

Article

“Children of the Prophets and the Covenant”: A Post-Supersessionist Reading of Luke-Acts

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Abstract: Luke-Acts is a theocentric narrative. It tells how God in and through Jesus acts out of faithfulness to the covenant on behalf of Israel. This article uses this fundamental claim to offer a post-supersessionist reading of Luke-Acts. It contends that genealogical Israel (the Jewish people) remains God’s people because of election. God turns to Israel offering forgiveness and salvation. The people struggle to respond. All Israel, including Jesus’s disciples, stumbles. Some Jewish people are more faithful, others less. Together they comprise the less-than-faithful people of God to whom God is faithful. Luke’s Jesus and Paul embody this dynamic. Jesus recapitulates Israel’s history, acting faithfully on its behalf for its salvation. He dies in solidarity with the Jewish people, faithful and unfaithful alike. He is raised, proleptically guaranteeing their restoration. Paul embodies how God remains loyal to recalcitrant Israel. Apart from repentance from Paul, an encounter with the risen Lord transforms this “God-fighter” simply because he is a “chosen vessel”. In Paul, Luke narrates God’s radical fidelity to Israel. God will restore Israel, opening blind eyes to see Jesus as messiah. The article distills the author’s forthcoming monograph *Reading Luke-Acts after Supersessionism: The Salvation of Israel and the Nations in Accordance with the Scriptures*.

Keywords: Christian; Christianity; covenant; God; Jesus; Israel; intertextuality; Jews; Jewish people; Judaism; post-supersessionism; repentance; replacement theology



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1. Introduction: Luke-Acts and the People of God

Luke-Acts—Acts especially—have been loci of supersessionist interpretation and theology. Luke’s writings have long been read as having an ambivalence toward Jews and Judaism.¹ Luke roots his narrative in Israel’s scriptural history, values Torah, and highlights the Jewish origins of the Jesus movement. He narrates the opposition to Jesus and the persecution of his followers by “the Jews” with sharp language and describes the movement to the gentiles. Numerous interpreters conclude from this tension that Luke—presumed to be a gentile writing for gentiles—seeks to legitimize the Jesus movement as the true inheritors of Israel’s tradition over and against the Jewish people. Luke, they argue, may like Jewish things, but not Jews. His writings (re)define *Israel* by eschewing the Jewish familial group as God’s people while maintaining Israel’s Scriptures and symbols. The “new” or “true” Israel is now Jesus’s followers, Jewish and/or gentile. Objectors and alternative proposals have gained traction in recent years, causing a substantial shift in the landscape of Lukan studies. Nevertheless, reading Luke-Acts as evincing supersessionism remains the majority view (See the surveys in Jáuregui 1986; Tyson 1999; Bovon 2006, pp. 350–86; Moraff 2020).

Supersessionism boils down to whether the Jewish people are God’s people, regardless of how or why replacement occurs (Soulen 1996; Donaldson 2016). A non-supersessionist reading of Luke-Acts must demonstrate Luke’s commitment to the Jewish people, first and foremost, their identity, their covenant relationship with God, and expectations for their salvation. This article summarizes my attempt at a post-supersessionist reading of Luke-Acts (Moraff, forthcoming). In brief, I argue that Luke-Acts narrates Israel’s God maintaining covenant faithfulness to the Jewish people by bringing salvation to Israel and

the nations through Jesus.² In extending Israel's story in continuity with the Scriptures, Luke presumes who Israel is, what Israel's hope is, and how Israel's God maintains loyalty and will bring salvation to Israel, regardless of Israel's fidelity. The ubiquitous themes of judgment and restoration affirm ethnic Israel's identity as God's chosen.³ Amid calls for repentance and fidelity to Jesus as Israel's messiah, Luke-Acts constructs a non-competitive identity of Israel. "Faithful" and "unfaithful" Jewish people *together* constitute God's covenant family. Luke draws from Israel's sacred texts to affirm that Israel's identity is maintained by God's ongoing fidelity to them and the ancestral promises (Barth 1969, pp. 26–28; Wyschogrod 1989, pp. 173–223).

Israel, as usual, struggles to reciprocate. Everyone in Israel evinces degrees of (in)fidelity, including the disciples. Indeed, (un)faithfulness is a spectrum in Luke-Acts. All Israel sojourns on a communal journey of repentance that, for Luke, should be oriented toward Jesus, Israel's king. Nevertheless, Luke warns unrepentant Israelites that they will be "cut off" from the people by excluding themselves from the promised covenant life (Luke 3:9–17; Acts 3:17–26; 13:46). These cautions and consequences stand in continuity with Israel's Scriptures, are rooted in Israel's identity as God's people, and are not enacted in the narrative. Through its characters, Luke speaks among the Jewish people and in anticipation of their restoration.

Moreover, Luke's central characters Jesus and Paul are prototypical of God's relationship to Israel. They reenact Israel's communal story, demonstrate ongoing commitment to the Jewish people, and testify to the enduring expectation for national redemption amid judgment. Jesus and Paul embody the "recapitulation" and "historical recurrence" that runs throughout Luke's narrative (Reardon 2021, pp. 133–61). By *recapitulation*, I mean that Jesus encapsulates Israel's past, present, and future in his Jewish flesh: Israel's story is his story, and his story is Israel's (cf. Carter 2008, pp. 29–35; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.22.1–3). As Isaiah's loyal servant who brings salvation to all flesh and raises up Jacob's tribes (Isa 40:3–5), Jesus is faithful for the sake of corporate Israel, God's blind servant Israel in need of healing (42:1–43:13). His death reflects Israel's "fall"—Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE. His resurrection likewise empowers and guarantees the hope for its "rise" (Luke 2:35; Acts 4:1; Kinzer 2018). Saul/Paul personifies Israel's Lord's engagement with unfaithful Israel. His narrative arc demonstrates how, even at its most rebellious, violent, and blind state, Israel's Lord can (and will) restore Israel. God will overcome their obstinacy, reorienting them toward the risen Jesus.⁴ In the meantime, Paul ends in solidarity with the Jewish people, enchained in Rome, proclaiming Israel's hope for the kingdom of God (Acts 28:17–26). In short, Jesus takes Israel's judgment and restoration into himself, while Paul personifies God's ability to reorient intractable Israel.⁵

To draw these contours, I briefly discuss how recent efforts to frame Luke-Acts within Judaism undergird my theological approach. Next, I discuss how Luke 1–4 uses Israel's Scriptures to introduce Israel and God's relationship. Interconnected themes of judgment and restoration highlight God's faithfulness to the unfaithful covenant people. Israel remains a people chosen by God who continually struggle to respond to God rightly. I then discuss how Luke includes the disciples in Israel's repentance-journey. They reflect Israel's inability to be faithful. Israel's Lord must transform them. Then, I discuss how Jesus recapitulates Israel's story. The King of the Jews identifies with Israel in judgment and guarantees their restoration. Finally, I outline how the Paul of Acts is prototypical of God's dealings with recalcitrant Israel. Paul personifies how God can (and will) save Israel who opposes God's agents of salvation out of imperceptiveness out of God's own volition.

2. Theological Interpretation of Luke-Acts within Judaism

An emergent stream of scholars has attempted to map Luke-Acts on the variegated landscape of Second Temple Judaism. They explore themes of Torah, temple, Israel's salvation, engage Luke's ethnic reasoning, and compare Luke-Acts with early Jewish texts (Moraff 2020, pp. 76–80).⁶ Such invaluable efforts have typically been historical-critical in orientation. These works tend to be primarily descriptive and comparative. The focus often

has more to do with the *Sitz im Leben* of Lukan texts and their (dis)similarities with roughly contemporaneous works. Those who categorize Luke's perspective as Jewish frame his works historically and culturally within the diverse world of early Judaism. They map Luke-Acts in antiquity and/or along the gradual parting of the ways.

My study is indebted to these projects but develops them in a unique direction: Framing Luke's writings within Judaism funds my avowedly *theological* interpretation of Luke-Acts (Hays 2007; Moberly 2009; cf. Kinzer 2018, pp. 7–10).⁷ Resultant interpretive differences have more to do with posture and aim than method per se. For example, my project has descriptive and comparative dimensions. But these are integral to my asking: What does Luke-Acts say to the people of God about God and how God interacts with the world and God's people? The historical and socio-cultural framework informs my literary reading that seeks to unpack the theology of Luke's writings. The framing is essential, but it is not the end goal.

Luke-Acts is thoroughly theocentric: Israel's God is acting in Jesus on behalf of the covenant people and the entire world. Despite Israel's frequent infidelity, God remains faithful to them. Judgment may befall the nation. Some may be pruned from Israel. But the covenant cannot be annulled. It rests on God's faithfulness to his chosen people. Like God's past messengers, Jesus and his followers, even in their harshest words, extend God's faithfulness to God's people, calling them to reform and receive salvation. Luke-Acts' theocentricity invites a theological reading grounded in Israel's Scriptures.

My approach is a close reading of the text as a historically shaped, cultural product of the diverse world of Second Temple Judaism. By *Judaism*, I mean the ancestral tradition—the ways of life and patterns of thought—of the Jewish people. A few unifying elements enable one to identify subsets of Judaism: identification with the Jewish people by genealogy or conversion, loyalty to Israel's God, commitment to the temple (which allows for critique), and adherence to Torah (Schwartz 2009, pp. 49–100; Sanders 2016; Schwartz 2011). By framing Luke-Acts “within Judaism,” then, I mean that these texts affirm the central, unifying elements of God, Torah, temple, and the people of Israel.⁸ I consider the completed literary compositions as participating in the renegotiation of the Jewish ancestral tradition after the destruction of the temple, centering it on and orienting it towards Jesus the Messiah. My narrative approach holds the Jewishness of Luke-Acts as an indispensable feature of its textual makeup and theological agenda (cf. Bockmuehl 2006, pp. 189–228).

Luke's writings evince their Jewish character at a foundational level. They affirm core features of Judaism in their particularity and carnality. Luke-Acts depicts ongoing commitment to the one God of Israel (e.g., Luke 1:16; 4:8; 7:16; 9:43; Acts 3:13; 22:14). Jewish Jesus followers maintain fidelity to the Torah (e.g., Acts 15:1–29; 22:3; Jervell 1979, pp. 133–52; Oliver 2013, pp. 445–82) and participate in the temple amid harsh critiques (e.g., Luke 19:45–49; 24:53; Acts 2:46; 7:2–51; 21:26; 22:17; 24:12; 25:8). They express ongoing identification with and loyalty to the covenant people of Israel during dispute (e.g., Acts 13:15–17, 26; 28:17–20). The Way aligns with what is written in the Torah and the prophets (24:14). Innovations and conflict—Christology, gentile inclusion, interpretive disputes, etc.—do not necessarily undermine Jewishness. Innovation and conflict were common among early Jewish subgroups. Even with tensions and conflicts, they generally sought the flourishing of the people of Israel and its ancestral tradition, not their abandonment (Böttrich 2015). Likewise, Jesus and his followers identify with the Jewish people, seeking the people's and the tradition's reformation. Luke's truth claims about Jesus's messianic identity are depicted as being for the sake of Israel and their salvation. Therefore, I attempt to hear Luke-Act speaking from among and out of loyalty to the Jewish people and their tradition even when there is dissonance.

To illustrate the significance of my theological interpretive posture, the impact of reading Luke-Acts theologically within Judaism emerges with Lukan intertextuality and narrative portrayal of competing Jewish groups. Luke's narrative is a story embedded in a story (Green 1994). He wrote during a period when inheritors of Israel's story grappled with how to understand it and its significance for the present. Framed in this context, read-

ing Luke-Acts within Judaism presumes continuity between Luke's writings and Israel's Scriptures, even as it allows Israel's God to act in surprising, though not unprecedented, ways. It presumes God acts for God's people in covenant faithfulness. In extending Israel's sacred history, Luke begins with a particular understanding of who Israel is and what Israel's hope is. Redefinition of scriptural terms or alteration of expectations might occur, but they must be explicit.

Early Judaism and its literature were part and parcel of Luke's interpretive community. Understanding Luke-Acts within Judaism demands comparison with Second Temple Jewish literature. Luke-Acts inherits interpretive traditions, participates in conversations about how best to understand Israel's sacred texts, and therein argues that the Jewish ancestral tradition should be oriented toward Jesus. Early Judaism was replete with competing visions for Israel's future, each rooted in Israel's sacred texts (Wendel 2011). This historical context of conflict should caution interpreters from concluding too quickly that Luke's particular vision for Israel is supersessionist. Luke-Acts participates in this wider discourse among its Jewish compatriots. Early Christian interpreters of Luke-Acts, of course, remain a part of this interpretive discussion. They often provide language that encapsulates Luke's theological vision. Other times, like some early Jewish texts, they provide points of contrast with Luke's narrative aims. In short, I draw a larger interpretive community to foster a theological reading of Luke-Acts as an innately Jewish narrative.

3. God's Faithfulness to Unfaithful Israel

3.1. Who Is Israel? Election and Genealogy

Luke-Acts presupposes the story of God and Israel. Luke's narrative is predicated on God's acting on behalf of Israel, as well as the entire world, out of fidelity to his covenant promises to God's people. Notably, Luke never introduces *God* or *Israel*. He assumes the reader knows who they are. The God about whom Luke speaks is Israel's God (Acts 13:17). And Israel is this God's people (Luke 1:68; 2:32; 20:37; Acts 3:13; 7:42). Israel is a people whose identity is rooted in God's choice to relate and be faithful to them, beginning with the Patriarchs.⁹ The identity of the covenant people in the Scriptures continued genealogically, though its borders were typically porous and malleable (e.g., Exod 12:38; Ruth 1:16; Jud 14:10; cf. Ezra 9:1–4). The physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, faithful and unfaithful, inherited the covenant legacy (e.g., Deut 26:5; 29:14–28; Kaminsky 2016). Luke upholds the genealogical dimension of Israel's identity, highlighting God's faithfulness to Abraham's physical descendants.¹⁰ Nevertheless, election, covenant, and promise ground Israel's identity; they *precede* genealogy. Israel's infidelity, then, cannot repudiate the corporate relationship with God. It rests on God's faithfulness alone (e.g., Jer 33:19–26; Ezek 36:22–32).¹¹ Israel is God's people because God has chosen them and upholds the covenant. Israel's identity is thus not reducible to genealogy. Descent from the Patriarchs is not primary for who Israel is. Election is.

Still, Israel for Luke is a particular familial group. Luke-Acts depicts the Jewish people as (at least a subset of) Israel (Dahl 1958; Neubrand 2006; cf. Staples 2021). The Jewish people are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the intended heirs of God's promises (e.g., Acts 2:39; 3:25–26; 13:23, 32–33; 26:6–7).¹² They are a nation with their own ancestral history, territory, language, temple cult, and customs. Luke ties his Jewish characters to this people group along these exact ethnic lines.¹³ They continue to identify with and participate in the Jewish *ethnos* (Moraff 2021, pp. 49–101). The Twelve comprise the reconstituted core of Israel, but they do not redefine the people. They are a representative segment of the twelve tribes chosen by God (Luke 6:12–16; 22:30; Acts 1:12–26; 24:17; 26:4–8; 28:17–19; D. A. Smith 2018, pp. 67–123). Luke never grants the appellation *Israel* or *Israelites* to someone other than Jewish people. They are the people in covenant relationship with God for whom God is acting in Jesus (cf. Acts 13:16; 19:9). Even the unrepentant remain descendants of Abraham (e.g., Luke 1:55, 73; 16:30; Acts 3:13; 7:2; 13:26). As Peter tells his Jewish listeners, "You are (*ὁμεῖς ἐστέ*) sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors" (Acts 3:25).¹⁴ Their covenant status

remains intact. The Jewish people remain God's elect family. The narrative tension arises in whether Israel will repeat its history of failing to respond properly to their God.

3.2. *Salvation and Judgment in Luke 1—2*

Luke's opening chapters establish the deep link between how God is acting in Jesus for the forgiveness and restoration his people Israel (Oliver 2021, pp. 28–70; Reardon 2021, pp. 33–64). The angel Gabriel introduces Jesus as the anticipated Davidic king who "will reign over the house of Jacob forever" (1:32–33; cf. 2 Sam 7:13–14; 4Q246; 4Q174). Zachariah further describes how the Davidide's coming brings Israel's peace. The *Magnificat* and *Benedictus* use language reminiscent of Isaiah's new exodus, that is, Israel's redemption from the darkness of exile and oppression from enemies as God forgives the nation's sins (Luke 1:46–55, 67–79).¹⁵ Faithful Simeon elaborates that this child will carry out the Isaianic vision of universal "salvation" by being "a light for revelation for the nations and glory to your [God's] people Israel" (Luke 2:25–32; cf. Isa 42:1–7; 43:1–13; 49:5–7; 51:4–8; 55:4–5; Bar 5:1–9).¹⁶ The vision of gentiles coming alongside Israel to worship Israel's God will come to fruition in tandem with Israel's redemption (e.g., Isa 2:1–11; 19:19–25; Micah 4:1–5; Tob 14:6–7). The pious prophetess Anna of the tribe of Asher, one of the lost tribes, proclaims Jesus to all those looking for "Jerusalem's deliverance" (Luke 2:36–38; cf. 21:28; 24:21; Acts 26:27; Jdt 16:1–17).¹⁷

From the outset, Luke uses Israel's Scriptures to contend that Israel—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—will find national renewal in this promised son of David. In Jesus, God is acting in faithfulness to the everlasting covenant with Abraham's descendants (Luke 1:54–55, 68–79; cf. Isa 63:7–19; Sir. 5:6; Acts 3:17–26). Notably, salvation stems from the divine initiative alone. God has visited the people, turning toward them with forgiveness of sins. As throughout Israel's history, God's saving acts demands a response. The question is whether Israel will turn toward God. To paraphrase Luke's Jesus, when God brings about justice for God's chosen, will the Son of Man find faithfulness in the land (18:7–8)?

Luke-Acts narrates another call for Israel to repent in light of God's visitation. Should they fail to (re)align with God, they will fall into judgment (Luke 3:7–9, 17; 11:23; 13:1–9; 20:9–18; Acts 3:23; cf. 1QS 9.3–11). Coming salvation and potential judgment are again intertwined.¹⁸ Indeed, harsh judgment for Israel's infidelity presupposes Israel's covenantal relationship with God (cf. Deut 30:1–10). Throughout Israel's history, people and groups have been removed from God's people. Nevertheless, the removal of some and centering of others does not negate Israel's corporate election (e.g., Gen 17:14; Exod 12:15, 19; Num 16:20–35; 25:1–9; Deut 4:3–4; 31–34; Isa 6:11–13; 9:13–17; 10:20—11:16). Luke's opening chapters reinscribe the historic tension of salvation and judgment intrinsic to calls to repent. The people must reorient their lives according to God's visitation in Jesus.

The elderly Simeon prefigures the bleak outlook for Israel's response. Simeon cryptically warns that Jesus "is set for the falling and rising (*πτῶσιν καὶ ἀνάστασιν*) of many in Israel and a sign that is spoken against" (2:35). Israel will divide and, at least in part, oppose him (cf. 12:49–53). That God's messenger coincides with and provokes a crisis in Israel, particularly the failure of its leadership, is no surprise. Prophets often arise because the people are in a state of obstinacy.¹⁹ As Stephen will recount and reenact, Israel has a long history of rejecting God's agents of redemption (Acts 7:2–60).²⁰ Israel repeatedly fails to turn back to God when God turns to them. Such failure often results from Israel's poor leadership. Jeremiah and Ezekiel juxtapose the Davidic shepherd-king's return to restore the flock of Israel against Israel's present cruel, disloyal shepherds who fail to herd justly and, as a result, have contributed to the flock's scattering (Jer 23:1–8; Ezek 34:25–31, esp. vv. 25, 28–29; cf. Luke 15:1–7; Acts 20:28). As the Third Gospel progresses, Jesus quarrels with Israel's leaders more than the people. The commonfolk are the battleground between Jesus and Israel's current shepherds—whom will Israel follow (Lohfink 1975, pp. 33–61; Brawley 1987, pp. 133–54)?²¹

Nevertheless, Simeon's foreboding words reinscribe the anticipation for redemption amidst division and opposition. "Falling and rising" (πτῶσιν καὶ ἀνάστασιν) insinuates a sequential pattern. The "many in Israel"—the corporate entity with the potential exclusion of some of its members—fall then rise (Oliver 2021, p. 39). Simeon reinscribes the patterns of judgment and restoration envisioned by the prophets (e.g., Deut 30:1–10; Isa 28:13–22; Jer 32:26–44; Ezek 11:5–21; 36:22–37:28). Israel, in other words, would experience a type of death and resurrection. Judgment will not have the last word (Kinzer 2018, pp. 21–58, 129–59; Moraff 2021, pp. 184–87; cf. Levenson 2006).

3.3. *The Call to Repentance (Luke 3–4)*

John the Baptist's appearance is framed by salvific language taken from Isaiah (Luke 3:3–6; cf. Isa 40:3–5). John is the forerunner of the new exodus, sent to prepare the Lord's people for their visitation. The prophet's words, though, emphasize imminent judgment and the need for repentance (Luke 3:7–18). John describes the coming wrath that will purify the people should they fail to respond (3:7–9, 16–17; cf. Mal 3:19–24; Sir 48:1–10; 4Q521; Otten 2021, pp. 44–45).²² The immerser's words are often cited as negating physical Abrahamic ancestry, marking the beginning of Luke's redefinition of Israel (e.g., Fox 2021, pp. 117–19). John does not sever the genealogical dimension, though. Instead, the immerser challenges the sufficiency of Abrahamic descent for participation in God's kingdom. The Jewish populace cannot rely on having Abraham as their father or on his merits (Levine and Witherington III 2018, pp. 86–88). They must produce "fruits worthy of repentance" to escape the wrath to come. Trees that do not bear "good fruit" will be cut down and thrown into the fire, burned as chaff (Luke 3:9, 17).²³ Simply being from Abraham's line is insufficient to participate in Israel's salvation, John warns. Indeed, the crowds do not interpret John's "offspring" metaphors ontologically but behaviorally. Their question "What, then, shall we do?" recognizes that John is exhorting them to change their behavior. John responds by calling them to economic justice (Luke 3:10–14). John, in other words, demands the people look like Abraham rather than vipers (cf. Sir 21:1–3). The people must pursue righteousness like their father Abraham, the rock from which Israel was originally hewn (Isa 51:1–3; Brawley 2020, pp. 55–56). Should they not, they will be cut off, excluded from the promised restoration.

The rest of Luke-Acts reiterates the tension that Abraham is father to the Jewish people and that lineage does not guarantee salvation (e.g., Luke 16:22–25, 30; Acts 5:30; 7:2; 13:17, 26). This is best seen in Peter's speech at the Beautiful Gate (3:12–26). Peter warns that those who do not listen to Jesus, the prophet like Moses, will be cut off from the people (3:23; cf. Lev 23:29; Deut 18:15–20). In his next breath, Peter reiterates that his Jewish listeners (who have not repented yet) are *presently* covenant members, descendants of Abraham on whose behalf God has acted in Jesus (Acts 3:25; cf. 13:16, 26). John the Baptist and Peter warn that those who fail to repent and bear good fruit will be excluded from the life of Israel (cf. 13:46). But this is a common prophetic warning to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The programmatic scene in Nazareth repeats the tension of salvation and judgment for Israel and prefigures the divided response Jesus will engender among his people. In the synagogue, Jesus proclaims that God's deliverance to captive Israel as envisioned by Isaiah is fulfilled (Luke 4:16–21; cf. Isa 58:6; 61:1–2;). God is acting in his anointed servant Jesus to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release from sin, and open unseeing eyes. The Lord's favorable year of deliverance is at hand.²⁴ Jesus informs the community that God is enacting the anticipated Jubilee release (ἀφεσις) for impoverished Israel (and, of course, the impoverished in Israel). Israel's long-awaited new exodus, its atonement for sin and liberation from exile, is at hand (Reardon 2021, pp. 65–98; cf. Lev 25:8–55; Ezek 46:17; Dan 9:3–27; 11Q13). Comfort and deliverance are coming to God's people (cf. Isa 40:1–11). The people's initial response to Jesus and his words is positive, yet incomplete. Those in the synagogue speak well of him. They do not recognize him, however (Luke 4:22).

In response, Jesus describes how Nazareth will miss out on experiencing comparable things done in Capernaum. His hometown will not receive him (4:22–24). Jesus reminds his listeners about how “many . . . in Israel” missed out on provision and healing during the times of Elijah and Elisha. These prophets healed gentiles instead (4:24–29). While his words foreshadow the gentile mission in Acts and comparable Jewish resistance to his followers, Jesus’s reference to these prophets speaks more to Israel’s disobedience. During the times of Elijah and Elisha, the people of Israel were recalcitrant. Their disloyalty to God, exemplified in their rulers, precipitated the ministries of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 17–19; 2 Kgs 2–8). The majority of Elijah’s and Elisha’s work was geared toward turning Israel back to its God. However, because of the obstinate state of the people, restoration went elsewhere. Israel failed to receive the power of God intended for them because of their obstinacy. The synagogue’s sharp anger suggests they recognize that Jesus’s words are a comment against them as much, if not more than, a statement about gentiles.

Israel’s history repeats with Jesus (cf. Acts 7:2–53). A new Elijahian prophet has arisen because Israel again needs to return to God. The people once more risk rejecting God’s prophet and, therefore, renewal, because of their obduracy (Brawley 1987, pp. 18–27; Denova 1997, pp. 138–46; Otten 2021, p. 67).²⁵ Saving acts and calls to repentance by God’s agents coincide with warnings of judgment and the failure of God’s people to receive healing. The people reenact the typical hostile response to a prophet in Israel; they are those in Israel who will disbelieve (cf. Luke 2:34–35). Notably, Jesus neither rejects them in response nor issues another prophetic warning (cf. Luke 9:5; 10:11; Acts 13:51; Brawley 2020, pp. 66–67).²⁶ He simply moves on to another (Jewish) city, Capernaum. Jesus ministers to others in Israel who may respond better than his hometown. Like Elijah and Elisha, God’s Spirit-anointed servant continues to reach out to the covenant people.²⁷ Israel is thus divided over Jesus. They stand between the promise of restoration and the risk of judgment.

3.4. “This Generation”

Jesus’s language of “this generation” provides a helpful analogy for the tension of salvation and judgment for God’s people (9:41; 11:29–32, 50–51; 17:25; 21:32; Acts 2:40; cf. Moessner 1988). The phrase recalls the people delivered from slavery in Egypt yet barred from entering the promised land due to their infidelity (Deut 32:5, 20; Ps 78:8; cf. Jer 7:29; 1 En. 93:9). Second Temple literature uses this language in internecine polemic. Some Jewish subgroups refer to those whom they considered to be the unfaithful within Israel as “this generation”.²⁸ Such subgroups conceived of themselves as the renewed core or faithful remnant within Israel. They are those who remained faithful to the covenant. These groups did not exhaust Israel, though. Some would be excluded, but ultimately corporate Israel would be restored as they turn and accept the group’s vision of the ancestral tradition (Bergsma 2008; Staples 2021, pp. 259–338).²⁹ Luke-Acts’ narration of Jesus, his disciples, and the broader Jewish world resembles this trend. Jesus’s followers are portrayed as the faithful remnant of Israel who seeks repentance from the rest of Israel; they are the faithful *part* of Israel, not Israel in its totality. Nothing in Acts suggests that *Israel* becomes reduced to the remnant or redefined around the movement known as the Way. The remnant of Israel calls the rest of Israel to adhere to their form of Israel’s tradition that is centered around Jesus as the Messiah. Notably, Jesus implicates his followers in “this wicked generation,” even as they will exhort others to be saved from it (9:41; 11:29–32; Acts 2:40).

4. Israel’s Infidelity and the Disciples

4.1. Repentance as a Journey

Israel must respond to God’s actions in Jesus. All must repent. For Luke, repentance is the reorientation toward and realigning with God’s kingdom and Israel’s messiah. An initiatory turning takes place, but repentance cannot be reduced to a singular act in Luke-Acts.³⁰ Luke intertwines repentance with bearing fruits and movement along “the way” of the Lord (Luke 3:3–17; 13:1–9; cf. 8:4–15; 17:3–4; Acts 8:22). Repentance, then, is a process that manifests in one’s actions (Acts 26:20); it is about change in patterns of being (Nave

2002, p. 169). To use a different metaphor, then, repentance in Luke-Acts is a journey (Green 2015, pp. 50–122; Moraff 2021, pp. 106–9). It is walking along the way of the Lord (Isa 40:3–5; Luke 3:1–6).

For Luke, all Israel has historically been and is still on this journey of repentance as it sought to live faithfully to God (Acts 7:2–51; 13:16–41).³¹ The prophets repeatedly called Israel to (re)turn to God when they departed from their God-given vocation. History is repeated in Luke-Acts. Corporate Israel again will struggle to respond rightly. In narrating this response, Luke-Acts blurs clean divisions between faithful and unfaithful in Israel, between “the disciples” and “the people” (6:17–20; 7:1; Lohfink 1975, pp. 73–77; Green 1997, pp. 262, 285). All are implicated in “this generation” and must reorient themselves. Fidelity and infidelity are spectrums. Some characters are more faithful, others are less so. Many fluctuate throughout the story. The journey of repentance inevitably requires frequent recalibration based on the word of the Lord.

4.2. *The Disciples’ Journey of Repentance*

Jesus’s own followers participate in Israel’s journey of repentance. Unlike much of the Jewish populace, they are rightly oriented toward Jesus. They are further along on Israel’s journey of repentance. Nevertheless, they, especially the apostles, evince a comparable struggle to be faithful and understand Jesus properly (D. A. Smith 2018, pp. 187–266; Moraff 2021, pp. 127–55). Jesus gives them insight to “the mysteries of the kingdom,” yet they repeatedly misapprehend Jesus’s teachings and kingdom mission (8:9–10; 9:20–22, 45; 12:1; 18:31–34; 22:39–46). The apostles, like the failed shepherds of “this generation,” jockey for status as the greatest at the table (Luke 22:24–27; cf. 11:43; 14:7; 20:46; Moessner 1988, p. 41). The apostles evince unbelief (8:22–25). When Jesus is arrested, tried, and crucified, the disciples keep their distance (23:49; cf. Ps 38:11). They think the testimony of the resurrection given by Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary mother of James is nonsense (24:1–11). When they encounter the risen Lord, they disbelieve (24:36–43). Despite their privileged insight, they are blind like the rest of Israel (19:41–45; Acts 28:25–28; cf. Isa 42:18–43:13). The disciples need the risen Jesus to open their eyes and minds before they can perceive him properly (Luke 24:13–35, 44–53; cf. 10:21–24).

Even after the Spirit comes, Jesus’s followers falter here and there.³² The Way has dishonorable members who affect its external testimony (Acts 5:1–11; 8:9–24). The apostles are often slow to obey the calling Jesus entrusted to them and to recognize God’s movements (1:6–11; 8:1, 14–15; 10:1–11:18; 15:1–28). They frequently see their Spirit-formed unity dissolve due to internal strife (6:1–7; 15:1–3; 15:36–40). Albeit to a lesser degree than in the third gospel, the restored core of Israel continues to move along and occasionally stumble with the rest of Israel on the way of repentance. They continue to (re)align with Israel’s Lord.

4.3. *Prototypical Peter*

Simon Peter exemplifies how the disciples mirror Israel’s corporate journey of repentance. Jesus’s commissioning of Simon initiates his movement from misunderstanding and skepticism to recognition and obedience (5:1–11). Simon’s first words in the narrative demonstrate his deficient posture toward one he knows is a miracle worker (4:38–39). He refers to Jesus as “master” (*ἐπιστάτης*) and balks at Jesus’s request to let down their nets again. Luke reserves the title *ἐπιστάτης* for the mouths of characters—typically disciples—who evince incomplete understanding (5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13; Levine and Witherington III 2018, pp. 135–37).³³ Still, Simon acquiesces to Jesus’s request. The subsequent abundant catch of fish reconfigures Simon Peter’s perception of himself and Jesus. Simon properly identifies Jesus as “Lord” (*κύριος*) and calls himself as “a sinful man,” unworthy to be in the Lord’s presence (cf. Isa 6:5–6). Nevertheless, Jesus has selected him to be a witness to his own people and to the gentile nations.³⁴ A transformative encounter with Jesus prompts Peter’s repentance journey, precipitating his gradual (re)alignment with God’s kingdom.

Peter's progress ebbs and flows throughout Luke-Acts. Peter recognizes Jesus's messianic identity (9:20–22). Immediately after, Peter almost sleeps through the transfiguration. Even when he awakes, he speaks in ignorance. A heavenly voice interrupts and corrects him, reiterating that Peter and his companions must listen to Jesus (9:32–34). Like Judas, Peter betrays Jesus due to satanic influence. Peter denies Jesus before people (Luke 22:31–34, 54–62; cf. 12:9). Unlike Judas, Peter returns. And rather than denying Peter, Jesus has prayed for him and preemptively reinstated him to strengthen his brothers (22:32; cf. 22:3; 12:9). Indeed, he is the only of the eleven remaining apostles who investigates the empty tomb, though he seems to share their skepticism (24:11–12). The apostles Judas and Peter, then, reflect two options for the unfaithful in Israel. They can repent (again) and be forgiven (cf. 17:3–4), or they can depart further, to the point of removing themselves from the people of God (Acts 1:16–20; 3:23). One abdicates his position as a judge of the twelve tribes, the other returns to it (Luke 22:28–30). Indeed, Peter will emerge as a bold, Spirit-empowered leader. Nevertheless, the Lord continues to bring Peter into greater alignment and understanding of God's will (e.g., Acts 10:1–11:18). In sum, Luke narrates the disciples comparably to the rest of the Jewish people. Israel together struggles to align with God's kingdom and messianic king. Peter and all of Jesus's followers are fellow sojourners in Israel on the road of repentance with their fellow Jews.

5. Jesus as Israel in Luke's Gospel

5.1. *Jesus as Israel, God's Faithful Servant*

Luke depicts Jesus as an inclusive representative of Israel. Jesus is Israel in the flesh. Representatives in Israel's Scriptures do not reduce the corporate identity to themselves. A figurehead encapsulates the nation and its relationship to God, but it does not comprise the totality of the people of God or redefine Israel in or around themselves. They neither are nor construct a "new" or "true Israel" apart from the covenant family.³⁵ The servant in Isaiah illustrates this dynamic. Israel is God's servant. This servant is both corporate and individual. Corporate Israel is unfaithful and unseeing (Isa 42:18–19). Individual Israel is faithful *for the sake of the corporate servant(s)* and its (and the gentile nations') redemption.³⁶ The individual Israel(ite) represents corporate, unfaithful Israel. He acts on behalf of "worm Jacob" by granting sight to the people as God forgives and restores them (41:8–14; 42:6–7; 44:21–26). Luke depicts Jesus and Israel comparably. Israel is again called God's servant (Luke 1:54; cf. 1:69; 2:29; Acts 4:25), as is Jesus (Luke 2:45; Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). Jesus acts out Israel's servant vocation faithfully for their sake, without redefining the people of God. To borrow Tommy Givens' term, Luke's Jesus is "catholic," that is, he maintains fidelity to the faithful and the unfaithful in Israel alike, holding them together in himself "with hope and forgiveness" (Givens 2014, p. 5).

Luke's Gospel highlights Jesus's Jewishness and identifies him with Israel early and often. While Luke's genealogy does not center David like Matthew's, Luke still notes that Jesus's Davidic descent (Luke 3:31; Strauss 1995, pp. 209–15). As its king, Jesus is Israel's representative who acts on the people's behalf (1:27, 32–33, 69; 2:4, 11). Luke is the only evangelist to record Jesus's circumcision, his entry into the covenant community (2:21). His parents present him in the temple for purification and redemption (2:22–24; cf. Exod. 13:12–15; Num 18:15–16; Thiessen 2012; Oliver 2013, pp. 421–27). Simeon identifies Jesus as the (individual) Isaianic servant who acts on Israel's behalf (Luke 2:32; cf. Acts 13:47; Lyons 2013; Beers 2015). At his baptism, the heavens are opened (*ἀνοίγω*; cf. LXX Isa 64:1), and the heavenly voice identifies Jesus as God's beloved son (3:22, 38; cf. Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1; Ps 2:7) as he immersed alongside "all the people" (Luke 3:21–22). He too participates in eschatological cleansing act that John summons all the nation to perform as indicative of repentance (cf. Ezek 36:22–36; 1QS 2.25–26, 3.6–9; Metcalf 2022, pp. 55–89). Jesus's forty-day wilderness temptation—while it may also resonate with the adamic temptation (Luke 3:38)—echoes Israel's forty-year wandering in the desert. Jesus remains loyal where corporate Israel was disobedient (4:1–13). He relives their history faithfully to God to enact

their restoration. Jesus takes Israel and its history into himself as part of his mission to bring release and renewal to the nation.

5.2. *The Falling and Rising of Jesus the Messiah*

Jesus's recapitulation of Israel for the sake of its renewal is best imaged in his trial and crucifixion. Jesus's condemnation as one (falsely) accused of inciting and misleading the people enables the release (*ἀπολύω*; cf. Luke 6:37; 13:12; 2 Macc 4:47; 6:22, 30; 12:45) of Barabbas, one guilty of comparable crimes, from prison (Luke 23:2–25). Luke twice notes that Barabbas was imprisoned for inciting revolt (*στάσις*; cf. Acts 15:2; 19:40; 23:7, 10; 24:5) and committing murder (*φόνος*; Luke 23:28, 25; cf. Acts 9:1). Jesus's being handed over to death provides freedom for a guilty Jewish-Israelite. Furthermore, Jesus's cryptic statement to the "daughters of Jerusalem" casts his death as a prefiguration of Israel's corporate fall (Luke 23:27–31; cf. Hos 10:8; Luke 2:34–35). He is the green wood that will be burned, warning the dry wood of its impending fate (cf. 12:49–50). Israel's king endures destruction at Roman hands in solidarity with his people (13:31–35; 19:41–44; 21:20–24; cf. 4 Ezra 1–3).³⁷

Whereas Mark and Matthew place the title "the king of Israel" in the mouth of Jesus's accusers (Mark 15:32; Matt 27:42), in Luke, they call him "the messiah of God, his chosen one" (cf. 18:7), and "the king of the Jews" (23:2–3, 35–38, 42; cf. John 18:33, 39; 19:3, 14, 19, 21). The ironic taunt by Israel's leaders that he saved others but cannot save himself, then, shows Jesus's relevance for the Jewish people specifically (24:35–37). By not saving himself, the Jewish messiah and king is bringing salvation to his Jewish people. His fidelity to his messianic task is for the sake of those who failed to recognize their visitation (9:20–22, 44–45; 17:25; 18:31–34; 19:41–45). The king of the Jews requests forgiveness for those who oppose him, including his own (23:34). During his execution, Israel's Lord maintains a posture of love and forgiveness (Strahan 2012, pp. 69–87; Kuecker 2014).

Luke alone among the Gospels differentiates the responses to Jesus among the criminals (23:32, 39–42). One criminal joins Israel's leadership in deriding Jesus for not saving himself and them. The other vindicates Jesus, acknowledging him as king. The two reflect Israel's divided, sometimes antagonistic response to Jesus. While Jesus informs the latter criminal that he will be received into paradise—that is, Jesus extends the life provided for Israel that is available "today"—Jesus still dies in solidarity with both criminals. By their own admission, these criminals rightly suffer the same fate as Jesus. The crucified criminals are emblematic of Jerusalem's children who merit their punishment, a foretaste of what will happen to the dry wood (23:28–31). The just one dies with those who die justly (23:41, 47). This scene provides an analogy for Jesus's relationship with corporate Israel. The faithful messianic king endures his people's suffering with them. While the dry wood will burn, Jesus extends life "today" to those who recognize him as king, even to those suffering judgment.

If Jesus prefigures Israel's corporate fall in his crucifixion (Luke 23:27–31), he proleptically rises on their behalf. Luke's narration of Jesus's humiliation in death and exaltation to glory echoes Isaiah's depiction of Israel, especially Jerusalem, its head city. Israel was brought to shame through judgment and exile, yet God promised to restore glory to Israel when salvation comes (Isa 46:13; 51:4; 62:1–5). Jesus too had to suffer first before entering his glory (Luke 17:25; 24:26).³⁸ Jesus endured crucifixion to overcome the powers of darkness and liberate his people by offering repentance and forgiveness (Acts 5:31; 26:18). His death, resurrection, and exaltation enable "the times of refreshing" to come to a repentant people (Acts 3:18–21). Israel's national resurrection, their corporate rising, is rooted in Jesus's own (Anderson 2006). Jesus is "first from among the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 26:23). Indeed, Jesus's descriptions of Jerusalem's destruction gesture toward a future redemption for its city and people (13:34–35; 20:20–24, 27–28; cf. 19:41–44). The apostles proclaim Jesus as the one whose resurrection guarantees of Israel's hope.³⁹ Luke's Jesus, including his death and resurrection, faithfully reenacts Israel and its story for the sake of the covenant people's restoration.

6. Paul as Israel in Acts

6.1. God's Faithfulness to the God-Fighting Saul

Luke's Saul/Paul functions prototypically for unfaithful Israel and God's ability to reorient the people to carry out their vocation to be a light to the nations (Hamm 1990; Moraff 2021, pp. 180–262). Acts depicts him as the consummate "God-fighter," a figure who actively resists God's redeeming activity (5:38–39). Luke then uses Paul to illustrate God's ability to transform recalcitrant Israel. Luke introduces Saul while he is approving of Stephen's killing (7:58; 8:1; cf. 22:20). Saul is counted among those whom Jesus reproves for approving the killing of the prophets (Luke 11:48). Saul initiates and drives the persecution against Jesus's followers (Acts 8:1, 3; cf. 9:4–5; 22:4, 7–8; 26:11–14). He affiliates himself with the generation that kills and persecutes the prophets and apostles (Luke 11:49; cf. Acts 7:52). And this generation, Jesus warned, would be held to account with all the prophetic blood shed from the beginning (Luke 11:50–51). Saul is the epitome of Jewish resistance to God's messiah.

Despite these unseemly behaviors and associations, Saul is forgiven (cf. Acts 7:59), re-oriented, and transformed. While Saul is still in a murderous rage against Jesus's followers (9:1; cf. 4:27–29; 26:10; 28:4), the risen Lord confronts and overcomes Saul. Nothing precipitates Jesus's reorientation of Saul. Saul neither received a call to repent nor performed any prior act of penance. The only apparent justification for Jesus's encounter with Saul is that he is a "chosen vessel" who participates in the task of bringing light to the nations (9:15–16).⁴⁰ Election and divine prerogative alone motivate Jesus to transform Saul. This God-fighter is "defeated" by direct encounter with Israel's risen Lord (Gaventa 1986, p. 65; Kuecker 2014, pp. 220–24). All Israel can be, too. Paul leverages his past God-fighting to persuade Jewish listeners about Jesus's messianic identity (22:1–15; 26:12–18; cf. 24:10–21). The Lukan Paul, in other words, leverages his violent behavior and reorienting encounter with the risen Lord to establish rapport with Jewish opposition and proclaim Jesus. He uses it to say he was "just like you all are today" (Acts 22:3–4). All Israel can become like him and be reoriented toward Israel's messiah.

6.2. The Falling and Rising of Paul

Luke's Paul also demonstrates that judgment and redemption can coexist in God's people. When the Lord visits Paul to reorient him, judgment and salvation follow. The light that flashes around him likely carries a double sense (Green 1997, p. 149). It connotes judgment (cf. e.g., Job 28:11; Isa 10:17; 51:4). This manifests tangibly as blindness.⁴¹ Paul endures the blindness common to all Israel (Luke 19:42–44; Acts 28:26–28). Light also implies salvation and revelation.⁴² His open-yet-unseeing eyes reflect his internal inability to perceive rightly (Acts 9:8; cf. Luke 2:30). An encounter with the risen Jesus moves Paul from darkness to light. He is given new sight (cf. Isa 29:18; 35:5–6). This occurs simply because Lord reveals himself to Paul (cf. Luke 10:21–24). Like Israel as a whole, Paul remains chosen by God and can be redeemed simply by the Lord's ability to open blind eyes.⁴³ When recounting this transformative encounter with the Jerusalem Jews, Paul uses language that echoes Isaiah's depiction of Israel's judgment and renewal when God overcomes the servant's blindness (Acts 26:6–11; Isa 59:7–10; 59:16–60:1). Paul embodies how God will restore sight to God's unfaithful people, reaffirming their election simply out of divine fiat so they might fulfill their calling (Isa 14:1–2; 19:3–10; 41:8–10; 45:4; cf. Acts 26:12–18).

In Simeon's words, Paul undergoes a representative "fall and rise," a type of death and resurrection, on the Damascus Road. The spatial movement captures this imagery. Paul "falls to the ground" (9:4; 22:7; 26:14). Luke frequently uses "falling" to describe judgment.⁴⁴ The LXX uses similar phrasing euphemistically for death and destruction (e.g., Exod 32:28; Amos 3:14; 2 Chr 6:13; 20:24; 1 Macc 6:46). Likewise, Jesus tells Saul to "rise" (ἀνάσθηθι; 9:4–5; 22:10; 26:10), and Saul is then "raised (ἡγέρθη) from the ground" (9:8).

While Jesus commissions Paul as a prophet,⁴⁵ resurrection imagery resonates in Luke's word choice.⁴⁶ The risen Lord judges and restores the personification of recalcitrant Israel.

6.3. Paul at the End of Acts

The narrative's end reaffirms Paul's role as a representative of Israel (28:17–28). Paul arrives in Rome enchained. Reminiscent of Ezekiel and Jehoiachin, Paul is in an exilic state in a New Babylon, akin to that of the Jewish people after the destruction of Jerusalem (Litwak 2005, pp. 198–99; Schmidt 2007; Metcalf 2022, pp. 146–83). Paul declares how he has done nothing against the Jewish people or their ancestral customs. In fact, he is a prisoner *because of* Israel's national hopes. Paul continues to speak for the sake of Israel's salvation. When he declares a judgment of blindness on them (Isa 6:9–10), the reader recalls that blindness can be overcome by Jesus. Israel's inability to see, as it was in Isaiah's vision, will only be temporary; it will facilitate the transformation of the people, as it did with Paul (Isa 6:11–13; 39:18; 42:1–44:28; 58:6; 61:1–3). One day they will be brought from darkness to light (Fusco 1996). If one as hostile, unseeing, and unrepentant as Paul can be reoriented toward Jesus simply because God acts on behalf of a chosen vessel, how much more so the rest of elect Israel? It might require a direct encounter with the Risen Lord but hope for restoration persists. In the meantime, God continues to reach out to them (Acts 28:30–31; cf. Isa 65:2).

7. Conclusions

Luke's story continues the story of Israel and its God. This narrative is radically theocentric. Luke-Acts recounts how, in Jesus, God is acting on behalf of the covenant people to bring salvation to them and to the world. God turns to Israel (and the nations) in a posture of forgiveness, offering restoration. The people of Israel, as is typical in its history, offer a mixed response. Some repent, others do not. Regardless, God remains faithful to Israel. God alone maintains the covenant identity of and relationship with the Jewish people. Repentance and realignment with God's kingdom remain an ever-present possibility for all. To be sure, Luke indicates that some may be removed from God's people in the end (Tiede 1988; Tannehill 1986, pp. 56–57; Kinzer 2018, pp. 109–18). Some will not participate in Israel's restoration. For Luke, though, all Israel, faithful and unfaithful alike, continue along a journey of repentance in the meantime. The door to return stands open. Jesus's disciples continue to preach repentance to their fellow Jews and share in the fate of Jacob's house. Ultimately, God remains loyal to them, regardless of their fidelity. God will enact the salvific rising of all Israel when God opens unseeing eyes to recognize Jesus as messiah.

Attentive readers will recognize that my interpretation retains Lukan exclusivism regarding Jesus. Such a reading seems inevitable. Luke seemingly offers no *Sonderweg* for Israel outside of Jesus (e.g., Luke 20:17–18; Acts 3:23; 4:11–12; 5:31–32).⁴⁷ However, I offer two comments, one historical and one theological, that question categorizing Luke's exclusivism as supersessionist. First, when read within the diversity of Second Temple Judaism, Luke's exclusivism echoes other Jewish subgroups' claims to sole proper understanding of Israel's tradition. Calls to repent and accept a group's singular vision for Israel's future were common in Israel's Scriptures and early Judaism (e.g., LXX Deut 32:4–9, 19–27; LXX Ps 77:8; Josephus *J.W.* 4.163–192). These demands and their accompanying warnings of judgment did not redefine Israel; rather, they anticipated a renewal of corporate Israel, albeit with some members removed and judged (Staples 2021, pp. 259–89).⁴⁸ Read in this context, Luke-Acts is reminiscent of other Jewish groups vying for all the people to join its eschatological vision for Israel. It speaks the language of its contemporaries. By way of contrast, the supersessionist question is more about how Christian communities employ these exclusivist claims today.

Second, God remains faithful to Israel as the covenant people regardless of their reception of Jesus. The Jewish people *are* God's people (cf. Acts 3:17–26). Israel's salvation comes through Jesus for Luke, but it rests on God's election and faithfulness. *God* will save

Israel in and through Jesus, the king of the Jews. Jesus upholds God's relationship to them. The messiah acts faithfully on behalf of all Israel, sinful and repentant alike. Jesus endures death and is raised from the dead for their sake. As Givens phrases it, "rather than Jesus' supposedly disowning the violent, 'false' members of God's people," his radical solidarity with Israel "makes the cross the culmination of God's election of Israel and the way to the resurrection of the dead for the whole world by the Spirit, that is, the way to peace" (Givens 2014, p. 6). As in Israel's past, God can use one rejected by his brothers to redeem those who did not receive him (Acts 7:9–14, 23–39). God's unshakeable loyalty to Israel in Jesus is best seen in Luke's Paul. He represents the greatest hostility toward God's messengers due to inability to see correctly. But because Paul is the Lord's chosen vessel, Israel's Lord restores Paul, realigning him with the kingdom. God brings him from darkness to light through a direct encounter with the risen Lord. Luke's open-ended story retains hopeful anticipation for that day of refreshing for Israel and the whole world.

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Notes

- ¹ I use the traditional appellation for the author for convenience rather than due to a priori historical conclusions. I presume a narrative unity of Luke and Acts. Translations are my own.
- ² My understanding of *salvation* in Luke-Acts is indebted to Reardon (2021). Reardon argues "salvation, grounded in God's initiatory covenant fidelity and Israel's restoration, is a theopolitical reality that takes up space in the world, made present in Jesus and manifest in the political body of the church participating in God's kingdom. My thesis is that *Luke-Acts offers a complete, holistic, embodied, and political soteriology, cosmic in scope, that takes up space in the world and includes both the what and how of salvation, taking Christus Victor form*" (Reardon 2021, p. 3; emphasis original). Reardon contends *salvation* functions narratively; it has a beginning, middle, and end. Its beginning is rooted in the story of God and Israel, particularly the people's need for forgiveness and restoration from exile. The middle is salvation's unfolding in Luke-Acts and beyond. The *shalom* of salvation, then, is experienced "today" (Luke 2:11; 4:21; 19:9; 23:43), while it also looks forward to its consummation. The end is the full restoration of the world and especially Israel according to the promises made to them. On this latter point, see Oliver (2021). *Salvation* in Luke-Acts retains the vision of the prophets, especially Isa 40–66. It is present and eschatological in orientation.
- ³ Whether *the Jewish people* comprise the totality of *Israel* in Luke-Acts is unclear. Luke mentions Anna is "of the tribe of Asher," one of the ten "lost" tribes (Luke 2:36), and Paul maintains an ongoing hope for the twelve tribes (Acts 26:7; cf. Luke 22:30). Samaritans claimed Israelite identity, and some have argued Luke depicts their inclusion as the restoration of the northern tribes (e.g., Jervell 1979, pp. 113–32; Ravens 1995, pp. 98–105). Both suggest that *Israel* is a broader category to which *the Jewish people* belong. As in early Judaism generally (Staples 2021), *Israel* for Luke would be the overarching theo-political identity encompassing the twelve tribes, and *Jewish* a narrower socio-ethnic epithet. Still, Luke never disambiguates *Israel* from *the Jewish people*; they are inseparable. I therefore use *Israel* and *the Jewish people* somewhat interchangeably, acknowledging the latter is likely a subset of the former.
Of course, Luke also narrates gentile salvation. The monograph (Moraff, forthcoming) addresses gentile inclusion and the identity of Israel at length. Suffice to say at present that gentile inclusion does not redefine Israel. Luke stands in the stream of the prophets and early Judaism that anticipated that gentiles would come *alongside* Israel *as gentiles*. They join with Israel without becoming Israel (Acts 15:4; cf. e.g., Isa 19:16–24; 56:1–8; 66:18–24; Amos 9:7; Zech 2:10–13 [14–17 Heb.]; 8:20–23; 14:16–21). On this line of Jewish thought, see Simkovich (2016).
- ⁴ I use "Israel's Lord" ambiguously to retain Luke-Acts' implicit high Christology (Rowe 2009; Henrichs-Tarassenkova 2015).
- ⁵ Paul and Jesus are not equals in this regard. Jesus is God's agent of salvation, and Paul proclaims Jesus.
- ⁶ Since my article, more have emerged (e.g., Crabbe 2020; Oliver 2021; Moraff 2021; J. P. Smith 2021).
- ⁷ Amy-Jill Levine recently opined, "Theology and ethics, rather than historical-critical exegesis, is the best way of addressing supersessionist teachings" (Levine 2022). Theology and ethics are essential, perhaps even primary, for adjudicating readings for the church. Still, the NT is a cultural product and theological interpretation should be plausible in historical context (Green 2011).
- ⁸ Of course, Jews argued about how best to express loyalty to these features and approaches to the ancestral tradition varied. This does not undermine that there were agreed-on features that makes *Judaism* identifiable.
- ⁹ Luke 1:72; Acts 3:25; 7:8; 13:23, 32–33; 26:6–7; 28:17; cf. Luke 22:20.
- ¹⁰ Luke 1:55, 73; 13:16; 19:9; 20:37; Acts 3:25; 7:2, 8; 13:26; cf. Luke 3:8; 13:28.
- ¹¹ Infidelity can prevent participation in God's intended *shalom*, however (e.g., Deut 29:14–30:20; Pss 95:6–11; 106:6–48). Israel's chastisement is a natural consequence of infidelity in the covenant relationship, as fidelity is linked to blessing (e.g., Lev 26; Deut

27—28 Hos 11:1–11). Their judgment presupposes the relationship. Judgment is also temporary; hope for restoration always lies on the other side (Schaefer 2012, pp. 37–101).

12 Luke 1:16, 54, 68; 2:25, 32, 34; 22:30; Acts 2:22, 36; 3:12; 5:21, 31, 35; 7:23, 37; 9:15; 10:36; 13:16–24; 21:28; 26:17.

13 E.g., Luke 1:5–6, 26; 2:21–24; Acts 10:28, 45; 11:12; 16:1; 18:2; 21:39; 22:3; 26:4–8; 28:17–20.

14 Of course, John states that Abrahamic descent does not guarantee inclusion in Israel’s salvation (Luke 3:7–9; cf. Acts 3:17–26). Jesus warns that some will be thrown out of the kingdom while others come from all directions to recline with the Patriarchs (Luke 13:20–30). The latter could refer to exiles or gentiles. Regardless, they are not expressly identified as Abraham’s children (cf. Simkovich 2016, pp. 27–45, 67–93). Luke also does not equate the *ἐκκλησία* with *Israel*. With one exception (Acts 7:38), *ἐκκλησία* refers to assemblies of Jesus-followers (5:11; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3–4, 22; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32, 39, 41; 20:17).
15 Cf. e.g., Isa 8:11–9:7; 40:1–11; 43:14; 48:17–20; 50:10; 51:4–16; 52:1–10; 59:1–21; 64:1–7; Ps 106 [105]; Ezek 36–37; Micah 7:1–20; Dan 9; Neh 9; Tob. 13:1–14:5; Pr Azar 1:3–22; Jub. 1:7; 11QMelch 2.7–9 (Reardon 2021, pp. 39, 73–76).

16 Simeon reinforces a genealogical definition of *Israel*. A Spirit-inspired speaker identifies Israel as God’s people in distinction from the gentiles, while affirming gentile redemption in the same breath (cf. Acts 13:26).

17 For an interesting foray into Anna as a representative of Israel, see García Serrano (2014).

18 Judgement is not a binary in Israel’s Scriptures or Luke-Acts. It ranges in severity, permanence, and purpose. Judgment can entail destruction or removal from the people. It is not always this harsh or punitive. In Israel’s Scriptures, Israel’s corporate judgment is always temporary and often fosters transformation. It can coexist with forgiveness and redemption. Still one of the most profound expositions of the interrelationship between judgment and salvation is Heschel (2001). In Luke-Acts, judgment and salvation coexist in individuals and the people (e.g., Zachariah, Peter, Paul, and Simon Magus; Moraff 2021, pp. 39–41). On the Deuteronomistic dimensions of Luke-Acts, see Moessner (2016, pp. 238–71); Schaefer (2012).

19 E.g., 1 Kgs 17:1; Isa 6:1–13; Jer 3:6–25; 7:25–26; 44:1–10; Zech 7:8–14.

20 Stephen’s speech is central to claims of Lukan supersessionism. The monograph examines it at length. At present, two points about Joseph and Moses, the rejected agents of deliverance Stephen mentions, mitigate supersessionist claims: (1) Joseph and Moses retain kinship ties with those who reject them; they are persecuted and denounced by their own “brothers” (Acts 7:8–9, 13, 23, 26, 32). Denying God’s agent does not dissolve the genealogical ties. (2) Joseph and Moses *redeem the people who reject them*. Suffering and judgment result for the people because of their opposition to the liberator and God (7:11–16, 30–43). Redemption comes to the kinship group through this agent, nevertheless. On the “rejected prophet” motif in Luke-Acts, see McWhirter (2014).

21 E.g., Luke 5:17–26; 9:10–45; 11:14–32; 19:47–48; 22:1–2; 23:1–5, 48. Jesus also calls Israel’s leadership, at least the scribes and the Pharisees, to repent. They remain open characters. In other words, whether they will respond rightly to Jesus is left unanswered (e.g., Luke 15:1–3, 31–32).

22 Otten (2021) overstates that John and Jesus enact “removal” from Israel within the narrative. Exclusion is threatened but rarely enacted. When it does, *it occurs with Jesus’s followers* (Judas, Ananias and Sapphira). All other characters are open-ended, even those whose prospect for repentance looks dim (e.g., Saul/Paul).

23 Cf. Luke 13:6–9; Isa 3:10; 10:33–34; 51:1–2; Ezek 15:1–8; Wis. Sol. 4:4–5; 10:6–7; 4 Ezra 3:20, 33.

24 The significance Luke’s omission of “the day of recompense” has long divided interpreters. See Hays (2016, pp. 226–28). Even if one does not hear its echoes, Jesus’s tone turns judgmental soon after.

25 The notion that anti-gentile sentiments motivated the hostility of these Jews is dubious. Luke-Acts includes positive Jew-gentile interactions and relations (e.g., Luke 7:1–17; Acts 10:22), including gentile participation in synagogues (e.g., Acts 14:1; 17:4).

26 Interestingly, Jesus continues to be linked to his hometown (Luke 18:37; Acts 10:38; 26:9).

27 Likewise, whenever Paul turns to the gentiles, he immediately returns to Jewish space or engages Jewish people (14:1; 18:6–8; 19:9–10; 28:30–31). See Moraff (2021, pp. 265–66).

28 E.g., 1QpHab 2.7–8; 7.1; CD 1.12–13; 1 En. 93:9–10; 94:1–2; Jub. 23:14–15. See Winn (2020) for additional references, albeit geared toward understanding Mark’s use of this phrase.

29 E.g., 1QS 1.1–21; 5.1–20; 1QSa 1.1–6; 2.11–22; 1QM 1.1–2.15.

30 Luke 1:16–17; 15:7, 10; 17:31; 22:32; Acts 1:25; 2:38; 3:19, 26; 7:39–42; 9:35; 14:15; 15:19; 19:26; 26:20.

31 A related set of metaphors involve proper perception, specifically going “from darkness to light” (26:18) and from blindness to sight (Moraff 2021, pp. 222–68).

32 Here I find myself in the minority of Lukan interpreters, even the post-supersessionist inclined. For an elaboration of the Way’s stumbling in Acts, see Moraff (2021, pp. 127–55).

33 Luke 5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13.

34 Luke 5:10; 22:28–30; 24:46–49; Acts 1:6–8; 2:14–41; 3:1–4:12; 10:9–11:18; 15:7–11.

35 For comparable reflections about Jesus-as-Israel in Matthew’s Gospel, see Schaser (2021). On notions of representative figures and the relationship between individuals and the corporate whole in the Hebrew Bible, see Kaminsky (1995); Mol (2009, pp. 114–208); Doak (2019). On early Jewish and rabbinic analogies, see Davies (1980, pp. 55–57); Jewett (2018, pp. 239–50). I am grateful to Ralph Korner for pointing me toward these sources.

- 36 Isa 42:1–9, 18–22; 43:1–13; 44:1–8; 48:20; 49:1–13; 50:4–10; 52:13–53:12; 61:1–11cf. 54:17; 56:6; 59:20–21; 63:17; 65:8–9; 66:10; cf. Luke 1:54, 69; 2:29.
- 37 For extended arguments, see Kinzer (2018, pp. 129–59; cf. Wright 2008, 2:569–70).
- 38 Luke 2:31–35; 9:22; 17:25; Acts 3: cf. Isa 60:1–2, 19.
- 39 Acts 2:29–40; 4:2, 33; 23:6–8; 24:15, 21; 26:5–8, 22–23; 28:20. For extended arguments, see Kinzer (2018, pp. 129–59); Oliver (2021, pp. 71–139). See also Reardon (2021, pp. 121–23).
- 40 Cf. Acts 13:47; 26:23; Isa 41:8–16; 44:1–2; Pss. Sol. 18:5–16.
- 41 Cf. Exod 4:11; Deut 28:28–29; Isa 6:9–10; Luke 1:20; Tob 5:10; CD 1.8–11.
- 42 Cf. e.g., Isa 9:2; 10:17; 42:16; 50:10; 59:9; 60:1; Tob 3:17; 11:8; 14:10.
- 43 Acts 5:38–39; 9:15; cf. Luke 4:16–21; 7:22; 18:41–43; 24:13–49.
- 44 E.g., Luke 10:18; 11:17; 13:4; 17:16; 20:18; 21:24; 23:30; Acts 5:5, 9; 13:11; 15:16; 20:9.
- 45 Cf. e.g., Jer 3:17; Ezek 3:22; Jon 1:2; Acts 8:26; 10:26; 14:10.
- 46 E.g., Luke 7:14, 22; 9:7, 22; 16:31; 24:7, 46; Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30.
- 47 While addressed in-depth in Moraff (forthcoming), Acts 4:12 merits brief discussion. In immediate context, Peter explains to Israel’s leadership that it is by Jesus’s name that “this sick man has been healed (σέσωται)” (4:9; cf. 3:1–16). This might suggest that the healing, not eschatological salvation, is the σωτηρία found exclusively in Jesus’s name (4:12; cf. 3:6). Healing and eschatological salvation should not be bifurcated, however. This man’s healing is representative of Israel’s corporate healing (3:16–4:2; Bauckham 2001). Some of the prophets describe the nation’s restoration using the analogy of being healed from the inability to walk (Isa 35:6; Mic 4:6–7; Zeph 3:19–20). Luke’s overarching use of the σωτηρία word-group and vision of salvation is holistic, presently available, and eschatologically oriented (Reardon 2021). Therefore, Peter declares to Israel’s leadership that the name of the Lord Jesus is the sole source of healing and eschatological salvation, both for this man and the nation (Acts 4:10–12; cf. 2:21).
- 48 E.g., CD 1–5; 4QMMT; 1QS 1–3, 8–9; 1QHab 12; 1 En. 85–90.

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