (ed. R. Clouse; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977) provide further argumentation for the respective views within evangelicalism.

² I am assuming in this paper that the above-mentioned Luke is responsible for composing the two-volume work that the Church designated as Luke and Acts. I also begin my investigation convinced that Luke was a major theologian in his own right and that he structured his work to reflect his theological understanding of salvation history. On this see H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961); I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), though with significant modification of Conzelmann. Although it is not as much in favor now, I still persist in thinking that Luke has structured his work around a tripartite presentation of redemptive history. Luke, modifying the traditional Jewish notion of the two ages, views the present age of sacred history in terms of three epochs: (1) the epoch of Israel, (2) the epoch of Jesus, which is the midpoint of salvation history, and (3) the epoch of the Church and its witness to the Gentiles. It should be noted, however, that even if the current consensus that Luke has a twofold scheme be established, this will not materially affect my particular focus in this paper. On the current consensus see E. Richard, "Luke—Writer, Theologian, Historian: Research and Orientation of the 1970's," *BTB* 13 (January 1983) 5-6. Cf. W. E. Hull, "A Structural Analysis of the Gospel of Luke," *RevExp* 64 (1967); M. Tolbert, "Leading Ideas of the Gospel of Luke," *ibid.*; H. S. Songer, "Luke's Portrayal of the Origins of Jesus," *ibid.* The tripartite approach is defended by G. W. Barker, W. L. Lane and J. R. Michaels, *The New Testament Speaks* (New York: Harper, 1969) 279-282, and more recently by J. Koenig, *Jews and Christians in Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979) 99-102.

uniquely Lucan section, the birth narratives (Luke 1–2). The ambience vividly recalls the OT era, especially the patriarchal narratives and the birth stories of Samson and Samuel that feature the motif of the barren wife.³

The birth announcement to Mary through the angelic messenger Gabriel sounds the note of fulfillment of the Davidic covenant: “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32b–33; cf. 2 Sam 7:16). Luke weaves the note of hope throughout the opening two chapters of his gospel. In particular the prophecy of Zechariah (Luke 1:67–79) resonates with prophetic statements from the OT that promised a national restoration. The prophetic utterance (1:68) highlights the keynote of liberation that the God of Israel was now beginning to effect through the birth of John (1:76) and the Davidic scion (1:69). On this point Walter Liefeld observes:

The idea of redemption runs through Scripture, with the Exodus being the great OT example of rescue from enemies and captivity. Luke 24:21 shows the expectation Jesus’ followers had that he would do a similar work of freeing God’s people. Luke, though committed to the universal application of the gospel, includes these words of redemption that apply especially to Israel (see esp. v. 69). Not only does this reflect his emphasis on the Jewish roots of Christianity, it also underlines the political aspects of redemption foremost in the minds of Zechariah’s contemporaries. . . . Therefore, the salvation in view here involves both political deliverance and spiritual blessing.⁴

The theme is reinforced, following Jesus’ birth, by the presentation scene in the Jerusalem temple. Here the godly Simeon under the influence of the Holy Spirit celebrated the Messiahship of Jesus. Our attention is especially drawn to Luke’s description of the man as righteous, devout and “waiting for the consolation of Israel.”⁵ What would such consolation have connoted in the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*? It is generally agreed that the term

³ See C. T. Ruddick, Jr., “Birth Narratives in Genesis and Luke,” *NovT* 12 (1970) 343–348. Luke structures his material so that there is an alternation between John and Jesus with a clear parallelism between the two figures; see further R. E. Brown, “Luke’s Method in the Announcement Narratives of Chapter One,” *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (ed. C. H. Talbert; Danville: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978) 126–138.

⁴ W. Liefeld, “Luke,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 8.840. For a similar view see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981) 348; R. C. Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story,” *JBL* 104 (1985) 75–77. Colin Brown observes that “in the intertestamental period . . . [redemption] received a political and nationalistic connotation (Pss Sol 9:1; 12:6). The Qumran texts also stress this aspect (1QM 1:12f.; 14:5f.)” (*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975] 3.193). Contrast L. Morris’ comments on the text: “We may agree that there is an authentic Jewish note, but it should not be overlooked that the deliverance from enemies is specifically related to serving God. The song is religious rather than political” (*The Gospel According to St. Luke* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978] 79). This statement flies in the face of the clear overtones of the text. Furthermore, for observant Jews, serving God in accordance with the Torah while under the domination of a pagan power was accomplished only by painful compromises. E.g. the presence of the Roman standards in Jerusalem was a violation of the prohibition of images and idols (Josephus *J.W.* 2.165).

⁵ Tannehill draws attention to Luke’s portrayal of his witnesses as reliable (“Israel” 70). We would add the emphasis placed on the filling of the Holy Spirit when they give witness (Luke 1:67; 2:25, 27).

harks back to Isa 40:1 (LXX): "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God."⁶ If so, a national, political dimension can hardly be separated from the spiritual in light of the context of Isaiah 40–55, which is permeated by the hope of a return to Zion—a second exodus.⁷ Furthermore Jewish literature of the Second Temple period demonstrates a close connection between the consolation of Jerusalem and its restoration politically. This is patently clear in texts such as Tob 13:9–18; 14:5–7 (c. 2d century BC); 2 Macc 1:27–29; 2:7–8 (c. 1st century BC); Bar 4:5–5:9 (c. 150–60 BC). It is difficult to believe that political associations were not also present to the minds of individuals like Zechariah, Simeon and Anna.⁸ The NEB renders Luke 2:25 as "the restoration of Israel" and 2:38 as "the liberation of Jerusalem." Such renderings convey the actual sense intended.

The question that must now be examined is whether Luke, in the rest of his two-volume work, demonstrates or implies that such an understanding must be rejected or at least modified. I will approach the issue by focusing on three related questions: (1) Did Jesus' ministry fulfill all the OT promises of national restoration? (2) Did the Jewish people forfeit the promises of restoration by their unbelief? (3) Are there any passages that imply a national restoration?

I. LUKE'S STRESS ON JESUS' FULFILLMENT OF OT PROPHECY

Clearly Luke operates within an understanding of promise and fulfillment. In contrast to the other synoptic writers, Luke begins Jesus' ministry with the Nazareth sermon (Luke 4:14–30). Its elaboration is uniquely Lucan and assumes programmatic significance for the rest of the gospel as well as for the book of Acts.⁹ The focus of the episode is on the present fulfillment of Isa 61:1–2a: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).¹⁰

Nonetheless one should also notice that Jesus broke off reading in mid-sentence. The portion not read refers to "the day of vengeance of our God" (i.e. the Day of Yahweh). This may be an instance in which the prophet has telescoped the two phases of Messiah's advent into one unified

⁶ See O. Schmitz and G. Stählin, "*Parakaleō, paraklēsis*," *TDNT* 5.792–793.

⁷ Note how frequently the promise of return to and restoration of Zion is mentioned in this section: Isa 40:2 (implied); 43:5–6; 44:26, 28; 45:13; 46:13; 48:20–21; 49:8–26, esp. v. 13; 51:3, 11; 52:1–2, 9; 54:11–12.

⁸ Tannehill has correctly sensed the impact of such language on readers who were aware of the Jewish-Roman war and its outcome: "They would sense the tragic disappointment of this hope" ("Israel" 72). But the impact of these words in the *Sitz im Leben Jesu* would have been electrifying, to say the least.

⁹ On this see M. Tolbert, "Leading Ideas of the Gospel of Luke," *RevExp* 64 (1964) 442.

¹⁰ G. H. P. Thompson observes that "the original context of the quotation is the prophet's announcement of a coming deliverance of Jerusalem and the restoration of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon (about 540 B.C.). Now Jesus applies the prophecy to the new and greater deliverance that he is bringing" (*The Gospel According to Luke in the Revised Standard Version* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1972] 91). As D. Flusser reminds us, Jesus is "the only Jew known to us from ancient times who proclaimed that the new age of salvation had already begun" (*Jesus in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* [Hamburg: Reinbeck, 1968]), cited in J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner's) 108.

picture.¹¹ If such be the case, one must be cautious in saying that the entire passage (61:1-11) was fulfilled by Jesus in his earthly ministry. Notice especially v. 4: "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations" (cf. also v. 7). One cannot simply assume that the return from the Babylonian exile fulfilled this prophecy since the time of devastation is explicitly stated to be generations, not just a generation. In other words it seems better to say that the Isaiah passage contains both a "now" and a "not yet" fulfillment in Jesus' earthly ministry.¹²

There are other texts in Luke's gospel, however, that buttress the notion that Jesus' ministry actually ushered in the kingdom of God. In 7:18-23 John the Baptist inquired whether Jesus was "the one who was to come." Jesus' response consisted of a conflation of several Isaianic passages that spoke of a future time characterized by divine healing (Isa 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1-2). Apparently John expected national restoration as part of the Messiah's mission, in keeping with the hopes of Zechariah his father and Simeon and Anna.¹³ Jesus simply referred to his current ministry of healing and preaching with no explanation as to the omission of a nationalist agenda. In 10:9 Jesus commanded the seventy that when they performed their healing ministry they were to say, "The kingdom of God has come near to you" (RSV). They were also told to shake off the dust of their feet in the cities that rejected them. Because the kingdom of God had come and the inhabitants did not know it, their judgment would be more severe than that of Sodom in the Day of the Lord. We see here a tension between a present fulfillment and a future vindication. The Lucan account of the return of the seventy (10:17-24) accents the overcoming of Satan in the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. Whereas contemporary Judaism connected the defeat of Satan with the end of the age, Jesus taught that the age to come had in a certain sense already begun.¹⁴ Closely related to the foregoing is 10:23, in which Jesus told his disciples that "many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it." Of similar import is 11:20, where exorcism signals the presence of the kingdom of God.

Perhaps the most significant text for our present discussion is Luke 17:20-21. Having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is

¹¹ Jeremiah has observed that the images employed in the Isaiah passage "are all age-old phrases in the east for the time of salvation, when there will be no more sorrow, no more crying and no more grief." In other words the passage, in its original setting, has eschatological overtones (*Theology* 104).

¹² See the discussion by G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 57-69.

¹³ See G. Ladd, *The Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 12.

¹⁴ According to Jeremiah, "Jesus' visionary cry of joy leaps over the interval of time before the final crisis and sees in the exorcisms performed by the disciples the dawn of the annihilation of Satan." Jeremiah also reminds us that "there is no analogy to these statements in contemporary Judaism; neither the synagogue nor Qumran knows anything of a vanquishing of Satan that is already beginning in the present" (*Theology* 95).

within you." Although Jeremias argues for an eschatological meaning for the saying, it seems difficult to deny the emphasis upon the presence of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry.¹⁵

Finally, Luke concludes his gospel on a note that answers to the Nazareth sermon. In the Emmaus episode Luke says that "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] explained to them [the two disciples] what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (24:27). Later in the upper room Luke reports Jesus as saying to his disciples: "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (24:44). Thus Luke has intentionally framed his gospel by means of a note of promise and fulfillment, a note that continues into the book of Acts. For example, in Acts 1:16 Peter applied two passages in the Psalms (69:25; 109:8) to the defection of Judas and the necessity of seeking his replacement. In Acts 2:16-21 the outpouring of the Spirit fulfilled the ancient prophecy of Joel 2:28-32, and Psalm 16 prophesied Jesus' resurrection ("David said about him," v. 25). Peter's message in Acts 3 likewise stressed the fulfillment of OT prophecy (3:17, 24). The episode of the Ethiopian eunuch (8:30-35), Paul's synagogue sermon at Antioch of Pisidia (cf. 13:27), the Jerusalem council (15:15-18), Paul's synagogue ministry at Thessalonica (17:2-3), Berea (17:11), Corinth (18:4) and Ephesus (19:8)—all testify to the centrality of the theme, as do several of Paul's trial speeches (24:14-16; 26:6-7, 22-23, 27) and his last recorded message to the Roman Jews (28:23-28).

Does such evidence imply that Jesus' ministry fulfilled Israel's hope? Many would say so. Richard T. France concludes that "Jesus presented his ministry as the fulfillment of the whole future hope of the Old Testament, the day of the Lord and the coming of the Messiah."¹⁶ Now it is surely correct that the emphasis of Jesus' preaching and ministry, as Luke presents it, is upon present fulfillment. That is entirely as one would expect, for the kingdom had indeed arrived, and it was the dawning of the new age of salvation. Yet this is not the sum of the matter. All the evidence has not yet been taken into account.

II. PASSAGES THAT SPEAK OF AN IMPENDING JUDGMENT

ON THE JEWISH NATION OR IMPLY ITS REJECTION AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD AND CONSEQUENT FORFEITURE OF NATIONALISTIC HOPES

Jesus, in keeping with the tradition of the OT prophets, uttered constant warnings and threats concerning both personal and national disaster. In

¹⁵ Jeremias argues that v. 24 should "be understood eschatologically and be translated: '... will (suddenly) be in your midst.' Thus even in the *hentos hymōn estin* saying, the *basileia* is understood eschatologically; it is coming suddenly" (*Theology* 101). More likely, however, is the more usual rendering of "among you." See Liefeld, "Luke" 997; I. H. Marshall, *Commentary on Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 259.

¹⁶ R. T. France, "Old Testament Prophecy and the Future of Israel: A Study of the Teaching of Jesus," *TynBul* 26 (1975) 58.

this, of course, he followed the lead of his cousin and forerunner who declared that "the axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Luke 3:9). In Luke 11:49–51 the generation of Jesus' day would be held liable for the murders of all the prophets. A report of an atrocity perpetrated by Pilate prompted Jesus to solemnly warn his listeners: "Unless you repent, you too will all perish" (13:1–5). This is followed by a parable of the fig tree in which the nation is apparently given but one more year to bring forth the fruits of repentance (13:6–9).¹⁷ As Jesus traveled toward Jerusalem for that last fateful fruit inspection he did so with the grim conviction that "no prophet can die outside Jerusalem" (13:33). This is followed by a passage that indicts Jerusalem as the slayer of prophets and likens her to a desolate house as the result of her willful stubbornness to respond to the prophetic message (13:34–35). The requisite repentance not being forthcoming, we have a poignant Lucan insertion into the account of the triumphal entry that highlights the failure of Jerusalem to heed the warnings: "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes . . . because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you" (19:42–44). Finally we have a Lucan addition to the account of Jesus' being led to Golgotha in Mark 15:21 and Matt 27:32 whereby Jesus turned to the wailing women who were following and warned of a far worse fate coming upon the city: "For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (Luke 23:31).

This leads then to a consideration of the nation's fate. Did the impending judgment so vividly depicted by Luke signify an annulment of the OT promises of national restoration? In 20:9–19 Luke, following Mark, includes the parable of the wicked tenants. The verdict is that the owner "will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others" (20:16). France, while admitting that the parable in its context was aimed at the religious hierarchy, holds that the parable implies the rejection of the Jewish nation as a whole.¹⁸ To this one might add the Lucan parable of the great eschatological banquet (14:15–24), which ends on the surprising note of exclusion for those initially invited. Compare also the passage in 13:28–30, which reveals the unexpected guests at the messianic banquet and the unambiguous threat: "There will be weeping there, and gnashing

¹⁷ C. A. Evans says that it is probable that Luke's contemporaries would have understood the tree to represent the nation (*Luke* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990] 206).

¹⁸ France argues as follows: "But was it only against the leaders? Is a divorce between leaders and led, however convenient, a realistic way to interpret Jesus' message? Notice again the note of finality in the parable. Is it an adequate exegesis of this to regard the transfer of the vineyard to new tenants as a manifesto merely for a change in government in Jerusalem?" ("Future" 64). In my opinion Evans demonstrates a more even-handed approach in dealing with Luke 20:9–19: "The people's leaders are selfish and disobedient. They will have to be replaced with new leaders who are obedient and responsive to God. This leadership consists, of course, of those whom Jesus has taught. His disciples will replace the old Jerusalem establishment and will serve God and his people more faithfully. In the context of Jesus' ministry this has reference only to new leadership **within Israel**. Of course, by the time of Luke, this new leadership was undoubtedly identified with the church" (*Luke* 299).

of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out."

One may even trace the warning of rejection into Acts. What are we to make of Peter's plea on the day of Pentecost when he urged his listeners to save themselves "from this corrupt generation" (Acts 2:40) and his warning following the healing of the crippled beggar that "anyone who does not listen to him [Peter applies this passage about the eschatological prophet to Jesus; cf. Deut 18:19] will be completely cut off from among his people" (3:23)? To this we add Stephen's scorching denunciation: "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it" (7:51–53).

Finally, we cannot fail to observe the mounting Jewish opposition to Paul's missionary efforts and the freighted words "we now turn to the Gentiles" (13:46; 18:6) accompanied by the symbolic act of shaking off the dust from his sandals or shaking out his clothes (13:51; 18:6). Indeed Acts ends on what could be likened to an obituary for the Jewish people. Paul's attempt to convince the Jewish community at Rome of Jesus' messianic status concludes with a judgment oracle from Isa 6:9–10 applied to unbelieving Jews. The Nazareth synagogue sermon reverberates with Paul's solemn declaration: "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!" (Acts 28:28). Texts such as the above have led some to conclude that for Luke the Church is the new Israel.¹⁹

There are, however, other texts in Luke-Acts that present a different perspective. First of all, one can turn up passages that depict a much more positive response to the gospel. For example, consider the repeated mention of the growing numbers of believers in Jesus from among the Jews (Acts 2:41: three thousand; 4:4: five thousand more; 6:7: "a large number of priests"; 21:20: "many thousands"). Luke seems to go out of his way to emphasize the number of Jewish Christians found in the religious capital of Judaism. One recalls Paul's assertion that "at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace" (Rom 11:5). The fact is that right up to the end of the book of Acts, some Jews responded to the gospel of the kingdom (Acts 28:24).

Second, notice the remarkable texts that indicate that the guilt of the Jewish nation was not without a mitigating circumstance and, more importantly, that it was not something beyond the scope of pardon. Peter

¹⁹ H. Flender concludes that "there is much to suggest that Luke's purpose in Acts was to portray Christianity as the legitimate successor to the Jewish religion" (*St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History* [London: SPCK, 1967] 109). P. Richardson, more cautiously, says that Luke "goes well along the way toward a Gentile inheritance of Israel's place" (*Israel in the Apostolic Church* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969] 165).

says, "I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders" (3:17). He assured his audience that repentance would result in their sins being "wiped out" (3:19). Stephen's dying prayer was "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (7:60), to which must be compared the uniquely Lucan word from the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Paul also acknowledged that "the people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath" (Acts 13:27).

Third, granted that Jesus taught that there would be a transfer of stewardship of the kingdom of God from Israel to a new people of God, the real question is whether the transfer precludes a future reinstatement into the people of God and a consequent fulfillment of the OT promises of national restoration. Since a majority of exegetes believe that Rom 11:26 refers to a future conversion of Israel, why so much resistance to the notion of a national destiny for the Jewish people?²⁰ There has been a long tradition in Christendom to spiritualize the OT promises made to Israel and to apply them to the Church.²¹ This of course raises a hermeneutical and theological issue well beyond the scope of this paper. My point is that theological presuppositions may well be hindering our ability to read some Biblical texts as they were originally intended.

III. TEXTS IN LUKE-ACTS THAT IMPLY A FUTURE, NATIONAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

We begin with a text pointing to a future that is hopeful and positive. After lamenting the stubbornness of Jerusalem, Jesus predicted a time when the inhabitants will cry out: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Luke 13:35). It is hard not to see here a reference to the future conversion of Israel (cf. Rom 11:25-26). The suggestion that the cry is a reluctant admission of sovereignty has little to commend it, especially in view of the context of the quotation from Ps 118:26.²² Granting that Luke

²⁰ As noted by J. Goldingay, "The Jews, the Land, and the Kingdom," *Anvil* 4 (1987) 10.

²¹ Thus van Buren, who stands outside the evangelical tradition, urges the Church "to affirm God's promise of the land to Israel and therefore to stop spiritualizing this promise in a vain attempt to make it apply to the church" (*Theology* 204-205). From within evangelicalism W. S. LaSor says that "to attempt to remove the 'material' elements of the messianic age and leave only the 'spiritual' is to cut the doctrine from its Old Testament roots and leave it as a structure more akin to Greek idealism" (*The Truth About Armageddon* [New York: Harper, 1982] 85). Writing from the Jewish perspective J. Klausner fastens on a serious shortcoming in some Christian theology: "In the belief in the Messiah of the people of Israel, the political part goes arm in arm with the ethical part, and the nationalistic with the universalistic. It is Christianity which has attempted to remove the political and nationalistic part which is there, and leave only the ethical and spiritual part" (*The Messianic Idea in Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Completion of the Mishnah* [London: Allen and Unwin, 1956] 10). See also Goldingay, who observes the lack of attention given to the theme of the land in the treatment of Christian OT theologies: "The obvious explanation is that this is entirely because of the narrowing influence of the New Testament on Christian theological study, including Old Testament theology as undertaken by Christians" ("Jews" 12).

²² Cf. D. C. Allison, Jr., "Matt 23:39 = Luke 13:35b as a Conditional Prophecy," *JSNT* 18 (1983) 75-84.

13:35 may indicate a future conversion of the Jewish people, France nonetheless insists that "it gives no hint of a *political* future for Israel."²³ But is there not a hint of a political future? After all, the OT passages that speak of Israel's regeneration locate it in the ancient homeland (cf. Zech 12:10–13:1; Ezek 36:24–37), and the setting of Jesus' prediction assumes a Jewish presence once again in Jerusalem.

France discovers one troublesome passage, Luke 21:24, that he admits "seems to go against" what he believes to be the consensus of Jesus' teaching—namely, that Jesus had no interest in a future restoration of Jewish nationhood.²⁴ He dismisses it, however, with the remark that "a passage which gives rise to such varying interpretations can hardly be taken as a warrant to reverse the whole tenor of Jesus' teaching."²⁵ But this special Lucan insertion into the Olivet discourse recalls phraseology and vocabulary from Zech 12:3; Dan 9:26; 12:7 (LXX). These passages are found in contexts in which an international siege of Jerusalem is broken by the intervention of the Lord himself. Supernatural deliverance gives way to the complete and final restoration of Jerusalem (Zech 14:6–21). France's comment that "there is nothing in Luke 21 to suggest what will happen to Jerusalem when the times of the Gentiles are over" may well be correct, but his further assertion that there is a "total lack of any other suggestion in Jesus' teaching, or indeed in the whole New Testament, of a political or a territorial restoration of the Jews"²⁶ is too sweeping. For example, what has become of the Spirit-inspired utterances that heralded the birth of Jesus as the Davidic King who would deliver his people from their enemies? That these have not been completely muted or transmuted I proceed to demonstrate.

Consider Luke 22:28–30 (cf. Matt 19:28), which Luke places in the setting of the last supper and Matthew locates following the account of the rich young ruler. In Luke's version Jesus assures his disciples: "And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29). In dealing with the Matthean version France comments that "the twelve tribes over whom they rule . . . are the ideal Israel of the age to come, perhaps, but not certainly, to be identified as the church."²⁷ France's hesitation at this point is noteworthy since his interpretation certainly is not the face value meaning of the text. I. Howard Marshall says that "the difficulty about the *twelve* tribes disappears if the saying refers metaphorically to the new Israel."²⁸ The alleged "difficulty" seems to arise from other than purely exegetical concerns. Merrill Tenney correctly observes that "the disciples would have understood this to mean a literal rule over Israel, restored to national

²³ France, "Future" 76.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 74.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 76.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 75–76.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 70.

²⁸ I. H. Marshall, "Luke," *New Bible Commentary: Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 921.

status."²⁹ Why so? The passage recalls Dan 7:9, 18, 26–27, where the saints of the Most High take possession of the kingdom of God at the end of the Gentile kingdoms. The rabbis held that the thrones of Dan 7:9 "were reserved for the great men of Israel with whom God as presiding Judge would judge the nations of the world."³⁰ That the disciples must have understood this promise in terms of a literal and national restoration of Israel follows as well from the sequel to Luke's gospel. The last question the disciples ask the Lord before his ascension is whether he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel at that present time (Acts 1:6).

It is worth careful reflection that Luke's passion narrative picks up the threads of the nationalistic aspirations woven into his opening infancy narratives. Thus we are informed that Joseph of Arimathea "was waiting for the kingdom of God" (Luke 23:51; Mark 15:43). The expectation of Joseph can hardly be limited to the spiritual dimension. Could this member of the Sanhedrin, almost certainly a Pharisee, have grasped what the disciples still had not understood after forty days of postresurrection instruction by Jesus (cf. Acts 1:3)? Furthermore the essential meaning of the kingdom for Joseph is paraphrased in the uniquely Lucan account of the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–33). They "had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (24:21). The meaning of the redemption can scarcely be other than that discovered for Luke in 2:38. Thus David Hill links together the use of *lytroō* by the Emmaus-road pilgrims and the deliverance that "Zechariah and Anna appear to envisage"—that is, "the promised restoration of the fortunes of Israel in terms of Old Testament prophecy concerning the historic people of God."³¹ Lest it be objected that Jesus upbraided them for their foolishness and denseness (24:25), one should note carefully v. 26. Their misunderstanding had to do with their failure to understand the necessity for suffering to precede glory, not with an alleged false hope of national restoration.

We turn now to the book of Acts. As already mentioned, the last question asked by the disciples concerned the time of the restoration.³² Jesus' answer has been understood in diametrical ways. Those who on other grounds are convinced that the NT thoroughly transforms the materialistic hopes of the OT into spiritual ones tend to hear a mild rebuke in Jesus' reply. They insist that Jesus squelched the last flickering hopes for national

²⁹ M. C. Tenney, "Luke," *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1962) 1064.

³⁰ O. Schmitz, "Thronos," *TDNT* 3.164–165. To be sure, John in the Apocalypse describes the millennial reign of Christ without referring to a distinct, national restoration of Israel (Rev 20:1–6), as does Paul in his passing references in 1 Cor 6:2–3; 15:22–27. But these are not necessarily contradictory notions. The restoration might be prior to the millennial kingdom or concurrent with it. Contextual considerations account for its absence in the above texts.

³¹ D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms* (SNTSMS 5; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 67. See also Tannehill, "Israel" 76.

³² Note the position of the adverbial phrase (*en tō chronō toutō*) right at the beginning of the sentence.

restoration.³³ On the other hand one may understand Jesus' reply as a re-direction of priorities rather than a rejection of national aspirations.

The context requires the second option. As mentioned earlier, the disciples have had the benefit of forty days of postresurrection instruction about the kingdom of God (1:3). Luke specifies that the question about the time of restoration was immediately prior to the ascension. In other words it was their last question. It seems psychologically improbable that the issue of national restoration had not come up for discussion prior to that moment. According to Luke, as late as the last supper the disciples had been quarreling about who was to be the greatest in the kingdom (22:24). This must have involved leadership in the new commonwealth. Therefore if Christ never intended to restore Israel nationally he surely would have addressed that burning issue. Yet we have this question in 1:6. I conclude that the point of the question could hardly have been whether there would be a restoration but, rather, when it would occur.³⁴ This is supported by the previous mention of the promised Holy Spirit in 1:4–5. Since the renewed activity of the Holy Spirit was one of the hallmarks of the messianic age, the disciples must have connected the coming of the Spirit "in a few days" with national restoration (cf. Ezek 36:24–28; 37:1–14). It was their misconception that Jesus clarified: Restoration would not occur in a few days. In fact that was not even to be a concern of theirs. They had a mission to undertake. The Father would see to the other in his own time.

Perhaps the most important passage for our consideration occurs in Peter's sermon in chap. 3. The reason lies in its placement. We are in a post-Pentecost setting, and Peter as the spokesman of the believing community was filled with the Holy Spirit. If we have an indication of a future restoration of Israel under these new circumstances it will go a long way toward silencing the objection that the NT nowhere expresses such a hope.

³³ I. H. Marshall advocates this view: "The disciples would appear here as representatives of those of Luke's readers who had not yet realized that Jesus had transformed the Jewish hope of the kingdom of God by purging it of its nationalist political elements" (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 60). L. Legrand agrees with Marshall but sees 1:6 as a purely literary device whereby Luke calls attention to three misconceptions current in his circles: the illusion of an imminent eschatology, a reduction of Jesus' cause to zealotism, and a narrow Jewish-Christian exclusivism ("The Spirit, the Mission and the Church: Acts 1:6–8," *Bible-Bhashyam* 8 [1982] 204–205). This approach betrays too skeptical a view of Luke's historical reliability. Others who agree with Marshall and Legrand include C. S. C. Williams, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (HNTC; Harper, 1957) 57; Fitzmyer, *Gospel* 155; H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883) 27–28; R. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 9.256.

³⁴ Goldingay makes the point that "if Jesus and Paul see God as still committed to Israel, do they not imply a concern with the *land* of Israel? It is at least arguable that they would have needed to make it explicit if they had not assumed that God's promise of land to Israel still held, for the notion of land is intrinsic to the notion of peoplehood. . . . The New Testament's silence on the theme of the land of Israel may thus imply that this theme should be taken for granted, not that it should be rejected" ("Jews" 14–15 [italics his]). This stands in contrast to P. Jewett, "Eschatology," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975) 2.344–345.

Peter is quoted as saying, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" (3:19–21). The expression of interest is "to restore everything," which the NASB renders more literally as "the period of restoration of all things." While found nowhere else in the NT it is rooted in the OT and Jewish traditions concerning the eschatological redemption. In its verbal form in Jer 16:15 we have Yahweh's promise: "I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers" (cf. also Jer 23:8; 24:6; Hos 11:11; Sir 48:10). One cannot simply restrict the scope of fulfillment to the regeneration of individuals. The "everything" of Acts 3:21 resists such a reduction.³⁵ Lest someone insist that in 3:24 Peter does in fact sum up the "everything" in the events of Jesus' ministry, death and bestowal of the Holy Spirit ("Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days"), I reply that the NT perspective is that the last days have indeed begun. But within the last days there yet remain unfinished business and unfulfilled prophecy—such as the restoration of Israel. At some unspecified time the messianic days will feature a national regathering, restoration and conversion, and Acts 1:6 may now be linked with 3:19–21 as evidence for such a belief among the apostles.

That there are no more nationalistic hints in the book of Acts does not undermine what we have discovered. The focus of the rest of the book is upon the fulfillment of the commission of 1:8. But Luke has certainly hinted that before history has expired we will witness a national restoration of Israel in accordance with prophetic hope.

IV. CONCLUSION

Luke, by the way he has structured his two-volume work and by the insertion of material peculiar to him, displays an unmistakable interest in the question of the national restoration of Israel. We have seen that the opening two chapters of Luke's gospel raise the issue in terms of expectancy. This hope, while modified by Jesus' ministry, is never rejected. Indeed at the end of the gospel the hope is still visible. At the outset of the

³⁵ As A. Oepke notes: "Grammatically *hōn* cannot be related to *chronōn* but only to *pantōn*. This means further that *pantōn* can only be neut. and not masc. This also means that *apokatastasis* cannot denote the conversion of persons but only the reconstitution or establishment of things" ("Apokatastasis," *TDNT* 1.391). H. Alford was on target when he wrote: "I cannot see how it can be applied to the work of the Spirit . . . in the hearts of men. This would be contrary to all Scripture analogy. I understand it then of the glorious restoration of all things, the *pal-ingensis* of Matthew 19:28, which as Peter here says, is the theme of all the prophets from the beginning" (*The Greek Testament* [rev. E. F. Harrison; Chicago: Moody, 1958] 38–39). For a fuller discussion of the politically messianic sense of the verb *apokathistanai* see Oepke, "Apokatastasis" 388–389; H.-G. Link, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. Brown) 3.146–148.

book of Acts (chaps. 1–3) the hope of restoration is still alive and well. There is no indication that the hope is abandoned. It is simply put on hold. That it is Luke who exhibits a keen interest in the question is in all likelihood owing to the influence of his theological mentor, the apostle Paul.

Luke's manner of presenting the nationalistic hopes of the Jewish people implies that he himself believed that there would be a future, national restoration. If Luke really believed that there would not be a restoration, he has certainly gone out of his way to give the contrary impression.³⁶

³⁶ In an article challenging the view that Luke was really anti-Jewish, J. L. Houlden observed: "Luke's demonstrable selectivity means that his inclusion of this material cannot be put down to mere faithfulness to the facts. It is deliberate and is, to say the least, confusing to readers who are . . . meant to be strengthened in their anti-Jewishness. It seems then, that if Luke's dominant view of Judaism is that it lies under God's judgment, even if he also believes it to be the progenitor of Christianity, he has laid a number of false trails and gone to unnecessary lengths to create a quite different and more positive impression" ("The Purpose of Luke," *JSNT* 21 [1984] 56). The same observation can be made *mutatis mutandis* in regard to Luke's view of Israel's national restoration.