

THE HOPE *of* ISRAEL

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IN THE
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



BRANDON D. CROWE

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Part 1

The Resurrection
in Acts

The State of the Question

The Resurrection in Acts

A Universal Message

We begin in Acts 17. After Paul and Silas made their way to Thessalonica, they entered a synagogue, and for three Sabbaths Paul reasoned with those present about the suffering and resurrection of Jesus, who is the Christ (v. 3). Some of the Jewish people were convinced, along with many Greeks and leading women; these joined the movement Paul and Silas represented. Others fomented an uproar and tried to seize Paul and Silas.

Later in Acts 17 Paul and Silas arrived in Athens, that bastion of classical philosophy, which Paul considered to be a hotbed of idolatry. Having gained the ear of the philosophers of the day, Paul gave them something new (for indeed, they enjoyed new things): he preached the resurrection of Jesus (v. 18) and that there would be a day of righteous judgment by this man who had been raised from the dead (vv. 30–31).

Whether, then, it was in a Jewish synagogue or in history-rich Athens, Paul in Acts consistently drew attention to the resurrection of Christ.¹ In the synagogue, the resurrection is the crucial point for proving the messianic status of Jesus from the Scriptures. On trial before the Areopagus, the

1. See also Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*, NSBT 27 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 78–79; Stanley E. Porter, *The Paul of Acts: Essays in Literary Criticism, Rhetoric, and Theology*, WUNT 1/115 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 167.

resurrection of Jesus is proclaimed to those who are not steeped in the Jewish Scriptures. Jesus of Nazareth, according to Paul, has been raised from the dead, and this is a cosmic event with implications for all people.

Beyond Paul, we find a similar emphasis on the resurrection throughout Acts. Indeed, whether the audience was Jews or gentiles, Pharisees or Sadducees, kings or congregants, a remarkable consistency is found in the apostolic emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection is firmly rooted in the Jewish Scriptures, yet is also a message with universal relevance.

Acts 17 thus provides a preview for my argument. Simply put, in Luke's second volume, the resurrection of Jesus bears a weighty load, weighty enough to merit extended reflection.

The Resurrection and the Interpretation of Acts

It is not difficult to identify any number of knotty exegetical issues in Acts, and it may be that attending to the role of Christ's resurrection in Acts will help untangle some of these. Acts is, from one perspective, a *transitional* book, and many of the exegetical difficulties seem to be tethered to this unique period in the history of the church. At the same time, Acts is a *programmatic* book for subsequent generations of Christians, providing the apostolic basis for the early Christian message and delineating the life of the earliest community of Jesus followers. As a *transitional* book, Acts recounts a number of nonrepeatable events; as a *programmatic* book, Acts provides guidance for the church in subsequent ages. It therefore behooves the exegete to wrestle with which portions of Acts are transitional, unrepeatable moments in the history of salvation and which are programmatic events that believers today should emulate.²

Parsing out these distinctions is tricky. For example, in what sense was the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost a qualitatively new event in the history of redemption, and in what sense ought we to see the Spirit's work as contiguous with divine activity in ages past? If the Holy Spirit comes to all people—Jews and gentiles—by Acts 10, then why had the Spirit not already fallen on the group of Ephesian believers in Acts 19? Similarly, why did the Samaritans not receive the Spirit when they believed? On a different note, why is so much attention devoted to the defenses of Paul in the latter chapters of Acts?

These issues have been variously addressed, and the number of thorny exegetical issues in Acts could easily be multiplied. No one volume would be sufficient to address them all. Nevertheless, in what follows I will argue

2. See also Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1997), 2–13.

that a robust appreciation of the resurrection of Christ in Acts—which is a prominent Lukan emphasis—provides a hermeneutical guide to help us untangle a number of knotty issues in Acts.

The Centrality of the Resurrection in Acts

In what follows I argue that the resurrection of Christ is one of the major emphases of Acts, which unifies and provides coherence for the theology of Luke's second volume.³ By *resurrection* I simply mean the reality for Luke that Jesus of Nazareth had risen bodily from the dead to new life. Luke presents the resurrection of Christ as a singular turning point in the accomplishment of salvation that ushers in the age of the exalted Messiah. By focusing on the resurrection message of Acts, we are thus able to perceive with greater clarity the purpose(s) of Acts, and we are also better able to wrestle with questions related to the newness and contiguity of the gospel message with what has come before. My argument consists of two parts, which correlate to the two halves of this book. In part 1, I exegete relevant texts in Acts pertaining to the resurrection. In part 2, I explore the theological implications of the resurrection in more detail.

A few more words on these two divisions are in order. First, we need to appreciate how the resurrection is a major artery connecting various events and passages in Acts. To use another analogy, the resurrection of Christ serves as a powerful theological adhesive that contributes to the theological unity of Acts. For example, the resurrection is foundational to understanding the Lukan emphasis on the *kingdom*—which bookends Acts—and is also necessary to understand the rationale and timing(s) of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, the resurrection consistently plays a climactic role in the apostolic preaching. Indeed, I will also propose that the resurrection—though typically not an end in itself in the preaching—is often the logical key to the apostolic preaching in Acts,⁴ since the resurrection explains the implications of the work of Christ like no other event. Thus, for example, though the

3. Following the strong and consistent evidence of the early church, I identify Luke to be the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. See, e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.1; 3.1.1; 3.13.1–2; 3.10.1; 3.12.12; 3.14.1; 3.15.1; 3.17.2; 4.6.1; Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels*, trans. John Bowden (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 44–56; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 47–51.

4. A point also made by Kevin L. Anderson, “*But God Raised Him from the Dead*”: *The Theology of Jesus’s Resurrection in Luke-Acts*, PBM (repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 197. See also the chart in Thompson, *Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 91; Lidija Novakovic, *Raised*

apostolic speeches typically end in paraenesis,⁵ the reason that the people must repent and believe is that Jesus *lives* (e.g., Acts 2:33–39; 13:37–41). My goal will thus be to show that at various key junctures of the apostolic preaching (including Paul’s defenses), the conclusions and implications depend upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I will likewise argue for the key role of the resurrection more broadly in Acts, beyond the speeches.

Second, in addition to the *that* of the resurrection’s centrality in Acts (part 1), we must consider the *why* and the *so what* of the resurrection in Acts. Therefore in part 2, I will linger over Luke’s emphasis on the resurrection and consider some of its implications for Christian theology. To this end, I will address the way in which Jesus is and/or becomes Lord in Acts, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures and the purpose of Acts, and the New Testament canon in light of early Christian theology. I will argue that the resurrection of Christ bears significantly on all of these issues.

Simply stated, my focus is intently on the resurrection and its implications in Acts and for Christian theology. Though, as the survey that follows will show, many have recognized the centrality of the resurrection in Acts, surprisingly few studies have traced out the implications of this observation in an integrated way, articulating its contribution to biblical and systematic theology.

I aim to make a bold case in this volume, because I am persuaded that so much in Acts hinges on the resurrection of Christ. We fail to do justice to the theological message of Acts if we give less attention to the resurrection than Luke himself does. To be clear, I will focus primarily on the resurrection of Christ himself, and not the general resurrection. Though the latter is also in view in Acts, I emphasize the cosmic and personal dimensions of Christ’s resurrection, which certainly has consequential—indeed causal—implications for the general resurrection.⁶ I also recognize that debates persist on the relationship of the resurrection to the ascension and enthronement of Jesus. These are all clearly important. Yet I will argue in chapter 5 that the resurrection seems to function for Luke as a *primus inter pares* (first among equals) when he is speaking of aspects of Christ’s exaltation.

It will also be helpful to state what this book is and what it is not. Simply stated, this book is an investigation of the centrality of the resurrection of

from the Dead according to Scripture: The Role of Israel’s Scripture in the Early Christian Interpretations of Jesus’ Resurrection, JCT 12 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 197.

5. Cf. Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Tyndale, 1962), 27.

6. Cf. Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 205–6.

Christ in Acts and its theological implications. This book is not an investigation of the *historicity* of the resurrection in Acts. Others have written with the goal of defending the veracity of the resurrection of Christ; that is not my aim.⁷ Nevertheless, my argument does assume that the resurrection of Jesus described by Luke is historical.⁸ Indeed, I believe the dichotomy between theology and history is artificial, which I will not assume. Questions pertaining to the historicity or nonhistoricity of particular events necessarily involve theological assumptions, since often such historical questions relate to how God does or does not intervene in history. Historicity is a theological issue for Luke as well. He affirms in the prologue of his Gospel that the events recounted can be traced back to eyewitnesses, so his readers can have certainty about the doctrines which they have been taught (Luke 1:1–4). To pose historical questions is therefore at the same time to pose theological questions; ultimately the two cannot be separated.

My method will be to look intently at the text of Acts and its role in the New Testament, taking a biblical-theological approach.⁹ I will read Acts in light of Luke, assuming the hyphen in “Luke-Acts,” though my argument does not hinge on one’s assessment of the literary unity of the two books.¹⁰ Indeed, as I argue in chapter 8, Acts is quite flexible in the canon and was placed alongside a variety of canonical books in the early centuries of the church. But while I will pay particular attention to the relevance of the Gospel of Luke for the interpretation of Acts, I will also read Acts in the context of and in light of the entire biblical canon. This approach assumes the macroscopic

7. E.g., N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, COQG 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

8. Cf. Joel B. Green, “‘Witnesses of His Resurrection’: Resurrection, Salvation, Discipleship, and Mission in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker, MNTS (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 244; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994–98), 2:xlix; Arthur Darby Nock, “A Note on the Resurrection,” in *Essays on the Trinity and Incarnation*, ed. A. E. J. Rawlinson (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), 47–50.

9. This is the same approach I discussed in *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 18.

10. For various perspectives, see Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1958), 8–11; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986–90), 2:6–8; Joseph Verheyden, “The Unity of Luke-Acts: One Work, One Author, One Purpose?,” in *Issues in Luke-Acts: Selected Essays*, ed. Sean A. Adams and Michael W. Pahl, GH 26 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2012), 27–50; Michael F. Bird, “The Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion,” *JNT* 29 (2007): 425–48; Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte: Übersetzt und erklärt*, KEK 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 91; Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

unity of the New Testament witness, which means that Luke's unique voice is not in fundamental disagreement with any other New Testament author.¹¹ This claim will not find universal assent, but fruitful vistas open before us if we approach the question of the resurrection in Acts in concord with, for example, Paul's letters. In addition, I am less interested than some other studies in questions of sources and underlying traditions, though to be sure, such questions do have their place.¹² My primary interests are more in the text of Acts itself and in Luke's narrative presentation.¹³ I will, however, give particular attention to the Old Testament as a source, since the Old Testament is explicitly cited by Luke throughout.

State of the Question: The Resurrection in Acts

It is not novel to identify the resurrection as a key emphasis in Acts. Indeed, any number of articles, essays, commentaries, and monographs routinely note the importance of the resurrection for Luke's second volume.¹⁴ Further, if the resurrection does occupy a substantial place in the theology of Acts, then it would be surprising if its significance had been little noted. However, it is much less common—in fact it is surprisingly rare—to find monographs or other book-length studies devoted to the resurrection in Acts.

11. Cf., e.g., Philipp Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 33–50, with the more recent assessment of Sigurd Grindheim, "Luke, Paul, and the Law," *NovT* 56 (2014): 335–58 (though Grindheim overplays the negative connotations of living according to the law).

12. I have written on this topic previously. See Brandon D. Crowe, "The Sources for Luke and Acts: Where Did Luke Get His Material (and Why Does It Matter)?," in Adams and Pahl, *Issues in Luke-Acts*, 73–95.

13. This is not to deny the importance of textual-critical issues (especially for Acts!). I will engage in such discussions where necessary throughout this study.

14. See, e.g., Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 31, 74, 77, 80, 90–91; Barrett, *Commentary on the Acts*, 2:xlix; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 104–5; Dennis J. Horton, *Death and Resurrection: The Shape and Function of a Literary Motif in the Book of Acts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009); C. F. D. Moule, "The Christology of Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 165; H. Douglas Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology*, SNTSMS 89 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 114–18; Stefan Alkier, *The Reality of the Resurrection: The New Testament Witness*, trans. Leroy A. Huizenga (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 141; Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 30; Joshua W. Jipp, *Reading Acts* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 17; Willie James Jennings, *Acts, Belief* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017), 14–15.

I do not intend here to survey all the research.¹⁵ However, to situate the present work, it will be helpful to provide a brief, selective overview of some of the most significant works touching on the resurrection in Acts. To anticipate the outcome of this survey: though much has been said, further study on the resurrection in Acts is warranted, especially studies that seek to think carefully about its implications.

Major Studies on the Resurrection in Acts

Pride of place among book-length treatments of the resurrection in Acts now goes to Kevin Anderson's *"But God Raised Him from the Dead": The Theology of Jesus's Resurrection in Luke-Acts*. To my knowledge this work, which originated as a PhD thesis, is the only recent, substantial monograph in English to give extended attention to the role of the resurrection in Acts.¹⁶ Anderson provides an eminently capable treatment of the background and issues related to the resurrection, though his work also covers the Gospel of Luke. This makes for an ambitious project. Anderson points to Henry Cadbury as the first twentieth-century scholar to bring attention to the centrality of the resurrection for Luke and Acts,¹⁷ yet Anderson is surprised that more has not yet been done on the subject.¹⁸ In Anderson's estimation, a disproportionate amount of material has appeared on Luke's ascension accounts, which in part is due to the various ways that scholars have related the resurrection to the ascension in Lukan theology.¹⁹ Anderson therefore steps into the gap and analyzes the prominence and theological role of the resurrection in Luke-Acts. For Anderson the resurrection has theological, christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological dimensions.²⁰

Anderson has produced a fine study, and he is right to see the need for extended investigation of the resurrection in Acts. However, as I am sure

15. Surveys of research on Acts include François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950–2005)*, 2nd rev. ed. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006); W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989); Todd Penner, "Madness in the Method? The Acts of the Apostles in Current Study," *CBR* 2 (2004): 223–93; Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Fads and Common Sense: Reading Acts in the First Century and Reading Acts Today," *JETS* 54 (2011): 251–78.

16. Though see also Horton, *Death and Resurrection*.

17. Anderson, *"But God Raised Him from the Dead,"* 1; cf. Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 278–80.

18. Anderson, *"But God Raised Him from the Dead,"* 1–2.

19. Anderson, *"But God Raised Him from the Dead,"* 5–10. This is a discussion I will contribute to in ch. 5.

20. Anderson, *"But God Raised Him from the Dead,"* 13.

Anderson himself would affirm, his study is not the last word; more angles and passages have yet to be considered. Additionally, Anderson's study takes the form of a dissertation, along with all its requisite constraints and expectations. I shall give more sustained focus to Acts than Anderson does in his work, but I walk a similar path.

Daniel Marguerat has written prolifically on the resurrection. Marguerat has published a short book on the resurrection more generally,²¹ but he has also written a number of more focused essays on the resurrection in Luke and Acts. In perhaps his most relevant article for the present purposes (from 2001), Marguerat traces out some ways that the resurrection is the “heart of the message” in Luke-Acts.²² These include the resurrection as the central hinge (“charnière centrale”) of Luke-Acts, the requirement for apostles to be eyewitnesses to the resurrection, Luke's allocation of the most space of any evangelist to the resurrection of Christ (including chronological markers), the resurrection marking a recurring theme in the apologetic emphases of the missionary speeches in Acts, and the resurrection constituting a common motif to both Judaism and Christianity (cf. Acts 23:6).²³ In a 2012 essay, Marguerat considers the rhetorical role of the resurrection in Luke-Acts and argues that the resurrection is key (“clef”) to the reading of history.²⁴ Here he argues that the resurrection is not the object, but the subject, of Luke's argumentation.²⁵ He further suggests that “the event of Easter is the lever that opens the meaning of the [Scriptures].”²⁶ Additionally, Marguerat has recently completed a two-volume commentary on Acts that I shall utilize throughout this study.²⁷

21. Marguerat, *Résurrection: Une histoire de vie* (Poliez-le-Grand: Editions du Moulin, 2001).

22. Marguerat, “Luc-Actes: La résurrection à l'oeuvre dans l'histoire,” in *Résurrection: L'après-mort dans le monde ancien et le Nouveau Testament*, ed. Odette Mainville and Daniel Marguerat, MdB 45 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001), 195–214. Marguerat quotes “le coeur du message” (195) from François Bovon's French work *Luc le théologien: Vingt-cinq ans de recherche (1950–1975)*, 2nd ed., MdB 5 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1988), 132. This essay by Marguerat has since appeared in English: “Writing Acts: The Resurrection at Work in History,” in *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters*, WUNT 1/310 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 130–47. The translations of French are my own.

23. Marguerat, “Luc-Actes,” 195–96.

24. Marguerat, “Quand la résurrection se fait clef de lecture de l'histoire (Luc-Actes),” in *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue*, ed. Geert Van Oyen and Tom Shepherd, BETL 249 (Leuven: Peters, 2012), 183–202.

25. Marguerat, “Quand la résurrection,” 189.

26. Marguerat, “Quand la résurrection,” 189. This is my translation of “L'événement de Pâques est le levier qui ouvre le sens des textes.”

27. Marguerat, *Les Actes des Apôtres*, 2 vols., CNT 5a–b (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2007–15), esp. 1:29.

Another significant voice is that of Robert F. O’Toole, SJ, whom Anderson considers to be the “veritable master of St. Luke’s resurrection theology.”²⁸ O’Toole’s PhD dissertation focused on the resurrection in Acts 26 as the christological climax of Paul’s defense.²⁹ He argues that the argument in Acts 26 is like a diptych, composed of two panels, with the end of each portion emphasizing the resurrection.³⁰ In addition, O’Toole has contributed several articles on the resurrection in Acts.³¹ Among these is an important 1981 article in which he emphasizes the various ways that Acts assumes the ongoing work of the resurrected Christ.³² For example, he argues that the risen Lord sends the Spirit and likely even picks Judas’s replacement.³³ O’Toole’s work is valuable, and I will give particular attention to his work on Acts 13 and Acts 26 in chapters 3 and 7.

Additional Studies on the Resurrection in Acts

Beyond these more extensive treatments, a wide array of other studies have recognized the key role of the resurrection in Acts, even if they are not entirely devoted to the topic. Alan Thompson’s *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus* builds on the presupposition of the importance of the resurrection in Acts, as he proceeds to give a kingdom-centered exposition of Acts.³⁴ Another fine exposition of Acts that recognizes the key role of the resurrection is Dennis E. Johnson’s *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*, cited earlier. Although this volume has not received the attention it deserves, Johnson recognizes the central role played by the resurrection (particularly in the speeches) and the important connections between the resurrection and the Scriptures.³⁵

Among the many essays on the resurrection in Acts are I. Howard Marshall’s contribution to a Festschrift for F. F. Bruce, in which he claims: “According

28. Anderson, “*But God Raised Him from the Dead*,” xviii.

29. O’Toole, *Acts 26: The Christological Climax of Paul’s Defense (Ac 22:1–26:32)*, AnBib 78 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), esp. v, 156–58.

30. O’Toole, *Christological Climax*, v, 30–32, 156–57; cf. O’Toole, “Christ’s Resurrection in Acts 13,13–52,” *Bib* 60 (1979): 369.

31. See especially O’Toole, “Activity of the Risen Jesus in Luke-Acts,” *Bib* 62 (1981): 471–98; O’Toole, “Christ’s Resurrection,” 361–72; O’Toole, “Luke’s Understanding of Jesus’ Resurrection-Ascension-Exaltation,” *BTB* 9 (1979): 106–14.

32. E.g., O’Toole, “Activity of the Risen Jesus,” 471–72, 495.

33. O’Toole, “Activity of the Risen Jesus,” 476, 485. This view is not unique to O’Toole; cf. Barrett, *Commentary on the Acts*, 2:xcv.

34. Thompson, *Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, esp. 48–54, 76–88.

35. See Johnson, *Message of Acts*, 144–46, 149–50; cf. 200.

to the theology expressed in the Acts of the Apostles the fundamental place in salvation history is to be assigned to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”³⁶ Marshall also expresses surprise “that no detailed attempt has been made to expound the theology of the resurrection [in Acts]”³⁷—an observation that is perhaps only magnified these many years later, Anderson’s monograph notwithstanding. Marshall concludes that the resurrection is, theologically, “the decisive act whereby in accordance with prophecy God exalted his Son to be the Lord and revealed him to chosen witnesses in order that they might preach the good news of forgiveness in his name.”³⁸ This is a good start, and Marshall’s essay is valuable. However, much more remains to be said theologically, as Marshall devotes more attention to questions of underlying tradition(s) than I shall in the present volume.

Another important essay comes from David G. Peterson.³⁹ Peterson also recognizes the centrality of the resurrection in Acts, and he traces out the implications further than many others. Peterson correctly notes that Peter’s sermon at Pentecost already focuses on the resurrection, and this speech is programmatic for what follows in Acts.⁴⁰ Further, Peterson points to Jesus’s resurrection as his “ultimate accreditation and vindication as God’s servant and Messiah.”⁴¹ For Peterson, “the resurrection does not simply prove Jesus’ divinity but inaugurates the End Time of prophetic expectation, a new world with the exalted Christ at its centre.”⁴² Peterson’s essay accords with much of what I will argue more fully in the present volume.

Many others have recognized the importance of the resurrection as well. Bo Reicke in 1959, anticipating many later studies, suggested that Acts is about what “the risen Lord did for his church through his apostles.”⁴³ Another study valuably considered passages that speak of the resurrection in Acts and related them to similar texts in some of the earliest noncanonical Christian

36. Marshall, “The Resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 92. See also Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 42, 165.

37. Marshall, “Resurrection in the Acts,” 92.

38. Marshall, “Resurrection in the Acts,” 107.

39. Peterson, “Resurrection Apologetics and the Theology of Luke-Acts,” in *Proclaiming the Resurrection: Papers from the First Oak Hill College Annual School of Theology*, ed. Peter M. Head (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 29–57; cf. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 53–97.

40. Peterson, “Resurrection Apologetics,” 34–35.

41. Peterson, “Resurrection Apologetics,” 35 (emphasis removed).

42. Peterson, “Resurrection Apologetics,” 38.

43. Reicke, “The Risen Lord and His Church: The Theology of Acts,” *Int* 13 (1959): 157–69.

writings.⁴⁴ Charles Talbert has considered the importance of the resurrection in Lukan theology.⁴⁵ Similarly, Joel Green writes that the resurrection of Jesus is “the central affirmation of the Christian message in the Acts of the Apostles.”⁴⁶ Additionally, Jacob Jervell has argued that the resurrection is at the center of the gospel in Lukan theology.⁴⁷ Such studies show, for example, that the presupposition for the book of Acts is the ongoing work of the risen Jesus in the church, and a consistent emphasis of the speeches is the resurrection of Jesus.

Others have noted, in particular, the role of the resurrection in Paul’s defenses. In addition to the work of O’Toole, Robert J. Kepple has argued that Paul’s defense reveals three interrelated beliefs: (1) the resurrection of Jesus is part of Israel’s scriptural hope; (2) the resurrection of Jesus fulfills this scriptural hope; (3) the resurrection of Jesus is necessarily tied to the broader belief in the resurrection of the dead.⁴⁸ Similarly, Klaus Haacker points out that Luke closely relates the resurrection of Jesus to the resurrection hope of Israel.⁴⁹ The resurrection does indeed play a key role in the defenses of Paul, and I shall have much more to say about this in due course.

When speaking of studies on the resurrection in the New Testament, one must also take note of N. T. Wright’s formidable work *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Wright demonstrates the uniqueness of the embodied resurrection envisioned by Judaism and early Christianity and provides expositions of key New Testament resurrection texts. Wright acknowledges the central role of the resurrection in Acts, yet he devotes only seven pages to Acts.⁵⁰

All told, the resurrection is widely regarded to be important for the theology of Acts, which makes book-length treatments of the topic desiderata.

44. Everett F. Harrison, “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Book of Acts and in Early Christian Literature,” in *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enlin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings*, ed. John Reumann (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1972), 217–31.

45. Talbert, “The Place of the Resurrection in the Theology of Luke,” *Int* 46 (1992): 19–30; cf. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics: An Examination of the Lukan Purpose* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966).

46. Green, “Witnesses of His Resurrection,” 227.

47. Jervell, *Theology of the Acts*, 90; cf. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 75–112.

48. Kepple, “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,” *JETS* 20 (1977): 231–41.

49. Haacker, “Das Bekenntnis des Paulus zur Hoffnung Israels nach der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 437–51, esp. 446.

50. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 451–57.

Theological Dimensions of the Resurrection

Several studies discuss the theological dimensions of the resurrection in the New Testament. As we have seen, plenty of studies have noted the theological importance of the resurrection in Acts, yet fewer have provided a sustained and integrated consideration of Luke's contribution in light of the scope of biblical and systematic theology. Relevant in this regard is the work of Richard Gaffin, who did something like this for Paul's epistles. Gaffin has argued persuasively for the centrality of the resurrection in Pauline theology.⁵¹ Gaffin argues that "the resurrection is *the* pivotal factor in the whole of the apostle's soteriological teaching."⁵² Key texts for Gaffin include 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 1:3–4.⁵³ The latter text contrasts "two successive stages of Christ's history, implying two successive modes of *incarnate* existence."⁵⁴ For Gaffin, the resurrection of Christ is in Paul the great climax of redemptive history and is of a piece with the resurrection of believers.⁵⁵ Significantly for the present study, Gaffin recognizes that Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13 (especially v. 33) is very close to Romans 1:4.⁵⁶ I believe this is correct, and in both passages the resurrection of Jesus is the lynchpin of the argument. Something similar to what Gaffin has offered for Paul remains to be done for Acts.

Looking Ahead

Despite widespread awareness of the importance of the resurrection for Acts, few sustained treatments of the theological dimensions of the resurrection have been offered in recent years. In what follows, I will provide a new synthesis and suggest some new possibilities in the way that the resurrection functions in Acts in the context of early Christian theology. The resurrection has implications for many aspects of Christian doctrine—including

51. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978). This was later released as a second edition with a different title: *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987). See more recently Gaffin, "The Work of Christ Applied," in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 268–90.

52. Gaffin, *Centrality of the Resurrection*, 135 (emphasis original).

53. See also Peter J. Scaer, "Resurrection as Justification in the Book of Acts," *CTQ* 70 (2006): 219–31.

54. Gaffin, *Centrality of the Resurrection*, 112 (emphasis original).

55. See, e.g., Gaffin, *Centrality of the Resurrection*, 112–13, 135.

56. Gaffin, *Centrality of the Resurrection*, 113.

Christology, soteriology, pneumatology, eschatology, and ecclesiology. By way of example, there have been any number of studies concerned with the eschatology of Luke.⁵⁷ One thinks of Hans Conzelmann's watershed work.⁵⁸ Yet, Conzelmann gives less attention than one might expect to the wide-ranging implications of Jesus's resurrection (he has more to say about the general resurrection).⁵⁹ Yet to speak of the eschatological age is to speak about the age of the resurrected and ascended Christ. This perennial question of Lukan eschatology, in other words, is necessarily tied to the resurrection of Jesus.

The Resurrection, the Apostles, and the Kingdom in Acts

As I conclude this opening chapter, I want to set the table for the context of the chapters to follow. In chapters 2–4, I give extended, though not exclusive, attention to *speeches* in Acts. However, as readers of Acts well know, there is much to the theology of Acts beyond the speeches; the narrative contours and narrator's comments are no less important for understanding the theology of Acts than are the speeches.⁶⁰ Three aspects of the theology of Acts, in particular, reveal the centrality of the resurrection: the divine necessity of the resurrection, the kingdom framework of Acts, and the role of the apostles as resurrection spokesmen.

The Resurrection and Divine Necessity

First, Luke emphasizes the divine necessity (*dei*; Gk. "it is necessary") of certain events that had to take place for the accomplishment of eschatological salvation.⁶¹ As part of a broader theology of promise and fulfillment,⁶² these *dei* statements are fairly diverse, but include the necessity of the resurrection. In the final three *dei* statements in Luke (24:7, 26, 46), the resurrection is

57. See, e.g., the survey of literature in Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, ch. 1.

58. Conzelmann, *Theology of Saint Luke*; for the German title, see *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas*, 3rd ed., BHT 17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1960).

59. Cf. Conzelmann, *Theology of Saint Luke*, 204–6.

60. See, e.g., Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading," *Int* 42 (1988): 150; Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 96; Osvaldo Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 88–107.

61. See further Crowe, *Last Adam*, 95, 103–7, and sources cited there.

62. See, e.g., Samson Uytanlet, *Luke-Acts and Jewish Historiography: A Study on the Theology, Literature, and Ideology of Luke-Acts*, WUNT 2/366 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 35–69; Mark S. Giacobbe, "Luke the Chronicler: The Narrative Arc of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles in Luke-Acts" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2018), 259–64.

necessary, as it is in 9:22. Luke therefore highlights the necessity of the resurrection for eschatological salvation.

Likewise, several *dei* statements in Acts correspond to *dei* statements in Luke. Indeed, more details regarding the Scriptures that were necessary to be fulfilled, which are mentioned with minimal exposition at the end of Luke, are provided in Acts. Although *dei* terminology is not always used in the scriptural expositions of Acts, several *dei* statements do speak of the necessity of the resurrection in Acts. Acts 3:21, for example, speaks of the need for heaven to receive Jesus until the restoration of all things. Though this passage raises a number of interesting questions, the text quite clearly envisions the heavenly session of the resurrected Christ. Also presupposing the resurrection of Christ is the *dei* statement in 4:12: there is no other name given among men, apart from Christ, by whom it is necessary to be saved. The theological context for this proclamation is an exposition of the resurrection of Christ (cf. v. 10). Another relevant *dei* passage is 17:3, where Paul explains the Scriptures in Thessalonica, including the way that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. Additionally, the replacement for Judas (cf. 1:21–22) needed to be an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus.

I will have more to say about the Scriptures throughout this study; and in chapter 7, I will argue that Acts manifests a clear interest in showing how the resurrection is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. At this point I simply point out that Luke's *dei* statements indicate the resurrection is (1) necessary for the fulfillment of the Scriptures and (2) necessary for salvation.

The Resurrection and Kingdom Frame

The kingdom of God is important in Acts, and the resurrection of Christ is foundational to the rationale of the kingdom.⁶³ This is not to say that the kingdom is *only* about resurrection; but Luke's presentation of the coming of the kingdom presupposes the resurrection of Jesus. To begin, Acts evidences a kingdom *inclusio*.⁶⁴ In Acts 1:3 the risen Christ discusses the kingdom of God with his disciples, and in verse 6 the disciples ask Jesus about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Jesus's response refocuses the question onto the coming empowerment by the Holy Spirit (vv. 7–8), but this is not something different from the kingdom. For, as I argue in chapter 2, the coming of the Holy Spirit is predicated upon the resurrection and ascension of Jesus as universal king.

63. See also G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 239–40

64. Thompson, *Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 44–48.

The other aspect of this *inclusio* can be found in the final two verses of Acts (28:30–31). At the end of Acts Paul preaches without hindrance the *kingdom of God*, teaching about matters concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a close connection, as readers would expect by this point in Acts, between the lordship of Jesus and the kingdom of God. Indeed, it is best to understand the message about the kingdom of God to be a message about the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom *inclusio* in Acts is therefore a framework focused on the resurrected Jesus.

Further, it is highly significant that the content of the preaching often focuses on the kingdom and on the living, resurrected Christ as Lord (cf., e.g., 2:24–36; 3:15, 26; 4:2, 10–12). The kingdom message of Acts is built upon the conviction that Christ is the living Lord. This also corresponds to two other aspects. First, the kingdom is often associated with *glory* in Luke and Acts, and the glory of Jesus is seen preeminently in his resurrected state (cf. Luke 9:26; 21:27; 24:26; Acts 7:55; 22:11). Indeed, glory and dominion are in several New Testament texts taken as concomitants, which speaks again of the risen Lord's glory (1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 1:6; cf. Jude 25). Second, closely tied to the kingdom framework of Acts is the reality of a coming judgment by the authoritative, resurrected Jesus (cf. Acts 10:42; 17:31). Repentance is therefore necessary (17:30; cf. 2:36–38; 3:14–21; 24:25).

The Resurrection and the Apostles

A final preliminary point to consider is the importance of the resurrection for the apostolate. The importance of the apostles in Acts needs no defense. With the defection of Judas arose the need to find a twelfth, faithful apostle (1:15–26). And, importantly for the present study, 1:21–22 states that Judas's replacement had to be an eyewitness to Jesus's resurrection (and his ministry).⁶⁵ Thus, the proofs that the risen Jesus offered to the apostles were most likely proofs of his resurrection (vv. 2–3).⁶⁶ It soon becomes apparent in Acts that this is not an idle requirement, for the apostles immediately begin to testify about the *resurrection* of Jesus and its implications (see again 2:24–36, esp. v. 32; cf. Luke 24:46–48). The apostles had to be eyewitnesses of the resurrection because in large measure their task was to testify about the resurrection of Christ. The apostles are central to the book of Acts, and central to the task of the apostles is their role as witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

65. This is widely recognized. See Green, "Witnesses of His Resurrection," 228–31; Peterson, "Resurrection Apologetics," 33; Johnson, *Message of Acts*, 20, 144–45; cf. Crowe, *Last Adam*, 146–47.

66. Marguerat, "Quand la résurrection," 193–95.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid the groundwork for a fuller study of the resurrection in Acts. The resurrection of Jesus is central in the book of Acts. As such, it requires extended reflection. In the remainder of the first half of this volume I will trace out where and how the resurrection functions in Acts. After that, I will turn in part 2 to consider in more detail the theological dimensions of the resurrection in Acts.