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JEWS, GENTILES AND SALVATION IN LUKE–ACTS[1]

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Introduction

In 2006, Francois Bovon made the statement that 'Lukan studies have long preferred Christology to soteriology.'[2] That does not mean that there have not been major studies on soteriology in Luke–Acts, because there have been;[3] however, they have been overshadowed, at least in the past, by other

1. I wish to thank the organizers of the 'Sin and Salvation in Luke–Acts' session of the Luke–Acts Section at the Evangelical Theological Society Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX, November 14–16, 2023, especially Aaron White and Zachary Dawson, for inviting my participation. I also appreciate the several comments and questions I received from fellow participants and audience members who have helped me to refine my thoughts.

2. Francois Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950–2005)* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2nd rev. edn, 2006), p. 277; cf. pp. 273-304. His volume is very useful for tracing the history of research on this and other topics.

3. Some of the major studies include I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), whose study is devoted primarily to salvation in Luke–Acts; Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke–Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1972); Stephen G. Wilson, *Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke–Acts* (SNTSMS, 23; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke–Acts* (SNTSMS, 76; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (eds.), *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 17-166; Joseph B. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke–Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press,

topics such as Christology, but there have been others as well. This situation has recently changed, with publication of several studies since Bovon's survey. These studies include Paul Doble's work on salvation and Luke's theology of the cross, Michael Fuller on the restoration of Israel, H.J. Sellner's exploration of soteriology in Luke–Acts and L. Daniel Chrupcała on God's salvation in Lukan theology, among other book-length treatments.[4] There are many possible reasons for this shift in emphasis and renewed interest in a topic that, as we shall see, should probably never have been so neglected. One is the major re-conception of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles.[5] Whereas it may have been easier in the past to focus upon Gentile redemption especially when focus is upon Luke as a more expansive Gospel and Acts as concerned with the expanding church, recent scholarship has returned to the question of the relationship of Jews and Gentiles. Along with this return has come rethinking of whether there is continuity or discontinuity in New Testament thinking—and in particular in Luke–Acts—regarding the place of the Jews and the Gentiles within the development of early Christianity and especially within the thought of the writer of Luke–Acts (whom I will call Luke, for historical reasons).[6] Another consideration is the recent resurgence of a longstanding theme of the role that the biblical author, Luke, plays in relationship to the events purportedly recorded within the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Whereas previous generations may, at least in some circles,

1999); and Günter Wasserberg, *Aus Israels Mitte—Heil für die Welt: Eine Narrative-Exegetische Studie zur Theologie des Lukas* (BZNW, 92; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998).

4. Peter Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation: Luke's Theology of the Cross* (SNTSMS, 87; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Michael Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-Gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke–Acts* (BZNW, 132; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006); H.J. Sellner, *Das Heil Gottes: Studien zur Soteriologie des Lukanischen Doppelwerks* (BZNW, 152; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007); and L. Daniel Chrupcała, *Everyone Will See the Salvation of God: Studies in Lukan Theology* (Analecta, 83; Milan: Edizioni Terra Santa, 2015).

5. For a survey of recent opinion, see Jason F. Moraff, 'Recent Trends in the Study of Jew and Judaism in Luke–Acts', *CurBR* 19 (2020), pp. 64-87; and for a study of major figures in New Testament scholarship since the rise of historical criticism, see Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*.

6. This is not the place to debate authorship of these two books. I realize that there is much debate. However, there is also much reason to believe that traditional attribution is grounded in historical memory.

have taken a much more historical view of these books, recent scholarship has grown increasingly skeptical of their historicity. This extends to some returning to a version of the F.C. Baur hypothesis and dating Acts to about the middle of the second century.[7] With this return to the Baur chronology, there is a tendency to revive others of Baur's hypotheses. One of these is the divide within early Christianity between Jews and Gentiles, and more particularly between Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity. Some of this thought is reflected in recent efforts to posit a much more Jewish Jesus and a much more Jewish Paul than in previous times, to the point of seeing both supporting and upholding Jewish law and custom, regardless of the relationship to Gentiles. This results in a bifurcated early Christianity, in which Jesus and Paul preserve Jewish law rather than abrogate it, and, along with it, preserve Jewish views of such matters as salvation, sometimes to the point of arguing for a different way of salvation for Gentiles.[8] There are obviously many more issues raised by this topic than I can address in one paper, although there will be places where I touch upon them.

In this paper, I wish to return to some fundamental questions regarding sin and salvation in Luke and Acts, and, based upon this evidence, attempt to characterize how Luke and Acts treat the question of salvation for Jews and Gentiles. I cannot offer a thorough and complete picture, nor can I answer all the attendant questions raised, but I hope to raise some interesting questions prompted by my observations.

Sin and Salvation Language in Luke–Acts

I begin by examining the language of sin and salvation in Luke–Acts. I will attempt to do this based upon an examination of two different lexical semantic domains along with their interaction. I realize that my attention to the use

7. The leading thinker in this respect is Richard I. Pervo, along with Joseph Tyson. See Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2006).

8. I am highly skeptical of those who wish to emphasize the notion of a Jesus within Judaism that creates undue distance from an early mission to the Gentiles, one grounded in the actions and teachings of Jesus and reflected in the Gospels. My skepticism implies—and, I believe, the Gospels demonstrate—that Jesus abrogates the necessity of the Jewish legal system and its salvific implications, even if the Jewish people retain a vital place in God's economy and the future.

of selected lexical items may limit the textual evidence that I am discussing. This is intentional, but I believe that this provides at least as good a starting point for further discussion as any other, one arguably more controlled than many previous studies.[9]

I begin by identifying the two respective semantic domains focal to my topic. Studies along these lines, whether mine or earlier ones, are often complicated by several factors. These include the fact that the Louw–Nida lexicon of semantic domains that I will be employing is polysemous rather than monosemous in lexical theory and organization.[10] This often means that lexical items appear in multiple semantic domains, sometimes spread across large expanses of the semantic domain continuum (which categories are organized by contiguity). This is thankfully not the case with the language of sin and salvation, except in one important instance to be mentioned further below. The words for *sin* are found in semantic domain 88L' 'Sin, Wrongdoing, Guilt' (88.289-318), while the words for *salvation* are found in semantic domain 21F 'Save in a Religious Sense' (21.25-32). The only major exception to this regular pattern is that a word that is included within the *save* domain (σῴζω) is also found within semantic domain 23H 'Health, Vigor, Strength' (136). This example is clearly, at least to me, a case of metaphorical extension, one in which salvation in a religious sense is a metaphorical extension of the physical sense, that is, where domain 21 is a metaphorical extension of domain 23 (or is it the other way around, in which the spiritual sense is primary and the physical sense is a metaphorical extension, thereby stating that physical maladies stem from spiritual problems? Some might wish to argue the latter for theological reasons).[11] Despite their possible semantic and metaphoric relationships, I will be concerned with examples that fall within

9. Contra Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), for whom 'salvation' becomes a governing metaphor and ends up at times encompassing much of the theology of Luke–Acts.

10. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988). Criticism of the lexicon is abundant, but it remains an invaluable tool if rightly used.

11. For discussion of the relationship of these senses, see Ben Witherington III, 'Salvation and Health in Christian Antiquity: The Soteriology of Luke–Acts in its First Century Setting', in Marshall and Peterson (eds.), *Witness to the Gospel*, pp. 145-66 (esp. 150-54).

domain 21 rather than 23, although it is sometimes difficult to differentiate the instances (I will use the criterion that I will not examine physical healing pericopes that use such language, even if the formulations are similar; cf. Lk. 8.48 with 7.50).

Some lexemes included within the Louw–Nida lexicon are not, I believe, appropriately placed within their respective domain, at least so far as Luke–Acts are concerned, and so I do not consider these. Further, although several different lexemes legitimately appear within these domain listings, not all of them are always pertinent to Luke–Acts. I am not doing a study of the lexeme but of the domains of *sin and salvation*, and so am concerned with lexemes that are contextually constrained to indicate these ideas.

The lexemes within the *sin* domain are (according to frequency): πονηρός, ἁμαρτία, ἁμαρτωλός, πειρασμός, πειράζω, ὀφείλω, ἁμαρτάνω and ἐκπειράω.[12] The lexemes within the *salvation* domain are fewer but are (according to frequency): σῴζω, ἀπόλλυμι, σωτηρία, σωτήρ and σωτηρίον.[13] I do not attempt to treat every instance of every lexeme but try to discuss important passages that include such lexemes, while emphasizing those passages that reveal the view of sin *and* salvation in pericopes in Luke–Acts.

Luke's Gospel

There are twenty-two events in Luke's Gospel that fall within the scope of my discussion of sin and salvation, spanning the entire length of the Gospel, from its opening infancy narrative to the final chapter and Jesus' commissioning of his disciples.

Luke indicates in subtle ways from the start that his Gospel is concerned with salvation, an observation that some scholars have picked up and used as their organizing principle for discussion of the theology of Luke. In her song

12. Words that are within the domain but not pertinent to Luke–Acts are αἰτία, αἴτιον, ἀμέμπτος, ἀπρόσκοπος, ὀφειλέτης, ῥαδιούργημα, ῥαδιούργια, σκανδαλίζω and σκάνδαλον.

13. Doble (*Paradox of Salvation*) examines a different set of wordings, based upon his treatment of the Lukan passion account; Joel B. Green, 'Salvation to the End of the Earth: God as the Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles', in Marshall and Peterson (eds.), *Witness to the Gospel*, pp. 83-106 (esp. 86), focuses upon cognate words of σῴζω but then adds words for healing, thus conflating the two categories; and Bock (*Theology*, pp. 228-37) provides a similar style of reading as I do but focuses upon a narrower range of Greek words cognate with σῴζω.

of praise, Mary states from the outset that 'my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior (σωτῆρι)' (Lk. 1.47), a passage that probably draws from Hab. 3.18 and possibly other Old Testament passages (e.g. 1 Sam. 2.1; Pss. 25.5; 35.9).[14] The cotext is one in which the mighty are brought low and the humble are exalted, one of whom is Mary. The humble are those to whom the God of the Old Testament extends his favor. God is here labeled from the outset as savior, who in ancient culture was seen as the one who rescues from adversity and brings peace. However, when the angels appear to the shepherds, they tell them not to fear 'because today a savior (σωτήρ) is born in the city of David who is Christ Lord' (Lk. 2.11). This passage brings savior into conjunction with Messiah, Lord, and the line of David from which the Messiah comes, in other words, a rich Old Testament environment, to describe Jesus. There is a sense in which these passages, grounded in the Old Testament and addressed to those within Israel, are addressed to corporate Israel.[15] However, that may be too narrow a reading of salvation in this context, especially when the first statement is issued by a young woman and the second by shepherds, neither representative of national Israel in the same way as a leader, or even a man. The national focus may be less than the sense of inclusion within salvation of the unexpected, an instance of the overturning of expectations of which Mary speaks. In any case, salvation is proclaimed as an attribute of both God and Jesus, and firmly grounded in the Old Testament. This equality of function—and of being—in which Jesus is savior and bringer of salvation just as God does the same is maintained throughout Luke and Acts.[16]

The initial message of the bringing of salvation is further conveyed in Zechariah's prophecy regarding the redemption of God's people, Israel, out of their sin. Zechariah praises the 'Lord, God of Israel, who has looked upon and made redemption of his people, and he has raised a horn of salvation (σωτηρίας) for us in the house of David his child, as he spoke through the

14. See Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyer, *Origins of New Testament Christology: An Introduction to the Traditions and Titles Applied to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023), pp. 157-68 (163).

15. Heikki Räisänen, 'The Redemption of Israel: A Salvation-Historical Problem in Luke–Acts', in *Challenges to Biblical Interpretation: Collected Essays 1991–2001* (BIS, 59; Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 61-81 (esp. 63); Bock, *Theology*, p. 185.

16. See H. Douglas Buckwalter, 'The Divine Saviour', in Marshall and Peterson (eds.), *Witness to the Gospel*, pp. 107-23.

mouth of his ancient holy prophets, salvation (σωτηρίαν) from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—to make mercy with our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, an oath he swore to Abraham our father, to give to us while rescuing us from the hand of enemies, to worship him in holiness and righteousness before all our days' (Lk. 1.68-73). This first part praises the God of Israel and speaks of salvation for the house of David coming from within that house, from one who is in the line of David. However, Zechariah also places Israel within a context of salvation from enemies and those who hate it. All was spoken by the prophets and initially inaugurated with Abraham, and thus grounded in Old Testament history. Zechariah continues by apostrophizing his expected child: he says that 'you, child, will be called prophet of the highest, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his road, to give knowledge of salvation (σωτηρίας) to his people in forgiveness of their sins (ἁμαρτιῶν), on account of compassion of the mercy of our God, in which the east from on high will look upon us, to reveal to those who are sitting in darkness and shadow of death, to guide our feet into a way of peace' (Lk. 1.76-79). The second part states that Zechariah's child will prepare for the Lord by conveying knowledge of salvation to the sinful Jewish people who are in darkness, death, and turmoil, a condition predicated upon not national distress but the human condition of sinfulness.[17] At this point, the anticipated person—subsequently identified as John the Baptist—is designated as a prophet who is to prepare the way for the Lord of the line of David who brings salvation to the Jewish people. To this point, whereas we may have some adumbrations of a wider Gentile soteriology, the focus has primarily been upon the salvation of the Jewish people. This sets the stage for the rest of the Gospel by grounding salvation in God's people, the Jews, even if this salvation is extended to wider humanity.

Almost from the beginning of Jesus' appearance in Luke–Acts, however, he is associated with salvation for all humanity. When Jesus is presented in the temple, even as a child, Simeon receives him—a man who has been looking for the Lord's Messiah. When he is presented with Jesus, Simeon exclaims, 'Now you are releasing in peace your servant, Master, according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation (σωτήριον), which you prepared before the face of all the people, a light unto revelation of nations

17. Christoph Stenschke, 'The Need for Salvation', in Marshall and Peterson (eds.), *Witness to the Gospel*, pp. 125-44 (132-33).

and glory of your people Israel' (Lk. 2.29-32). Simeon sees in Jesus salvation, displayed before all people as a revelation to them, both the nations (Gentiles) and Israel. There is consistency in seeing both Jews and Gentiles as sinful and in need of salvation. As already seen above, Israel is not simply morally or ethically at odds with God's will but said to be sinful, and Gentiles are as well; hence they both require the same spiritual solution, salvation.[18]

The message that is identified with John the Baptist, following on from the message to Zechariah, is one of 'preaching a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)' (Lk. 3.3). John's message, delivered to the territory around the Jordan River, is based upon Isaiah the prophet (40.3-5): 'a voice of one calling in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be lowered, and the crooked will be straightened and the rough into smooth roads, and all flesh (πᾶσα σάρξ) will see the salvation (σωτήριον) of God' (Lk. 3.4-6). We will return to the notion of baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins, since similar language of dealing with sins is found elsewhere in Luke–Acts. Appeal here is made to an Old Testament passage, but the passage itself extends God's salvation beyond just ethnic Israel to 'all flesh', that is, all humanity as a witness to God's salvation. In other words, salvation from almost the beginning of Luke's Gospel—and as we shall see to the end of Acts—is made available to both Jew and Gentile on the basis of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

In the calling of Jesus' first disciples, Simon Peter falls on his knees before Jesus and directs him to depart from him because he is a sinful (ἁμαρτωλός) man (Lk. 5.8). Jesus does not deny that Simon Peter is a sinner but instead tells him not to be afraid because his purpose is to call him to follow after him. The next several episodes in Luke's Gospel are cleansing and healing episodes (leper, Lk. 5.12-16; and paralytic, Lk. 5.17-26). In the healing of the paralytic, there is an unusual yet informative treatment of sin and salvation that goes beyond just a physical healing. A crowd of various people is gathered, including Pharisees and teachers of law, from a wide range of villages. When his friends are not able to bring the paralytic to Jesus, they go up on the roof and remove the tiles and lower him down before Jesus. Luke says that Jesus observed their faith and then bluntly states, 'Fellow human, your

18. For a sustained argument of this point especially regarding the Gentiles, see Christoph W. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to their Coming to Faith* (WUNT, 2/102; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

(σου) sins (ἁμαρτίαι) stand forgiven' (Lk. 5.20), a statement that resonates throughout the Gospel as a description of individual forgiveness made available to everyone. The scribes and Pharisees strongly react and wonder who Jesus is, speaking blasphemy and claiming to forgive sins (Lk. 5.21), since this is God's prerogative. Jesus, aware of the dispute, addresses them: 'What is easier, to say "Your sins (ἁμαρτίαι) stand forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"?' (Lk. 5.23), with repetition of his pronouncement regarding forgiveness of sins. Jesus says he does this to show that, among other things, 'the son of man has authority upon the earth to forgive sins (ἁμαρτίας)' (Lk. 5.24). We don't know whether the paralytic was a Jew, but even if we assume he was (and that seems most likely), Jesus does not hesitate to appropriate a divine function, the forgiveness of sins, a prerogative given him as the son of man. As mentioned above, there is much debate over Jesus' relationship to the Jewish law, with some recent scholars wishing to argue that Jesus never argues for invalidation of the law, even if he questions its application or use. This passage arguably indicates that Jesus is not just questioning the law but rejecting its validity, since he arrogates for himself divine prerogatives as the son of man, within the context of the son of man having earthly authority to forgive sins, apparently not limited in the minds of the author (or Jesus) to a particular locale or ethnicity. This broad scope is reiterated in the episode of the calling of Levi. The Pharisees and scribes question Jesus as to why he eats and drinks with sinners (ἁμαρτωλῶν) (Lk. 5.30), to which he responds that he 'did not come to call the righteous but sinners (ἁμαρτωλούς) to repentance' (Lk. 5.32), a clear reference to John the Baptist's message, but with an even wider apparent application to all human beings. The contrast is between the righteous and sinners, with the implication being that the two have different salvific status, as the righteous don't need to repent as do sinners. This wider application appears to be confirmed in the pericope about love of enemies, where Jesus refers to loving those who love you as being no different from other kinds of people, such as sinners (ἁμαρτωλοί)[19] who also love those who love them, who do good to those who do good to them, and who lend to other sinners (ἁμαρτωλοῖς) (Lk. 6.32, 33, 34).[20]

19. There is also use in this context of πονηρός, in which being sinful and doing evil appear to be linked (Lk. 6.35, 45).

20. But compare Lk. 7.34, where tax collectors and sinners are lumped together. The episode with Levi shows that tax collectors may be Jews. However, a Jewish tax

In the episode of the woman who anoints Jesus' feet, she is referred to as a sinner (ἁμαρτωλός) twice, once when introduced as a major participant (Lk. 7.37) and once when referred to by the Pharisee who invited Jesus (Lk. 7.39). After Jesus asks his telling question regarding the more grateful person, the one forgiven more or little, Jesus instructs Simon the Pharisee. After recounting all that the woman did, Jesus tells Simon, 'Her many sins (ἁμαρτίαι) stand forgiven' (Lk. 7.47), and then he turns to her and says, 'Your sins (ἁμαρτίαι) stand forgiven' (Lk. 7.48), with Jesus again using his individualized statement. This prompts the others at the dinner to ask, 'Who is this who indeed forgives sins (ἁμαρτίας)?' (Lk. 7.49). Jesus then pronounces that her faith has saved (σέσωκεν) her. There are two major observations to make about this pericope. The first is that we do not know the ethnicity of this woman. All we know is that she is a sinner. Even if she were a Jew, she is clearly not included within the covenant community according to the Pharisee. She is a sinner who should not be touching Jesus (although it is intriguing that she is even allowed inside the door). Perhaps the lack of description allows her to represent either Jew or Gentile, that is, any sinner. The second observation is that the language Jesus uses of sins standing forgiven echoes John the Baptist's original purpose and repeats Jesus' purpose in Luke 5 (v. 20). Jesus' words elicit a similar response, the question regarding how he is able to forgive sins. This time, rather than translating forgiveness of sins into physical healing or even pronouncing about the son of man, Jesus declares that she stands saved because of her faith, as evidenced in coming to Jesus and implicitly recognizing him as savior. This is not a corporate faith, as is so often recently promoted regarding the New Testament, but an individual faith, related to her personal demonstration of belief in Jesus, although also a faith implicating more than just this one woman but anyone who believes.

The parable of the sower is about the word of God and salvation (Lk. 8.4-8, 11-15). The seed falling along the way represents those who hear but then have the devil take the word from their heart, so that, while believing, they might not be saved (σωθῶσιν).[21] The seed on the rocks, indicating those who may believe for a time, does not have sufficient roots to resist temptation (πειρασμοῦ) and is excluded. The seed that falls among the thorns is choked

collector as a sinner seems to be someone excluded from the salvific community, regardless of ethnicity.

21. The NIV says, 'so that they may not believe and be saved'. This does not appear to be an accurate construal of the use of the negation.

out and does not develop. But the seed that falls on good ground, hearing the word, bears fruit through endurance. I find it implausible that the parables of Jesus, generally speaking, are addressed only to Jews, even in their Jewish context. In this instance, even though the word of God may refer here to the Old Testament, the parable seems to be addressed to anyone who is responsive to that word. The conditions of receipt are more important than the ethnicity of the receiver. If the parable is addressed only to the Jews, or, perhaps better, in the sense that it is addressed to Jews, it seems to indicate that those who are anything less than fully receptive of God's word are excluded from God's salvation, without further regard. A similar pattern is found in several specific episodes within the Gospel: the Gerasene demoniac, who is said to have been saved (ἐσώθη) (Lk. 8.36) from being dominated by demons (not a physical malady, according to the Gospel author); and the woman who touches Jesus' garment and whose hemorrhage stops, but then to whom Jesus says 'Your faith has saved (σέσωκεν) you' (Lk. 8.48), repeating the phrase used earlier to represent the relationship of faith to salvation.[22] This latter statement may indicate a physical healing, and therefore should not be included in the language of sin and salvation as I have previously defined it. However, this pronouncement possibly indicates a second work, one of spiritual healing by Jesus, after the one of physical healing, since the account says that she was healed immediately upon touching Jesus (cf. Lk. 8.47).[23] In other words, there may be two works of Jesus performed here.

In foretelling his death and resurrection, Jesus instructs his followers not to tell anyone who he is (after Peter's confession), because it was necessary for the son of man to suffer and be rejected by the religious authorities and

22. Matthew Thiessen (*Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity within First-Century Judaism* [Grand Rapids: Bakers, 2020], pp. 69-96) attempts to argue that this episode does not show Jesus abolishing ritual purity laws. I think that Thiessen overstates what he demands that Jesus would do or say to indicate such an abolition, when the context shows a clear disregard by Jesus for any impurity on the woman's part and focuses on her faith and its saving power.

23. Other examples of similar wording are Lk. 17.19; 18.42; Acts 4.9; 14.9; cf. Lk. 23.35, 37, 39 concerning saving himself and others; Acts 7.25. One wording that illustrates the difficulty of semantic differentiation is Acts 27.34, where Paul tells the sailors to eat food, 'for this is for your salvation (σωτηρίας)'. Many have interpreted this as a eucharistic scene, when this may simply be some tired and hungry sailors eating.

killed and then resurrected. He tells all of them, 'If someone (τις) wants to come after me, he should deny himself and take his cross every day and follow me. For whoever (ὃς ἄν) wants to save (σῶσαι) his soul, he will lose (ἀπολέσει) it, but whoever (ὃς ἄν) might lose (ἀπολέσῃ) his soul because of me, this one will save (σώσει) it. For what does it profit a person, gaining the entire world but losing (ἀπολέσας) himself or being forfeited?' (Lk. 9.23-25). The formulation is again singular, 'someone' (excuse my use of the masculine singular in my translations). Even though the context may reflect the reality of fear of the Jewish authorities, the statement is not formulated in terms of Jews alone but in terms of any person who wishes to have salvation. This salvation is dependent upon denying oneself and following the path of Jesus, which involves the cross and death.

In Luke 11, Jesus teaches his followers about praying, after they see him praying. The fact that they ask Jesus to teach them to pray indicates that they are desiring something other than the kind of praying that they are used to. In Luke's account, Jesus teaches them to pray, among other things, 'and forgive us our sins (ἁμαρτίας), for we also forgive everyone indebted (ὀφείλοντι) to us, and don't bring us into temptation (πειρασμόν)' (Lk. 11.4). The formulation regarding temptation is unusual, since temptation is often directed toward Jesus rather than his followers in the Gospel (e.g. Lk. 4.2, 12). Nevertheless, the forgiveness of sins, beseeched of God, is based upon the forgiven offering forgiveness to others.

One of the clearest calls to reject sin (repent) is found in Luke 13. When Jesus is told about the instance in Galilee when Pilate mixed the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices, he asks whether his audience thinks that these Galilean sinners (ἁμαρτωλοί) were worse than other Galileans, to which he answers that this is not the case. Instead, 'if you do not repent all will likewise perish (ἀπολεῖσθε)' (Lk. 13.2), a line repeated at the end of the pericope (Lk. 13.5).

Jesus went around Judean towns and villages teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Along the way, someone asks him, 'Lord, are those who are being saved (σῳζόμενοι) few?' (Lk. 13.23). The implication is that membership within the Jewish community alone or even following the Jewish law is not, in Jesus' eyes, sufficient for salvation, but that there is another way, a narrower way, to which Jesus subscribes. Jesus replies that they should compete to enter through the narrow door, because many will seek to enter and will not be able to, because the householder will lock the door, leaving those desiring to get in outside, unrecognized by the householder. It is unclear who exactly

is being excluded, although Jesus says that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when his hearers see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but themselves outside. It appears that some, even within the people of Israel, are excluded from the kingdom for their doing iniquity (Lk. 13.27), but that some from east and west and north and south—that is, Gentiles—will be seated in the kingdom (Lk. 13.29).

In several parables—the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son (Lk. 15.1-7, 8-10 and 11-32)—there is a contrast between sin and salvation that reveals what is required for a sinner to be saved and how much God values such sinners. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus tells this parable to tax collectors and sinners (ἁμαρτωλοί), while Pharisees and scribes complain that Jesus receives sinners (ἁματωλούς) and eats with them, perhaps indicating a contrast between those outside and inside the covenant community. The parable itself focuses upon the shepherd who leaves his ninety-nine sheep to find the one sheep at risk of loss (see ἀπολέσας, Lk. 15.4; ἀπολωλός, vv. 4, 6). In the same way, Jesus says, there is more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner (ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι) than upon ninety-nine righteous not needing repentance (Lk. 15.7). This parable may be interpreted in a variety of ways, but it seems to indicate that God's desire is for anyone, even those who are sinners, to find salvation, whether they are Jewish or not.[24] The same theme is continued in the parable of the lost coin (ἀπολέσῃ, Lk. 15.8, 9), where Jesus says that joy comes upon the angels of God over one repentant sinner (ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι) (Lk. 15.10). In the parable of the lost son, the prodigal realizes that he is worse off than one of his father's servants (he depicts himself as perishing, ἀπόλλυμαι, Lk. 15.17). So, he marshals courage to admit, 'Father, I have sinned (ἥμαρτον) against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son' (Lk. 15.18), which words he tells his father when he approaches him (Lk. 15.21). The father, disregarding the son's declaration, rejoices at his return and calls for great festivities, 'because this my son was dead and now is brought back to life, was lost (ἀπολωλώς) and is found' (Lk. 15.24), words essentially repeated at the end of the parable in response to the complaint of the brother (Lk. 15.32). All three of these parables are what Snodgrass calls 'parables of lostness', that is, parables that are concerned to

24. See Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd edn, 2018), pp. 95-110, where he emphasizes that human repentance is not as significant as God's desire to seek out sinners.

show how much God, through Jesus, seeks out and shows compassion for the lost, much to the consternation of the religious leaders.[25] The emphasis is not on ethnicity or exclusivity but on inclusivity so long as one responds to the divine call, not to any other.

In a series of sayings by Jesus in Luke 17, Jesus tells his hearers to pay attention: 'If your brother sins (ἁμάρτῃ), rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins (ἁμαρτήσῃ) against you seven times in a day and seven times he turns to you saying, "I repent," you will forgive him' (Lk. 17.3-4). This aphoristic statement is about sin and the boundless potential of forgiveness for human beings.

More to the point is a description of the coming of the kingdom and its elusiveness (Lk. 17.20-37). Jesus mentions examples, two of them from the Old Testament. The first is Noah and the second is Lot. Both occur outside of the boundaries of national Israel, Noah before it and Lot parallel to the days of Abraham. There is much destruction depicted in these accounts of sinners (cf. Lk. 17.27 and 29 with ἀπόλλυμι). Jesus makes clear that, 'whoever (ὃς ἐὰν) seeks to make his soul secure ['to save (σῶσαι)' in most manuscripts, including Sinaiticus] will lose (ἀπολέσει) it, but whoever loses (ἀπολέσῃ) it will preserve it' (Lk. 17.33).

In Luke 18, two episodes are worth recounting. In the first, Jesus tells the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Lk. 18.9-14). Two men go to the temple to pray, and so presumably Jews, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee thanks God because he is not like others, especially the tax collector he sees nearby, and then recounts his many good deeds, such as fasting and tithing, that is, following the law. The tax collector, standing at a distance, humbles himself and simply says, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner (ἁμαρατωλῷ)' (Lk. 18.13). Jesus pronounces that the tax collector was justified (δεδικαιωμένος), because everyone who elevates himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be elevated (Lk. 18.14). This parable does not necessarily say that the Old Testament requirements are abolished (although it appears to come close insofar as their effectiveness), but it does seem to indicate that they have little to do with being put in right relationship with God, even for a Jew. Nevertheless, consonant with a theme used elsewhere in Luke regarding God's seeking those who are sinners, even a sinful tax collector can find justification by coming humbly before God.

25. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, pp. 93-143 (but esp. 94-95).

Later in the chapter, a rich ruler comes to Jesus and, although he says he knows and keeps the commandments, he is unable to give up his worldly possessions to possess eternal life (ζωὴ αἰώνιος) (Lk. 18.18). This episode (Lk. 18.18-30) focuses upon eternal life and what is required to secure it. It appears that maintaining the Jewish law is not sufficient for eternal life, but God demands more or possibly something else. Jesus does not say that he is abrogating the Old Testament law, but the implication is that the law is insufficient for gaining eternal life. In other words, while the law is arguably necessary (and it must be argued, as this encounter does not answer that question), it is not sufficient for eternal life. One might construe this in different ways, but it appears to be related not just to the fulfillment of the outward proscriptions of the law but attending to beliefs and behaviors that reveal the genuine priorities of the person and their worthiness for eternal life. Jesus tells the rich ruler that he must sell all that he has and give it to the poor, and then he will have storehouses in heaven. After the rich ruler leaves, because he was exceedingly rich, Jesus elaborates on the topic of riches and states that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Those hearing legitimately ask, 'And who is able to be saved (σωθῆναι)?' (Lk. 18.26). That the topic of riches is just the presenting symptom, not the cause, is indicated by Jesus' statement that what is impossible with humans is possible with God (Lk. 18.27). That is, God is able to save, despite human failure. When Peter says that he and the others have left their own affairs to follow him, Jesus says that there is no one who has left their earthly matters on account of the kingdom who will not receive many times over in this time and, in the coming age, eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον).

In Luke 19, Zacchaeus hears of Jesus and makes an embarrassing attempt to see him. When Jesus stops and invites himself to Zacchaeus's house, this causes grumbling. Those watching say that Jesus has 'entered into the house of a sinful (ἁμαρτωλῷ) man to relax' (Lk. 19.7). Zacchaeus makes a pronouncement regarding his dispensing with his wealth, to which Jesus responds, 'Today salvation (σωτηρία) comes into being in this house, just as indeed he is a son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and to save (σῶσαι) the lost (ἀπολωλός)' or perishing or even dead (Lk. 19.9-10). Zacchaeus is a Jew, but that is apparently not the point here in relation to the Lukan context or this cotext. The major point is that those who are without salvation, and this includes Jews apparently, are lost or perishing or dead without the salvation made possible by the son of man, who comes as God's

co-regent descending from heaven to deal with humanity.[26] This episode turns the table on Jewish privilege in Luke. Jesus indicates that salvation has come into being in Zacchaeus's house for the first time at that time, not previously and not based on ethnic privilege. This means that the statement about Zacchaeus being a son of Abraham is problematic in its wording and in its relation to the rest of the clause. The sense seems to be that he is a son of Abraham, but despite that he was without salvation until he responded to Jesus' call. The son of man had an active ministry of seeking and saving all the lost, including the Jews.

The Gospel of Luke draws to a close with Jesus appearing to his disciples before his ascension. He tells them that 'it stands written (in the Old Testament) that the Messiah is to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and for repentance for forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed to all nations beginning from Jerusalem (κηρυχθῆναι ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλήμ)' (Lk. 24.47). The Messiah is God's expected, anointed one from the people of Israel. In the New Testament, the Messiah is often combined with a variety of Christological titles to define his role. This role primarily revolves around intervening in the life of God's people and on their behalf. Old Testament messianic expectation was turned towards a variety of figures, especially those in the line of David who would save Israel from Roman oppression, but Jesus as Messiah becomes the one who saves all of God's people, including both Jews and Gentiles.[27] As this closing passage in Luke's Gospel states, the attested Messiah brings a message of 'repentance for forgiveness of sins', thus signaling the accomplishment of John the Baptist's ministry, and clearly extending this proclamation to 'all nations', from Jerusalem and beyond. This forms a hinge between the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. This verse serves as a suitable close to the Gospel, in many respects mirroring the initial use of such language in Luke 1 and 2 and recounting a consistent theme repeated throughout the Gospel, but also anticipating the book of Acts and similar language in Acts 1.8, where the gospel proceeds from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.[28]

26. On the son of man, see Porter and Dyer, *Origins*, pp. 47-63 (esp. 55), regarding the earthly ministry of the son of man, here said to be to save the lost.

27. Porter and Dyer, *Origins*, pp. 135-56.

28. See Green, 'Salvation', pp. 84-85, who links the Lukan section with Acts 1.8 and 13.47. However, Green probably takes too large a view of what constitutes

Acts of the Apostles

I now turn to the Acts of the Apostles. There are nine events that I wish to note in Acts that are pertinent to the theme of sin and salvation.

In Acts 2, during the time of Pentecost, after Jesus' resurrection, Jews (specified by name) were gathered from many different nations (Acts 2.5), when each began hearing a voice in their own language. They were astonished because the speakers were Galileans, while the hearers were from all over the greater Mediterranean world. Peter addresses the crowd, quoting from Joel 2.28-32 (3.1-5 LXX). Peter quotes Joel as saying that, in the last days, God will pour out his spirit on 'all flesh' (Acts 2.17) and all will prophecy, followed by natural phenomena, to the point that 'all (πᾶς) who call upon the name of the Lord can expect to be saved (σωθήσεται)' (Acts 2.21), language that we will see is similarly used subsequently in Acts by Paul to describe his conversion. However, these words are directed primarily at Peter's Jewish audience. Are we to believe that the 'all' is only Jews, or Jews and anyone else who calls upon God's name? It is at least the Jews and probably extends to anyone who does similarly. In other words, the ability to call upon God of all humans begins with the Jews and is grounded in God's revealed word to them that is then available to all. At the close of his proclamation, the audience responds, 'What should we do?' (Acts 2.37), to which Peter says—to his primarily Jewish audience—'Repent and be baptized, each one of you, upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)' (Acts 2.38). This language is reminiscent of John the Baptist in Luke's Gospel (ch. 3) and is found elsewhere in Acts.[29] Peter goes further and clarifies that the promise is to his hearers and to their children and—this point is not to be missed—to all those to whom God extends his call (Acts 2.39). Peter exhorts them: 'Be saved (σώθητε) from this crooked generation' (Acts 2.40). The term 'generation' may indicate that the current generation is one that is not following God and needs salvation, especially because it is this generation that over-

salvation and its importance in Acts, as is evidenced in his exegesis of other passages that do not include the vocabulary studied in this paper.

29. Acts 3.19: 'Repent and turn to the expungement of your sins.' See Stenschke, 'Need for Salvation', p. 141, who emphasizes the repentance passages, including also Acts 8.22; 17.30; 26.20. See also below.

saw the crucifixion of Jesus.[30] Those who accepted his word were baptized and swelled the ranks of the church. As a result, those who believed (πιστεύοντες) held all in common and divided according to need. They still attended the temple (Acts 2.46), broke bread each day, and shared with each other. The result was that the Lord added to the saved (σῳζομένους) each day.

After healing a lame man and being brought before the Sanhedrin, Peter questions the reason (Acts 4.9). He says that what was done was done in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom they crucified but who was raised from the dead, just as the rejected stone is made the cornerstone (Acts 4.10-11). In a sweeping and both inclusive and exclusive statement, Peter says that 'salvation (σωτηρία) is not in any other, for there is no other name under heaven, given among humans, by which it is necessary for us to be saved (σωθῆναι)' (Acts 4.12), referring to the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. This statement may originate in Old Testament imagery (Ps. 118.22), but the scope of the salvation and the power of the savior extend far beyond a limited human audience.

It therefore comes as no surprise in Acts that, when the apostles are hauled before the Sanhedrin because of their testimony and acts of healing (as well as their liberation from jail for doing the same), Peter proclaims on behalf of the apostles, 'it is necessary to obey God rather than humans. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you took in hand, hanging on a tree. This one God elevated to his right hand as leader and savior (σωτῆρα), to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)' (Acts 5.29-31). Although the words are directed to the Jewish leaders, Peter makes clear that following Jewish law is insufficient for salvation, but repentance or turning from evil and forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ—given for such a purpose—are required. This is certainly a message to the Jewish people,[31] as is indicated by the immediate context, but the larger context of salvation language (see Luke 1) indicates that the message of salvation extends further to anyone who repents and is forgiven of their sins.

In Acts 10, Peter is summoned by God to Cornelius's house. Cornelius is a Roman centurion, apparently living with his family. When Peter is in their midst, he speaks: He states that God is not one to show favorites, but everyone

30. Cf. Stenschke, 'Need for Salvation', pp. 135-40, who devotes a major discussion to the term but gives it a more extended meaning as representing many generations of this sort.

31. Bock, *Theology*, p. 185.

who fears him and does righteousness, of whatever nation, is received by him (Acts 10.35). This comes through Jesus Christ of Galilee, who was crucified but raised and manifested, not to all people but to those chosen by God and instructed to preach and bear witness that this one, Jesus Christ, is God's judge of the living and the dead. As the prophets testify, they are 'to receive forgiveness of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) through his name, all who believe (πιστεύοντα) in him' (Acts 10.43). The message of Acts 5 before the Sanhedrin and Acts 10 to Cornelius is the same, whether to Jew or Gentile. See also Acts 11.14, where Peter is approached by men from Simon the tanner regarding words by which 'you will be saved (σωθήσῃ)', you and your household.

Paul at Pisidian Antioch speaks in the synagogue (Acts 13.16-41).[32] He addresses his comments to 'Israelites and those who fear God' (Acts 13.16) and later 'Brothers, sons of the offspring of Abraham and those among you fearing God' (Acts 13.26), as is appropriate within a synagogue.[33] After recounting the history of the Jewish people as God's elect, Paul shows how Jesus is the culmination of this line: 'from the seed of this one [David], God according to promise brought to Israel a savior (σωτῆρα), Jesus, announced in advance of his entrance by John with a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel' (Acts 13.23-24), reintroducing the message of John as the precursor of Jesus. Paul states his purpose directly: 'to us [as a fellow Jew] the word of this salvation (σωτηρίας) is sent' (Acts 13.26). The Jewish people, according to Paul, still require a savior, despite their status as God's chosen people. In that sense, being a Jew is not sufficient for salvation, since it requires the work of a savior—and ostensibly an acceptance of this act of salva-

32. See Joshua W. Jipp, 'The Paul of Acts: The Proclaimer of the Hope of Israel or Teacher of Apostasy from Moses?' *NovT* 62 (2020), pp. 60-78 (esp. 70-72). Although I agree with much of what Jipp states—that Paul did not abandon Judaism, as depicted in Acts through his reinforcement of law and belief in Scripture—I believe that Jipp is pushing too hard against a rock that does not need moving (and he need not think so disjunctively), especially in terms of salvation. The law may be in place and Scripture may be revelatory, but they still both point to Jews and Gentiles alike being saved through Jesus Christ as savior.

33. On the term 'God fearers' and who is entailed, etc., see Martinus C. de Boer, 'God-Fearers in Luke–Acts', in C. M. Tuckett (ed.), *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* (JSNTSup, 116; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 50-71. Among other things, de Boer makes clear that the 'nations' are not God fearers. Some of his other speculations are less certain.

tion.[34] Paul then recounts the events surrounding the death and resurrection and public witness of Jesus as fulfillment of God's plan. Just to be clear, 'Let it therefore be known to you, brothers, that through this [one Jesus or his death and resurrection] forgiveness of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) is announced to us' (Acts 13.38), and then to be absolutely clear, lest there be any residual doubt, 'from all of which things you are not able to be justified by the law of Moses' (Acts 13.38). Just to repeat, 'in this [one or process?] everyone who believes is justified' (Acts 13.39). I cannot help but include Paul's final quotation from Hab. 1.5, as pertinent then as perhaps now: 'Look, those who look down on such things, and marvel and perish, because I am working a work in your days, a work which you would not believe even if someone explained it to you' (Acts 13.41). One can understand why Paul's Jewish audience was apparently concerned and queried him at their next meeting. Paul and his entourage point out that they are now turning to the Gentiles, from the Jews, a pattern that is in fact reflected in the Old Testament: 'I have placed you as a light of the nations for you to be salvation (σωτηρίαν) until the end of the earth' (Isa. 49.6) (Acts 13.47; cf. Acts 1.8). In that regard, the Jewish people were entrusted with a salvific task that pointed beyond themselves to all humanity living at the extreme ends of the earth.

It is no wonder, then, that we confront an episode such as the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), when those who argue for the salvific power of the Mosaic law emerge in response to the message of Paul. In Acts 15.1, the author records that some came from Judea teaching that 'If you are not circumcised according to the custom (ἔθει) of Moses, you are not able to be saved (σωθῆναι)', with the complaint restated in Acts 15.5 as 'to keep the law (νόμον) of Moses'. Such teaching precipitates the council at which several people speak, including Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, before James concludes. Peter states that God chose to include Gentiles on the same terms as Jews, without discrimination, in which by faith their hearts are purified.[35] Rather than attempting to put a burden on the Gentiles that even the Jews could not bear—that of keeping the law of Moses—Peter exclaims that 'through the grace of the Lord Jesus *we* believe in order to be saved (σωθῆναι) in this way, *and they also*' (Acts 15.11;

34. Bock, *Theology*, p. 185.

35. Räisänen, 'Redemption of Israel', p. 71, who states, 'Peter states that Jews and Gentiles will be saved in the very same manner (v. 11), by having their hearts cleaned by God through faith (v. 9). There is no difference whatsoever. This has been planned by God from of old (v. 18).'

emphasis mine). There is nothing contradictory put forward by the council, nor elsewhere by Paul,[36] and especially by James (Acts 15.13-21). James advocates for the inclusion of Gentiles as a continuation of the prophetic announcement of the rebuilding of Israel mentioned in Amos 9.11-12 but without Gentiles having to become Jews.[37] However, the imposition of the four prohibitions of Leviticus 17–18 probably reserved for Gentiles (Acts 15.20) can hardly be seen as either an abrogation of the entire Jewish law or a wholesale endorsement and requirement of it, certainly for Gentiles.[38] The law is selective for Gentiles at best. Nevertheless, according to Peter, salvation for both Jew and Gentile comes through grace when they believe.

After the council, we find episodes such as Paul's encounter in Philippi, where he is seen as purportedly (and no doubt correctly) announcing 'the way of salvation (σωτηρίας)' (Acts 16.17) to the Philippians. Because Paul exorcises the Pythian spirit in Philippi, and thereby ruins her owner's means of making a living, he incurs the wrath of the city leaders as a troublemaker and rebel. Once in the Philippian jail, Paul and Silas are singing when an earthquake releases them. Upon discovery of this, the Philippian jailer is concerned and asks what he must do 'to be saved (σωθῶ)' (Acts 16.30). There is question about whether he is referring to physical safety in the midst of the earthquake and its damage, general well-being in the midst of the turmoil and its possible consequences, or spiritual salvation. However, most likely the jailer is aware of the story of what Paul and Silas have been doing in the city

36. Paul does state in Acts 25.8 that he has not sinned toward the law of the Jews nor toward the temple nor toward Caesar, but none of these declarations indicates his view of the law, etc., only that he did not violate it when he was at the temple.

37. Richard Bauckham, 'James and the Gentiles (Acts 15.13–21)', in Ben Witherington III (ed.), *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 154-84. Cf. also Bauckham, 'James and the Jerusalem Church', in Richard Bauckham (ed.), *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (BAIFCS, 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 415-80. However, I am not as sanguine as is Bauckham that these rules were followed in the Gentile churches, including in the Pauline churches.

38. Cf. Dulcinea Doesenberg, 'Negotiating Identity: The Jewishness of the Way in Acts', *Journal of Religion and Society Supplement Series* 13 (2016), pp. 58-75, who posits that '[t]he believing community in Acts is defined in Jewish terms' (p. 73). This does not appear to be the case.

and the accusations made of them regarding salvation. Hence he asks regarding his own salvation, in response to which he is instructed 'Believe (πίστευσον) on the Lord Jesus, and you and your household can expect to be saved (σωθήσῃ)' (Acts 16.31). The fact that a household is involved has caused some to argue for one of the other views, probably that Paul here only says that they will be preserved through the disaster.[39] The reaction of the jailer, including his being baptized (Acts 16.32) and having faith in God (Acts 16.34), argues otherwise.

In both Acts 22 and 26, when Paul is recounting his conversion, he uses language that is reminiscent (to varying degrees) of Peter's language in Acts 2. In Acts 22.1-21, Paul recounts his conversion to those gathered in the temple area when he is accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple. Paul offers a short autobiographical account of his life, establishing that he is a Jew of the Diaspora, but one who came to study with Gamaliel in Jerusalem. He says that, on a trip to Damascus, he was suddenly confronted by Jesus who sent him to Ananias in Damascus. According to Paul, Ananias told him in his closing words, 'Getting up, baptize (yourself) and wash away your sins (ἁμαρτίας), calling upon his name [the name of Jesus]' (Acts 22.16). This instance is complexified by use of the middle voice for 'baptize', not reflexive but ergative middle with agency internal to the process.[40] Then, in Acts 26, before Agrippa, Paul also offers an account of his background and conversion. In this account, Jesus tells him to get up and begin to accomplish the purpose he has for him of being a witness to the nations, which includes 'to take them forgiveness of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) and inheritance in the holy things by faith in me' (Acts 26.18).

The book of Acts closes, appropriately enough one might argue, with Paul speaking to a group of Jewish leaders he has assembled. He tells them that he has done nothing contrary to the Jewish people or the customs of the fathers, but he is nevertheless a prisoner in Rome (Acts 28.17). When a larger group reconvenes later, Paul explains the gospel to them from the Old Testament, including a lengthy quotation from Isa. 6.9-10 regarding the lack of hearing and seeing and the hardening of the heart of the Jewish people. There has been much controversy about how to interpret this quotation within the close

39. Witherington, 'Salvation and Health', p. 153, who suggests various views mentioned above.

40. See David L. Mathewson, *Voice and Mood: A Linguistic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), pp. 51-73.

of Acts. Many have thought that it indicates that God has completely abandoned the Jewish people, and others have even contended that it reveals some form of anti-Semitism. This latter argument is difficult to understand in light of the fact that Paul is recorded as citing the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. The solution probably rests elsewhere, with the enigma or puzzle indicating that there is a recognizable resistance to God's good news by the Jewish people when it is brought to them, despite warnings, which provides an opportunity for the Gentiles—without indicating all the issues regarding the continuing role of Israel. The quotation nevertheless ends with a word of hope remaining.[41] In the meantime, Paul concludes with these words: 'Let it be known to you that I was sent to the nations with respect to the salvation (σωτήριον) of God; they indeed will hear' (Acts 28.28). As noted at the outset (see Lk. 3.6), Luke–Acts announces a major theme early that all humanity—whether addressed as all flesh or, as here, as the nations—are potential recipients of God's salvation.[42] This is also a fitting note not only for Paul to finish upon but also for the close of the entirety of Luke–Acts.

Sin and Salvation in Luke's Gospel

Luke's Gospel begins in a Jewish context, with the opening two chapters focused upon diverse Jewish people responding to their situation in anticipation of God acting on behalf of Israel. Thus, salvation is an important theme of the Gospel from the outset, although it is problematized with both God (Mary's hymn) and Jesus (the shepherds) being referred to as saviors. Zechariah clearly expresses the relationship of sin and salvation. The Jewish people are expecting God's action on their behalf, and Zechariah recognizes that his child will be one to prepare for God's intervention on behalf of a people who are in darkness and death. To this point, the theme of salvation focuses primarily upon Israel being saved by God, although another figure already looms in the background, another savior. This savior emerges when Jesus is taken to the temple and Simeon receives him as bringing salvation, not just to Israel, but to all people, including the nations. The continuity of

41. For a discussion of the issues with bibliography, see Karl L. Armstrong, 'The End of Acts and the Jewish Response: Condemnation, Tragedy, or Hope?' *CurBR* 17 (2019), pp. 209-30, where he cites the major proponents for the diverse views over the last fifty to seventy years.

42. I want to thank Timothy Finlay for his helpful comment regarding the use of 'salvation of God' language in Lk. 3.6 and Acts 28.18.

this salvation of all with Jewish precedent is established by John the Baptist, whose message is focused upon a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins extended to all flesh who will see God's salvation. John the Baptist's message contains the clear indication of a wider salvation of humanity. As Jesus begins his ministry, he welcomes sinners of all types, including his disciples and many others, because those are the ones who need a savior. Some of these people are Jews (Peter, Levi, Zacchaeus), but others probably are not (the Gerasene demoniac). Jesus not only depicts his salvific actions in dealing with others, but his teaching proclaims the same message. In the parable of the sower, there is nothing that limits the scope of the parable to seed sown only to the Jewish people. Similarly in other parables, Jesus' focus is upon the repentance of individual sinners, not ethnic identity or nationalist salvation or even related religious allegiance. No parable is perhaps more poignant regarding this than that of the Pharisee and the tax collector, where the tax collector is the one who is justified with right standing before God, not because of legal obedience but because of sinful repentance. The Pharisee is not justified, despite the law and his obedience. As Jesus heads toward his death and resurrection, he makes clear that these events are salvific for anyone who wishes to escape the clutches of death and destruction. Jesus' teaching focuses upon turning away from self and toward Jesus, repentance, as a means of salvation. Noteworthy is the fact that in many instances Jesus is dealing with individuals and formulates his statements regarding individuals in the singular, not in the plural and not corporately. And the number being saved is few, not an entire nation, nor even a part of a nation, but the few from the four corners of the world who enter by faith. The Gospel closes with the Old Testament confirming that the Messiah's suffering, death, and resurrection provide forgiveness of sins for those of all nations, even if beginning in Jerusalem.

Sin and Salvation in the Book of Acts

The book of Acts begins similarly to Luke's Gospel, with a scene set within a Jewish context that expands also to Gentiles. Jews gathered at Pentecost are told that God is pouring out his spirit on all flesh, citing Joel 2, so that all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved, to which the people respond by asking what they must do. Peter does not say that they must be more obedient to the law but that they must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins—although Peter's message is based upon the Old Testament itself anticipating the salvation of Gentiles as well. This proclamation of Jesus as the means of salvation is continued in Acts,

even in the first portion that focuses upon the Jews. As a result, Peter declares that salvation occurs only by Jesus Christ. This message is then expanded to Gentiles, first with Cornelius and then in Pisidian Antioch. The way of forgiveness for sins is through faith in Jesus Christ as the means of being saved. Jesus is the savior of both Israel and the Gentiles, as the history of Israel and its Scriptures anticipated. As a result, one might expect an event such as the Jerusalem Council, which affirms Peter's words that one is not saved by following the law or custom of Moses (the words seem to be functionally synonymous), but, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, we believe and are saved. This message is encapsulated in Acts 16 and the message to the Philippian jailer: believe and you will be saved. The book of Acts closes with Paul meeting with an assemblage of Jewish leaders, in which the course of the gospel is repeated. Jewish disobedience and hardness of heart has enabled the Gentiles to be saved also, but hope remains for Israel. In his closing encounter, Paul repeats a message that he encountered at his own conversion, and that is that the message of God's salvation, for both Jews (of whom Peter and Paul are representatives) and Gentiles, is by means of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

I conclude simply by saying that I find the evidence pointing to a conclusion similar to one earlier argued by Günter Wasserberg, among several others, regarding Luke's theology.[43] Both Luke and Acts—which are in continuity with each other, with Luke beginning and then Acts continuing the argument—assume that the Jewish people are in a sinful condition, as indicated by how they are depicted in relation to the Scriptures of Israel that anticipate and then explain the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as savior. What begins with God's act of salvation is then assumed by Jesus Christ as savior (as well as Messiah, etc.). Both Luke's Gospel and then the book of Acts speak of how both Jews first and then Gentiles are sinful and in need of salvation provided by God through Jesus Christ. Jesus in his earthly ministry, and as reflected by Luke as author, calls both Jews especially but also Gentiles to salvation through repentance and faith. The apostles, especially Peter and Paul, in the book of Acts, continue this emphasis upon salvation for both

43. Wasserberg, *Aus Israels Mitte*, summarized in Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, p. 520, used here. See also Bock, *Theology*, p. 237.

Jews especially but also Gentiles through calling upon the name of Jesus Christ. Luke's Gospel focuses more upon the Jewish people although the Gentiles are also in view, whereas Acts begins with the Jewish people but then quickly encompasses the Gentiles. Whereas at the beginning of Luke's Gospel God reveals his salvation as a solution to the sinfulness and fallenness of the Jewish people, as confirmed by Scripture, in Acts the death and resurrection of Jesus points both to the necessity of salvation for the Jews but also to salvation made available to the Gentiles through faith. The book of Acts closes by bringing these several motifs together as Paul gathers Jewish leaders from Rome around him and describes their hardened state, yet one that offers a hope of repentance and spiritual healing that has already been extended to and accepted by Gentiles.