

# THE HOPE OF ISRAEL, THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, AND JESUS: A STUDY OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN ACTS WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF PAUL'S TRIAL DEFENSE

Robert J. Kepple\*

One of the notable characteristics of the Book of Acts is the large amount of space given to Paul's arrest and subsequent trials. Long recognized as a significant feature of the book, the attention that Luke focuses on this part of Paul's life has often been an important factor in various interpretations of the purpose of Acts.<sup>1</sup>

Basic to such an interpretation grounded on these accounts in chaps. 21-28 is an accurate understanding of Luke's presentation of Paul's trial and defense, but this is far from easy to attain. It is the purpose of this paper to examine one difficulty in understanding Luke's presentation of Paul's trials—namely, how can Luke present Paul as claiming that he is on trial for “the hope of Israel” and “the resurrection of the dead” when it seems far more accurate, from our perspective, to say that the issue is “Jesus”?

This difficulty will be examined by first making some observations about Paul's trials and defenses. Then, the various statements Paul makes about why he is on trial will be examined. And finally, the relationship in Acts between the hope of Israel, the resurrection of the dead, and Jesus will be analyzed.

## I. PAUL'S TRIALS AND DEFENSES

There are three basic features of Luke's presentation of Paul's trials and defenses that need to be noted as background to what follows.

First, the charges made by the Jews against Paul are both political and religious. In 21:28, the original “riot” is occasioned by the charge: “This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people, and the law, and this place; and besides, he has even brought Greeks into the temple area and has defiled this holy place.” The charge is twofold: (1) general and religious—he works against true Judaism; and (2) specific, religious and civil—he has defiled the temple. In the scene in chap. 23 no specific charges against Paul come out; but in chap. 24 we find the formal Jewish charges brought against Paul before Felix: “For we have found this man a real troublemaker who stirs up

\*Robert Kepple is reference librarian at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, the essay by A. J. Mattill, Jr., “The Purpose of Acts: Schnuckenburger Reconsidered,” *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 108-122, who argues that Acts 21 is “the key to the composition of Acts” and that the next five chapters of Acts build directly upon it. See also the use made of the material in Acts 21-28 by various exegetes as analyzed in W. W. Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) *passim*.

dissension among all the Jews throughout the world. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him" (24:5, 6). Here the charge is again twofold: (1) general—he is a troublemaker who stirs up rebellion (*stasis*); this has converted the original complaint to a more serious civil charge;<sup>2</sup> and (2) specific—he has tried to defile the temple. Finally, in chap. 26 before Felix we are simply told that the Jews brought "many serious charges against him which they could not prove" (25:7).

Second, Luke presents Paul as completely innocent of any wrongdoing, civil or religious. Three times the authorities declare Paul innocent of any civil crime (Claudius Lysias—23:29; Festus—25:25; Agrippa and Festus—26:31-32). Rather, the civil authorities see the issue as a religious one—an argument among Jews: so Claudius Lysias in 23:29 ("accused over questions about their law") and Festus in 25:19 ("they had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion"). Paul himself makes it clear that he has done no wrong. In 24:11-13, he points out that for twelve days he lived peaceably in Jerusalem and concludes: "Nor can they prove to you those charges of which they are now accusing me." In his defense before Festus, Paul states: "I have committed no offense either against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar" (25:8). Finally, in 28:17-18, Paul notes that he "had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers" and that the Romans had been willing to release him after examination.

Third, Luke takes pains to be sure that the reader understands that Paul is not wayward with respect to Judaism. Paul is presented as taking a Jewish vow, being purified, bringing alms to his people, and apologizing for speaking against the high priest. Indeed, the bulk of Paul's defense speeches is concerned with asserting his orthodoxy. Paul points out his Jewish background (especially that he is a Pharisee—23:6; 26:5), his blamelessness before God (24:16), his exemplary life as a Jew (26:4), and his zeal for Judaism prior to his conversion (26:9-12). Further, Paul argues that his teachings are fully in accord with the law and the prophets and with Jewish beliefs (24:14-16; 26:22-23). As Jervell develops it more fully in his essay, "Paul, the Teacher of Israel,"<sup>3</sup> Paul is portrayed by Luke as an exemplary Jew, and no charge of theological unorthodoxy, much less any violation of civil or religious law, can be sustained against him.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>As Sherwin-White notes, "the Jews were trying to induce the governor to construe the preaching of Paul as tantamount to causing civil disturbances throughout the Jewish population of the Empire. They knew that the governors were unwilling to convict on purely religious charges and therefore tried to give a political twist to the religious charge." A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963) 50.

<sup>3</sup>J. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) 153-183.

<sup>4</sup>A. A. Trites, "The Importance of Legal Scenes and Language in the Book of Acts," *NovT* 16 (1974) 283, notes all three of these features of Luke's presentation: "By this means [courtoom terminology] Luke tries to show that Christianity cannot be construed as a *religio illicita*, for the Christian confession . . . is opposed neither to Jewish or [sic] Roman law. It is not in conflict with the true interpretation of the Old Testament, as Paul shows by 'proving' that Jesus is the Messiah."

## II. PAUL'S STATEMENTS ABOUT WHY HE IS ON TRIAL

But if Paul is as innocent as Luke presents him, why are the Jews then accusing Paul at all, much less insisting on his death? One is tempted to reply: "Because he preached Jesus as Messiah, especially to Gentiles." But a survey of the various statements by Paul as to why he is on trial reveals that he never gives this as the reason.

Before the Sandehrin, Paul asserts: "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; I am on trial because of the hope in the resurrection of the dead"<sup>5</sup> (23:6). Thus Paul claims that he is on trial for a doctrine accepted as orthodox among a very respected segment of Jewish religious leadership—as Luke informs the reader in v 8.<sup>6</sup> Further, in v 9 we learn that some of the Pharisees are convinced enough to urge that Paul not be condemned by the council. Undoubtedly this scene, as well as the whole of Paul's defense, involves historical problems;<sup>7</sup> but clearly Luke, at least, presents Paul's assertion as a reasonable defense.<sup>8</sup> As Lake and Cadbury write: "Doubtless from the point of view of the Sanhedrin it [Paul's statement] was not true, but it was from Paul's own standpoint."<sup>9</sup> But how could it be seen as true by Paul or Luke? Commentators *supply* a connection, and on this point Haenchen and Bruce agree: "What is meant is the Messianic hope (fulfilled in Jesus) . . . ; for Paul/Luke naturally it is above all the resurrection of Jesus which is in mind."<sup>10</sup> "The hope of Israel, as Paul saw it, was bound up with the resurrection of Christ, and thus with the general principle (held by the Pharisees) of the resurrection of the dead."<sup>11</sup>

Such remarks are reasonable and logical deductions by these men, but how do we know that the connection they posit exists? More im-

<sup>5</sup>*Elpidos kai anastaseos* is most probably a case of hendiadys by which Luke avoids a string of dependent genitives. So N. Turner, *A Grammar of NT Greek* (gen. ed. J. H. Moulton; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 3. 335-336, who cites four other examples from Luke/Acts. So also M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963) 155; and BDF, section 442 (16).

<sup>6</sup>Note that in 24:15 Paul includes his confession of belief that he has "a hope in God which these men [the Jews] cherish themselves—that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." On the issue of whether the Pharisees actually believed in a *general* resurrection, see the discussion of the evidence by I. H. Marshall, "The Resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles," *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin) 97, who effectively counters E. Haenchen's use of Josephus on this matter (*The Acts of The Apostles* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971] 655).

<sup>7</sup>Haenchen, *Acts*, p. 641, terms it "an historical impossibility." But compare Marshall, "Resurrection," pp. 96-98, who defends the historicity of this scene and the whole of Paul's trial, especially as it relates to the belief in the resurrection.

<sup>8</sup>The argument that Paul is here concerned only with using a stratagem to divide the council is unconvincing. In the subsequent defense speeches, Paul repeatedly claims the same point—it is the resurrection of the dead that is at issue. His remark in 24:21 should not be taken as an admission that he should not have shouted this statement to the council; rather, Paul is asserting that there is no other reason for his trial except the fact contained in the statement, which is a theological, not a civil, issue.

<sup>9</sup>K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles* (gen. eds. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake; London: Macmillan, 1933), 4. 286.

<sup>10</sup>Haenchen, *Acts*, p. 638.

<sup>11</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 411.

portantly, how can we know that this is the connection that Paul and/or Luke understood to exist and that Luke expected his readers to understand to exist?

The same problem reappears in Paul's defense before Felix. After sketching his beliefs and asserting his innocence, Paul again states the reason he believes the trial is occurring: "These who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin—unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood among them: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today'" (24:20-21). Thus in this passage the same paradox appears: Paul is presented as being tried for a Jewish doctrine, one that a number of other Jews hold.

In his defense before Agrippa in chap. 26 Paul makes a more extended reference to why he is on trial, stressing slightly different elements. After asserting his orthodox background as a Pharisee, Paul interjects: "And now I am on trial because of the hope. . . . It is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me" (26:6-7). But here Paul specifies that the hope he is speaking of is "the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers, the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night." This undoubtedly refers to Israel's messianic expectations—as almost all commentators understand these verses<sup>12</sup>—and in the following verse Paul also draws in the concept of the resurrection of the dead, although he does not state its connection with the hope. "Why is it considered incredible by you that God raises the dead?" (26:8). Again, Paul has returned to the same "interpretation" of his trouble—they are against him because he believes in the resurrection of the dead—and he has linked this belief with the hope Israel has in God's promise.

Finally, in his initial meeting with the Jews of Rome, Paul tells them: "I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel" (28:20). Again the same problem arises, for it is far from evident how this is the cause of his imprisonment.

In summary, Paul is presented by Luke as repeatedly insisting that he is on trial because of "the hope of Israel" and "the resurrection of the dead." But the question still remains to be answered as to why Paul and/or Luke believe that the two are so closely linked. And even if they are, how can Paul claim (and Luke present him as doing so) that this is the reason for his difficulties? There can be no question, judging from the contents of Acts, that Paul and Luke are aware that the messianic hope is held by all good Jews and that others who hold the same belief in the resurrection were not being condemned as Paul was.

<sup>12</sup>Lake and Cadbury, *Acts*, p. 289, seem to argue that in 26:6-8 and 28:20 Paul is *not* referring to the messianic hope since in 23:6, 24:15 and 25:19 he equates the hope *solely* with the resurrection. While it must be admitted that Paul greatly emphasizes the resurrection in speaking of the hope, it also seems clear that he means that it is the messianic hope that rests on the resurrection—see his use of Scripture and the analysis of it that follows.

### III. THE HOPE OF ISRAEL, THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, AND JESUS

The answer to this problem can be found by examining what connection is drawn in Acts between the hope of Israel, the resurrection of the dead, and Jesus.<sup>13</sup> The following analysis attempts to demonstrate that in Acts these three elements are viewed as inseparably bound up with one another. Together they form a trilogy of beliefs in which all three are vital elements. Thus it is perfectly proper, from Luke's viewpoint in writing Acts, to present Paul as claiming that any one of these three beliefs is why he is being tried—after all, they are understood to be inseparable.

That these three concepts are so closely linked can be established by examining three basic theological beliefs that appear in Acts: (1) The resurrection of Jesus is spoken of in the law and the prophets and is part of the promise upon which Israel's hope is based; (2) the resurrection of Jesus is the key fulfillment of that promise; and (3) the resurrection of Jesus is inextricably bound up with the resurrection of the dead. The first two of these beliefs will be dealt with together, since they appear in the same passages of Acts and are closely related.

Paul's repeated claims in his defense speeches that his beliefs and teachings are in agreement with the law and the prophets have already been noted. But at one point in making that claim, Paul specifically asserts that the resurrection of Jesus was part of OT prophecy. Paul, in his own description of his preaching in 26:22-23, says: "And so, having had God's help to this very day, I stand and testify to both great and small, stating nothing but what the prophets and Moses said was going to take place—that the Messiah was to suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."<sup>14</sup>

The only missionary speech of any length by Paul to Jews that is recorded by Luke is found in Acts 13:16-41. In it Luke represents Paul as taking great pains to establish both of these beliefs about the resurrection of Jesus. Paul twice states that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise and then elaborates the point. Paul, it should be remembered, in chap. 26 says that the hope he is speaking of is "of the promise

<sup>13</sup>Another line of research that could be undertaken would be to investigate the connection (if any) in first-century Judaism between the messianic hope and the resurrection of the dead. Few would dispute that both beliefs are well represented in the intertestamental and NT periods (see, for example, the bibliography listed by Oepke, *TDNT* 1:368), but their connection is not clear. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge; Harvard University, 1972), in his analysis of the belief in resurrection in the intertestamental period, concludes that the belief in its various motifs concerned judgment and that "late resurrection texts specify resurrection of the body as the means by which God will administer rewards and punishments" (p. 175). This line of investigation has not been undertaken here. Rather, since the purpose in this paper is to understand Luke's portrayal of Paul's trial claims, it is more necessary to investigate how Luke sees the relationship of these beliefs.

<sup>14</sup>Note that in 28:23 Luke tells us that Paul, when speaking to the Roman Jews, "explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and from the prophets." From the examples of Paul's preaching and use of the OT presented elsewhere in Acts, Luke most probably understood the resurrection of Jesus to be part of what Paul was attempting to convince them about from the law and the prophets.

to our fathers," a phrase that also occurs here in chap. 13.

In 13:23 Paul turns from his recital of Israel's history to Jesus by affirming: "From the offspring of this man [David], *according to promise (kat' epangelian)*, God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus." After a brief recital of the facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, Paul in 13:22 says: "We preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers," namely, "that God has fulfilled this promise to us children." But the important point is *how* Paul saw this promise as being fulfilled: *anastēsas Iēsoun*<sup>15</sup> (13:33). Thus it is Paul himself who proclaims one of the premises that helps to explain the trial scenes. For Paul, as Luke presents his teaching, the raising of Jesus brings about the fulfilment of Israel's hope.

After making this assertion in 13:33a, Paul continues in v 33b and the following verses to establish its Scriptural basis. After quoting Ps 2:7 in v 33b, he then in v 34 quotes another text that he believes foretold the resurrection of Jesus and that Jesus, being raised up, is "never to see decay." This is as God had promised in Isa 55:3: "I will give to you the holy and sure blessings of David" (LXX). Paul then continues in 13:35 (quoting Ps 16:10) to further demonstrate the OT basis of one aspect of the promise he is speaking of: "You will not allow your holy one to undergo decay." Then, with a logic similar to Peter's in Acts 2, Paul argues that such a statement obviously does not apply to David—he died and did undergo decay. Rather, "he whom God raised did not undergo decay." Paul then concludes with a call for repentance that makes it clear that Jesus is "he whom God raised."

Thus Paul saw the resurrection of Christ as spoken of in the OT. But further, this resurrection is seen as connected with "the holy and sure blessings of David." Whatever the merits of the LXX as a translation of the MT, in both the LXX and the MT of Isa 55:3 the *hosia David ta pista*<sup>16</sup> are connected with the "eternal covenant." This can hardly be other than the one spoken of in 2 Sam 7:10-14, a passage that seems to lie behind the whole of Paul's argument in this section.<sup>17</sup> Both speak of a "raising up by God," of "David's seed," of "sonship" being obtained, and of a "promise" by God. In short, Goldsmith is correct in his assessment that "the complex of OT citations in Acts

<sup>15</sup>It is a matter of some debate as to whether the phrase here refers to Jesus' earthly ministry or to his resurrection from the dead. F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, p. 269, prefers the former, pointing to the usages of *anistēmi* in 3:22, 3:26, 7:37 and 13:22. But the latter is more probably correct since (1) Paul has already passed the "earthly life" portion of his speech about Jesus (in vv 27-29); (2) the resurrection in mind in this section is clearly *ek nekron* (see vv 30, 34); (3) if vv 33-36 are Paul's explanation of how Jesus' resurrection fulfils the promise (as is argued below), then v 33 is part of the development of how the resurrection from the *dead* fulfils the promise; and (4) the two lines of Ps 2:7 quoted in v 33b to support v 33a are only used elsewhere in the NT with reference to Jesus' resurrection/exaltation (see Heb 1:5; 5:5). So Haenchen, *Acts*, p. 411, and Lake and Cadbury, *Acts*, p. 154. H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HNT 7; Tübingen: Mohr, 1963) 77, notes that both are possible but that "der Zusammenhang fordert das Letztere," citing Lövestam's study (see below, n. 17).

<sup>16</sup>The English translation used above for this phrase ("holy and sure *blessings*," so *NASB, RSV, NIV*) is influenced by the *ḥasde* of the MT of Isa 55:3, since the LXX is properly "holy and sure *things*."

<sup>17</sup>So E. Lövestam, *Son and Saviour: A Study of Acts 13, 32-37* (*ConNT* 18; Lund: Gleerup, 1961) 84: "It is likely that already from the beginning allusion is made to the account in 2 Sam 7:6-16."

13:33-37 is not a random selection, but one carefully conceived on linguistic and theological grounds to show the Jews *how* God fulfilled his promise to David in II Sam 7—namely, by raising Jesus from the dead.”<sup>18</sup>

While this speech by Paul contains other important theological statements,<sup>19</sup> the important points for the purpose of this study are these: The resurrection of Jesus (1) fulfils the promise, (2) was spoken of in the OT, and (3) is seen as a part of the Davidic messianic promise.

Peter's speech in chap. 2 also contains an argument designed to show that God<sup>20</sup> raised up Jesus in accord with Scripture. The argument runs thus: (1) God raised up Jesus, (2) having loosed the bonds of death (a necessary prerequisite); (3) this was done because death was not able to hold Jesus; (4) but how does Peter know this? Because David had foretold it! The prophecy of David (Ps 16:8-11), Peter argues, could not possibly refer to David himself since he obviously had seen corruption and remained in Hades (you can still see his tomb!); (5) therefore, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah.<sup>21</sup>

But of particular interest to this investigation is one of three participial clauses modifying the verb *elalēsen* in 2:31. The first and third are not unusual here, but the other clause is: “knowing (*eidōs*) that God had sworn an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne.” The wording is barely close enough to that of the OT passages to warrant classifying this as a quotation; yet the concept referred to is certainly found in 2 Sam 7:12-13 (cf. Ps 132:10-11), as most writers agree. But *why* is it significant to mention at this point that David “knew” these things? Certainly it is not necessary for the logic of the argument as we now have it. On close examination it appears that the function of the clause at this point is to link the resurrection with the fulfillment of the Davidic messianic promise.

A clue to this function is provided by some variant readings for this verse,<sup>22</sup> which add (among others) the words *anastēsai ton Chris-*

<sup>18</sup>D. Goldsmith, “Acts 13:33-37: A *Peshar* on II Samuel 7,” *JBL* 87 (1968) 324.

<sup>19</sup>See in particular Lövestam's extensive treatment of this passage.

<sup>20</sup>The formula, “Jesus whom God raised from the dead,” or a variation of it, occurs frequently in Acts (2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30, 34, 37; 17:31). Only one place in Acts is Jesus the subject of *egeirō* or *anistēmi* (10:41), and there it is an infinitive construction that conveys no sense of activity on Jesus' part. For Luke, God is the effective power behind the resurrection of the dead in general and Jesus in particular.

<sup>21</sup>Thus, I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 162, seems correct that the point of the argument here is that “since Jesus was the Messiah whose resurrection was prophesied, therefore death could not hold Him and it was inevitable that He should rise from the dead,” rather than that Peter is claiming that since God raised Jesus, Jesus must be the Messiah—as, for instance, B. Lindars, *NT Apologetic* (London: SCM, 1961) 38-45, contends.

<sup>22</sup>The variant readings are numerous, adding all or most of *to kata sarka anastēsai/anastēsein ton Christon kai* between *autou* and *kathisai* with minor variations. Hardly any writers defend the phrase as original. The United Bible Societies committee argues that “the Hebraic use of the phrase *ek karpou* as a noun . . . has given rise to various explanatory expansions (derived perhaps from 2 Sam 7:12).” See B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek NT* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971) 299. Of interest to this study is that it is *explanatory* and connected with 2 Sam 7:12. Similarly, Westcott and Hort, *The NT in the Original Greek: Appendix* (London: Macmillan, 1970) 92, suggest that the variants are “perhaps from 2 Sam vii 12.”

ton to the clause under discussion. The addition of these words makes clear Peter's reasoning: David, knowing that God had promised to raise up the Messiah and seat him upon the throne, spoke about the *anastasis* in Psalm 16. Thus with this text the "raising up" is part of the Davidic promise and is connected with the "seating upon his throne," which Peter in the following verses links with the ascension through Ps 110:1.

While these words are most probably not part of the original text, they are still important for two reasons: (1) They indicate what a number of early fathers and scribes understood the significance of the *eidōs* clause to be, and (2) this variant may accurately reflect the implicit thought of this clause.

The clause refers to 2 Sam 7:12-13 primarily (Ps 132:10-11 refers back to the 2 Sam passage), and there is no doubt that the whole prophecy of 2 Sam 7:10-14 was understood as messianic in the first century, as witnessed to by 4QFlor and the other NT usages. But of particular significance here is that 2 Sam 7:12b reads "*kai anastēsō to sperma sou meta se . . .*" (LXX), and v 13 goes on to promise the throne. It seems probable that Peter/Luke inserts the *eidōs* clause because of this connection. In this OT passage, the "raising up" is the first of several actions that God promises to perform for the seed, including the establishment of the throne. The general reference of this verse is to the promise of 2 Samuel 7, and the unquoted portion of this passage (especially v 12b) seems to be in mind here as well as the quoted portion.

Thus the connection drawn in the variant reading is probably a correct understanding of Acts 2:30-31. The resurrection is part of the promise sworn to David; thus, it is only logical that we find David prophesying about it. This, it should be noted, is very similar to the ideas of chap. 13 discussed above.

In short, in Acts the resurrection of Jesus is seen as spoken of in the law and the prophets. It is seen as part of the Davidic messianic promise as foretold in the law and the prophets. And further, the resurrection of Jesus is seen as the key event by which the promise is fulfilled.

The third belief in Acts that helps establish the close relationship between the hope of Israel, the resurrection of the dead, and Jesus is the belief that the resurrection of Jesus is inextricably bound up with the resurrection of the dead and vice versa. While it is more difficult to establish this belief as part of the theology of Acts, there is adequate evidence that Luke was presenting Paul's trial defense with such an understanding in mind.

In his defense before Agrippa, Paul asserts that Moses and the prophets foretold that "the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles"<sup>23</sup> (26:33). Of importance here is the ascription to the Messiah

<sup>23</sup>So NIV, RSV, Good News Bible, et al. A few other versions (e. g., NASB) take the *prōtos* adverbially with *mellei*. The translation used above is highly preferable—so Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, p. 447; Haenchen, *Acts*, p. 687; et al.—since it takes the *prōtos* in the more natural function of a substantive rather than



of the characteristic *prōtos ex anastaseōs nekron*. As has been noted, Paul twice has named "the resurrection of the dead" as the cause of his troubles (23:6; 24:21), and here he is presented as making a connection between Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection of the dead.

While the significance of this phrase is not explained in Acts, it is difficult *not* to see in it the concept, developed more fully in the Pauline writings (see especially 1 Corinthians 15), that Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection of the dead and that belief in the resurrection of Jesus and in the resurrection of the dead thus rise and fall together. Thus Bruce, commenting on 26:23, does not seem to be stretching the point when he writes that "for Paul, the resurrection of the dead in general cannot be separated from the resurrection of Christ in particular."<sup>24</sup> Similarly Marshall, in his study of the resurrection in Acts, writes that "according to Luke the question of the resurrection of Jesus could be regarded as a particular aspect of the general question of the resurrection of the dead."<sup>25</sup>

Elsewhere in Acts, Luke twice includes statements that indicate that it is not simply the fact of Jesus' resurrection that was proclaimed<sup>26</sup> but also that Jesus was a participant in the resurrection of the dead. Further, Luke also closely links opposition to belief in Jesus and opposition to belief in the resurrection of the dead in these passages.

In Acts 4:2 Peter and John are arrested, according to Luke, for "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead." Here, "the meaning seems to be that they proved from the fact of Jesus' resurrection (*en tō Iēsou*, 'in the case of Jesus') the general principle of resurrection, which the Sadducees denied."<sup>27</sup> The opposition of the temple author-

---

in an adverbial function (where *prōton* would be more natural)—see BAG, pp. 733-734; TDNT 6:865-870. The translation of this verse is problematic due to the *ei* constructions which most probably are the remnants of an incorporation of early Christian "testimonia" headings into this verse. This view was first advanced by J. R. Harris, "The Use of Testimonies in the Early Church," *Expositor*, 7th ser., 2 (1906) 408-409, and is quoted with apparent approval by F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 494; *Acts: Greek Text*, p. 447; R. P. C. Hanson, *The Acts* (New Clarendon Bible; Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 240; *et al.*

<sup>24</sup>Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, p. 447.

<sup>25</sup>Marshall, "Resurrection," p. 96. So also Lake and Cadbury, *Acts*, p. 316, who write: "Paul's whole argument [in 26:8] is that denial of the resurrection of Christ is a denial of the general resurrection." Similarly Lake, writing in K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles* (gen eds. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake; London: Macmillan, 1933), 5. 213, adds: "To him [Paul] the Resurrection was the necessary foundation of his whole position, and he felt that those who admitted the possibility of a resurrection ought to follow him." Many other commentators make similar remarks.

<sup>26</sup>The "fact of" or "historicity of" the resurrection of Jesus is viewed as an established fact, the sureness of which is alluded to on several occasions. In Acts 1:3, Luke reminds us that "he [Jesus] presented himself alive, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days." And in Luke 24, he has more fully recorded some of the appearances. In Acts 2:32 Peter mentions the resurrection, "of which we are all witnesses"; so also in 3:15 and 5:32. In 10:40-41 and 13:31 the witnesses to the resurrection are also mentioned. The only words that imply doubt concerning Jesus' resurrection come from Festus: "... a certain dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive" (25:19). But in Acts the remark seems in keeping with the portrayal of Festus as one "at a loss" as to how to deal with religious questions rather than as a statement of any substantive doubt.

<sup>27</sup>Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, p. 116. On the use of *en tō Iēsou* in Acts 4:2, see the thorough discussion by N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965) 155-156.

ities and the Sadducees to the preaching of Peter and John was not based solely on the fact that they were preaching Jesus, but that they were preaching the resurrection of the dead. Thus Luke here closely links belief in the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead and speaks of Jesus as having participated in the resurrection of the dead.

Similarly, when Paul preached in Athens he is said to have preached about "Jesus and the resurrection" (17:18), not simply about the "resurrection of Jesus." When Paul reached the end of his speech and spoke of God's attesting Jesus by raising him from the dead (17:31), Luke reports in v 32 that the listeners mocked at the idea of the resurrection of the dead, not simply at the idea of Jesus' resurrection. Once again, Luke closely links belief in both resurrections.

Thus, in Acts the resurrection of Jesus is seen as bound up with the general doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, for Jesus is the first result of that resurrection. In Luke's theology, to reject one was also to reject belief in the other.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Concerning the hope of Israel, the resurrection of the dead, and Jesus, these four beliefs have been found in Acts: (1) The hope of Israel is closely bound up with the resurrection of the dead; (2) the resurrection of Jesus is spoken of in the law and the prophets and is part of the promise upon which Israel's hope is based; (3) the resurrection of Jesus is the key fulfilment of the promise; and (4) the resurrection of Jesus is inextricably bound up with the resurrection of the dead.

How Luke can portray Paul as saying "on account of the resurrection of the dead I am on trial" and "I am wearing this chain on account of the hope of Israel" can be seen from the above. Paul's claims are only a logical outgrowth of these four beliefs. The resurrection of Jesus is essential if what the law and the prophets spoke of is true; it is essential to the fulfilment of the messianic promise. To reject Paul's witness to the resurrection of Jesus was, in his mind as Luke presents him, to also reject the idea of the resurrection of the dead and thus to reject any hope of the fulfilment of the messianic promise.

Admittedly Luke could have presented this so that it would have been more obvious to us, but it probably was obvious to Luke and to those for whom he wrote. Whatever Luke's purposes in writing Acts, it seems fairly certain that one of them was to present Christianity as the true continuation of the Jewish religion and of the people of

---

While admitting that understanding the *en* as equivalent to a dative of reference is both possible and "likely to have most appeal to commentators," Turner believes Luke to be using it here as an equivalent to the Pauline *en Christo*, and thus "the apostles preached that all who are 'in' Christ shall rise from the dead." While such an interpretation is possible, it does not seem very probable in the light of how Luke links Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection of the dead in the rest of Acts.

God.<sup>28</sup> Thus the Christian interpretation of the resurrection of the dead and the hope of Israel is seen as correct and lies behind the statements in Paul's speeches which we have examined, but it only appears incidentally in the speeches of Acts rather than being carefully developed in explicit form.

<sup>28</sup>E. Franklin, *Christ the Lord* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) 112, in his recent study of the purpose and theology of Luke/Acts, notes the close connection drawn in Acts between Jewish and Christian belief: "The embrace of Christianity is therefore but a little step for those whose understanding of Judaism is correct. . . . The differentiating factor is that the belief in the resurrection of the dead is fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (23:6; 24:15, 21; 26:8, 23; 28:20) by which the general resurrection is guaranteed."