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Resurrection

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Editorial: Reflections on the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ

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This issue of *SBJT* is devoted to the theme of the resurrection and especially the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. From a number of different angles, both Old and New Testament, our authors reflect on the biblical teaching regarding the resurrection, Christ's resurrection, and its implication for our lives as Christians. At Easter time, much attention is given to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. But at other times of the year we often neglect detailed reflection upon our Lord's work and especially his resurrection. This issue of the journal seeks to remedy this lack of thought and reflection on such an important biblical and theological truth.

It goes without saying that the resurrection of Christ is at the heart of Bible, Christian theology, and the Gospel. Many places in Scripture remind of us of this fact but probably none so clear as the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (vv. 3-4), and a little further in the same chapter, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is

futile; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (vv. 14, 17-19). Apart from the resurrection of Christ, Paul rightly argues, the entire Gospel message makes no sense, and the entire grounds of the Christian faith crumble.

Why is this the case? After all, prior to Christ's resurrection other resurrections occurred in Scripture. In both the OT and NT, resurrections are rare but they did occur. No doubt, it is probably best to view these resurrections more as resuscitations since there is no evidence that those who were raised remained permanently alive. For example, in the case of Lazarus, our Lord raised him from the dead, but we presume that Lazarus would have died again as even now he awaits the final resurrection. So what makes Christ's resurrection so unique and singular in importance?

The answer is not found merely in stating or demonstrating the mere historical fact of the resurrection, namely, that the Jesus who died on the cross was bodily raised on the third day since prior to Christ's resurrection, other resurrections/resuscitations took place. Rather, the answer is that if one places Christ's resurrection within the plotline of Scripture (which is what we must do), Jesus' resurrection is presented to us in an entirely different category than previous ones. Instead of being like the resurrection of Lazarus, it is viewed as nothing less than *the* resurrection of all resurrections and the beginning of an entirely new creation order because, after all, it is *the* resurrection of the divine Son.

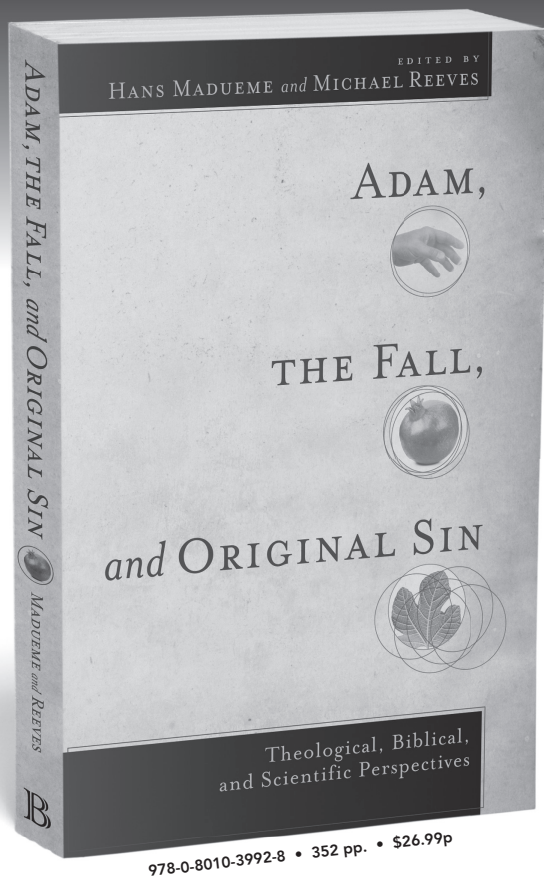
Proof of this assertion is not hard to find. In the storyline of Scripture, Jesus is presented as God the Son incarnate, or in the words of John, "the Word made flesh" (John 1:14). The reason for the incarnation of the eternal Son, the second person of the triune Godhead, is to save us from our sins (Matt 1:21) and to inaugurate a new covenant in his cross work on our behalf (Heb 2:5-18; 5-10). The Son took on our humanity for the purpose of paying for our sin, defeating the power of death, and accomplishing our eternal redemption. At the heart of the human problem is sin before God which results in death, and apart from payment of our sin and the defeat of death, there is no salvation. Due to our sin, first in Adam and then in all of us as members of the human race (Rom 5:12-21), death is viewed as an intrusion into God's good world and the penalty of our rebellion against God (Rom 6:23). It is not until sin is paid for and death destroyed that God's

new creation finally comes. In our Lord Jesus Christ, this is precisely what has occurred. This is why *his* resurrection is not presented as an ordinary one; rather it is *the* resurrection which inaugurates an entirely new order.

Furthermore, not only is Christ's resurrection viewed as the beginning of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17), it is also described as the firstfruits (1 Cor 15:20)—thus resulting in a new existence. As a result of Christ's resurrection, redemption is accomplished and his resurrection body now becomes the pattern of what we shall be, and what God intended for us from the beginning (see 1 Cor 15:42-44). In addition, it is due to Christ's glorious cross and resurrection (in biblical thought the two are inseparable) that death is not only destroyed and salvation is accomplished, but God's judgment is sure. Paul at Athens makes this clear as he proclaims that Christ's resurrection not only ushers in salvation but also judgment (Acts 17:31). The holy and righteous Creator of the universe will not let sin go forever unpunished; instead in Christ and precisely because of his resurrection, the triune God speaks with certainty to this poor, lost world: judgment is coming, the books are going to be balanced, and it will be done by the crucified and risen Lord of Glory.

In Scripture, the resurrection of Christ is no small thing, and that is certainly an understatement. The entirety of the Gospel depends on it: not merely the fact of Christ's resurrection as important as that is, but the *truth* and the *theology* of the resurrection. Christ's bodily resurrection in history means something specific in God's eternal plan and what it means is that Messiah Jesus, God the Son incarnate, is none other than the sovereign Savior, Redeemer, King, and Judge. May this issue of *SBJT*, in its focus on the theme of the resurrection, stir in all of us a recommitment to our great Redeemer, and a desire to live for him and to make him known. With the church of all ages, may it lead us to cry: So come, risen and exalted Jesus!

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“From Dust You Shall Arise:” Resurrection Hope in the Old Testament

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INTRODUCTION

My oldest boy used to think that if he could not see the sun shining in the sky during the day, then it was not really out and shining. For him, the sun had to be visible, uncloaked by clouds. He eventually realized that the presence of the sun was evident in the light it shone. Clouds might affect his seeing the fiery ball above, but the rays still came down to illumine the earth. And soon he will learn that even darkness does not mean the absence of the sun, for the moon reflects its light.

The sun of resurrection hope shines bright and clear in Daniel 12:2: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” There is not a cloud in sight. But whence came this hope? Some interpreters insist that it did not shine earlier than Daniel 12.¹ But what if rays could be seen through clouds in earlier prophets, poetry, historical books, and even the Torah? What

if the promise of resurrection, in some places, was more like moonlight?

In this article I will put forward evidence that the OT authors advanced a hope for resurrection. Daniel 12:2 is the fullest expression of it, but that verse is not an innovation or intrusion in OT theology. Resurrection hope is discernible in the Bible's earliest books and culminates in the statement that those who returned to the dust would one day wake up and rise.

TWO PRELIMINARIES

An exhaustive exploration of OT resurrection hope is not possible in this article, so subsequent sections will engage texts that represent expressions of this hope in the theology of the OT authors. Crucial to my approach are two preliminary issues: first, the importance of progressive revelation, and second, the dynamic presentation of death and life in the Bible.

Progressive revelation acknowledges that what God disclosed at one point in history may undergo development and further disclosure. Later biblical authors may use and reappropriate the texts of earlier biblical authors. Recognition of such usage is hermeneutically helpful because we can see an inspired, authoritative interpretation and expansion of earlier verses and themes. The insights of progressive revelation can be more fully appreciated in the Bible's canonical context. Attending to the canonical context helps to preserve the organic storyline and unity of Holy Scripture. Certainly resurrection hope is a frequent subject in the NT. For the question of that hope in the OT, our attention to progressive revelation can help us rightly identify early texts where the seeds of this hope are planted.

Some readers may conceive of resurrection hope in exclusively biological terms. This understanding is far too narrow, however. We should take our cues from the biblical authors, who spoke of death and life in more dynamic ways. The hope for bodily resurrection was part of a matrix of other OT themes—like the movement of rising up, restoration reversing desolation, provision of offspring despite obstacles, near-death rescue, promises implying new bodily life, redemption from captivity, recovery from sickness, resuscitation from physical death, return from exile—that testified of God's power and promise-keeping zeal. This tenfold matrix will help us see how resurrection hope was both implicit and explicit prior to Daniel 12:2.

RESURRECTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Movement of Rising Up

The opening chapters of the Bible narrate God creating a world and, most specifically, giving life as things rise up. His Spirit hovered over the waters (Gen 1:2) and, on the third day, brought forth land out of the water (1:9) and then vegetation and plants from the land (1:11). Mirroring the third day was the sixth,² when God brought up man from the dust (2:7). These reports of upward movement from the ground or water are resurrection imagery.³ From the ground, God has raised up life. Man was not created as a soul apart from a body; man was an *embodied* being. The divine design, then, was an image-bearer with a body.

The first Adam was an archetype in the sense that every image-bearer would come into this world as an embodied person. And while the wages of sin was death (Rom 6:23), the last Adam secured resurrection life for all who are in him (1 Cor 15:22). When the apostle Paul talked of resurrection hope in 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, he alluded to Genesis 1-2. Death could be depicted as sowing grain in the ground (1 Cor 15:37), yet the seed rises up in due time with its fitting form (15:38-39). Likewise the body is sown into the ground at death, but it will be raised imperishable at the resurrection (15:42-44). Jesus' own resurrection was the fruit of this hope coming true (1 Cor 15:20; cf. John 12:24).

Restoration Reversing Desolation

In Genesis 7-8, God destroyed the world and then made it new again. The flood was a de-creation. God's Spirit had once separated waters (Gen 1:6), brought forth dry land (1:9), and filled that land with plant, animal, and human life (1:11, 25-27). Yet this order was reversed as God wiped out mankind, animals, and plants, and then covered the dry land again with water. When the mighty deluge ended, God caused the waters to move (8:1), and when they receded, dry land appeared (8:4-5) and plant life returned (8:11). Soon the animals and man filled the land again (8:18-19). The biblical author depicted Genesis 7-8 not only as a de-creation but as a re-creation too.⁴ The world which had died was now raised from its desolate state. The apostle Peter referred to the ark being preserved through the waters of judgment (1 Pet 1:20) right before he mentioned baptism (1:21). Baptism pictures

going into and coming out of the grave (cf. Rom 6:3-4), so Peter's previous reference to the ark event confirms that Genesis 7-8 tells a story of death and resurrection.

By analogy, desolations of land are death, and restoration is resurrection. For example, in Isaiah 35 God will cause the wilderness to be glad and the desert to thrive (35:1-2). According to Levenson, as God "marches forth in wrath against the oppressive forces of chaos and death, nature languishes, and when he returns enthroned in victory and justice, nature flourishes and luxuriates."⁵

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning
sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of
jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes (Isa 35:5-7).

In this passage, physical handicaps and geographical desolation are linked together, and God reverses the state of both. He brings life and restoration. Levenson again: "These transformations, whether of deserts or mountains or unjust fates or human disabilities, were equally impossible and equally exceptional ... To those of little faith, they were doubtless mere fantasies and impossibilities."⁶ Yet God's power overcomes what seems impossible. Earlier verses (e.g., Isa 25:8 and 26:19) teach that God's power will undo death as well. Greenspoon reasons that the "resurrection of man can be fit into the overall portrayal of nature's response to the victorious Divine Warrior."⁷

The Israelites could also be desolated and restored. When God promised judgment to rebellious Israel, he compared his wrath to a lion that would tear them apart (Hos 5:14). Hosea reported the response of the people, "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him" (6:1-2). While the sincerity of the people may be in question (see 6:4-6), they were not wrong about God's ability to raise the dead. If God desolated them with judgment, their restoration would be like resurrection from the dead. Their use of resurrection language confirmed the existence of this concept already during the 8th century B.C.⁸ Since resurrection hope existed prior to Hosea's

ministry, the language in 6:2 adapted bodily resurrection to the experience of the nation.⁹ The Israelites described their revival in terms of a land flourishing under God's blessing: "Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth" (6:3). Similar language appeared in 14:6-8 (Eng. 14:5-7) when God promised to restore his desolate people: "I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon."¹⁰ In Hosea 6, the people hoped God would resurrect them, that he might come to them like spring rains on a parched land. And in Hosea 14, God pledged to do just that. In their desolate state, God's restoring power would raise them up.

Provision of Offspring Despite Obstacles

The experience of barrenness (Gen 11:30; 16:2; 18:11-13) or the loss of children (37:33-35; 48:11; Job 1:19-20; Jer 31:15) were devastating obstacles that a couple could face. Wright observes, "To see one's children die or be killed was perhaps the greatest possible personal disaster."¹¹ The end of a family line was a functional death because personal identity continued on in the survival and propagation of progeny (cf. Gen 15:1-3; 30:1). Life, then, was bound up in social identity, and Hebrew culture did not finely distinguish the individual from it.¹² This logic undergirded the practice of levirate marriage (Deut 25:5; Matt 22:24).¹³ If a couple experienced barrenness or the loss of children, the subsequent provision of children was the resurrection of the family line from the dead.

Consider the tragic death of Abel in Genesis 4. Coming after the promise of 3:15 that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent, Eve may have thought that the birth of Abel marked the fulfillment of that prophecy (4:1). Yet Cain killed Abel, ending the line that would have advanced through him (4:8). The birth of Seth was the resurrection of the promised line (4:25-26).¹⁴ The theme of obstacles to the line of promise surfaces repeatedly in the Pentateuch, and the first attestation of the pattern of birth-reversing-death was in Genesis 4 (cf. Job 1 and 42).

The chapters of Genesis also interweave a barrenness theme. Levenson

rightly observes, “Striking at each generation of the patriarchs of Genesis, and then Judah in the next, childlessness in one or both of these modes threatens to terminate the family, thus evoking the terror that later generations (including our own) feel in the face of their personal deaths.”¹⁵ God promised Abraham that all families of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen 12:2-3), but the reader had just learned of Sarah’s barrenness (11:30). This obstacle of barrenness introduced tension in the narrative because God promised the patriarch more offspring than the stars above (15:5). Displaying his power, God granted life to Sarah’s dead womb (21:1-7). “God’s reversal of Sarah’s infertility brought life from death in the same way Seth’s birth brought hope after Abel died.”¹⁶ In Paul’s interpretation of Isaac’s birth, the apostle affirmed that God “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom 4:17). The pattern of birth-reversing-death was repeated in the wombs of Rebekah (Gen 25:21), Leah (29:31), and Rachel (30:22). “These reversals of barrenness strengthen the confidence that God has the power to reverse destruction and to overcome any obstacles impeding the advance of his promises and the seed of the woman.”¹⁷

Near-Death Rescue

Stories of near-death rescues pervade the OT. God may rescue his people from external threats (like looming tragedy or the assault of enemies) or from internal threats (like sickness). In this section we will consider rescues of the former kind.

Abraham’s child of promise was born in Genesis 21:1-7, and in 22:2 God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. This instruction would kill the promised line, and it would also call into question God’s promise in 21:12 that “through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” Nevertheless, Abraham went to the mountain with his young men and son (22:3), and on the appointed day he took Isaac to the mountain. Before the ascent he told his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you” (22:5). Abraham spoke in the plural when he spoke of returning (“come again,” *wěṇāšûbāh*). The best explanation of his words is confidence that God would not renege on the promise of multiplying offspring through Isaac. His plural statement, “I and the boy will ... come again to you,” was an expression of resurrection faith. If God appointed Isaac as the vessel of offspring, and if he also directed Abraham to kill this promised

child, then God must intend to raise Isaac from the dead in order to uphold his promise. Abraham did not believe that God's command in Genesis 22:5 would nullify God's promise in 21:12. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham "considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back" (Heb 11:19). Isaac's near-death deliverance was a figurative resurrection from the dead!¹⁸ And according to Beale, God's preservation of Abraham's seed through the deliverance of Isaac was a "type" of the future resurrection.¹⁹

If a biblical character neared death, successful intervention was deliverance from death. This deliverance was sometimes framed as if the victim was in the very jaws of Sheol before being lifted out by the power of God. Therefore death was not just the culmination of a life but could even describe the process leading up to the cessation of biological life. Commenting on how Hebrews 11:19 interpreted the rescue of Isaac in Genesis 22:10-12, Byron Wheaton deduces:

This text provides us with several clues for reading other narratives of the OT for their allusion to the resurrection. First, the "victim" is under some sort of sentence of death. Second, the process of execution is in progress. Third, there is no human possibility of rescue; the end is imminent. Fourth, the dying process is miraculously overcome so that the victim is restored to life. Fifth, the "resurrection" issues in a new future for the victim and those associated with him.²⁰

With this hermeneutical lens in place, consider the near-death rescue of Jonah. The prophet was thrown into the sea (Jon 1:15), and a fish swallowed him (2:1 [Eng. 1:17]). The fish delivered Jonah from drowning, and Jonah experienced another deliverance when the fish vomited him onto dry land after three days and three nights (2:1 [Eng. 1:17]; 2:11 [Eng. 2:10]). The prophet described the watery depths as "the belly of Sheol" (2:3 [Eng. 2:2]), from which the fish rescued him and "brought up my life from the pit" (2:7 [Eng. 2:6]). Wheaton says, "This act of divine intervention when there was no possibility of escaping death can only be understood as resurrection."²¹ Jesus used the image of Jonah's near-death descent to speak of his own impending death: "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt 12:40).

David once portrayed his conditions of demise as waves of death, torrents of destruction, cords of Sheol, and snares of death (2 Sam 22:5-6). When he called upon God, “He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters” (22:17). The content of 2 Samuel 22 parallels Psalm 18 (see Ps 18:5-6 [Eng. 18:4-5]; 18:17 [Eng. 18:16]). The picture of being taken up from Sheol is resurrection from the dead. Anderson explains:

Some of Israel’s psalms indicate that death is something more than a biological event that occurs when the heart stops beating... [I]n the view of Israel’s psalmists, death’s power is at work in us now, during our historical existence. Death’s power is felt in the midst of life to the degree that one experiences any weakening of personal vitality through illness, bodily handicap, imprisonment, attack from enemies, or advancing old age. Any threat to a person’s welfare ..., that is, one’s freedom to be and to participate in the covenant community, is understood as an invasion of Death, regarded as a mythical Power, into “the land of the living.” In some of the psalms (especially individual psalms of thanksgiving), one can see how the experience of salvation from the power of death moves toward the experience of “resurrection,” that is, being restored from death to life.²²

David wrote in Psalm 3 about enemies surrounding him. With the threat of death rising against him (Ps 3:1-2), God was a shield and head-lifter (3:3-4). David lay down, slept, and rose again because of God’s sustaining power (3:5). David was confident of vindication (3:7). In Psalms 22-24, David described terror on every side, as well as a feeling of forsakenness within him (22:1, 6-7, 12-15). Evil doers encircled the king (22:16), piercing him and gloating over him (22:16-18). Yet the Lord was his shepherd (23:1), leading him and restoring him (23:2-3). In the shadow of death, he confessed the comforting staff of God (23:4). Then in Psalm 24, David asked who shall ascend and stand in God’s holy place (24:3). The answer was “the King of glory” (24:7-10), who experienced exaltation and triumph. Passages like Psalm 3 and clusters like Psalms 22-24 depict the deliverance and vindication of the king in terms that evoke rescue from death. Confident in God’s power over death, the psalmist can say, “when I was brought low, he saved me ... I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living” (116:6, 9).

The book of Daniel described two famous near-death rescues: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered out of a fiery death (Dan 3:26),

and Daniel was saved from the lions (6:22-23). The fiery furnace and den of lions were places of death, and God delivered these characters in figurative resurrections. Steinmann says, “The preservation of his faithful followers from physical harm and temporal death affords a glimpse of the salvation from eternal death and resurrection to eternal life that all God’s people have through faith (12:2-3).”²³ Near-death deliverances stirred hope for that final vindication when God’s people will dwell with him forever in bodies not bound by death. In the book of Daniel, a temporal deliverance and vindication “encourages us to see the prediction of resurrection as the final and most explicit promise in a much longer line ... Any second-Temple Jew who pondered the book would find in 12:2-3 not a new and outlandish idea, unanticipated and unforeseen, but the crown of all that had gone before.”²⁴ Every deliverance from death, every picture of resurrection, turned up the heat of hope for God to do something about death itself. With each divine rescue—be it of Isaac, Jonah, David, or Daniel—the temperature rose.

The previous stories in this section concerned small-scale deliverances from death, with the focus on an individual. On a corporate scale, the crossing through the Red Sea depicted resurrection on a grand canvas. As the Egyptians pursued the Israelites, the latter asked Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?” (Exod 14:11a). The people believed they were standing in their own graves, and this language was significant for what God did next. God divided the waters of the sea into two standing walls (14:21-22), and the Israelites crossed on dry ground (14:22, 30). The apostle Paul certainly viewed this crossing as a picture of resurrection because he spoke of the people being “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:2), and baptism displayed dying and rising again.

Promises Implying New Bodily Life

In the Garden of Eden, the tree of life held out hope for a kind of life Adam and Eve did not yet have. After the couple sinned, God exiled them out of the garden “lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever” (Gen 3:22). The tree of life was a promise of immortal bodily life. Adam and Eve were embodied image-bearers, but they lived in mortal bodies in the garden. The tree of life indicated that another kind of bodily life was possible, a superior and immortal existence. Waltke says, “This

highest potency of life was available in the garden and ... will be experienced consummately in the resurrection of our bodies.”²⁵

God promised Abraham, “I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God” (Gen 17:8; cf. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18). But how could God keep this promise if Abraham died not owning more than a burial plot in the promised land?²⁶ The patriarchs did not believe death would hinder the fulfillment of their promised inheritance. When Abraham died, Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah—a cave in Canaan (25:9). When Isaac died, Jacob and Esau buried him in that same cave (35:29; 49:31). And as Jacob was dying, he told his sons to “bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah” (49:29-30; 50:13). Near his own death, Joseph requested that his bones be carried from Egypt to Canaan (50:24-25; Heb 11:22). These Genesis characters believed burial in Canaan was important because God would keep his promise to give them the land as an everlasting possession. These hopeful men would experience new bodily life that enabled the fulfillment of the land-promise. N. T. Wright says that no rabbi “supposed that the patriarchs ... had yet been given this resurrection life. The point of demonstrating that there were promises yet outstanding to the patriarchs was that God must be capable of fulfilling them in the world yet to come.”²⁷

Isaiah 24-27 is a little apocalypse, and in 25:8 God promised to “swallow up death forever.” If death is defeated, its hold on bodies would be broken. Therefore the promise to eat death implied resurrection. Isaiah 25 contrasted with the previous chapter, which narrated God’s judgment and cosmic destruction (24:1, 3-6, 17, 19-20). Isaiah 24 and 25 were chapters of judgment and renewal, and God’s consumption of death would be part of this renewing work. Since death was one of God’s enemies, “or even the ultimate enemy,” the final victory of God “requires the elimination of his great foe, death.”²⁸ The apostle Paul understood that the promise of Isaiah 25:8 would be fulfilled at the resurrection (see 1 Cor 15:54).

Redemption from Captivity

In light of the OT’s dynamic view of death, slavery or captivity was a functional death.²⁹ An episode like the exodus from Egypt (Exod 12:33-42) was a redemption tantamount to living again. Liberation was resurrection.

According to Levenson, "To be alive in this frequent biblical sense of the word inevitably entailed more than merely existing in a certain physical state. It also entailed having one's being within a flourishing and continuing kin group that dwelt in a productive and secure association with its land."³⁰ The exodus became a salvific event writ large in the minds of Israelites. It was a prototype of ultimate redemption, of eschatological liberation: resurrection from the dead.³¹ Especially in the Prophets, the events of the nation subsumed within it the hope for individual liberation as well, freedom from death and decay (cf. Hos 6; Ezek 37). The OT authors advanced individual hope through the experiences of Israel.

Having considered the corporate example of the people being liberated in Exodus, now reflect on the individual story of Joseph at the end of Genesis. His scheming brothers sold him into slavery (Gen 37:27-28). The narrator said "Joseph had been brought down to Egypt" (39:1), a descent into captivity. Yet God prospered Joseph. Joseph's master installed him as the overseer of his house "and put him in charge of all that he had" (39:4). Eventually Joseph rose to power in Egypt with only Pharaoh being greater (41:40). Pharaoh set Joseph over all Egypt, putting a ring on his hand, fine linens on his body, and a golden chain around his neck (41:41-42). From the death of captivity, Joseph had experienced a resurrection.³²

Recovery from Sickness

Keeping in mind Anderson's words that "Death's power is felt in the midst of life to the degree that one experiences any weakening of personal vitality through illness,"³³ Naaman's leprous condition was a kind of death. In 2 Kings 5, the king of Israel received a letter from the king of Syria which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy" (5:6). But Israel's king tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?" (5:7). In the mind of this king, God alone could cure leprosy because God had the power to kill and make alive—and a leper being cured would be like rising from death!

According to Leviticus 13:45-46, a leper had to wear torn clothes and loose hair, cry out "Unclean! Unclean!" lest anyone come near, and live in exile for the rest of his days, cut off from friends and family (see Num 5:2-3). In light of Moses' words about Miriam when she became leprous, someone

with that disease was as good as dead (see Num 12:10-12). Curing leprosy was like resurrection. Elisha instructed Naaman the Leper to wash in the Jordan River seven times in order for his flesh to be restored and clean (2 Kgs 5:10), and Naaman's compliance resulted in physical restoration (5:14). What seemed impossible to man could be overcome by the power of God.

Resuscitation from Physical Death

In the Torah, no one was physically raised from death. Three occurrences in the historical books merit our attention, however. Elijah raised a widow's son (1 Kgs 17:20-23), Elisha raised a Shunammite's son (2 Kgs 4:34-35), and Elisha's bones raised a dead man when the latter's body touched the prophet's bones (2 Kgs 13:20-21). N. T. Wright says these resuscitations "are not particularly relevant to the study of Israelite beliefs about death and life beyond,"³⁴ but that statement severely underestimates their importance. Since there was no previous story of someone coming back from the dead, these episodes were unprecedented. And consider what these reports meant about death: *physical death was not undoable*. Its jaws, though clenched tightly over its prey, could be pried open at the command of God. Of Elijah's resuscitation of the widow's son (see 1 Kgs 17:20-23), Greenspoon said that "what Elijah carried out could be termed a preliminary resurrection, but a resurrection nonetheless."³⁵ After all, the three resurrections in 1-2 Kings were still unto mortal bodies, so death would eventually come again for each character. Of Elisha's resuscitation of the Shunammite's son (see 2 Kgs 4:34-35), Levenson said the miracle demonstrated "a firm faith in God's power over death."³⁶ Indeed, "long before the apocalyptic framework came into existence, the resurrection of the dead was thought possible—not according to nature, of course, but through the miraculous intervention of the living God."³⁷

The NT evidence confirms the importance of these OT resurrections as pointers to the general resurrection of the dead. In Hebrews 11, the writer lists a series of victories and deliverances in 11:33-35a, ending with "Women received back their dead by resurrection" (11:35a). The allusion is surely to the widow's son of 1 Kings 17 and the Shunammite's son of 2 Kings 4. Note that as a list of sufferings begins in Hebrews 11:35b, the writer mentions a hope for general resurrection: "Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life." At the pivot point between the list of victories (11:33-35a) and the list of sufferings (11:35b-38), 11:35

has a pair of resurrection references. And both references use *anastasis*. The writer could have ordered the victories and sufferings any way he deemed appropriate, so it is not incidental that the final victory (11:35a) and the first suffering (11:35b) refer to resurrection. The former—resurrection to mortal bodily life—is a type and foreshadowing of the latter—resurrection to immortal bodily life. As Cockerill notes about 11:35, "Every temporal deliverance provides assurance of ultimate deliverance in the 'better resurrection' (11:35b) because it bears witness to the faithfulness and power of God."³⁸

The typological significance of temporal resurrections is confirmed in Jesus' words as well, though he wasn't alluding to 1-2 Kings. In Matthew 11:5, Jesus answers the doubts of John the Baptist by telling him "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them." This verse is a meshing together of various OT texts. Discernible is the dependence on Isaiah 35:5-6 (where there is reference to the blind, deaf, and lame) and Isaiah 61:1 (where good news is preached to the poor).³⁹ Jesus' reference to the dead who "are raised up" is probably an allusion to Isaiah as well, most notably to 26:19: "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise." This verse occurs in the Little Apocalypse (Isa 24-27) just like 25:8 (which Paul quoted in 1 Cor 15:54). The pertinence of Jesus' allusion to Isaiah 26:19 is in the fact that his words in Matthew 11:5 were to miracles he had done in his ministry (see Matt 8-9). He had healed a leper (8:1-4), a lame man (9:1-8), the blind (9:27-30), the deaf (9:32-34), and he had preached good news to the poor (9:35-36). He also raised a dead girl (9:23-25), but her resurrection wasn't unto immortality. Note, then, that Jesus alludes to an Isaianic promise of *general* resurrection when he had only performed a *temporal* resurrection in his ministry. This allusion to Isaiah 26:19 does not exhaust the hope of that OT promise, but it does confirm that the eschatological restorative and transformative power of God is already at work in the world. Temporal resurrections are signs pointing to the hope that one day bodies would rise never to die again.

Return from Exile

As far back as Genesis 3, exile denoted death.⁴⁰ Adam and Eve had sinned against God, and God had previously promised Adam that violating his command would bring death (2:17). The first couple did not immediately

die physically, though God sent them from the land (garden). Since death is viewed dynamically by the biblical authors, the exile of Adam and Eve was a kind of death. Sin affected mankind both spiritually and physically (Gen 2:17; 3:17-19; Rom 5:12-21). But before Adam and Eve left the garden, God made a promise to the serpent that "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). Eve anticipated the fulfillment of this prophecy (see 4:1, 25-26), and this hope was passed from generation to generation. Lamech hoped his son Noah was the promised victor, for he said, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands" (5:29).⁴¹ Noteworthy is the fact that Lamech believed the promised victor would reverse the curse from 3:17-19.⁴² And, keeping in mind that an aspect of the judgment in 3:17-19 was physical death (3:19), this promised one would reverse the curse in a sense that would affect death itself.⁴³ Beale rightly concludes, "The first possible hint of resurrection life may be discernible in Gen 1-3."⁴⁴ The reversal of the curse and the resurrection of the dead is the greatest return from exile.

The pairing of resurrection language with a return from exile is also evident in Psalm 80. There Asaph prayed for the restoration of Israel: "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!" (80:4 [Eng. 80:3]). The nation's destruction meant death, so the psalmist prayed for God to "give us life, and we will call upon your name!" (80:19 [Eng. 80:18]). This prayer of Asaph was significantly preceded by Psalm 79, which opened with, "O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins" (79:1). The return and restoration of Israel would be resurrection from the dead.

Perhaps the most famous pairing of return from exile and resurrection is in Ezekiel's vision of dry bones in a valley (Ezek 37:7-10). Ezekiel prophesied over the bones, and they came together, bone to bone, followed by sinews, flesh, and skin (37:7-8). Breath entered the bones, and the resurrected people stood on their feet (37:10). Who is this army? God told Ezekiel, "Son of Man, these bones are the whole house of Israel" (37:11a), and then, "Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel" (37:12). The return from exile was

resurrection from the dead! According to Carnley, "The standard use of any term is presupposed by the metaphorical use, and we would not understand the metaphor without it."⁴⁵ So the choice of language in Ezekiel 37—bones, sinews, skin, breath, raise—would function most effectively when placed in a worldview already informed by the concept of bodily resurrection.⁴⁶ Rather than a prophecy of corporate resurrection influencing writers to hope for bodily resurrection, the hope for bodily resurrection came before corporate applications of it.⁴⁷

Hope for Bodily Resurrection

Near the end of Deuteronomy, Moses reports Yahweh's unrivaled claim: "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut 32:39). The claim to "kill" and "make alive" is parallel with the claim to "wound" and "heal." The order is significant because wounding comes before healing, so the previous pair should be understood as killing and then making alive after death. Bronner observes, "The arrangement of the key words ... suggests that they are dealing with a resurrection motif."⁴⁸ Here God claims the power to raise the dead. The timing of this claim is important because there was no report, up to that point in Israel's history, of God raising anyone physically from the dead (see later in 1 Kgs 17; 2 Kgs 4; 2 Kgs 13). God is asserting his uniqueness over against idols which can do nothing. Greenspoon, again, is correct: "Since there is perhaps no other action of God's which displays the totality and uniqueness of His power more forcefully than the process by which He restores His dead to life, a reference to bodily resurrection is surely in keeping with the context at this point."⁴⁹ Not to downplay the previous texts I've cited from Genesis and Exodus, but if Deuteronomy 32:39 was all the evidence we had in the Torah for resurrection hope, that verse alone "may well be sufficient to establish the certainty of an early date for the Biblical belief."⁵⁰

In Psalm 16:9-11, David was confident he would not be abandoned to Sheol, for "You make known to me the life path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (16:11). There is no hint of danger or sickness in the context of Psalm 16, so David was hoping for something more than the postponement of death.⁵¹ Mortality did not negate a future deliverance. God would vindicate the righteous,

showing faithfulness to his own, and if this could be fully attained only after death, then God could be trusted to raise the dead.⁵² The NT certainly applied Psalm 16 in a resurrection context. Peter quoted 16:8-11 in order to explain why “it was not possible for [Jesus] to be held” by death (Acts 2:24). Psalm 16 should be read as a hope for rescue after death.⁵³ Other psalms also hold forth a resurrection hope (such as 49:16 [Eng. 49:15]; 71:20; 73:24). Bauckham is right that hope for resurrection life beyond death is found “especially in the Psalms.”⁵⁴

Within the Little Apocalypse of Isaiah 24-27, there is a promise in 26:19 that God’s people will see life again: “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.”⁵⁵ The notion of bodily resurrection is clear because the verse speaks of dead bodies rising from the dust. While a corporate application isn’t necessarily excluded, Robert Martin-Achart rightly notes, “The author of Isa 26:19 is not, like Ezekiel, envisaging the political revival of the nation; he is not even speaking about an event that would concern all Israel; he is thinking only of certain members of the chosen People, of those to whom ‘thy dead’ refer.”⁵⁶ To underscore the plain sense of Isaiah 26:19, Sawyer says its resurrection meaning is something “which no-one but a Sadducee, ancient or modern, could possibly misconstrue.”⁵⁷

Regarding the clarity and fullness of expressing resurrection hope in the OT, Daniel 12:2 is unmatched:⁵⁸ “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”⁵⁹ Sleeping in the dust is a metaphor for death,⁶⁰ and waking up from the sleep of death is a metaphor for resurrection. Goldingay notes that “The OT’s standard way of envisaging dying and coming back to life is by speaking of lying down and sleeping, then of waking and getting up.”⁶¹ Death in the dust recalls Genesis 3:19, where God told Adam, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Resurrection is a curse-reversing act of God’s (re)creative power.⁶² As those in the dust awake, God’s power “breaks open the world of death.”⁶³ This resurrection is unto an eternal state (“everlasting,” *’ôlām*) for two groups, the righteous and unrighteous.⁶⁴ Jesus alludes to Daniel 12:2 when he says, “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his

voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). He interprets Daniel 12:2 as a prediction that everyone—believer and unbeliever—would be raised either to life or judgment.

THREE CONCLUSIONS

The previous sections were not exhaustive examinations of OT texts, but they illustrated how biblical authors advanced resurrection hope. From the beginning, evident in the garden's tree of life, image-bearers had a hope for immortal bodily life. Subsequent stories and promises displayed the dynamics of death and life at work in the world. The stream of resurrection hope had many bends and turns along the way, surging to its climactic expression in Daniel 12:2. At this point we can draw three conclusion in light of the preceding OT evidence.

First, God has the power to keep his promises. This confidence stimulated resurrection hope because the Bible's characters saw God overcoming every obstacle and hostile power, even death itself. Therefore, if God made great and precious promises that were not fulfilled before death, then he would fulfill them in his people's resurrection life. In no way would death prove God a promise-breaker. According to Ladd, "The idea of man as an animated body, and the faith in a sovereign God whose power and promises could not be broken by death, led to the belief in the eschatological resurrection of the body."⁶⁵

Second, resurrection hope is rooted in the Torah. This claim is controversial, since what Elmer Smick wrote over forty years ago remains true today: "The consensus of critical opinion still insists that emergent belief in the resurrection of the dead was a thing unattested in the literature of preexilic Israel."⁶⁶ Yet the NT rejects this critical consensus. The apostle Paul said his hope for resurrection was based on "believing everything laid down by *the Law* and written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:15). And when the Sadducees told Jesus a story which they thought displayed the absurdity of resurrection, Jesus answered, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt 22:29). He went on to say, "And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He

is not God of the dead, but of the living” (22:31-32).⁶⁷ Jesus quoted Exodus 3:6 to the Sadducees because they only accepted the Torah as authoritative.⁶⁸ His introductory words, “as for the resurrection of the dead” (22:31a), help us see that his OT quote would be evidence of resurrection hope.⁶⁹ Jesus, whom Stephen Dempster calls “the Master Exegete,”⁷⁰ would show the error of the Sadducean position. So while interpreters may be willing to see glimpses of resurrection hope in the Psalms and Prophets, or at least in the book of Daniel, we should adjust our affirmations to fit those of Jesus and the apostles. Either those characters are wrong, or higher-critical scholars are wrong. When the OT evidence is considered, the higher-critical consensus is a seriously deficient position. The hope of resurrection was sown as early as the Torah—indeed, even in Genesis.⁷¹ This article sides with Jesus and Paul against the Sadducees.

Third, the biblical authors advanced a hope for resurrection in a matrix of themes that presuppose a dynamic view of death and life. As long as interpreters insist on recognizing resurrection hope only if certain words or expressions are present (e.g., Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2), then the Sadducees are right about the Torah. Certain words, yes, may denote resurrection,⁷² but Jesus’ use of Exodus 3:6 and Peter’s use of Psalm 16 are examples of seeing resurrection in OT texts lacking “standard” terms. From the Bible’s opening chapters, God is a God of life. His purposes advance by sovereign power, and death is no comparable foe. As we read the OT, there are figures of resurrection everywhere. Hays says:

Because the Old Testament’s pointers to the resurrection are indirect and symbolic in character, the resurrection [of Jesus] teaches us to read for figuration and latent sense. The Sadducees were literalists, but God seems to have delighted in veiled anticipations of the gospel. . . . Resurrection-informed reading sees the life-giving power of God manifested and prefigured in unexpected ways throughout Scripture.⁷³

As we read the OT, at least ten themes stand out as catalysts for resurrection hope: the movement of rising up, restoration reversing desolation, provision of offspring despite obstacles, near-death rescue, promises implying new bodily life, redemption from captivity, recovery from sickness, resuscitation from physical death, return from exile, and explicit hope for bodily

resurrection. While some texts may fit into more than one category, this tenfold matrix provides a map to locate figures and promises of resurrection.

God has the power to keep all of his promises. We will be raised, and all creation will be made new (see Rom 8:22-23). Christ's resurrection was the firstfruits of this hope (1 Cor 15:20). Death, the last enemy, will be destroyed (15:26). Resurrection will reverse and overcome the sin and curse that grips the world and the grave. From dust you shall arise (Dan 12:2). Believer, you shall awake and sing for joy (Isa 26:19), for Christ comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

- ¹ See, e.g., John J. Collins, *Encounters with Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 28, 32; Lloyd Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 73.
- ² Days 1-3 form what is then filled in Days 4-6. See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Word, 1987): 6-7.
- ³ For an excellent treatment of resurrection typology in the Genesis creation account, see Nicholas P. Lunn, "'Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures': Resurrection Typology in the Genesis Creation Narrative," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57.3 (2014): 523-35.
- ⁴ See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 162-63.
- ⁵ Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 211.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.
- ⁷ Leonard J. Greenspoon, "The Origin of the Idea of Resurrection," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 276.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.
- ⁹ Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea* (Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1980), 420.
- ¹⁰ The language in Hos 14:6-8 (Eng. 14:5-7) is probably shaped by the earlier resurrection passage in 6:2-3. See Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 205.
- ¹¹ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 148.
- ¹² Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 109.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 120. "By a kind of legal fiction, his family brings something of their dead kinsman back to life, birth again reversing death. Levirate marriage is a mode of redemption of the dead" (121).
- ¹⁴ For a further treatment of how the birth of Seth was a resurrection of the line that died with Abel, see Mitchell L. Chase, "The Genesis of Resurrection Hope: Exploring Its Early Presence and Deep Roots," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57.3 (2014): 467-80.
- ¹⁵ Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 119-20.
- ¹⁶ Chase, "The Genesis of Resurrection Hope," 477.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ According to Philip E. Hughes, "So dramatic was the sequence of events that it was as though Isaac really had died and been raised up to life again" (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 484).
- ¹⁹ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 320.
- ²⁰ Byron Wheaton, "As It Is Written: Old Testament Foundations for Jesus' Expectation of Resurrection," *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (2008): 248.

- 21 Ibid., 252.
- 22 Bernard W. Anderson with Steven Bishop, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 312.
- 23 Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel* (Concordia Commentary; St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 322.
- 24 Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 114-15.
- 25 Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 257.
- 26 Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death and Resurrection of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 17.
- 27 Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 199-200.
- 28 Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 200.
- 29 Ibid., 161. See also Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978).
- 30 Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 154-55.
- 31 Ibid., 27-28.
- 32 Wheaton, "As It Is Written," 250.
- 33 Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 312.
- 34 Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 96.
- 35 Greenspoon, "The Origin of the Idea of Resurrection," 315.
- 36 Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, xii.
- 37 Ibid., 132. As Smith rightly concludes, "The fact that Elijah and Elisha brought to life two different dead boys (1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:18-37) and that a dead man was brought back to life after his body touched ... Elisha's bones (2 Kgs 13:20-21) indicates that individual resurrection from the dead was known long before the days of Isaiah" (Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39* [New American Commentary; Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2007], 452).
- 38 Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 526.
- 39 There are no clear OT promises that lepers would be cleansed. Jesus' inclusion of this miracle, then, adds to his remarkable healing ministry.
- 40 As Koorevaar explains, "Exile and return together form one of the most important theological subjects of the OT... At the beginning, with the banishment from the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, the subject of exile applies to all of humanity. From Gen 11:27 and the rest of the OT, the subject of exile and return applies to the people of the covenant, Israel. Humanity as a whole and the nation of Israel are linked together macro-theologically. Adam and his exile function paradigmatically for Israel and its possible exile. Israel's return to the land can then also be seen as a paradigm for the return of Adam as representative of all humanity. The question in this connection is: return to what? Return to the Garden of Eden, or return to the earth as a prospect of rising above death?" (Hendrik J. Koorevaar, "The Exile and Return Model: A Proposal for the Original Macrostructure of the Hebrew Canon," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57.3 [2014]: 510).
- 41 According to Walton, "It may have been Lamech's hope that Noah would somehow bring about the reversal of the curse" (John H. Walton, *Genesis* [NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 281).
- 42 James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 88.
- 43 Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 228-29.
- 44 Ibid., 228.
- 45 Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 229. Similarly, Ladd: "The very fact that the vision sees the restoration of dead bones to life suggests that the idea of bodily resurrection was familiar" (George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 48).
- 46 Greenspoon, "The Origin of the Idea of Resurrection," 293.
- 47 Greenspoon reasons, "It is sufficiently clear that Ezekiel was working with a concept of the resurrection of the dead well enough known to his audience to allow for the simultaneous application of this belief to 'literal' resurrection and national restoration" ("The Origin of the Idea of Resurrection," 294).
- 48 Leila Leah Bronner, "The Resurrection Motif in the Hebrew Bible: Allusions or Illusions?" *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 30.3 (2002): 145.
- 49 Greenspoon, "The Origin of the Idea of Resurrection," 312.
- 50 Ibid., 310. Beale agrees that Deut 32:39 is perhaps "the earliest explicit OT reference to [bodily] resurrection"

- (*A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 231).
- ⁵¹ Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, 46.
 - ⁵² Richard Bauckham, "Life, Death, and the Afterlife in Second Temple Judaism," in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 86.
 - ⁵³ Grogan says, "Many modern commentators are reluctant to understand these passages this way and, it seems to me, tend to set aside this kind of interpretation of them too easily" (Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms* [The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 291).
 - ⁵⁴ Bauckham, "Life Death, and the Afterlife in Second Temple Judaism," 85.
 - ⁵⁵ For an exploration of how Isa 26-27 parallel and depend on Hos 13-14, see John Day, "A Case of Inner Scriptural Interpretation: The Dependence of Isaiah xxvi.13-xxvii.11 on Hosea xiii.4-xiv.10 (Eng. 9) and Its Relevance to Some Theories of the Redaction of the 'Isaiah Apocalypse,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1980): 309-19.
 - ⁵⁶ Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life: A Study of the Development of the Doctrine of the Resurrection in the Old Testament* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), 131.
 - ⁵⁷ John F. A. Sawyer, "Hebrew Words for the Resurrection of the Dead," *Vetus Testamentum* 23 (1973): 234. Wright calls Isa 26:19 "the most obvious 'resurrection' passage in Isaiah" (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 116).
 - ⁵⁸ John Collins asserts, "There is virtually unanimous agreement among modern scholars that Daniel is referring to the actual resurrection of individuals from the dead" (*Daniel* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], 391-92).
 - ⁵⁹ For an exploration on how Dan 12:2 used earlier Scripture and influenced later intertestamental and NT literature, see my dissertation: Mitchell L. Chase, "Resurrection Hope in Daniel 12:2: An Exercise in Biblical Theology" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013).
 - ⁶⁰ See George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Harvard Theological Studies 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 17.
 - ⁶¹ John Goldingay, *Daniel* (Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 307.
 - ⁶² See Anne E. Gardner, "The Way to Eternal Life in Dan 12:1e-2 or How to Reverse the Death Curse of Genesis 3," *Australian Biblical Review* 40 (1992): 5-6.
 - ⁶³ Walther Zimmerli, *Man and His Hope in the Old Testament* (Studies in Biblical Theology; Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1968), 148.
 - ⁶⁴ In Nickelsburg's words, "A double resurrection was a conclusion drawn from these Jews' understanding of the Scriptures and from their belief that God would keep his word" (*Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life*, 22).
 - ⁶⁵ Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, 49.
 - ⁶⁶ Elmer Smick, "The Bearing of New Philological Data on the Subjects of Resurrection and Immortality in the Old Testament," *Westminster Theological Journal* 31 (1969): 12.
 - ⁶⁷ See J. Gerald Janzen's insightful interpretation of the Markan account of this story in "Resurrection and Hermeneutics: On Exodus 3.6 in Mark 12.26," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 23 (1985): 46-48.
 - ⁶⁸ Recognizing resurrection hope in the Torah was serious business, for according to the Mishnah nothing less than eternal inheritance was on the line: "And these are the ones who do not have a share in the World-to-Come: He who says that the resurrection of the dead is not in the Torah, [he who says] that the Torah is not from Heaven, and the skeptic" (*m. Sanh.* 10:1).
 - ⁶⁹ Hays explains, "Presumably, in fact, their rejection of the resurrection rests precisely on appeals to the authority of Scripture: no such belief was taught by Moses, so it should not be accepted. By challenging them at this point, Jesus creates the expectation that he will produce scriptural evidence to discredit their skepticism" (Richard B. Hays, "Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection," in *The Art of Reading Scripture* [ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 226).
 - ⁷⁰ See Stephen G. Dempster, "From Slight Peg to Cornerstone to Capstone: The Resurrection of Christ on 'The Third Day' According to the Scripture," *Westminster Theological Journal* 76.2 (2014): 371-410.
 - ⁷¹ See Chase, "The Genesis of Resurrection Hope," 467-80.
 - ⁷² See Sawyer, "Hebrew Words for the Resurrection of the Dead," 229-30. Sawyer concludes that eight verbs can carry the weight of resurrection: (1) *hēqīš*, (2) *hāyā*, (3) *ālā*, (4) *šūb*, (5) *āmad*, (6) *šīš*, (7) *qūm*, and (8) *nē' ōr*.
 - ⁷³ Hays, "Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection," 234.

Matthew 27:51-54 Revisited: A Narratological Re-Appropriation

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INTRODUCTION

At the moment of Jesus' death on the cross, after crying out with an earth-rending voice and yielding his spirit (Matt 27:50), Matthew recounts several cataclysmic events for his readers. He includes five signs¹ that accompany Jesus' death: 1) the curtain of the temple is torn (v. 51a), 2) the earth shakes (v. 51b), 3) the rocks split (v. 51c), 4) the tombs open (v. 52a), and 5) lifeless people whom Matthew calls "*hagiōn*" are raised to life (v. 52b).² The most perplexing of these cosmic events is the resurrection of the dead saints. Their resurrection from the dead has confounded interpreters and led to many crucial interpretive questions: What kind of bodies did these "holy people" have? Did they die again? How public was their appearance and how many people saw them? Were they raised *before* or *after* Jesus' resurrection from the dead? If they were raised before, what did they do after they were raised but before Jesus was resurrected (did they just wait in their tombs)? Was their resurrection like that of

Lazarus in John 11 or like the resurrection described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, i.e., glorified bodies? Is it possible that these “saints” were taken up to heaven like Enoch (Gen 5:24)? Was Matthew speaking of a historical event or merely using apocalyptic and metaphorical language here in his Gospel narrative?

Though these questions highlight the difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of this text, this Matthean pericope informs the way one understands the conclusion of Matthew’s Gospel, particularly the scenes surrounding these events (Matt 27:32-50 and 27:55-28:20), and has implications of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. The way Matthew constructs the narrative sets the stage in his Gospel storyline by means of the “lesser” resurrection of the saints since it anticipates the public vindication of Jesus before his enemies—he is not dead, he rose just as he said he would (Matt 28:6 cf. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19). For Matthew, the resurrection of the saints creates literary anticipation through narratological parallelism—the hero of the story, Jesus, dies and some other unidentified dead are made alive—and the vindicating resurrection of Jesus brings the plot of his Gospel to its literary resolution. Utilizing narratological parallelism—i.e., reading the biblical text with the type of literary sensibilities that enable interpreters to discern authorial devices such as contrast and irony and narrative progression or development in the midst of a narrative account, amid other literary devices—Matthew accentuates that Jesus’ “greater”³ resurrection is what the religious leaders were afraid of—it proved that they were wrong about him; he is actually God’s Son. So they propagate a lie and further prove themselves to be evil (Matt 28:12-15). His “greater” resurrection proves to his doubting disciples that he is truly alive and that he does indeed have “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18). His “greater” resurrection gives hope to all of his followers, for we know that the Lord is the resurrected Christ. He has conquered sin and death and hell; and now he is both God with us as we go about proclaiming and offering a gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins (28:20 cf. 1:23) and he is God in us, empowering us by the Holy Spirit that he and the Father have sent to us (John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8, 2:4; 1 Cor 6:19; Eph 1:13-14).

It is not surprising, then, that interpreters have labored to apply this pivotal text across the span of interpretive history in their respective hermeneutical and homiletical endeavors. The interpretive confusion results from a false

assumption that the resurrection of the saints is either a glorified resurrection and, therefore, displaced in the Matthean Gospel narrative, or is ahistorical and merely apocalyptically flavors the narrative scene. It is for this reason that further study of the Matthean pericope is required. Utilizing the tools of narratology, this article aims to assist interpreters in bridging the text's interpretive chasm. Further, this work intends to show that a narratological reading of Matthew 27:51-54 needs to be adopted; such a reading will deepen one's understanding of this Matthean passage, revealing that its meaning is about more than its canonical relationship with 1 Corinthians 15:20, Colossians 1:18, and Revelation 1:5.

A SOLUTION FOR THE DILEMMA

I suggest that the answer to the hermeneutical dilemma presented in this Matthean pericope can be answered by 1) reading the conclusion to Matthew's Gospel narrative narratologically,⁴ 2) understanding the resurrection of the saints in Matthew 27:52-53 as both historical and Lazarus-like, 3) understanding the five signs along with the resulting confession of the centurion as connoting the Christological and missiological significance of Jesus' life-giving cross-death, and 4) noticing that Matthew has used the scene in 27:51-54 to set up the scene of Jesus' resurrection from the dead recorded in 28:1-10 to accentuate the aforementioned significances. In this article I intend to show that Matthew parallels the resurrection pericopes in 27:51-54 and 28:1-10 to accentuate the Christological and missiological implications of Jesus' life-giving cross-death and death-defying vindication from the grave.

Some of the missiological implications are manifested in how the Pharisees challenged Jesus' divine Sonship (27:40, 43), and it is precisely the signs surrounding his horrific death that testify so loudly that even the Gentiles believe (27:54). Thus, the "lesser" resurrection of the saints anticipates the future "greater" resurrection of Jesus in his Gospel narrative and it visibly manifests Jesus' identity as the Son of God; the "lesser" resurrection of the saints anticipates the future gospel mission to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:16-20).

A thorough perusal of the Matthean passion narrative manifests the narratological parallelism used by the Gospel author to accentuate these theological

motifs—namely, Christological impact of the scene and a missiological agenda for the world. This can be seen in the chart that follows:

Matthew 27:45-66	Matthew 27:62-28:15
darkness (27:45)	dawn (28:1)
earth shook (27:51)	earthquake (28:2)
raised (27:52)	risen (28:6)
tomb (27:52-53)	tomb (28:1)
the holy city (27:53) ⁵	the city (28:11)
	those guarding (28:4)
centurion (27:54)	the guards (28:11)
	soldiers (28:12)
fear (27:54)	fear (28:4,5,8,10)
genuine profession (27:54)	false profession (28:13-15)
Mary Magdalene and Mary (27:56)	Mary Magdalene ... Mary (28:1)
Joseph of Arimathea before Pilate (27:57)	the chief priests before Pilate (27:62)
great stone (27:60)	the stone (28:2)
attempt to guard the tomb (27:62-66)	unable to guard (28:4)

Chart 1. Narratological Parallelism in Matthew 27-28

While interpreters may be able to recall a number of proposed literary readings that have overextended themselves hermeneutically, Matthew’s narratological intentionality in the conclusion of his Gospel narrative is evident. As he has at other points in his Gospel, Matthew utilizes narratological parallelism to emphasize theological truth as well as Jesus’ identity. Two character examples from the Gospel narrative’s introduction along with one example from the scenes surrounding Jesus’ birth and death as well as one macro-structural example of the Gospel will suffice to manifest his intentionality in the use of this literary device.⁶ Firstly, Herod the King (Matt 2:1) is paralleled in the narrative with Jesus, the newborn King of the Jews (Matt 2:2). The archetype of the longed for Davidic King has arrived in Jesus; unlike Herod, “rival” rulers do not frustrate his Kingdom. Secondly, the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry is paralleled in the narrative with the beginning of John the Baptist’s earthly ministry—both have wilderness experiences (Matt 3:1; 4:1); both begin their homiletical endeavors by heralding the same message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt

3:2; 4:17). The prophet like Moses has come in the person of Jesus (Deut 18:15-22; John 6:14)—he is greater than John; he leads righteously through the wilderness without succumbing to temptation as did his Adamic and Mosaic forefathers (Gen 3:6; Num 20:10-13). Thirdly, scenes surrounding Jesus' birth are paralleled in the narrative with scenes surrounding Jesus' death. Thus, when Jesus was born, children were slaughtered (Matt 2:16); when Jesus died, the dead were raised to life (Matt 27:52). Fourthly, not only has Matthew employed narratological parallelism by contrasting characters and scenes within his Gospel narrative, he has employed this parallelism in the structure of his work as a whole:

	1-4	Introduction: Birth and Beginnings of Jesus' Earthly Ministry
	5-7	Sermonic-Discourse: Sermon on the Mount/Entering the Kingdom
	8-9	Narrative-Discourse: The Authority of Jesus to Heal
	10	Sermonic-Discourse: Missiological Sermon to the Community
	11-12	Narrative-Discourse: Rejection of Jesus as the Christ by this generation
	13	Sermonic-Discourse: Parabolic Sermon on the Kingdom
	14-17	Narrative-Discourse: Recognition of Jesus as the Christ by the Disciples
	18	Sermonic-Discourse: Ecclesiological Sermon to the Community
	19-23	Narrative-Discourse: The Authority of Jesus Challenged
	24-25	Sermonic-Discourse: Eschatological Discourse/Coming of the Kingdom
	26-28	Conclusion: Death and End of Jesus' Earthly Ministry

Chart 2: Macro-Chiastic Structure of Matthew's Gospel⁷

The question, then, is “*why* did Matthew employ this intentionality in Matthew 27:45-28:15?” It seems that his narratological parallelism is intended to accentuate Jesus' identity—the earth he created mourns (Matt 27:45) and breaks (Matt 27:51) at his death, giving back the dead as a testimony to his dominion as the Son of God (Matt 28:18). Further, Matthew's intentional parallelism is intended to accentuate the mission Jesus' death necessitates—his death is life-giving and ultimately salvific for persons from every nation who profess faith in his name (28:16-20; cf. 27:54). In his death and burial, Jesus bears much fruit just as the seed of wheat that bears much fruit by falling to the earth (John 12:24).⁸ Matthew concludes his Gospel with an *inclusio* that has missiological implications—Jesus “bears fruit” through the disciples with whom he promises to be with until the end of the age as they are on mission for the renown of the triune name (Matt 28:20; cf. 1:23).

The main idea here is that despite the variety of ways exegetes have read this controversial Matthean pericope, the hermeneutical key to 27:51-54 is

1) reading the conclusion to Matthew's Gospel narratologically, 2) understanding the resurrection of the saints in 27:52-53 as both historical and Lazarus-like, 3) understanding the five signs and the resulting confession of the centurion as connoting the Christological and missiological significance of Jesus' life-giving cross-death, and 4) noticing that Matthew uses the scene in 27:51-54 to set up the scene of Jesus' resurrection from the dead recorded in 28:1-10 to accentuate the aforementioned significances. Further, Matthew parallels the resurrection pericopes in 27:51-54 and 28:1-10 to accentuate the Christological and missiological implications of Jesus' life-giving death and death-defying vindication from the grave.

MATTHEW 27:51-54 IN RECENT HISTORY OF RESEARCH

Matthew 27:51-54 in Biblical Studies

Scholars have produced massive tomes on resurrection in the New Testament as well as major exegetical works on Matthew's Gospel. As a result, the pericope under consideration has received a great deal of attention, as will be seen below. There is, however, a significant gap in the amount of attention given specifically to the narratological aspects of the pericope as they relate to Matthew 28 as well as the pericope's Christological and missiological implications when contending for Lazarus-like resurrection. Below I will briefly examine noteworthy scholars who have postulated translation issues, apocalyptic resurrection theses, narrative interpretations, and varying historical claims in their appropriation of this Matthean pericope.⁹

Delvin D. Hutton

Delvin Hutton's work, *The Resurrection of the Holy Ones (MT 27:51b-53): A Study of the Theology of the Matthean Passion Narrative*, is a redaction-critical analysis of the Matthean pericope that begins by briefly summarizing three ways Matthew 27:51-54 has been appropriated hermeneutically—to advocate *descensus Christi ad infernos* ("the descent of Christ into hell or the dead"), to advocate the death of a Hellenistic "divine man," and to advocate cosmic participation in the death of a cosmic deity.¹⁰ He contends that these are "hermeneutically inadequate"¹¹ and seeks to show that the pericopal scene has been both reshaped and replaced in the narrative by Matthew for theological purposes. Further, he clearly states, "It will be noted at no time

does the writer concern himself with the question, ‘Did it really happen; is it empirically verifiable?’”¹² Rather, the question he concerned himself with throughout his thesis is, “What was the meaning of the tradition expressed in Mt 27:51b-53 for the individual evangelist and for the community in which and for whom he composed his Gospel?”¹³

Hutton concludes that the scene Matthew crafted in his Gospel is a combination of the Markan material and oral epiphanic or “manifestation” traditions.¹⁴ He contends that the placement of the redacted material belonged originally with the scene Matthew portrays in the following chapter, Matthew 28:2-4.¹⁵ He suggests, then, that Matthew’s rearrangement of the material is to accentuate a new eschatological reality.¹⁶ More specifically, he contends that Matthew has crafted a scene with the resurrection of “*tōn kekoimēmenōn hagiōn*”¹⁷ as he relied on apocalyptic traditions in order to emphasize the eschatological nature of Jesus’ death on the cross.¹⁸ The portents surrounding Jesus’ cross-death connote that something decisive in salvation-history has occurred in the death of Jesus.

Delvin Hutton helpfully notes that the pericope under consideration is eschatologically oriented and marked with apocalyptic imagery. Further, he rightly asserts that Matthew’s work is “theologically arranged.”¹⁹ Yet, his redaction-critical work ultimately places the resurrection of “*tōn kekoimēmenōn hagiōn*” after Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and misreads the narratology manifest in the scene.

John W. Wenham²⁰

In 1981, John Wenham published his article, “When Were the Saints Raised: A Note on the Punctuation of Matthew xxvii. 51-53,” that argued for a full stop punctuation (i.e., a period) in the middle of Matthew 27:52.²¹ He suggested that it was inappropriate for translators to translate *aneōchthēsan* without punctuation because it wrongly ties the resurrection of “*tōn... hagiōn*” to events that occurred on Good Friday after Jesus yielded up his spirit on the Cross (Matt 27:50). To substantiate his thesis, he argues that “*kai exelthontes...pollois*” forms a partial parenthesis. That is, the words “*kai exelthontes...pollois*” are parenthetical, but they lack a subject within the versification in which they are currently found. Rather, Wenham argues, the subject is found in the previous verse, Matthew 27:52—*polla sōmata*. Consequently, he contends that this places the resurrection of the saints

with the events that follow instead of the events that precede—namely, he claims that the saints are both resurrected *and* come out of the tombs *after* Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.²² According to Wenham, then, the translation of Matthew 27:51-53 would read as follows: “And the earth quaked, and the rocks split, and the tombs were opened. And, many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and came out of the tombs after [Jesus’] resurrection and they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

Wenham’s concerns are twofold. First, the temporal lapse between the opening of the tombs caused by the earthquake in Matthew 27:51 and the subsequent resurrection of the many sleeping saints neatly places the events after Jesus’ resurrection and maintains his title as the firstborn from the dead (*aparchē tōn kekoimēmenōn*) (1 Cor 15:20; cf. Col 1:18; Rev. 1:5). Second, he wants to tie the resurrection of the saints with Jesus’ vindicating resurrection from the dead in Matthew 28:1-10. For Wenham, their resurrection is caused by Jesus’ resurrection; this causal relationship accentuates the power of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, a resurrecting power accessible to “all who fall asleep in Jesus.”²³ Therefore, he connects the resurrection of the saints with the resurrection of Jesus to emphasize his “defeating the powers of evil.”²⁴

John Wenham’s interpretive instinct to connect the resurrection of “*tōn kekoimēmenōn hagiōn*” (Matt 27:52-53) with Jesus’ resurrection (Matt 28:6) is correct. Close examination of the narrative manifests that Matthew has placed the pericopes parallel to each other in order to make clear the Christological and missiological implications of the passage. Wenham, however, incorrectly assumes that the raising of “*tōn kekoimēmenōn hagiōn*” threatens Jesus’ right as “*aparchē tōn kekoimēmenōn*” (1 Cor 15:20). Rather, Matthew intends for his readers to interpret the raising of the sleeping saints as Lazarus-like and testimonial. As his power was demonstrated and naysayers’ mocking comments were overturned when he restored the life of the sleeping-dead-girl (Matt 9:24-25), so now through the cosmic portents once again his divine power is on display as the dead are raised to life as a testimony (Matt 27:52-53). As his fame was heralded for overturning death previously (Matt 9:26), so now Matthew recounts that his fame is heralded in *tēn hagian polin* and, ultimately, to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:16-20).

Jack Dean Kingsbury

Jack Kingsbury argues for a literary approach to reading the Bible by means of narrative criticism. In his work, *Matthew as Story*, he describes his interpretive approach as a literary-critical approach to reading the gospel narrative. His project consciously moves away from “the historical-biographical, the form-critical, and the redaction-critical” approaches to the interpretation of Matthew’s Gospel.²⁵ Following Chatman, he analyzes the final form of Matthew as a unified narrative by arguing that the Gospel, like all other narratives, has two parts—the Gospel’s story and the Gospel’s discourse.²⁶ The story, according to Kingsbury, is composed of the events that comprise Jesus’ life from his birth to his death-defying resurrection; the discourse, then, is the medium by which this story is told to Matthew’s readers.²⁷ Throughout this work, he accentuates literary elements in his reading of the divine story—arrangement and development of theological themes in the narrative, irony, contrast, and character development—that Matthew recounts.²⁸ Kingsbury’s narrative-critical reading is further developed in his work, *Gospel Interpretation*, where he contends that discernment of the narrative’s arrangement is central to interpretation. The “arrangement” of the narrative is intended by the author to solicit a desired response from the readers; discernment of the “arrangement” of events or time or place or topic gives meaning to the plot of the story. Discerning the plot, for Kingsbury, enables the exegete to interpret the “positioning of each episode within the story and the literary role this episode plays within the story as a whole.”²⁹ In relation to Matthew 27:51-54, Kingsbury contends that Matthew used the recounting of the supernatural portents in his narrative to 1) substantiate Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God through “the counter-assertion, elicited by God himself” through the cosmic events surrounding Jesus’ death,³⁰ and 2) to bring the third part of his Gospel story to its initial narrative climax.³¹

Another of Kingsbury’s contributions in *Matthew as Story* is utilizing his literary-critical approach to interpret the actions of the antagonists in Matthew’s narrative. For Kingsbury, next to the Gospel’s protagonist, Jesus, no group represented in the story influences the events narrated in Matthew’s Gospel more than the antagonists, the religious leaders.³² Their hostile actions toward Jesus stem from their assumption that they are protecting the Jewish people from a pseudo-messiah. The narrative, however, describes their actions as positively moving the Gospel’s story toward its resolution.

Further, their actions not only repeatedly fulfill Jesus' mission and move the narrative forward, but they also fulfill Scriptures that prophesied his redeeming mission.³³ Kingsbury's analysis, then, enables one to see more clearly how the actions of Jesus' antagonists achieve the salvation for the world (Matt 28:16-20; cf. 27:54). Their God-rejecting actions preceding the scene of Matthew 27:51-54 accentuate the tension created by the narrative when the Gentile centurion confesses Jesus to be "*theou huios ên houtos*" (Matt 27:54). His confession manifests that the cosmic portents are not only Christological, in that they demonstrate that Jesus' cross-death is a life-giving death, but they are also missiological as both resurrected Jewish saints and a Roman Gentile testify to his identity as God the Father's Son.³⁴

Jack Kingsbury's narratological emphasis enables readers to discern more keenly theologically arranged literary structure, through which the Gospel writers obviously intended to communicate truth. In relation to Matthew 27:51-54, Kingsbury's analysis fails to note the narratological parallelism as well as the connection between Jesus' divine identity and gospel mission, both of which are conveyed in Matthew 27:51-54 and 28:1-10.

Ronald D. Witherup

Under Kingsbury's tutelage Kingsbury, Ronald Witherup wrote his dissertation: "The Cross of Jesus: A Literary-Critical Study of Matthew 27."³⁵ His thesis is that "Matthew 27 is the central and most important section in the passion/resurrection complex which concludes Matthew's Gospel (26-28)."³⁶ Further, he contends that the events surrounding Jesus' cross-death in Matthew 27 bring together four central themes that are prominent in Matthew's Gospel: "salvation-history, prophecy and fulfillment, discipleship, and most importantly, the theme of Jesus' identity as the royal, obedient and faithful Son of God."³⁷ Commenting on the pericope, he notes that it "is the climax of the entire chapter" since it should be read as "portraying the consequences of Jesus' death."³⁸ For Witherup, the silence of the historical scene is broken by means of the divine portents through which God speaks.³⁹ His final conclusion is that the pericope is "displaced." That is, Matthew has a literary proclivity of completing a story line that he interjects into the main thought.⁴⁰ For Witherup, this solves the interpretive conundrum created by the phrase "*meta tēn ergersin autou*" (27:53). Their resurrection further accentuates Jesus' resurrection as a climactic event; Matthew's intention in

recording it in Matthew 27:52-53 is to proleptically prepare the reader for the events of Matthew 28:1-10.

Though his literary interpretation of Matthew 27 helpfully accentuates the care with which Matthew crafted the passion narrative that concludes his Gospel, Ronald Witherup's reading falls short by displacing a historical event from the historical scene in which it occurs. If Matthew intended for the resurrection of the saints to read as a result of Jesus' resurrection, it seems odd that his placement of it is interjected into the midst of other cosmic portents that narrate events occurring as a result of his death, not his resurrection.

Ulrich Luz

After a redaction-critical analysis of the structure of Matthew 27:51-54 along with the sources utilized by Matthew to compose the passage, Luz offers an overview of the pericope's reception history and notes that interpretations of the passage are divided into five categories, broadly—salvation-history interpretation, Christological interpretation, Christ's descent into hell, allegorical interpretation, and eschatological interpretation.⁴¹ This is the prolegomena for Luz's own interpretation, which accentuates God's intervention in the narrative scene.⁴² He notes that Matthew is laboring to convey the events surrounding Jesus' cross-death as "acts of God" or "supernatural interventions" intended for self-revelatory purposes.⁴³ When it comes to the resurrection of the saints, he contends that, though their resurrection does not belong to the general eschatological resurrection, the "saints" could have been any of the "righteous" throughout redemptive-history.⁴⁴ Their presence in the narrative is a sign of God's coming judgment on the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.⁴⁵

Ultimately, though, Luz admits the interpretive difficulty of the passage and suggests that it has "multiple levels of meaning."⁴⁶ He accentuates two levels of meaning in particular—the Christological and the salvation-history dimensions of the text. Concerning the former, Luz suggests that the events recorded in Matthew 27:51-53 are "victory signs."⁴⁷ The self-revelation of God reaches its climax through these victory signs in the resurrection of the saints. Regarding the latter category, Luz accentuates God's revelation of the impending judgment upon Jerusalem. The temple is rendered obsolete and the future faith of the redeemed will no longer be ethnically or geographically confined, rather it will go with Jesus and those who place their faith in him.⁴⁸

Ulrich Luz helpfully notes that Matthew is communicating multiple truths simultaneously in his Gospel narrative by means of the pericope under discussion. Yet, he fails to show narratologically how Matthew has employed the passage broadly in Matthew 27:45-28:15. Further, he admits that he has no satisfactory explanation for the phrase, “*meta tēn ergersin autou*.”⁴⁹

R. T. France

R. T. France notes in his commentary that Matthew 27:52-53 is “special material”⁵⁰ in that it has no parallel in the other Gospel accounts.⁵¹ Further, he contends that Matthew’s lack of concern with “explaining” the meaning of the resurrection of the saints in his Gospel narrative is due to the fact that he is concerned with its symbolic significance.⁵² Matthew’s placement of the scene within the narrative connects Jesus’ death with his resurrection as the “key to new life which is now made available to God’s people.”⁵³ Contrary to John Wenham, France asserts that Matthew’s series of paratactic clauses with aorist verbs should not be broken up in order to interpret the resurrection of the saints as happening after Jesus’ resurrection. However, like Wenham, he argues that they did not come out of their tombs until after Jesus’ resurrection because their resurrection was the “consequence” of his resurrection from the dead.”⁵⁴

Though R. T. France rightly contends that Wenham’s reading of the Matthean pericope unnaturally breaks up the paratactic clauses, he too fails to note that Matthew’s placement of the scene in his Gospel is not “out-of-order.” Rather, having already been “resurrected” on the day of his death, they leave the area of the tombs to enter the holy city after his resurrection.

Michael Licona

Licona’s work, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* is a defense of the historicity of Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the dead. He challenges the assumptions of post-Enlightenment biblical interpreters who contend that historical evidence of Jesus’ resurrection is inaccessible to the modern historian.⁵⁵ He contends that the best evaluation of the evidence, for those who do have *a priori* commitments to the impossibility of the resurrection, supports belief in Jesus’ bodily, historical resurrection from the dead. In fact, he asserts that “there is no indication that the early Christians interpreted Jesus’ resurrection in a metaphorical or poetic sense

to the exclusion of it being a literal event that had occurred to his corpse. Indeed, that a bodily resurrection was the primary intended interpretation seems clear.”⁵⁶

Licona does not merely assert the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection; he also states “that the canonical Evangelists and Paul intended their statements regarding Jesus’ *death* by crucifixion to be interpreted literally.”⁵⁷ It is strange, then, when Licona writes “that the data surrounding what happened to Jesus is fragmentary and could possibly be mixed with legend” in reference to the scene of the resurrected saints in Matthew 27:51-54.⁵⁸ Further, considering his adamancy that Jesus’ death and resurrection are historical, it is inconsistent for Licona to suggest that the narrative scene surrounding Jesus’ cross-death is “theologically adorned” with conceivably ahistorical events—such as the darkness (Matt 27:45), the tearing of the veil (Matt 27:51), and the resurrection of the saints (27:52-53). The latter, he suggests, is metaphorical⁵⁹ and connotes eschatological imagery.⁶⁰ After surveying both Jewish and Roman literature in relation to resurrection as well as the death of an emperor/king, in his final assessment of the pericope he suggests the following:

Given the presence of phenomenological language in a symbolic manner in both Jewish and Roman literature related to a major event such as the death of an emperor or the end of a reigning king or even a kingdom, the presence of ambiguity in the relevant text of Ignatius, and that so very little can be known about Thallus’ comment on the darkness (including whether he was even referring to the darkness at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion or, if so, if he was merely speculating pertaining to a natural cause of the darkness claimed by early Christians), it seems to me that an understanding of the language in Matthew 27:52-53 as “special effects” with eschatological Jewish texts and thought in mind is most plausible. There is further support for this interpretation. If the tombs opened and the saints being raised upon Jesus’ death was not strange enough, Matthew adds that they did not come out of their tombs until after Jesus’ resurrection.⁶¹

Thus, Licona contends that the phenomena surrounding Jesus’ cross-death should be interpreted as “poetic device[s]” and eschatologically flavored “special effect” used by Matthew to communicate to his readers that Jesus died as the Son of God and that there is an impending judgment awaiting

Israel.⁶² Licona adopts this position as a rebuttal to Crossan's metaphorical interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Licona argues that it is the idea of "the harrowing of hell" which "most strongly persuades Crossan to go with a metaphorical understanding of Jesus' resurrection."⁶³ It is, therefore, because he rejects the way this text has been appropriated to argue for harrowing of hell and against Jesus' bodily, historical resurrection that Licona finds himself denying the historicity of these cosmic portents.⁶⁴

Michael Licona's work is magisterial in the breadth of its analysis. Unfortunately, in relation to Matthew 27:51-54, he is unable to reconcile how Matthew's work is both historical *and* eschatologically flavored. The events surrounding Jesus' cross-death have an apocalyptic "feel" as they accentuate cosmic impact of the occasion and manifest the end of temple as the mediator of God's soteriological blessings to the Jewish people and the foreign nations.⁶⁵ Yet, Matthew records historical events.

Summary

This brief survey of contemporary interpretative options demonstrates a variety of ways current exegetes have read this controversial Matthean pericope. Though the majority of conversation has revolved around displacement in the Matthean narrative due to the phrase, "*meta tēn ergersin autou*" in Matthew 27:53, or the pericope's apocalyptic/eschatological overtones due to the cosmological imagery, it has not been uncommon for interpreters to see other levels of meaning in this resurrection pericope. However, no interpreter appears to have connected the pericope with the theological motifs of Christology *and* missiology.

CONCLUSION: HOW NARRATOLOGY IMPROVES OUR READING OF MATTHEW 27:51-54

Hermeneutically, narratology can both accentuate and crystalize theological motifs that critical forms of interpretation often fail to observe. The article suggests, then, that a robust reading of Scripture is simultaneously exegetical, narratological, hermeneutical, and theological instead of merely grammatical-historical. Thus, one of the keys to reading the Gospels well is to read them with the literary features of a narrative in mind. This is especially true when reading the carefully crafted literary masterpiece known as the Gospel

of Matthew. A narratological reading of Matthew 27:51-54 improves our reading of Scripture by demonstrating that Matthew 27:51-54 is more than a perplexing text relating to Jesus' descent into hell. Rather, a narratological reading of the end of Matthew's Gospel reminds his readers that Jesus' death is primarily about the mercy of God that is manifested by the forgiveness of sins (John 20:23) and reconciliation with God (Rom 5:11; 2Cor 5:18; cf. Gen 3). Thus, this pericope is primarily about two theological motifs—Christology and missiology.

Moreover, and refreshingly, a narratological reading is not merely concerned with reconciling Matthew 27:51-54 with texts like 1 Corinthians 15:20, Colossians 1:18, and Revelation 1:5. Nor is a narratological reading of Matthew's pericope concerned with text-critical questions that present a stark dichotomy between historicity and the resurrection of the saints. Therefore, a narratological reading does not relegate this mysterious text to the realm of un-interpretable or un-preachable. Narratology's lack of attention to these relationships, however, does not mean that there is no significance in exploring them. Rather, it demonstrates that this text is primarily about Jesus' identity (Christology) and the mission his death necessitates (missiology).

The question, then, is "Why did Matthew intentionally employ this resurrection imagery in his Gospel-narrative?" The narrative structure is intended to accentuate Jesus' identity—at his birth, wise men are confounded as a star guides them to the Lord of heaven and earth (Matt 2:1-12); now at his death, the heavens, which he created, mourn in darkness (Matt 27:45) and the earth, which he created, breaks (Matt 27:51), giving back the dead as a testimony to his dominion as the Son of God (Matt 28:18). Again, when Jesus was born, children were slaughtered (Matt 2:16); when Jesus died, the dead were raised to life (Matt 27:52). Reading with the literary features of a narrative in mind accentuates Matthew's point—Jesus is one uniquely born; Jesus is one who uniquely dies. The uniqueness surrounding his life teaches us something about his identity.

Further, the uniqueness surrounding Jesus' life teaches us something about the mission his life and death necessitate. As the Son of God, Matthew tells us, Jesus saves people from their sins (Matt 1:21). Thus, Matthew's intentionality in his narrative structure is intended to accentuate the mission Jesus' death necessitates—his death is life-giving and ultimately salvific for persons from every nation who profess faith in his name (Matt 28:16-20;

cf. 27:54). Since Jesus is the Son of God and his life is unlike any other life, his death is a life-giving death (Matt 27:52); since Jesus is the Son of God and his life is unlike any other life, his death has meaning for the nations (Matt 27:54; 28:16-20).

Matthew concludes his Gospel with a reference to the beginning of his Gospel emphasizing the missional implications of Jesus' life, for Jesus "bears fruit" through the disciples he promises to be with until the end of the age as they are on mission for the renown of the triune God (Matt 28:20; cf. 1:23).

Matthew 27:51-54 is surrounded by mystery. Among other things, when composing his gospel, Matthew did not seek to answer all of the "crucial" questions that would arise from this periscope—questions like, "How will this pericope be reconciled with 1 Corinthians 15:20, Colossians 1:18, and Revelation 1:5?" This article has argued that contemporary readers of Matthew 27:51-54 have much to gain from a narratological re-appropriation of Matthew's Gospel narrative because it will inform our reading of Matthew 27:51-54 in the twenty-first century.

¹ I use "sign" instead of "symbol" since it more helpfully connotes a referent that points the reader both backward to the historical event as well as forward to a greater referent—for Matt 27:51-54 that is the resurrection in 28:1-10. That is, "sign" connotes more than a past historical referent. Like the rainbow in the Noahic Covenant, these "signs" function as proclamatory covenantal revelation (Gen 8:20-22; Matt 27:51-54) not only of what God has done in the past, but of what he will no longer do again in the future—he will never again crush his Son as a substitute for sinners. Further, it will be argued below that Matthew prepares his readers for the events in 28:1-10 and 28:16-20 by proleptically foreshadowing them through the "signs" in 27:51-54. Additionally, by "signs" I mean cosmic portents that manifest divine approval of Jesus' work as a penal substitute—these are divine portents that testify to the legitimacy of Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. For a recent argument on interpreting the symbolism in Matthew 27:51-54 see Daniel M. Gurtner, "Interpreting Apocalyptic Symbolism in the Gospel of Matthew," Unpublished paper delivered at the *Evangelical Theological Society*, New Orleans, 2009, 1-38.

² Strauss contends that there are only four events which accompany Jesus' death: 1) the curtain of the temple is torn, 2) an earthquake occurs, 3) the tombs are opened and the "holy ones" are resurrected, and 4) the centurion and those with him exclaim, 'Surely he was the Son of God!' See Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 238. Others, however, include the centurion's confession as a sixth sign; however, it seems that the centurion's confession is a positive result of the five signs that happen after Jesus yields up his spirit rather than a result of Jesus' death on the cross. The cosmic signs overcome his Gentile-unbelief. This is in contrast to Sim who contends that the events surrounding Jesus' death on the Cross were not a sufficient basis for a faith-profession from the centurion in Matthew 27:54. See David C. Sim, "The 'Confession' of the Soldiers in Matthew 27:54," *The Heythrop Journal* 34 (1993): 416. For a thorough treatment of the tearing of the temple veil, see Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Gurtner argues that the rending of the veil is cosmological imagery signifying the rending of the heavens.

³ For reasons specified below, I will argue that Matthew structured this section of his Gospel with a "lesser" resurrection (i.e., that of the "saints") and a "greater" resurrection (i.e., that of Jesus) in order to 1) accentuate

Christological and missiological motifs and 2) to climatically bring his Gospel plotline to resolution. Additionally, it is crucial to note that by “lesser resurrection” I mean, “not glorified,” and by “greater resurrection” I mean, “glorified.”

- 4 By “narratologically” I do not mean “fictitious” or “non-historical” or “imaginative” in the sense that the events presented by Matthew are “non-real” invention. Rather, I mean reading with the type of literary sensibilities that enables one to discern authorial devices such as contrast and irony and narrative progression/development in the midst of a narrative account and amid other literary devices. For example, Leithart argues for a chiasmic literary structure of Matt 27-28, specifically 27:55-28:20, as he notes the repetition of the same characters and other literary themes in the Gospel’s conclusion. See Peter J. Leithart, “Structure of Matthew 27-28,” *First Things*, March 15, 2010, accessed January 23, 2014, <http://www.leithart.com/2010/03/15/structure-of-matthew-27-28/>. See also, Peter J. Leithart, *The Four: A Survey of the Gospels* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2010) and Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009). Following Tannehill, Combrink argues that greater awareness to stories and how they are told is necessary to the interpretation of Matthew’s Gospel in H. J. Bernard Combrink, “The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 34 (1983): 63.
- 5 Note the *inclusio* with Matt 4:5—*eis tēn hagian polin*. Previously, after the baptismal scene in which God the Father identifies Jesus as the beloved Son with whom he is pleased (3:17), Satan challenged Jesus, attempting to incite him to take the initiative to identify himself as “the Son of God”—*ei huios ei tou theou*—but, Jesus refused (4:6-7). Similarly, the scene prior to the pericope under consideration reads like an anti-baptismal scene—reversing the scene that precedes Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. Formerly, Jesus had spoken (3:15), the Spirit descended upon him (3:16), and the Father audibly testified from heaven to his identify (3:17); now, after crying out with a loud voice twice (27:46, 50) an unnerving silence pervades the scene before Jesus yields the Spirit and dies (27:50). It is only after Jesus’ death that Matthew notes how the Father testified to Jesus’ identity as the “the Son of God” by means of the cosmological and apocalyptic imagery which dominates this historical scene.
- 6 For more on narrative design as well as narratological intentionality in the Gospels, see Timothy Wiarda, *Interpreting Gospel Narratives: Scenes, People, and Theology* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010).
- 7 Lohr argues for a similar structure of Matthew’s Gospel in Charles H. Lohr, “Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961): 427. He wrongly, however, places Matt 23 in the eschatological sermon-discourse. For a critique of Lohr’s position, see Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “The Structure of Matthew XIV-XVIII,” *Revue Biblique* 82 (1975): 369-371. Murphy-O’Connor’s strongest contention is that placing Matt 23 with Matt 19-22 accentuates the correspondence between the first sermon-discourse, Matt 5-7, and the last sermon-discourse, Matt 24-25. In this case, both sermon-discourses would be addressed to Jesus’ disciples; his disciples would be, according to Murphy-O’Connor, distinguished from the crowds within Matthew’s Gospel. Additionally, Murphy-O’Connor contends that this makes obvious the deliberate intention of Matthew to make the five sermon-discourses one of the major components of his gospel. Murphy-O’Connor argues that this is indisputable by the phrase, *kai egeneto hote etelesen ho Iēsous*, which is only used five times throughout the gospel. Pennington also notes that chapter 13 forms the chiasmic center of Matthew. For Pennington, this accentuates “the centrality of the message of the coming of the Kingdom of God.” See Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 280-281. Further, via Pennington, the chart above manifests a “sermon” then “narrative” structure throughout the Gospel rather than “narrative” then “sermon.” Though interpreters preceding me have noted that the discourses were either sermons or material collected from several of Jesus’ sermons, the phrase “sermonic-discourse” is my own. I am using the phrase intentionally to emphasize the homiletical nature of the Matthean discourses. This is significant both for our interpretation of the discourse—they are sermons/sermonic—as well as for our proclamation of the text—Matthew’s Gospel was intended to model for us one aspect of *how* to preach about the Kingdom of Heaven (KOH) now that it has been “*plērōsai*” in Christ (Matt 5:17). It seems, then, that the homiletical goals of Matthew informed his composition of the sermon-discourse in that he crafted his gospel 1) to solicit a certain type of response to the KOH and 2) to model for his readers how to preach authoritatively, like Jesus, about the KOH—*ēn gar didaskōn autous hōs exousian echōn* (Matt 7:29). Though referring to the Sermon on the Mount, Pelikan notes that homiletics can take their sermon cues from Jesus, who perfectly wed form with content. This model is seen in the sermon-discourses crafted by Matthew in his gospel. See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Divine Rhetoric: The Sermon on the Mount as Message and Model in Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), 48.

- ⁸ Matthew is clear, though, that it is only a life-giving death for those who love God instead of mammon (Matt 28:11-15; cf. 6:24)
- ⁹ This survey of the Matthean literature focuses on recent contributions to this pericope rather than those spanning the history of reception.
- ¹⁰ Delvin D. Hutton, "The Resurrection of the Holy Ones (Matt 27:51b-53): A Study of the Theology of the Matthean Passion Narrative" (Th.D. diss., Harvard University, 1970), 14. His analysis of interpretive history is short. Further, it is not entirely clear the significance of the distinction between his second and third appropriations of the text. I would argue that the divinely caused cosmic portents testify to the "deity" of Jesus. Thus, there appears to be 1) categorical overlap and 2) other interpretive appropriations of the text to explore.
- ¹¹ Ibid., 15.
- ¹² Ibid. Unlike Licona (see below), he is not concerned with questions of historicity in his work on the resurrection.
- ¹³ Ibid., 16.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 109.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 108.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 117, 119, 126, 172-176.
- ¹⁷ Hutton speculates to the identify of "tōn kekoimēmenōn hagiōn" in his work. He suggests that they are "the patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs, who, having joined their brethren in the sleep of death were set apart for vindication and blessing in the resurrection." Ibid., 142, cf. 137-143.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 145.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 115.
- ²⁰ Though Wenham's article is short, his contribution is significant because his thesis persuades D. A. Carson, *Matthew 13-28* (Expositor's Bible Commentary; ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 581-582. See also, Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (The New American Commentary, vol. 22; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 421.
- ²¹ See J. W. Wenham, "When Were the Saints Raised?," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 32:1 (1981): 150-152.
- ²² Wenham is concerned with alleviating Matthew from the erroneous assumption that the saints were resurrected for three days while remaining around the tombs until Jesus is raised from the dead in Matt 28:1-10—"Then the succession of events on Good Friday is clearly delineated, and the whole episode of the resurrected saints is placed after the resurrection of Jesus, thus absolving the evangelist from the charge of depicting living saints cooped up for days in tombs around the city." Ibid., 151.
- ²³ Ibid., 152.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 151.
- ²⁵ Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 2.
- ²⁶ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 3. Chatman's work is a structural analysis of narratology. He defines "story" as "the what of narrative" and "discourse" as "the way of narrative." Further, he seeks to explicate the elements of storytelling and explain their connection with the structure of narrative. That is, he seeks to provide a comprehensive approach to the general theory of interpreting narrative. His work, *Story and Discourse*, though not a theological work can aid the interpreter who rightly understands the care with which Matthew as an author has crafted his gospel narrative so that the elements of the story, which are historical, are theologically arranged in this discourse to convey truth. See Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978). Jonathan Pennington has recently advocated a narratological analysis akin to Chatman's for gospel interpretation. See Jonathan Pennington, *Reading the Gospel's Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 169-182.
- ²⁷ Thus, "story-time" reflects the chronological order in which all the events cited in the gospel's narrative occur; "discourse-time," however, is the order in which the readers of the gospel are told about the events that comprise the story. Ibid., 40-41.
- ²⁸ Jack D. Kingsbury, ed., *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical & Social Scientific Approaches* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 1-5.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 3.
- ³⁰ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 89. Earlier in his academic career, in *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* Kingsbury contended that the climax of Matthew's Gospel is intended primarily to convey that Jesus is the Son of God. As Jesus' resisting of Satan's temptations proved that he was the Son of God (Matt 4:3, 6), so now staying on the Cross and resisting the temptation of the Pharisaic naysayers to come down from it proves that he is indeed the Son of God. See Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 74-77.

- 31 Kingsbury adds a third (for him it is the second of the three) significance of the portents surrounding Jesus' death. He contends that the centurion's confession calls attention to the fact that the Cross signifies the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and the end of the temple cult as the "place" of salvation. See Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 89-90. Though Jesus' death on the Cross does indicate the end of his earthly life, it seems more accurate to argue that the tearing of the veil, not the confession of the centurion, marks the end of the temple as the mediator of salvation's blessings. Thus, the centurion's confession is a result of the portents and a proleptic narratival indicator that the gospel will be taken to the Gentiles (Matt 28:16-20; cf. 27:54).
- 32 Ibid., 126; see also 115. From the beginning of his gospel, Matthew has indicated that "evil" characterizes the religious "*gennēmata echidnōn*" (Matt 3:7). Thus, Kingsbury argues that conflict is a central motif throughout the plot of Matthew's story.
- 33 Among some of the more explicit fulfillment texts scattered throughout the gospel narrative are: Matt 1:23; 2:6, 18; 3:1; 4:14; 12:18-21; 13:14-15, 35; 15:8-9; 21:5, 16, 42; 26:56.
- 34 Kingsbury contends that the presence of these two groups together in the narrative is a prefiguring of the post-Easter church. See Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 57.
- 35 Ronald D. Witherup, "The Cross of Jesus: A Literary-Critical Study of Matthew 27" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1985).
- 36 Ibid., xi.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Witherup is inconsistent in this argumentation, though. He later contends that the resurrection of the sleeping saints was caused by the resurrection of Jesus. Ibid., 277, 285.
- 39 Ibid., 280.
- 40 Ibid., 284.
- 41 Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28* (Hermeneia; trans. James E. Crouch; ed. Helmut Koester; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 560-65.
- 42 Ibid., 566-70.
- 43 Ibid., 566. Later, he connects the self-revelatory events with the centurion's profession. Based on God's revelation of Jesus' identity, the centurion confesses Jesus to be the Son of God as the disciples had done previously.
- 44 Ibid., 567.
- 45 Ibid., 568.
- 46 Ibid., 570.
- 47 Ibid., 571.
- 48 Ibid., 571.
- 49 Ibid., 568-569.
- 50 Gurtner is one among many scholars who refer to Matt 27:51b-53 as Matthew's "special material" since several of these portents are unique to his Gospel. See Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, 144-152.
- 51 R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 1081.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid., 1082.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Two leading well-known advocates who deny Jesus' resurrection from the dead that he responds to are Bart Ehrman and John Dominic Crossan.
- 56 Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 553.
- 57 Ibid., 545. Emphasis original.
- 58 Ibid., 185.
- 59 He refers to Matt 27:52-53 as "that strange little text in Matthew 27:52-53, where upon Jesus' death the dead saints are raised and walk into the city of Jerusalem." Ibid., 545-546. Further, he notes that Mark and Luke record some of the phenomena surrounding Jesus' death—the darkness covering the land and the rending of the temple's inner veil—but it is Matthew alone who records the earthquake, the rocks splitting, the tombs opening, the raising of the dead saints, and their subsequent entrance into Jerusalem.
- 60 Ibid., 550.
- 61 Ibid., 552.
- 62 Ibid., 553. Though he understands some of the events surrounding his death to be poetic device, he contends that "interpreting the phenomena at Jesus' death as poetry does not lend support to interpreting Jesus' bodily resurrection as nothing more than a poetic or symbolic device."

⁶³ Ibid., 546.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 546-548, 552.

⁶⁵ Though his work is highly acclaimed, Licona's interpretation of this Matthean pericope resulted in interpretive-evangelical tumult from two leading figures in particular—Norman L. Geisler and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. Mohler's assessment of Licona's work can be found: R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Devil is in the Details: Biblical Inerrancy and the Licona Controversy," *AlbertMohler.com*, September 14, 2011, accessed September 14, 2011, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2011/09/14/the-devil-is-in-the-details-biblical-inerrancy-and-the-licona-controversy/>. For Geisler's numerous interactions with Licona and his work, see: "'Licona Controversy'Articles," *Dr. Norman L. Geisler*, last modified February 11, 2014, accessed February 11, 2014, <http://www.normangeisler.net/articles/Bible/Inspiration-Inerrancy/Licona/default.htm>. Even though Licona adamantly affirms the historicity of both Jesus' cross-death as well as Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead, their concern is with the implication(s) of denying the historicity of events occurring within a scene that is historical—namely, Matt 27:45-54. Since the aftermath of this interpretive argument was so public, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary devoted an entire journal to the assessment of the theme of resurrection, Licona's work, and the implications of Licona's arguments. See *Southeastern Theological Review* 3:1 (2012). Since the thesis of this paper affirms the historicity of these portents and is not an analysis of the relationship between interpretation and inerrancy, it is unnecessary for this argument to be explicated here.

Raised for Our Justification: The Resurrection and Penal Substitution

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What seems to have happened is that Western theology has allowed itself to be dominated by a legalistic view of sin and a forensic model of atonement which leaves little room for resurrection. When the atonement is thought of chiefly in terms of merit and the law, the cross becomes central, but the resurrection drops into the category of subjective redemption. [This] idea of atonement does not have much room for resurrection which can go almost unmentioned because it is not required.¹

That charge came from the pen of Clark Pinnock. It is no secret that Pinnock departed over the course of his life from numerous tenets of evangelicalism. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear his voice among the myriad of self-proclaimed evangelicals attacking penal substitutionary atonement. However, before dismissing the attack too quickly, we should at least acknowledge an element of truth in these words. I do not mean that there is truth in the claim that a forensic understanding of the atonement leaves no room for the resurrection. I aim in this article to argue otherwise. But there certainly is truth in the claim that the resurrection “can go almost unmentioned” by those of us who proclaim the gospel and understand the atonement as an act of penal substitution.

As a pastor who asks every potential member to share with me the gospel, I can actually ratchet up the charge made by Pinnock. In my experience, the resurrection does indeed “go almost unmentioned” on occasions, as people seem to tack it on to their explanation of Christ’s death for sinners as our hope of salvation. But just as often, it goes unmentioned altogether. While interviewing numerous college students for membership at our church (college students who come in large measure from solidly evangelical homes), I have lost count of the number of times I have had to ask, “Now did Jesus stay dead?” after a potential member had shared the “gospel.”²

Without exception, the candidate for membership has answered that question by affirming the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. However, the fact that this element of the gospel message (without which, Paul affirms, we would still be in our sins—1 Cor 15:17) is so easily neglected must lead us to pause and ask why the resurrection is so easily ignored in our presentations of the gospel. The answer, I believe, is that though all of these students believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and understand the need to affirm this truth, they (and numerous other evangelicals) do not grasp why Christ’s resurrection was necessary in a salvific sense. Consequently, failing to see the saving significance of the resurrection, they forget this crucial element of the gospel when describing Christ’s saving work.

The logic of this “gospel” message seems sound, coherent, and complete, without making note of Christ’s resurrection. God is holy. Man is sinful. Therefore, man stands under God’s condemnation and coming wrath, as sinners before a holy God. However, God the Son took on flesh and came to live the perfect life of obedience we never could. Moreover, he died on the cross for us. Bearing the penalty for our sins by his death, Christ appeased God’s wrath and bore the condemnation we deserved as he gave himself up in our place. Because of Christ’s saving work, then, all who repent and believe in him will be credited with Christ’s perfect obedience and receive forgiveness of their sins, as Christ’s death counts as the complete payment for our sins and removes God’s condemnation from us.

The problem, of course, is that without mention of the resurrection a gospel message is no gospel at all, and Scripture will not allow such an empty proclamation to be called “good news.” Rather, Paul declared, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Cor 15:17-18).³

In light of the possibility (and occasional tendency⁴) of proponents of penal substitution to articulate a “gospel message” without noting the crucial and necessary element of Christ’s resurrection, opponents of penal substitution have suggested that evangelicals need to rethink their understanding of Christ’s atoning work.⁵ That is, if an understanding man’s problem before God and Christ’s atoning work on their behalf can be articulated in such a way that the resurrection is not “required” (as Pinnock’s attack claims), then surely we must abandon these forensic categories, especially in regard to Christ’s atoning work. To abandon penal substitution in light of the biblical teaching in support of this crucial doctrine (see especially Rom 3:21-26; 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13),⁶ however, is no better than ignoring the resurrection. What is needed is not for evangelicals to flee the doctrine of penal substitution but rather consistent and faithful teaching that shows why penal substitutionary atonement not only leaves “room” for the resurrection of Christ but actually demands that Christ be raised, if man is to be justified by Christ’s work. Such is the purpose of this article as I aim to show that not only can Christ’s resurrection be reconciled with penal substitution but is actually the necessary consequence of penal substitution if indeed Christ’s work is to serve as the basis for man’s justification before God.

UNION WITH CHRIST

In order to understand the connection between penal substitution and Christ’s resurrection, one must consider the representative nature of Jesus’ work. Some have attempted to place the concepts of representation and substitution in separate and exclusive categories,⁷ but Scripture allows no such division. Believers are said to have “died with Christ” (Rom 6:8) *and* are told that “Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). Thus, Christ represents believers in his high-priestly work (Heb 5:1), yet because he is their substitute, they do not have to bear the wrath of God in their own persons. When explaining Christ’s atoning work, then, Richard Gaffin rightly notes that “we must account for both the exclusive or strictly substitutionary and the inclusive or representative aspects, both the ‘for us’ and the ‘in him’ and ‘with him’ of Christ’s death.”⁸ One must see Jesus as a “representative substitute”⁹ for believers and his atoning work as that of “inclusive substitution.”¹⁰ The combination of these two elements is crucial because unless the representative

element of Christ's work is acknowledged alongside that of substitution, the resurrection will seem to have little connection to a forensic atonement. The reason for this is because what Christ accomplishes in both his death and resurrection is appropriated to believers via their union with him.

Union with Christ has been noted as the "central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation,"¹¹ and this is for good reason. Salvation is pictured throughout Scripture in terms of those blessings which believers experiences by their union with Christ. Thus, when Paul writes of believers experiencing no condemnation before God, it is a reality for those who are *in Christ* (Rom 8:1). Nor is this reality of the blessings of salvation being experienced through union with Christ rare in Paul's letters. Bruce Demarest has noted that expressions such as *en Christō*, *en kuriō*, *en Christō Iēsou*, and *en autō* occur 216 times in Paul's letters, in addition to the twenty-six times in John's writings.¹² It is no exaggeration to say that without union with Christ, there is no salvation. But what is the nature of union with Christ? In order to answer this question, one must consider the relationship Scripture portrays between Adam and Christ.

ADAM, CHRIST, AND REPRESENTATIVE UNION

The identification most important for understanding the nature of union with Christ is that of Jesus as the second/last Adam. Paul links Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 45, and 47. In Romans 5:14, Adam is referred to as a "type"¹³ of Christ, minimally indicating that there is similarity between these two individuals. In addition, in 1 Corinthians 15:22, Paul parallels the notions of individuals being "in Adam" and "in Christ." Thus, the clearest indicator of what Paul means by "in Christ" is found in understanding the parallel phrase "in Adam." That is, understanding the way in which Adam relates to mankind or the manner in which man is "in Adam" should be indicative of the manner in which men are in union with Christ or "in Christ." What, then, is the relationship between Adam and mankind?

The answer according to Romans 5:12-21 is that Adam is in a "representative union" with mankind, so that what Adam did affected all those "in him." That is, as Adam lived in the garden, he did not live his life as a private and lone individual but represented mankind before God. This is clear in Romans 5:12-21 as Paul consistently shows Adam's one action affecting all

those “in him.” Therefore, as Paul notes Adam’s disobedience in the garden, he logically moves from the condemnation Adam brought on himself to the condemnation of all men for whom he was a representative (Rom 5:16, 18). Thus, what Adam does (disobeys) and receives (a verdict of condemnation) is determinative for those whom he legally represents.¹⁴

It is not surprising, then, that Paul speaks of Christ’s work as determinative for those whom he legally represents. Paralleling the theme regarding Adam’s representative action, he notes that Christ’s “one act of righteousness leads to justification resulting in life for all men”¹⁵ and that by his “obedience the many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:18-19). Where Adam is called the “first” man/Adam, Christ is called the “second” and “last” man/Adam (1 Cor 15:45-47). This implies that Adam and Jesus are unique; none other affects the world as these two. Gaffin’s comments here deserve to be quoted at length:

Adam and Christ are identified as representatives or key figures in solidarity with others. The order of Paul’s outlook here is such that Adam is “the first” ... there is no one *before* him. Christ is “the last” ... there is no one *after* him... But Christ is not only “the last,” he is also, as such, “the second” ... there is no one *between* Adam and him. In other words, and this is particularly important for us here, the sweep of Paul’s covenant-historical outlook, the overarching hierarchy of his concerns here, is such that no one comes into consideration but Adam and Christ—not David, not Moses and the law given at Sinai, not even Abraham as the promise-holder, not Noah, nor anyone else... As Paul is looking at things in this passage, no one between them “counts.”¹⁶

Therefore, just as the first Adam lives with his actions and the result of those actions as determinative for those whom he represents, so Christ lives with his actions and the result of those actions as determinative for those whom he represents. What, then, does Christ do so that those united to him are affected? Answering this question, too, causes one to reflect on the work of Adam.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST’S WORK

When one considers Christ’s work against the backdrop of Adam’s, it is clear that the crucial issues to be addressed (and overturned) are disobedience/

sin, condemnation, and death. What Paul highlights concerning the work of Adam in Romans 5:12-21 is Adam's disobedience, the condemnation that follows, and the manifestation of that condemnation in a reign of death. The fact that Adam's "one trespass led to condemnation for all men" (Rom 5:18) indicates the demand for absolute obedience, as one sin is sufficient to bring about condemnation on Adam and all those whom he represents before God. Recognizing this demand for obedience, Adam's sin highlights the need for one to obey where he failed and to remove the condemnation that he brought upon mankind if individuals are to be justified and live.

This is precisely the nature in which the Bible presents Christ's work. As man's representative, Christ must obey perfectly as well as bear condemnation on man's behalf. Thus, both Christ's "active" and "passive obedience"¹⁷ are necessary for overturning the effect of Adam's sin.¹⁸

When Jesus comes into the world, he comes as a representative for those "in him" to undo what Adam did as humanity's first representative. It is, therefore, not by accident that the beginning of Jesus' public ministry is a time of temptation. Also noteworthy is the manner in which this temptation appears in Luke's gospel.

Luke writes of Jesus' baptism in 3:21-22, ending with the Father's declaration, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). He then instantly moves into the giving of the genealogy of Jesus. Whereas Matthew's genealogy goes back to Abraham, though, Luke's concludes with reference to Adam, whom he describes as "the son of God" (Luke 3:38). Then, immediately upon concluding Jesus' genealogy, Luke turns to the account of Jesus being tempted by the devil. Again, interestingly, Satan's first temptation begins, "If you are the Son of God . . ." (Luke 4:3). The connecting point between these three seemingly unrelated events or topics (i.e., baptism, genealogy, and temptation) is the identity of the true son of God, the one who would obey God in the face of temptation. Luke is establishing Jesus as the last Adam, the true Son of God, the one who would obey where Adam failed.¹⁹ Therefore, Jesus "relives Adam's life"²⁰ and experiences the temptations Adam faced, but where Adam failed, Jesus remained righteous.

The Bible also portrays Jesus as bearing the wrath of God in his death. Just as Jesus comes to obey where Adam failed so he comes to bear the condemnation brought about by Adam's sin. In his death, however, the New Testament continues to emphasize Jesus' role as representative. The author

of Hebrews picks up this imagery most clearly, showing that Jesus is a priest in the line of Melchizedek, so that he might “act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins” (Heb 5:1-9).²¹ Jesus’ incarnation, then, is crucial so that he might “become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17). Thus, Hebrews sees Jesus as a representative for the people of God so that he might offer a sacrifice to turn away God’s wrath from them.²² One key difference between Jesus and the former high priests, however, is that Jesus is both the priest making the sacrifice on behalf of God’s people *and* the substitutionary sacrifice that is offered. Just as the lamb without blemish was slaughtered and its blood shed instead of the firstborn during the Passover, so Jesus offers “himself without blemish to God” (Heb 9:14). He appeared “once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of *himself*” (Heb 9:26).

Therefore, though God’s people were the objects of God’s wrath because of their sin (Rom 1:18-3:20; Eph 2:1-3), Christ bore God’s wrath and condemnation for sinners in his death on the cross. This reality is seen both in Jesus’ struggle in the garden and in the nature of his death. Prior to the cross, Jesus prays in the garden, “Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36). In light of the cup symbolizing God’s wrath in Scripture, this is the clearest meaning of “cup” in this text.²³ Jesus anticipates going to the cross so that he might bear the condemnation of God’s people—the wrath of God. Then, the scene at the cross itself shows that Jesus undergoes condemnation, bearing God’s wrath toward sinners. He is handed over to die, cries out, asking why God has forsaken him, and the earth is shrouded in darkness—all signs that he is bearing God’s wrath.²⁴ Therefore, when Jesus dies on the cross, he dies as the righteous Son of God bearing the condemnation of the Father for those who had sinned against him.

UNION WITH CHRIST AND HIS WORK

Union with Christ, then, is the believer’s union with one who has lived a perfectly obedient life before God and died, bearing the condemnation for man’s sin.²⁵ Both of these elements are crucial in explaining the concept of penal substitutionary atonement. Having lived a righteous life as the representative

for the people of God, Jesus dies as their substitute, paying the penalty for their sin. Bruce Demarest's definition of penal substitution concurs:

In love Jesus Christ, our substitute, in his *life* perfectly fulfilled the law and in *death* bore the just penalty for our sins. Expressed otherwise, on the cross Christ took our place and bore the equivalent punishment for our sins, thereby satisfying the just demands of the law and appeasing God's wrath.²⁶

This explanation of the nature and effect of Christ's death, however, again elucidates why some have claimed that those holding to penal substitutionary atonement make the resurrection unnecessary. Gregory Boyd, for example, notes, "If the main problem needing to be addressed by Christ was that God's wrath needed to be appeased, and if the main solution to this problem consisted of God slaying his Son on the cross, one naturally wonders what could possibly be left to be done once this is completed."²⁷ If man's problem is that he bears God's condemnation because of his sin and so God's wrath hangs over him, why is any more needed than for Christ to bear the condemnation for man's sin on the cross and, as his substitute, appease God's wrath toward man by paying man's penalty?

Moreover, the apparent sufficiency of Christ's obedient life and penalty-bearing death is seen when one compares the role of Adam and the role of Christ. If one considers that Adam disobeys and brings about condemnation that shows itself in death, then it seems that Christ's work parallels this sufficiently to undo what Adam did and to produce forgiveness of sins and life for those united to him. The logic of this parallelism is displayed in the following illustration comparing the work of Adam and Christ:

Adam → disobeys → is condemned → condemnation evidenced in death

Christ → obeys → bears condemnation → bearing of condemnation evidenced in life

In this sequence it seems logical that Christ's obedient life and penalty-bearing death are sufficient to bring about justification to the believer, a justification which shows itself in life. Each aspect of Adam's work that results in death appears to be matched sufficiently by an aspect of Christ's work that results in life. The problem, however, as noted earlier is that the New Testament simply will not allow this to be seen as a sufficient paradigm. Rather, Paul declares, "If Christ has not been

raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17-18). That is to say, there is another necessary element in Christ’s work if the believer is to be justified and have life—the resurrection of Christ. To see precisely why this is the case, one must understand the nature of Christ’s resurrection.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The necessity of the resurrection must be seen against the backdrop of the fact that Christ died as the condemned one.²⁸ If Christ’s death is the last “word” on that Friday, then it is a judicial declaration that Jesus is accursed of God. For Jesus to remain dead would be evidence that the one who appeared to be the perfectly obedient Son was something less than perfectly righteous. Moreover, since believers are united with Christ in such a way that what is true of him is true of them, if Christ remains under the condemnation of God then believers are condemned as well. After his death, then, Jesus must be justified, vindicated as the righteous Son. This is precisely what happens in the resurrection.²⁹ As Geerhardus Vos explained, “Christ’s resurrection was the *de facto* declaration of God in regard to his being just. His quickening bears in itself testimony of his justification.”³⁰

A return to the argument of Romans 5:12-21 reinforces this understanding, particularly Paul’s antithetical parallelism between Christ’s work and Adam’s work. As Paul notes that Adam sinned and brought condemnation that resulted in death, so he writes, “One act of righteousness leads to *justification resulting in life* for all men” (Rom 5:18). The unspoken reality paralleled in the work of Adam and Christ is that each received a legal sentence.³¹ That is, the judgment following Adam’s one trespass brought condemnation to all men (Rom 5:16, 18) precisely because this was the very sentence that was pronounced on Adam, who served as a representative for all mankind in union with him. That legal sentence of condemnation is then manifested in the reign of death. In like manner, Christ’s obedience “brought justification” (Rom 5:16) to all in union with him because this was the very sentence pronounced on Christ. And that legal sentence of justification is manifested in life. This parallelism is illustrated in the following revised diagram:

Adam → disobeys/sins → is condemned → condemnation evidenced in death
Christ → obeys → (bears condemnation) → is justified → justification evidenced in life

This diagram better reflects the reality that life is founded upon the legal sentence of justification received by Christ.³² How is it, though, that Christ's resurrection reveals that he has received this sentence of justification? Utilizing Vos's language, how is it that Christ's "quickenings bears in itself the testimony of his justification?" The answer lies in the connection between righteousness, justification, and life illustrated above. If one can say that death is a demonstration that one has been condemned, so one may equally say that life is a demonstration that one has been justified. Consequently, when Christ is raised from death *to life*, it is a demonstration that he is justified. The transformation to life is the evidence of a legal sentence of justification. This is what Vos was claiming as he wrote, "Christ's resurrection was the *de facto* declaration of God in regard to his being just. His quickening bears in itself testimony of his justification." If one can only have life as a result of being justified, then the resurrection of Christ to life is proof he has been/ is justified.³³

Scripture confirms this conclusion as well. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3:16 that Christ has been "justified by the Spirit,"³⁴ which most agree is a reference to Christ's resurrection carried out through the agency of the Spirit.³⁵ Moreover, if Christ's resurrection is needed to justify him because he had died as the condemned one, then it should be apparent that the resurrection was a necessary act *precisely because* of the nature of Christ's atoning death. Because Jesus was the righteous Son of God (the obedient second/last Adam), he could not remain under the wrathful condemnation of the Father, which he bore in his death. Thus, far from being disconnected from the resurrection, it is Christ's penal substitutionary death which *demand*s the resurrection. Furthermore, because the resurrection is a demonstration of the legal verdict of righteousness pronounced on the incarnate Son, the resurrection itself (like the atonement) is fundamentally forensic in nature.

JUSTIFICATION, RESURRECTION, AND THE BELIEVER

Because of the believer's union with Christ, however, that which Christ does and receives does not affect him alone. As established earlier, the representative union that exists between Christ and believers declares that what Christ does and receives is credited to those "in him." Therefore, if Christ's resurrection proves the legal declaration of his righteous status, then

believers should expect to see Christ's resurrection bringing about their own justification. And this is precisely what one finds in Romans 4:25.

Paul writes in Romans 4:25 that Jesus "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." The first half of the verse highlights Jesus' identification with believers in their condemnation—Christ pays the penalty for their sin. The second half underscores the connection between Christ's resurrection and believers' justification. The details of this connection become apparent as one understands that Christ's resurrection means that *Christ* has received a legal sentence of justification. The resurrected Christ is nothing less than the one who has received the legal sentence that he is righteous. Therefore, if believers are united to Christ in such a way that what Christ does *and receives* is determinative for them, then one may conclude that as Christ's resurrection displays that he has received a declaration of righteousness, so believers receive a declaration of righteousness as well as they are united with the resurrected Christ by faith.³⁶ This explains the logic of Romans 4:25. *Christ* is raised, and (because he is in representative union with believers) it is for *our* justification.³⁷

This understanding of Christ's resurrection and the benefit for believers also makes sense of Paul's claim in 1 Corinthians 15:17: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." Because Christ's death was one in which he bore the condemnation brought about because of Adam's sin, if Christ is not raised then he is under the condemnation of God. Furthermore, because believers are in union with Christ so that what Christ does and receives is determinative for them, then if Christ is not raised they are in union with one who remains under the condemnation of God. Thus, if Christ were not raised, they would remain in sin and under condemnation. This is the precise argument of 1 Corinthians 15:17. If believers are justified via their union with Christ, it is not only necessary that Christ dies on the cross, bearing the penalty for man's sin, but that he is also raised up so as to be under condemnation no more and receive his justifying verdict.

Were one to stop with believers receiving a justifying verdict, however, it would do injustice both to the connection between righteousness, justification, and life revealed in Romans 5 as well as the full nature of Christ's own justification. Romans 5:12-21 and the nature of Christ's resurrection each serves to remind the believer that the justification of the believer necessarily

includes both a judicial declaration of his righteousness in this life and a public demonstration of that justifying verdict in life.

Again, this reality is evident from the connection drawn in Romans 5:12-21. As verse 18 reminds the reader, Christ's righteousness results in justification which results in life. The connection between Christ's righteousness and the legal sentence of justification manifested in life is no less certain than the connection between Adam's sin and the legal sentence of condemnation manifested in death, which is witnessed to daily in our lives.³⁸ Therefore, just as Romans 5:12-21 leaves no possibility of one falling under condemnation and not being affected by death, so it leaves no possibility of one being justified and not experiencing eternal life—that which is fully experienced only in resurrection. Consequently, all who receive a verdict of justification necessarily will manifest that justification in eternal life (both as a foretaste in this age and in its fullness in the age to come).

Second, if indeed salvation is experienced in terms of union with Christ so that what Christ does and receives is determinative for those “in him,” then one should consider the justification of believers in light of Christ's own justification. In Christ's resurrection, the judicial declaration of his justification is evidenced in the reality that he is raised to die no more. Christ's resurrection signaled not only his justification but served as an eschatological demonstration of that justification as his body was raised from the dead. Therefore, if what Christ receives is determinative for believers, then believers' justification must be evidenced in bodily transformation as well. Christ must not only be the first to be raised in evidence of his justification but “the firstborn *among many brothers*” (Rom 8:29).

CONCLUSION

The claim that penal substitution makes no room for the resurrection because it is not required in a system of salvation that necessitates forensic atonement is without warrant. Rather, it is precisely because the incarnate Son dies as the condemned one in his substitutionary role for sinners that his resurrection is required. If Christ is not raised, then believers are united with one who lies in the grave, accursed of God. Consequently, because salvation is founded in union with Christ so that what is true of him is true of those united with him, if Christ lies condemned in the grave, then so do all whose faith rests in him.

The justification of sinners requires the removal of condemnation and a verdict of righteousness. Because these salvific blessings are communicated to believers via their union with Christ, these realities must be experienced by the incarnate Son of God. This is what is experienced in the life, death, and resurrection of the Christ. After living a perfect life, Jesus dies on the cross as the condemned one, bearing the penalty for all sinners who have trusted and will trust in him. However, because he is the perfectly righteous Son, he must receive a verdict of righteousness. That he does indeed receive this verdict is manifested in his resurrection to life because even as the reign of death in this world is evidence of the verdict of condemnation that has come upon mankind through Adam's sin, so resurrection life is the evidence of a verdict of justification. When Christ was raised so was manifested the Father's righteous verdict on his obedient Son. And because Christ lived, died, and was raised as our representative substitute, his perfect obedience is credited to us, his penalty-bearing death counts for us, and his justifying resurrection is the Lord's approval of all of us who trust in the righteous Son. That is, both penal substitutionary atonement and a justifying resurrection—two forensic acts—are necessary for our salvation. He “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25).

¹ Clark H. Pinnock, “Salvation by Resurrection,” *Ex Auditu* 9 (1993): 2.

² A friend and fellow pastor, David Carothers, has shared with me a similar discovery when he worked at a leading evangelical university and interviewed students prior to sending them out on mission trips. He asked each of them to write down the gospel and turn it in to the campus ministries office. He noted that so many of these “gospel” presentations left out the resurrection entirely that he gathered the entire group of students so that he might teach the content of the gospel prior to sending them out on their mission trips.

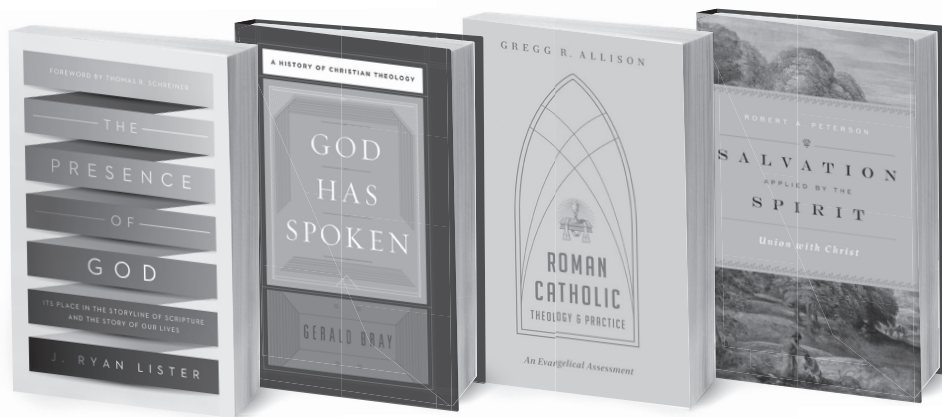
³ Concerning 1 Cor 15:17, Gaffin rightly notes, “His point here is surely not that they are in their sins only in some respects, say as sin's corrupting and death-dealing consequences continue, while others, like the guilt incurred, have already been removed by [Christ's] death. Rather, he can only mean ‘still in your sins’ entirely, unrelievedly.” Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “By Faith, Not by Sight”: *Paul and the Order of Salvation* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 28-29.

⁴ Jerry Bridges, for example, has written in his otherwise excellent work, “The good news of the gospel is that Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross and we are thereby forgiven.” *The Discipline of Grace: God's Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 25-26.

⁵ For example, Gregory A. Boyd, “Christus Victor Response,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 99; Steve Chalke, “The Redemption of the Cross,” in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of the Atonement* (ed. David Hilborn, Justin Thacker, and Derek Tidball; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 39; Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 148; Tom Smail, *Once for All: A Confession of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1998), 96; Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 100.

- ⁶ For an extended argument that these texts support and argue for penal substitutionary atonement, see Lee Tankersley, "The Courtroom and the Created Order: How Penal Substitution Brings about New Creation (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 107-79.
- ⁷ See, for example, Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 26-41; idem, "Interchange in Christ," *JTS* 22 (1971): 358; Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 61; Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 177.
- ⁸ Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Atonement in the Pauline Corpus: 'The Scandal of the Cross,'" in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives* (ed. Charles E. Hill and Frame A. James III; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 145.
- ⁹ Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve?," 21.
- ¹⁰ Gaffin, "Atonement in the Pauline Corpus," 144-45. Gaffin notes that he borrows the term "inclusive substitution" from Jürgen Becker, though he uses it differently. See Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (trans. O. C. Dean, Jr.; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 409. I'm using this term differently than Becker.
- ¹¹ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 161.
- ¹² Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997), 315.
- ¹³ For a thorough study and helpful explanation of the nature of typology in Scripture, see Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typos Structures* (vol. 2 of *Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series*; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981).
- ¹⁴ It is common to find claims that what Adam *does* is determinative for those "in him." However, the language that what Adam "receives" is also determinative for those "in him" is not as common. Yet this notion must be upheld in the parallel "in Christ" if one is to understand fully the legal declaration and transformative result of justification through union with the resurrected Christ.
- ¹⁵ This translation reflects my understanding of δικαίωσιν ζωῆς as a genitive of result, indicating that justification results in life. See also Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 341 n. 126; Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness*, 71; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (vol. 1; ICC; Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 289.
- ¹⁶ Gaffin, "Atonement in the Pauline Corpus," 159.
- ¹⁷ For discussion on the use of these phrases, see J. V. Fesko, *Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 146-64.
- ¹⁸ Fiddes has argued that proponents of penal substitution are "perplexed" and "confused" about the place of Christ's active obedience in salvation, but this claim is unfounded (Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*). Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, rightly note that Fiddes demonstrates "grave misunderstandings of the doctrine of penal substitution." Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2007), 212.
- ¹⁹ Beale correctly notes, "Instead of beginning with David and Abraham and working down towards the time of Jesus like Matthew, Luke's genealogy begins with the time of Jesus and works back to Adam, with which it ends: 'the son of Adam, the son of God' (Luke 3:38). The purpose is to identify Jesus as the Last Adam . . . as an end-time Adam, the true Son of God, resisting the temptations to which Adam and Eve succumbed." G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, (NSBT, vol. 17; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 172.
- ²⁰ Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 134.
- ²¹ This statement that the priest acts "on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" is spoken of a high priest generally in Heb 5, but the author makes clear through the remainder of that chapter that it is in this role that Jesus fulfills his sacrificial ministry. Concerning Jesus' high priesthood in the order of Melchizedek, see Heb 7:1-25.
- ²² Whether or not *λάσκαρῶσαι* is understood to include the idea of propitiation in 2:17, one can affirm that the effect of Christ's sacrifice (referenced in 2:17) was to turn away God's wrath from his people. This is evident from the language of Heb 10:26-31, where if one turns from faith in the sacrifice of Christ as sufficient, what awaits him is "a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries . . . punishment . . . [and] vengeance." Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 121-22.
- ²³ See, for example, Ps 11:6; 75:8; Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15; Rev 14:10; 16:19.
- ²⁴ That these are signs indicating Christ as bearing God's judgment, see Peter G. Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance*:

- Atonement in Mark's Gospel, (NSBT, vol. 18; (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 52-54, 126-33.
- ²⁵ Noting that believers alone are united with Christ is crucial because one is united to Christ only as he or she believes. Therefore, though Adam represents all of mankind, Christ represents only those who have, do, and will believe in him.
- ²⁶ Demarest, *The Cross of Christ*, 158-59 (emphasis original).
- ²⁷ Boyd, "Christus Victor Response," 99.
- ²⁸ That Christ in his death is the condemned one is the logic of Christ dying to bear the penalty for man's sin.
- ²⁹ That Christ's resurrection is his vindication/justification, see Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930, reprint, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 136-71 (esp. 151-52); N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 18-34 (esp. 28); Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, (NSBT, vol. 9; (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 46-47.
- ³⁰ Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 151.
- ³¹ Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, 29-31.
- ³² "Since the condemnation of the many results from the condemnation of Adam, the logic of the argument suggests that the acquittal of the many depends on the acquittal of Christ. This acquittal, which leads to life for the many, would have taken place at the resurrection, an act of vindication which established his righteousness. Just as men share Adam's condemnation and death, so now they share Christ's vindication and life. . . . Christ's death and resurrection lead to 'justification' for many precisely because he himself is 'justified' by God and acknowledged as righteous. The disobedience of Adam led to condemnation for him and for all men . . . because they are 'in Adam'; the obedience of Christ led to vindication for him and for all those who are 'in him', and the consequence of his acquittal is life." Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, 29-31.
- ³³ One can also affirm more than Vos does here as one considers the juxtaposition of the terms *de facto* and *de jure*. If *de facto* denotes a reality that exists regardless of whether or not it exists legally or by right (e.g., English is the *de facto* official language of the United States whether or not any legal document declares it so simply because it is the language spoken), then one is right to affirm that the resurrection is Christ's *de facto* justification. The mere presence of life declares justification. However, if *de jure* denotes a reality that exists by legal right (e.g., The King James Bible is the *de jure* official version of the Bible read in a church because the bylaws legally declare that it is so), then one may also affirm that the resurrection is Jesus' *de jure* justification since justification cannot rightly (indeed, legally) be withheld from him in light of his perfect obedience/righteousness. Therefore, one should affirm that the resurrection of Christ was his *de facto* and *de jure* justification. See Fesko, *Justification*, 323.
- ³⁴ This reflects my own translation of ἔδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι.
- ³⁵ See, for example, I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 78; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 280; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, (WBC, vol. 46; (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 227; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 184-85; Michael F. Bird, "Justified by Christ's Resurrection: A Neglected Aspect of Paul's Doctrine of Justification," *SBET* 22, no. 1 (2004): 86. Also, compare the Spirit's role in the resurrection in Rom 1:4, where Paul writes, "[Jesus] was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead."
- ³⁶ "By virtue of our union with Christ, God's declaration of approval of Christ is also his declaration of approval for us." Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 615.
- ³⁷ For support of this explanation of Rom 4:25, see I. Howard Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement: Cross and Resurrection in the Reconciling of God and Humanity* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007), 80-97; Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Justification and Eschatology," in *Justified in Christ: God's Plan for Us in Justification*, (ed. K. Scott Oliphant; Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2007), 6.
- ³⁸ Thomas Schreiner rightly notes, "Verse 17 functions as the ground of verse 16 (*gar*, for). What is the evidence that all are condemned through Adam and all are righteous in Christ? The evidence for universal condemnation is the reign of death over all people by virtue of Adam, and the evidence for the gift of righteousness is the reigning in life that becomes a reality through Jesus Christ." *Romans*, (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 285-86.



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God's Incarnate Son as the Embodiment of Last Day Resurrection: Eternal Life as Justification in John's Gospel

A. B. CANEDAY

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INTRODUCTION

Long ago Rudolf Bultmann argued that Jesus' activity as "Revealer of God" is the eschatological event, "*the judgment of the world.*"¹ Thus, Jesus' advent and departure constitute the last day so that resurrection and judgment are "now present in the word of revelation" he brings.² Thus, "the 'coming' eschatological hour, which men had hoped for at the end of time, is declared to be already present, for it is the hour in which the Word of the Revealer is heard. It is the hour of the resurrection of the dead."³ Consequently, the

last day has already arrived so that it “is not a dramatic cosmic event which is yet to come and which we must still await. Rather the mission of the Son, complete as it is in his descent and exaltation, is the judgement.”⁴ For Ernst Käsemann, Bultmann’s student, emphasis upon the presence of last day resurrection prompts him to suggest at one point that John’s Gospel reflects the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus who taught that the resurrection has already occurred (2 Tim 2:17-18).⁵

A generation before Bultmann, evangelical theologian Herman Bavinck more evenhandedly observed, “For Christ is the Son of Man who already precipitated a crisis by his appearance, continues it in history, and completes it at the end of time. Their relation to him decides the eternal weal or woe of human beings.”⁶ While Bavinck affirms that with his first advent the Son of God already commences the last day, unlike Bultmann’s interpretation of John, he does not jettison belief that Christ shall come a second time to execute final judgment in accord with the verdicts already announced in the good news of his incarnation. While John’s Gospel stresses inauguration of last day resurrection and judgment with the incarnation of God’s Son, he insists that resurrection and judgment will yet take place on the last day.

Consequently, though evangelical New Testament exegetes acknowledge that within John’s Gospel advance announcement of the last day figures prominently, they subscribe to Bavinck’s reading of the Gospel over against Bultmann’s contrived reading.⁷ Not even C. H. Dodd, a renowned advocate of “realized eschatology,” accepts Bultmann’s claim that an “ecclesiastical redactor” attempted to domesticate its “dangerous statements” by inserting John 5:28-29.⁸ So, Andreas Köstenberger rightly observes, “in an important sense, God’s judgment was already brought about by the light’s coming into the world in the incarnation of the Son (1:14). This coming of the light into the world, in turn, confronts people everywhere with the decision of whether to embrace the light or to go into hiding and persist in darkness.”⁹ He explains further that all who reject God’s Son incur divine judgment, but all who believe in him “escape judgment already in the here and now (5:24), though the final judgment awaits the end of time (5:28-29).”¹⁰

Since Bultmann, Käsemann, and Dodd, interpreters have “variously agreed with, disagreed with or modified” their views.¹¹ Evenhanded acceptance of the tension John’s Gospel poses by portrayal of the last day’s advance arrival with the advent of the Son of God remains a challenge. For the temptation

is either to suppress or to overstate the ramifications of the last day's arrival. With the incarnation of God's Son two concomitant and inseparable but distinguishable acts of God that belong to the last day even now penetrate the present.¹² Because Jesus is the Son of God, the Father gives "all judgment" to him and authorizes him to have "life in himself" (5:22, 26-27). Thus, his mission sweeps forward the verdicts of divine judgment from the last day. So, the incarnate Word now issues the advance announcement of God's last day verdict of judgment—everyone who believes "is not condemned," but whoever does not believe "is condemned already" (3:16-19; 5:21-29).¹³

Several crucial expressions—to live, life, eternal life, to be raised from the dead, to be given life, resurrection, judgment, condemnation—collocate in the Book of Signs (John 1-12). They feature the advent of God's Son as activating the divine verdict of the last day ahead of its time in continuity with resurrection of life or resurrection of condemnation (5:29). John's Gospel presents eternal life as a foretoken of the life of the coming age entered through resurrection. As such, receipt of eternal life is parallel to and concomitant with justification before God, which, though not expressed with *δικαίω* and *δικαίωσις*, is announced emphatically by means of *lito-*tes—"are not condemned"/"do not come into condemnation"—meaning, "are most assuredly justified."¹⁴ Thus, Jesus' advent *already* portends and bequeaths the initial phases of the *not yet* final verdicts of the impending last day. Though "eternal life" is not inherently a judicial category, within John's Gospel *receipt of or entrance into* life of the coming age is tantamount to receiving justification. Particularly, as Jesus enfolds "does not come into condemnation" with "has eternal life" and "has passed from death to life," he renders the three expressions equivalent in effect. So, now to receive the life Jesus gives from himself as God's incarnate Son is akin to receiving in advance the last day's divine verdict of justification. This is so because to give eternal life now is Christ's performative-declarative speech-act by which he grants the foretoken "resurrection of life" (*ἀνάστασις ζωῆς*, 5:29), the verdict of final judgment that stands opposite "resurrection of condemnation" (*ἀνάστασις κρίσεως*, 5:29), which already in foretoken form remains upon all who disobey God's Son (3:36). Advance receipt of eternal life as the divine verdict of the last day signals continuous possession of eternal life now and in the age to come, for to have this life now provides recipients assurance of resurrection of life on the last day.¹⁵

THE INTERSECTION OF SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DUALITIES

A distinguishing trait of the Fourth Gospel is its spatial duality (earth/heaven, world/not of this world, earthly things/heavenly things) that intersects a temporal one (an hour is coming and now is).¹⁶ While the Synoptic Gospels depict the age to come as remote yet coming, John's Gospel weaves together threads of spatial and temporal dualities which form an intricate pattern that features the immanence of last day resurrection and judgment signified by Jesus' miracles and accompanying discourses in preparation for his imminent "hour" of being glorified on earth paradoxically through death. Accented is the inauguration of the coming age's advent with the incarnation of God's Son who comes from heaven (3:13), who makes known the Father (1:18), and who embodies the powers of the coming age both to raise the dead (11:25) and to commence judgment (9:39; cf. 5:21-27). Essential to this temporal theme is the variegated thread that features the hour the Son of Man is to be glorified as the Passover Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.¹⁷ This temporal theme first appears in Jesus' reply to his mother's request at a wedding, "my hour has not yet come" (2:4). It reappears with recurrence to emphasize already commenced effects of the hour's imminence when Jesus says "the hour is coming and now is" (e.g., 4:23; 5:25; 16:32). The initial form of the temporal theme, first spoken by Jesus, reemerges when the narrator twice explains Jesus' eluding hostile capture by saying "his hour had not yet come" (7:30; 8:20) and later when he announces that Jesus "knew that his

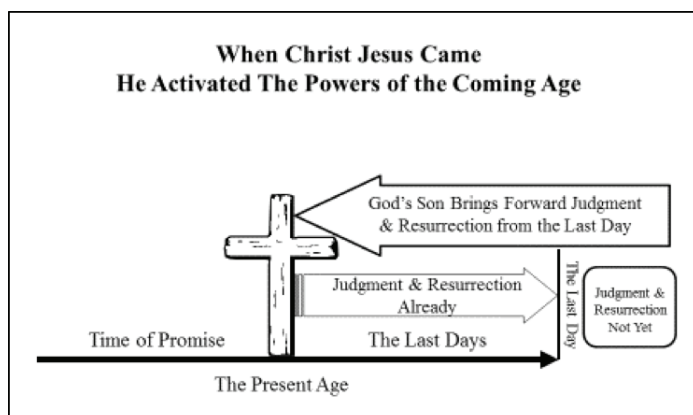


Figure 1

hour had come" (13:1) followed by Jesus' public declaration, "the hour has come that the Son of Man is to be glorified" (12:23, 27), and then private prayer, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son" (17:1).

In this manner, John's Gospel features the incarnation of the glorious and unique Son "who came from the Father" (1:14) as the one in whom resides the powers of the coming age so that with his advent he already sweeps forward resurrection and judgment from the last day into the present age (see Fig. 1). Thus, Jesus discloses most vividly the last day's spatial presence (immanence) and temporal presence (imminence) in his crucifixion and resurrection, but he also dramatizes the presence of resurrection and judgment through his signs and their accompanying discourses.

ACTED PARABLES AND PERFORMATIVE DISCOURSES

One aspect that distinguishes John's Gospel from the Synoptics is absence of a parable discourse. Yet, this hardly means that it is devoid of parables (e.g., John 2:19; 3:8; 9:4; 11:9, 10; 12:24). Given the range of meaning παραβολή bears throughout the LXX to translate *māšāl*, it is reasonable to identify Jesus' discourses in John's Gospel as entailing proverbial, paradoxical, and riddle-like sayings as parables, even if παραβολή occurs nowhere in the Gospel, though a synonym, ἡ παροιμία, does occur (10:6; 16:25, 29).¹⁸ For example, the evangelist essentially tells readers that Jesus' saying, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19-22), is a riddle, an enigma laden with significance designed to provoke response. Likewise, John portrays Jesus' miracles as *signs* (σημεῖα) that analogically signify realities of greater significance. Both Jesus' signs and the discourses that enshroud them are parabolic, for both portray heavenly things with earthly analogies (3:12-13).

Thus, each of Jesus' seven signs are acted parables that display his glory.¹⁹ Characterizing the series of signs is their escalating clarity of meaning, published knowledge, and provocative incitement of opposition that eventuates in Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Of particular signification are Jesus' third, sixth, and seventh signs which entail performative acts and discourses that reveal his divine authority to enact the powers of the last day as he brings judgment and raising the dead forward in dramatic representative acts to foreshadow the greater acts forthcoming in his crucifixion and resurrection which bring near powers of the last day.

In John's Gospel Jesus' signs and accompanying discourses have performative functions that his parables have in the Synoptic Gospels. For as he speaks to the crowds with parables "in order that while seeing they might not see and while hearing they might not hear" (Mark 4:11-12; cf. Matt 13:12; Luke 8:10), so Jesus performs his signs "in order to fulfill the word of the prophet Isaiah... 'he has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts in order that they might not see with their eyes and understand with the heart and turn and I would heal them'" (John 12:37-40; Isa 6:10).

Jesus purposefully performs his third sign on a Sabbath day, healing the man who had become lame apparently on account of sin (5:14), to constrict responses to two, either belief in him as God's Son or unbelieving opposition. So, on the Sabbath Jesus commands the invalid of thirty-eight years, "Arise!" (ἐγείρε, 5:8), signifying by way of miracle his greater authority to raise the dead just as the Father does, which he asserts in the subsequent discourse (ἐγείρει, 5:21; cf. 12:1, 9, 17).²⁰ By raising the invalid to restore in the earthly realm what sin, decadence, and death had destroyed, Jesus signifies his authority both in the heavenly realm to raise the dead on the last day and even now to give life to people imprisoned by sin's dark tomb. By performing this healing on a Sabbath Jesus equates himself with the Father who "works until now" (5:17) to draw attention to the fact that he is restoring the Sabbath of creation (Gen 1:31) by rescuing the created order from the ravages of the curse as the Light from the eschatological Sabbath already pierces the darkness. As Creator, Jesus has authority to give life as the Father has (John 5:21; cf. 1:1-4).

Only the Creator and Lord of the Sabbath, who "works until now" (5:17), has authority to give life and to raise the dead. It is against this backdrop that Jesus utters his riddle in John 5:21-29. Thus, Jesus' saying, "the hour is coming and now is," expresses well the overlapping of the first creation and the new, for the new creation begins while the old continues until the old meets its end on the last day.²¹ (More on the discourse that accompanies Jesus' third sign will resume in the next section.)

As Jesus performs the third sign on the Sabbath to signify new creation's dawn and arrival of the last day's verdicts, he dramatizes the same with the sixth and seventh signs. Three elements within the initial paragraphs of the sixth and seventh signs situate them as dramatized parables.²² First, Jesus' preparatory dialogues with his disciples feature their impaired vision, seeing

sin as the universal cause of every particular malady as in the case of the man born blind (9:1-2), and their impaired hearing, failing to grasp Jesus' figurative portrayal of death as sleep from which he will awaken Lazarus (11:11-14). It is noteworthy that the narrative concerning the sixth sign concludes with another conversation about the blindness, sin, and guilt of Jesus' accusatory opponents (cf. 9:39-41). Second, both narratives signal that the signs are acted parables by Jesus' announcing to his disciples that he acts in both as occasions for displaying the glory of God's Son. The case of the man born blind presents itself with purpose, "in order that the works of God may be displayed in him" (ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, 9:3), and Lazarus' illness will not terminate in death but is for God's glory, "in order that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς, 11:4). A third element that confirms signs six and seven as performed parables is Jesus' accompanying spoken parables which figuratively feature him as the light that shines in the dark world, reprising the first announcement on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (8:12).²³ It is evident that the two sayings have riddle-like qualities. The second recalls the first and both recall the temporal theme—"my hour has not yet come"—and the accompanying temporal duality theme—"an hour is coming and now is." Thus, both accent the temporal nearness of the end of Jesus' mission, the urgency of completing his work, and the night of darkness that awaits him in Jerusalem but also awaits his disciples once he, their light leaves them. For he speaks parabolically:

"As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (9:4-5).
 "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light" (11:9-10).

Because Jesus intends by way of a sign to disclose his divine authority to raise the dead he delays his arrival in Bethany until after Lazarus' death and burial. Then he announces and dramatizes with acted parable a foretoken of the last day which foreshadows his own resurrection forthcoming within a few days.²⁴ Thus, he says, "Your brother will rise again" (11:23). Martha replies, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (11:24).

But to make the point utterly clear that he is the embodiment of resurrection and eternal life, Jesus announces, “I am the resurrection and the life.”²⁵ To this he adds a paradoxical riddle—“the one who believes in me, even though he dies, he shall live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die, ever” (11:25-26). Again, Jesus uses a strong affirmative expressed by negation, “shall never die, ever” (οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, 11:25), which by litotes means “shall assuredly live forever.”

By virtue of his signs accompanied with discourses Jesus’ mission as God’s incarnate Son is a divine performative drama designed to provoke conflict that climaxes with his death which paradoxically is his glory. For the conquest Jesus’ zealous opponents are confident they win by crucifying him is the glorious fulfillment of the mission he was sent to accomplish. “Jesus’ death is John’s *peripeteia*, the falsification of expectation; ‘the end comes as expected, but not in the manner expected.’ The crucifixion is part of Jesus’ glorification.”²⁶ Thus, after repeatedly revealing himself unambiguously as God’s Son, eliciting belief and confirming adversarial unbelief, Jesus withdraws from opponents who would seize him, dramatizing that divine judgment is already coming upon them in advance of the last day (cf. 6:15; 7:30, 44; 8:20). He even hides himself to conceal the light from them as a performative act to warn and to signify that they already stand condemned (8:59; 12:36).

So, after Jesus announces to his disciples, “The hour has come that the Son of Man is to be glorified” (12:23), and prays, “Father glorify your name” (12:28), the voice from heaven which responds—“I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again”—is fittingly unintelligible to Jesus’ opponents who hear it. Its unintelligibility signifies impending divine judgment (cf. Isa. 28:11), which Jesus announces: “This voice came not for me but for you. Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (12:30-32). Failure to decipher the sound from heaven does not restrain the crowd from passing judgment upon Jesus, for they know that “lifted up” figuratively portrays crucifixion as his destined death, which confirms for them that he is not Messiah (12:34). After warning, “Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness apprehends you” (12:35; cf. 1:5), Jesus aptly left them and as a dramatic act to signify their condemnation *he hid himself* from them (ἐκρύβη ἅπ’ αὐτῶν, 12:36; cf. 8:59). Thus, Jesus sums up the paradox of his mission:

I, the Light, have come into the world in order that the one who believes in me might not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him, for I did not come in order to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has one who judges him; the word which I have spoken, that will judge him in the Last Day (12:46-48).

Jesus' hiding and his performative saying that climaxes his signs as dramatized parables announces the foretoken of the divine verdict yet to be issued in the last day as already present. With the advent of the Light, God's Son, justification and condemnation already arrive in their initial phases, for eternal life and wrath have come with him.

RESURRECTION OF LIFE AND RESURRECTION OF CONDEMNATION

Now it is necessary to return to Jesus' discourse that ensues in the wake of his third sign. Because Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, the Father authorizes him to have "life in himself" in order to bestow life of the coming age to whomever he desires and to set in motion the coming judgment.

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, in the same manner also the Son gives life to whom he desires. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Truly, truly, I say to you that the one who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you that an hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself in the same manner he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in tombs will hear his voice and they will come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:21-29).²⁷

This passage poses three pairs of riddles. Most notable is Jesus' claim that the future is present: "The hour is coming and now is." Second is the arresting claim, "the dead will hear." Third is the more complex juxtaposition of two theological assertions that seem discordant: "the one who believes ... has eternal life (v. 24) correlated with "those who did good will come forth to the resurrection of life" (v. 29). These three pairs of riddles correlate rhetorically in the form of oxymoron or paradox.

Jesus means that, as God's Son who comes from above, he *already* brings forward and sets in motion things that properly belong to the last day, including judgment, salvation, eternal life, resurrection, justification, and condemnation. He brings first phases of these forward from the last day into the present (6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). As John's narrative unfolds Jesus associates *possession of eternal life* with *justification*. He makes this association emphatic in three ways. First, he emphasizes his saying with a solemn introduction—"Truly, truly, I say to you" (ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, 5:24a). Second, he makes his saying emphatic by using litotes—"The one who hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and does not come into condemnation" (καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, 5:24b)—which is an emphatic inverse way of saying "is assuredly justified already."²⁸ Third, Jesus emphasizes his performative saying by adding "but has passed from death into life" (ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, 5:24c). By flanking "does not come into condemnation" on either side with "has eternal life" and "has passed from death to life," Jesus essentially indicates that to receive the life he now gives from himself is tantamount to receiving the divine verdict of the last day already, namely, justification, which he later designates "resurrection of life." The divine gift of eternal life is God's performative-declarative speech-act of justification.

The believer *already* experiences qualitative aspects of eternal life of the coming age, for even now the believer has crossed over from death to life. This strongly affirms that the powers of *the coming hour* are *already* active though not exhaustively nor in final form, for Jesus also speaks of resurrection and judgment *yet to come*, entailing everyone who does evil or good (5:29). All who *already* hear and believe are those who, in *the hour that is coming*, will hear from within their tombs signified by the raising of Lazarus (11:43-44), and will emerge unto the resurrection of life never to die again (5:28-29). Passage from death to life now is a harbinger of the resurrection of life in the

hour that is coming. Jesus' giving of life now is a foretaste, a promise of the consummate resurrection of life on the last day. Thus, the gift of eternal life serves as the sign and seal of justification, a foretoken of the divine verdict of acquittal on the last day.

Eternal life properly belongs to the coming age from which Christ, "the eternal life" who was with the Father (1 John 1:2), came *already* to raise spiritually dead people by the power of his Word through the gospel with assurance that he will come again to consummate resurrection by bringing forth the same individuals from their tombs unto the resurrection of life in the last day. Because God's Son has "life in himself" and "gives life to whom he will" (John 5:26, 22), he guarantees, "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (6:54). Assurance that everyone to whom the Son now gives eternal life he will raise them up (ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ) on the last day belongs exclusively to all who continue to feed on Christ who is the only source of eternal life. Perseverance in Jesus Christ links the now and yet to come as inseparable phases of eternal life and resurrection so that in the last day only "those who have done good" will be raised unto eternal life (5:29).

Though J. V. Fesko properly affirms the unitary indivisibility of resurrection and judgment, even as in a single act, he fumbles the contrast between ἀνάστασις ζωῆς and ἀνάστασις κρίσεως in 5:29. While he correctly takes ἀνάστασις ζωῆς, "resurrection of life," as God's *verdict* not God's *act of judgment*, Fesko misreads ἀνάστασις κρίσεως as the divine *act of judgment* not God's *verdict* because he misconstrues κρίσις (5:24 & 29) as "judgment" rather than as "condemnation."²⁹ Consequently, on the basis of his miscue on John 5:29, Fesko embraces an over-realized view of judgment that resembles Bultmann's reading of John's Gospel more than Bavinck's and the traditional confessions with regard to final judgment.³⁰ Because Fesko claims that "knowledge of the final outcome of history" is already known because it is "rooted ... in inaugurated eschatology," he over-reaches to claim, "Given the inbreaking of the eschaton, the resurrection is not the penultimate step before the final judgment but instead is the final judgment in that it visibly reveals what has come with the first advent of Christ" for both the righteous and the wicked.³¹ Though Fesko asserts this inflated claim, he does not fully side with Bultmann. For, though he believes that Christ's advent eliminates last day judgment for believers, he does not accept the notion that the already swallows up the not

yet of the last day. Even so, he adds another misstep to his insistence that believers will not at all pass through the divine act of judgment on the last day; he claims they “are spared judgment according to works.”³²

However, the fact that Jesus features *resurrection of life* and *resurrection of condemnation* as two antithetical divine verdicts of last day judgment in John 5:28-29 without explicitly mentioning the act of final judgment hardly means that judgment which accompanies Christ’s first advent eliminates judgment on the last day for all who are in Christ Jesus, including their being recompensed “according to their works.” Otherwise, why would Jesus specifically assert that all who are in the graves will hear the Son’s voice and “will come out, *those who have done good things* unto the resurrection of life, and *those who have practiced evil things* unto the resurrection of condemnation”? Clearly, Jesus’ statement in 5:29 does not contradict what Scripture universally declares, that God will recompense each person κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ (cf. Ps 61:13; Prov 24:12; Rom 2:6; 2 Cor 11:15; 2 Tim 4:14; Rev 2:23; 20:12-13; cf. Matt 25:31-46).

Inseparable are Jesus’ authority to raise the dead and to judge them. This is evident in the way he introduces the two into his discourse: “For just as the Father raises the dead and makes them alive, so also the Son makes alive whom-ever he wishes. For the Father judges no one, but he entrusts all judgment to the Son” (5:21-22). Thus, Jesus reinforces the inseparability of resurrection and judgment when he repeats the essence of vv. 21-22 and inserts it between his sayings concerning resurrection *now* and *not yet*, in John 5:26-27. He says, “For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has entrusted the Son to have life in himself, and he has entrusted to him to execute judgment because he is Son of Man.”³³ Nowhere in the context does Jesus join resurrection and judgment more indivisibly than in vv. 28-29: “Wonder not at this because the hour is coming in which all who are in their tombs will hear his voice and they will come out, *those who have done good things* unto the resurrection of life, but *those who have done evil things* unto the resurrection of condemnation.”³⁴ When Jesus speaks of the last day by setting “resurrection of life” over against “resurrection of condemnation,” in effect he merges resurrection and judgment, for both those who doers of good and evildoers.³⁵ Jesus presents last day resurrection as more than preparing its recipients for undergoing divine judgment.³⁶ He presents resurrection in that day as the respective verdicts of judgment—eternal life or condemnation—that already begins when the

dead hear the voice of the Son of God through the proclamation of the gospel. For those who hear the Son's word and believe the Father who sent him, to pass from death to life is God's foretold verdict of last day justification expressed by way of *litotes*, "does not come into condemnation" (5:24). This present verdict is inviolably of a piece with the final verdict in the last day, "resurrection of life." Likewise, for those who hear the Son's word but do not obey the Son, dwelling under condemnation—"the wrath of God remains on him"—is God's foretold verdict of last day condemnation expressed by way of *litotes*—"shall not see life" ("shall most certainly perish," 3:36). Again, this present verdict is inviolably of a piece with the final verdict in the last day "resurrection of condemnation."

JUSTIFICATION WITHOUT Δικαιῶ or Δικαίωσις

Juxtaposition of "resurrection of life" and "resurrection of condemnation" calls for some consideration of John's of the δικ- word group which is sparse within the Gospel. Never do δικαίω or δικαίωσις occur while twice δικαιοσύνη does within a single context referring to the Paraclete who will "convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8-10). The adjective δίκαιος occurs three times in John's Gospel, twice to describe judgment (ἡ κρίσις ἡ ἐμὴ δίκαια ἐστίν, 5:30; τὴν δικαίαν κρίσιν κρίνετε, 7:24) and once in Jesus' prayer, "righteous Father" (πάτερ δίκαιε, 17:25). One other use of a δικ- stem word is in 7:18, ἀδικία.³⁷

Absence of δικαίω or δικαίωσις from John's Gospel accounts for relative silence concerning the concept of justification among Johannine scholars.³⁸ Brief passing comments are common as in C. K. Barrett's observations on John 3:18, "The present verse may be regarded as a statement of the negative aspect of the doctrine of justification by faith. The believer (though a sinner) does not come under condemnation."³⁹ Again, on εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24), he fleetingly observes, "The thought is closely akin to the Pauline doctrine of justification, according to which the believer does indeed come into judgment but leaves the court acquitted."⁴⁰ Similarly, on ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται (3:18), D. A. Carson comments, "Although John does not explicitly appeal to Paul's 'justification by faith' doctrine, the substance of the matter is found here."⁴¹ On εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24), he echoes Barrett: "The idea is virtually indistinguishable from the negative component of Paul's

doctrine of justification: the believer does not come to the final judgment, but leaves the court already acquitted.”⁴²

John’s passages call for greater attention. Additionally, where scholars do acknowledge that John’s wording is akin to Paul’s doctrine of justification, they regard it as a simple negative (“not condemned”) of Paul’s positive doctrine (“justified”).⁴³ It is surprising that they do not take note of the Fourth Gospel’s use of litotes in “the one who believes on him is not condemned” (ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται, 3:18) and “the one who hears ... and believes ... does not come into condemnation” (ὁ ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων ... εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, 5:24). This silence is remarkable given the frequency of litotes in John’s Gospel, which not a few scholars, including Carson, point out in other places within the Gospel.⁴⁴

If litotes occurs in 3:18 and in 5:24, then John’s Gospel contributes more concerning the “doctrine of justification” than ordinarily recognized. For what John affirms in these two passages is not simply that believers “are not condemned” or “do not come into condemnation.” Rather, by way of litotes these affirmations exploit the emphatic use of understatement to affirm the positive by negating its opposite. So Jesus is emphatically affirming that his coming brings forward the verdict of the last day so that already the verdict of justification is being announced through the gospel to everyone who believes in him.

Jesus announces, “And this is the verdict: the Light came into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). So, in Christ, God already brings judgment to bear upon the world. The divine verdict of the last day is in, for the gospel is God’s announcement of his verdict ahead of the coming day of resurrection and judgment. As the cross of Christ Jesus portrays judgment’s condemnation on that impending last day, so his vacated tomb depicts the last day’s resurrection of life. Judgment, God’s wrath upon Christ on the cross condemned for others, and resurrection, God’s vindicating him by raising him from the tomb, constitute the in-breaking of God’s last day acts into the present age, both now bestowed to Christ’s believers in anticipation of the age to come.

Therefore, according to John’s Gospel, as Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom, he announces in advance the two verdicts of God’s final judgment—“resurrection of life” and “resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:29). So, “not condemned” and eternal life *already* belong to everyone

united with the Son of God through belief. All the blessings and powers of the *coming age* which we *already* foretaste are secured by Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Everyone who believes in God's Son *stands justified already* in advance for already they have eternal life ahead of the last day. On the other hand, everyone who does not believe in God's Son *stands condemned already* (3:18, 36). "The one who disobeys the Son shall not see life" (ὁ ἀπειθῶν τῷ υἱῷ οὐκ ὄψεται ζῶην, 3:36), by way of litotes effectively means "shall most assuredly see death" or "shall certainly perish" in the coming age. Yet, God's last day verdict of wrath is not remote, for already it remains upon the disobedient (3:36). Advance announcement of these two verdicts—justified or condemned—is gracious because, while the criterion of God's judgment now is inviolable and will not change in the last day, God has not yet issued his final verdict concerning each individual.⁴⁵ Rather, announcement of the final verdict awaits the coming day while God mercifully proclaims the inauguration of eternal life made effective for everyone who believes in his Son. For through the proclamation of the gospel, God beckons all to obey his Son in order to receive eternal life, the receipt of which is justification, the inverse of condemnation (3:31-36). So, in the gospel God graciously foreshadows his last day verdict of judgment, either resurrection of life or resurrection of condemnation. In this way the coming of God's Son renders the final verdict inviolable.

CONCLUSION

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This one was in the beginning with God." John designs his whole Gospel to flow from these words because every act Jesus performs and every word he speaks are God's deeds and words. Thus, the Fourth Gospel aptly introduces God's Son as the Word, God's creative Word. For as in the beginning everything that was made came into existence through the Word, so also now, new creation already begins through the same Word who became flesh, as a human dwelling among humans, as the light of life shining in sin's darkness. For the Word's incarnation brings his heavenly glory down to earth and his powers of the last day forward. While the Word's glory and powers of the last day are displayed through each of his signs and their accompanying discourses, the convergence of his glory and last day powers are most fully

displayed in his crucifixion and resurrection to which Jesus' signs point. Here, divine judgment and resurrection are not only dramatically portrayed but also historically enacted. Heaven's just verdict issues forth in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, for his incarnation already brings forward the two verdicts that will be issued on the last day, either resurrection of life or resurrection of condemnation.

Thus, the Word who was with God and came from heaven presents himself as "the Resurrection and the Life" and as one to whom the Father has given authority to judge in order that all might honor him by believing in him. Because he has authority to impart life to whomever he desires, to everyone who hears his word and believes the One who sent him, Jesus already enacts the powers of the coming last day both to impart life to the spiritually dead and already to commence judgment upon all who do not believe in him.

So, God's Son came not to condemn the world but to present himself as bread from heaven, the very source of eternal life. Yet, because the true Light now shines in the darkness exposing the works of darkness, judgment issues from his presence. His incarnation brings the last day verdict of justification to all who believe but brings the last day verdict of condemnation to remain upon everyone who disobeys by unbelief. So, just as Jesus Christ *already* gives eternal life to the dead who hear his voice ahead of the last day, so also, ahead of time Jesus announces the verdict of the last day, that those who do not believe in the Son *already* stand condemned while those who believe in him *already* stand not condemned, which is to say, they are already assuredly justified (3:18). And the gift of eternal life which is already theirs is the sign and seal of justification, God's assuring foretoken of his acquitting verdict, resurrection of life on the last day.

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (vol. II; trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Scribners, 1955), 35. He states that resurrection and judgment take "place in the response of men to the word of Jesus" (2.38). He explains, "This means that the earlier naïve eschatology of Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism has been abandoned, certainly not in favour of a spiritualising of the eschatological process to become a process within man's soul, but in favour of a radical understanding of Jesus' appearance as the eschatological event. This event puts an end to the old course of the world. As from now on there are only believers and unbelievers, so that there are also now only saved and lost, those who have life and those who are in death. This is because the event is grounded in the love of God, that love which gives life to faith, but which must become judgement in the face of unbelief" (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1971], 155).

- ² Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 258.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 259.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.
- ⁵ Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (trans. Gerhard Krodel; London: SCM, 1968), 75.
- ⁶ Herman Bavincq, *The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next* (trans. John Vriend; trans. John Bolt; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 138-139. Bavincq further explains, "The first time, to be sure, Jesus came on earth, not to judge the world, but to save it (John 3:17; 12:47). Still, immediately at his appearance he produced a judgment (*krisis*) whose purpose and result is that those who do not see can see and that those who see may become blind (3:18, 20; 9:39). As Son of Man Jesus continually exercises judgment when to those who believe already he grants eternal life here on earth and allows the wrath of God to continue to rest on those who do not believe (3:36; 5:32-38). Undoubtedly there is, therefore, an internal spiritual judgment at work, a crisis that is realized from generation to generation. It is an immanent judgment this side of the Beyond that takes place in the consciences of human beings. Here on earth faith and unbelief already bear their fruit and bring their reward. Just as faith is followed by justification and peace with God, so unbelief leads to a progressive darkening of the mind and hardening of the heart and a yielding to all kinds of unrighteousness" (pp. 138-139).
- ⁷ He argues, "In any case vv. 28f. have been added by the editor, in an attempt to reconcile the dangerous statements in vv. 24f. with traditional eschatology. Both the source and the Evangelist see the eschatological event in the present proclamation of the word of Jesus. Yet the popular eschatology, which is so radically swept aside by such a view, is reinstated in vv. 28f. The editor corrects the Evangelist by this simple addition, so that it is difficult to say how he thought the statements in vv. 24f. could be reconciled with it." (*The Gospel of John*, 261).
- ⁸ Concerning John 5:28-29, C. H. Dodd correctly defends its authenticity, for there is no hint that these verses were editorially added to the original text (Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: University Press, 1953], 147-48).
- ⁹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 468-469. Köstenberger acknowledges that Rudolf Bultmann rightly identifies that Jesus' activity as "Revealer of God," whose unitary advent (John 3:19; 9:39) and departure (12:31), is the eschatological event, "the judgment of the world."
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 469.
- ¹¹ Cf. W. Robert Cook, "Eschatology in John's Gospel," *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (1988): 83.
- ¹² Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 261.
- ¹³ As will be argued in this essay, a crucial interpretive decision must be made concerning uses of the verb κρίνω and the noun ἡ κρίσις throughout John 3:17-19 and within 5:19-29. For even though these terms may refer either to the act of judgment or to the verdict of judgment, their uses within these two contexts do not allow individual uses of the words simultaneously to bear equivocating senses as some inattentively read them. Each use refers either to the act of judgment or to the verdict of judgment but not to both at the same time. Within 3:17-19, given the contrasting destinies of those who believe in God's Son and those who do not believe, situated by the stark contrast expressed in 3:16 (μὴ ἀπόληται ἄλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον), it is apparent that both κρίνω and κρίσις, in 3:17-19, do not refer to the act of judgment but to the verdict of judgment. Hence, "For the Father did not send the Son into the world in order to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him. The one who believes does not come into condemnation, but the one who does not believe is already condemned because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict: that the Light has come into the world and the people loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." Within 5:19-29, it seems apparent that the general statement of v. 22 uses both κρίνω and ἡ κρίσις with reference to the act of judgment, thus "to judge" and "the act of judgment," respectively. Hence, "The Father judges no one, but has handed over all judgment to the Son." Likewise, in 5:27, use of ἡ κρίσις and καὶ ἔξουσίαν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν undoubtedly refers to "the act of judgment." Hence, "And he has given him [the Son] authority to carry out judgment because he is the Son of Man." Yet, because ἀνάστασις κρῖσεως stands antithetically to ἀνάστασις ζωῆς, in 5:29, here κρίσις must refer to the negative verdict of judgment, as in "the resurrection of condemnation" in contrast to "the resurrection of life."
- ¹⁴ Litotes is a form of understatement that is stronger than meiosis. It is a figure of speech that entails an emphatic use of understatement to affirm a positive truth by negating its opposite. For example, John the

Baptist's statement, "for he gives the Spirit without measure" (3:34), is an emphatic way of saying, "for he gives the Spirit lavishly." Here is a sampling of litotes within John's Gospel.

3:18 "Whoever believes in him is not condemned."

3:34 "for he gives the Spirit without measure."

3:36 "whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life."

4:14 "whoever drinks from the water which I will give to him shall never thirst, ever."

5:24 "He does not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life."

6:35 "shall never hunger . . . shall never thirst."

6:37 "I will never cast out."

6:50 "shall not die"

8:37 "My word has no place in you."

8:40 "This Abraham did not do."

8:51 "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death, ever!"

10:28 "they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

11:26 "everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die, ever."

15:20 "a slave is not greater than his master."

19:12 "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

- 15 As Marianne Meye Thompson points out, it is necessary to acknowledge that there "is a difference between 'resurrection' and 'life,' which one can see in John 5, where two statements are made about the life-giving work of the Son." After citing 5:25 & 28, she properly states, "According to these passages, the *dead* hear the voice of the Son of God and live; but those who are *in the graves* come out to resurrection. The statement in 5:25 describes a present reality—the hour is 'now here,' when those who hear the voice of the Son of God may participate in God's life, while the statement in 5:28 portrays a reality yet in the future, namely, the resurrection" ("The Raising of Lazarus in John 11," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* [eds. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008], 239-240).

- 16 On the significance of the spatial distinction between the "above" and the "below" (3:31; 8:23; 19:11) or the "heavenly" and the "earthly" (3:12-13, 27, 31; 6:31-58) for understanding symbolism in John's Gospel, see Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 1ff; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 200-202. Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (9th printing 1975; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 355, and G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (revised ed. 1993; ed. Donald Hagner [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974], 259-272. See also Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (revised edition 1993; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1976), 58-77.

- 17 This is not to suggest that John the Baptist had such an understanding when he announced, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). An echo of Ex 34:9 LXX (καὶ ἀφελεῖς τὸ τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν) seems plausible in the Baptist's declaration, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, John 1:29). The cognates, αἴρω and ἀπαίρω, are evident. Cf. D. A. Carson, "Adumbrations of Atonement Theology in the Fourth Gospel," *JETS* 57 (2014): 518-519.

- 18 Cf. Friedrich Hauck, "παράβολή," *TDNT* 5.744-761.

- 19 Concerning Jesus' signs as acted parables see D. A. Carson's comments on the first and seventh signs (*John*, 172, 414). What I mean and what Carson means by "acted parable" is not what Herman Ridderbos rejects when he states, "Miracle is neither parabolic story nor symbolic action" (*Gospel of John*, 100). Ridderbos' immediately preceding sentence is instructive, for he states, "Any suggestion that in the Fourth Gospel one can separate 'flesh' and 'glory,' history and revelation, violates the most specific aspect of that Gospel's character." That Ridderbos does not object to acknowledging that Jesus' miracles were "acted parables" is apparent when he observes that "a distinctive of the Fourth Gospel is its repeated linking of miracles with lengthy conversations focused on the *meaning* of the miracles in the framework of Jesus' self-revelation as the Christ, the Son of God (so chs. 5, 6, 9, and 11). If one fails to see that connection and hence also the deeper spiritual significance of the miracles, the one has not 'see' the signs (6:26), and faith that rests solely on miracle 'as such' has fundamentally forfeited its claim to that name (cf. e.g., 2:23ff; 3:2 with 3:1f; 4:48)" (pp. 100-101). See also Craig L. Blomberg, "The Miracles as Parables," *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6: *The Miracles of Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 327-359; idem, "New Testament Miracles and Higher Criticism: Climbing up the Slippery Slope," *JETS* 27 (1984): 425-438.

- 20 Granted, there is verbal asymmetry here, for John 5:21 does not say that Jesus raises the dead but gives life (John T. Carroll, "Present and Future in Fourth Gospel 'Eschatology,'" *BTB* 19 [1989]: 67). Indeed, Jesus

does not express the full symmetry within v. 21, for he intends to accent his bringing the resurrection forward from the last day. So, while the first clause of the comparative ("just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life") focuses upon the Jews' last day hope, the second clause ("so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes") prepares for Jesus' oxymoron of vv. 25-29. However, three elements in the text seem to legitimate taking the symmetry further than Carroll acknowledges. First, is the deliberate use of the same verb in both 5:8 & 21. Second, Jesus' words "gives life to whomever he wishes" underscores his sovereign authority to give life to the dead. Third, his sayings in vv. 24-29 make it clear that Jesus intends his hearers to understand his comparative to extend to both "raise the dead" and "give life." A fourth argument for my reading of the text may be added. The Fourth Gospel expressly connects Jesus' claim of 5:21 to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. John even uses the same verb (*ἐγείρει*) to describe Jesus' raising of Lazarus (cf. 12:1, 9, 17).

- 21 Cf. Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 4-19.
- 22 Concerning the sixth sign, Andreas J. Köstenberger suggests that "John 9:39-41 serves as a kind of interpretive epilogue, transforming the preceding narrative into an acted parable with a message about sight and blindness in the spiritual realm" (*John* [BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004], 295).
- 23 As a riddle, the wording in John 11:10—τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου τούτου—entails double-entendre. At the earth-bound level, *this world's light* refers to the sun, but to all who have ears to hear, Jesus himself is this world's light (cf. 8:12; 9:5). Thus, these two riddles that feature the light/darkness theme with its thematic variation as day/night signal the Son of Man's approaching *hour*, which for him will be his glory as his mission reaches its completion but for his disciples will be a time of walking in darkness in the absence of his light. Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 333-335 & 390-391; and Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 362-363 & 408-409.
- 24 As a riddle, the wording in John 11:10—τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου τούτου—entails double-entendre. At the earth-bound level, *this world's light* refers to the sun, but to all who have ears to hear, Jesus himself is this world's light (cf. 8:12; 9:5). Thus, these two riddles that feature the light/darkness theme with its thematic variation as day/night signal the Son of Man's approaching *hour*, which for him will be his glory as his mission reaches its completion but for his disciples will be a time of walking in darkness in the absence of his light. Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 333-335 & 390-391; and Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 362-363 & 408-409.
- 25 Whether "resurrection and life" is a pleonasm, with *life* simply clarifying without adding meaning to what is meant by *resurrection*, or if the two are complementary, the latter seems more likely. "It is natural to view the first as the corollary of 'I am the Resurrection,' and the second as the corollary of 'I am the Life. Thus, (a) I am the resurrection—that is, the one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. (b) I am the Life—that is, everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'" (J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 632). Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 365; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 413. Bultmann insists, "The two lines say the same thing, positively and negatively; by a paradoxical mode of sphere, for which human death and human life are only images and hints: the believer may suffer the earthly death, but he has 'lie' in a higher, in an ultimate sense. And for the man who tarries in the earthly life and is a believer, there is no death in an ultimate sense; death for him has become unreal" (*Gospel of John*, 403). Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 396, n. 48.
- 26 R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (paperback ed. 1987; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 88.
- 27 The ESV translates κρίσις (John 5:22, 24, 27, and 29) consistently as "judgment," as though referring to the divine act of judgment, even though καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24) and οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως (5:28) clearly denote condemnation, the divine verdict of judgment issuing from the act of judgment. Some appeal to 5:24 and 5:29 to claim that believers will not pass through divine judgment at all in the last day.
- 28 Cf. John's "does not come into condemnation" in John 5:24 (cf. 5:29) with Paul's "no condemnation" (Rom 8:1). Both use litotes to affirm emphatically a positive truth by negating its opposite.
- 29 J. V. Fesko, *Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 309-310, 312-316.
- 30 Ibid., 318. Just as with John's Gospel, Fesko misreads Herman Bavinck who states, "The resurrection and the last judgment are intimately associated as in a single act" (*The Last Things: Hope for this World and the Next* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], 132). Bavinck does not support Fesko's claim, for he explains that while the NT represents judgment as appointed on a day or an hour, resurrection and judgment "are so comprehensive in scope that they are bound to take considerable time" (p. 132).
- 31 Ibid., 310-311. Fesko explains, "At the second advent of Christ, the righteous, those who have been justified by faith alone, are instantaneously clothed in immortality; they receive a *sōma pneumatikon*. The wicked are

also raised but are naked; they still have a *sōma psychikon*; their condemned status is immediately evident. God need not utter a word, as the justified and condemned statuses of the righteous and the wicked are revealed through the resurrection, just as for Jesus." Fesko's inconsistency is evident in that here he takes ἀνάστασις κρίσεως as the verdict, divine condemnation of the wicked, which his sustained discussion on pp. 312-318 contradicts.

- 32 Ibid., 310. "This separation between the wicked and righteous accords with what we have already seen from John's Gospel: 'Those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment' (5:29; Rev 11:18). Notice that Christ says that only the wicked are raised to judgment" (p. 316).
- 33 Here, "Son of Man" certainly echoes Dan 7:13-14, a context concerning dominion and judgment. The indefinite υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου likely functions not simply to indicate Jesus' humanity but reference to the title in Daniel 7. Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 200-201. The creation-consummation motif of John 5:1-30, brought to into view by way of the Sabbath controversy, may suggest the Son of Man is Adam's eschatological counterpart. See Margaret Pamment, "Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel," *JTS NS* 36 (1985): 56-66. She argues that Jesus, as Son of Man, is Adam's counterpart—"what man could and should be." However, Pamment draws an unnecessary separation when she says, "It is therefore misleading to label 'Son of Man' a 'Christological term' since, unlike 'Son of God,' it does not seek to distinguish Jesus' unique nature or function, but defines the attributes of humanity which all men should exemplify" (p. 58). She has overdrawn the significance of the designation "Son of Man."
- 34 In the clause, μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, ὅτι ἐρχεται ὥρα, the use of ὅτι is somewhat ambiguous. It could bear the sense "that" as in, "Wonder not at this, that the hour is coming..." Or it could have the sense "because" as in "Wonder not at this (which I just said) because the hour is coming..." If it is the latter, as accepted here, then τοῦτο refers to Jesus' saying that the Son's voice will raise the dead to judgment. Cf. Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (NICNT; 3rd printing 1975; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 321; and Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 248.
- 35 If Jesus stresses that resurrection *already* is the token of resurrection *yet to come* in the last day when all the dead will hear his voice, then the relationship between "those who hear and believe" now in response to the Son's voice and "those who have done good" who come forth "unto the resurrection of life" calls for attention. The fact that Jesus identifies "those who hear and believe" as "those who have done good" poses theological difficulties for some. For example, Zane Hodges is concerned that some might read John 5:29 "as expressing a doctrine of salvation by works" ("Problem Passages in the Gospel of John, Part 6: Those Who Have Done Good—John 5:28-29," *BibSac* 136 [1979]: 158). Others attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction concerning reception of life by "those who hear and believe" and by "those who have done good" by arguing that "the lives they [believers] live form the test of the faith they profess" (Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 322). Similarly, John T. Carroll explains the not yet resurrection as validation of the resurrection life already received by those who believe: "Faith which does not lead to following is therefore inadequate. 'Abiding' is the test of discipleship (see 8:31)." For the disciples, therefore, present experience of eternal life calls for validation 'on the last day': faith in Jesus' word is the work not of a moment but of a lifetime" ("Present and Future in Fourth Gospel 'Eschatology,'" *BTB* 19 [1986]: 67). Likewise, Carson explains, "That believers who already experience eternal life must rise on the last day is not incoherent: their new resurrection-life existence will be the ratification and confirmation of the life and freedom from condemnation they already enjoy" (*The Gospel according to John*, 258). Cf. Köstenberger, *John*, 189-190. See also J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 322.

Though the idea that resurrection in the Last Day validates persevering belief is commensurate with Jesus' teaching, it seems less than fully adequate to explain the continuity between "those who hear and believe" and "those who have done good." This is so because Jesus' statements—"those who hear and believe" and "those who have done good things"—do not address *how* or *on what basis* they receive resurrection life. Rather, Jesus simply identifies *who* receives the life he gives. "Those who hear and believe" the voice of the Son of God who already come to life are identical with "those who have done good things" who will come forth unto the "resurrection of life."

Furthermore, John 5:29 does not associate belief and doing good by treating the second simply as validation of the former. John's Gospel identifies belief with obedience (cf. 3:26). In John's Gospel belief and doing good do not stand in synthetic coordination but rather they are in organic correlation. This is evident in 3:19-21, for to believe is to "do the truth" and "the one who does the truth comes to the Light, in order that it may be evident that his deeds have been done by God." Likewise, 6:27-29 indicates an organic correlation of belief and deeds: "Do not work for food that perishes but for food that endures unto eternal

life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on this one God the Father has placed his seal ... This is the work God requires, that you believe in that one whom he sent." Similarly, John 8:39 organically correlates belief and deeds: "If you are Abraham's seed, then do the works of Abraham" (cf. Urban C. Von Wahlde, "Faith and Works in Jn VI 28-29: Exegesis or Eisegesis?" *NovT* 22 [1980]: 304-315). These passages not only indicate that belief and works are in living correlation but also they stand together in vital relationship to God's work. For whatever deed the believer does that may be counted good is so only because it derives from God's work in the believer (3:21). So Jesus says, "As the branch is not able to bear fruit by itself if it does not remain in the vine, so neither can you if you do not remain in me" (15:4).

Therefore, the connection between the Son's voice in the already resurrection when he raises "those who hear and believe" and in the not yet resurrection when he raises "those who have done good" is one that is entirely oriented to the life-giving voice of the Son. It is the Son's creative voice that produces both the believing (represented under the imagery of hearing) and the doing of good that invariably characterizes all whom the Son will raise unto life in the last day.

³⁶ Cf. the discussion of resurrection and judgment within Paul's theology in Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 261-263. Vos notes, "In the resurrection there is already wrapped up a judging-process, at least for believers: the raising act in their case, together with the attending change, plainly involves a pronouncement of vindication. The resurrection does more than prepare its object for undergoing the judgment; it sets in motion and to a certain extent anticipates the issue of the judgment for the Christian" (p. 261).

³⁷ Sometimes ἀδικία is translated as a noun—"in him there is no falsehood" (esv)—and sometimes as an adjective—"nothing false in him" (RSV, NRSV, NIV)—on the assumption that the adjective ἀληθής, in the clause οὗτος ἀληθής ἐστιν, bears the sense *veracity* contrasting with *falsehood*. More likely, however, ἀληθής is virtually synonymous with "good" (καλός) or "righteous" (δίκαιος), contrasted with the clause "there is no unrighteousness in him" (NASB⁹⁵, NKJV). Cf. Geerhardus Vos, "'True' and 'Truth' in the Johannine Writings," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (ed. Richard B. Gaffin; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 344.

³⁸ Not so with Frédéric Louis Godet who cites H. Jacottet: "Here is justification by faith, and condemnation by unbelief" (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 1 [New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886], 397). Godet adds, "Now the Lord declares that the believer, being already introduced into eternal life, will not be subjected to an investigation of this kind. He will appear before the tribunal, indeed, according to Rom. xiv.10; 2 Cor. v.10, but to be recognized as saved and to receive his place in the kingdom (Matt. xx.v)."

³⁹ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1958), 181.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 217. Barrett correctly observes that καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24) does not mean that the believer will not face the divine act of judgment in the Last Day but that the believer will not come into condemnation. See note 8 above.

⁴¹ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 207.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 256. Barrett expresses the matter more carefully than Carson does when he states, "the believer does indeed come into judgment but leaves the court acquitted" while Carson claims "the believer does not come to the final judgment, but leaves the court already acquitted." Some may take Carson's statement beyond his own intentions, for it seems to overstate his own case slightly, as though believers do not still face divine judgment in the Last Day. Despite his claim, Carson's intention seems evident, for his point is that John 5:24 makes it clear that the believer passes unscathed through divine judgment in the last day.

⁴³ In a trade book, Philip Eveson comments on John 3:18 and 5:24 observes, "This is the verdict, and the condemnation includes the wrath of God remaining upon that person (John 3:36). The same truth is reiterated in John 5 where we are told that the one who receives God's word through Jesus has eternal life 'and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life' (vv 22-24). This means that they are in a right legal position before God here and now through faith in Christ. The future judgment is not ignored as the following verses in John 5 indicate. It will ratify what is already a reality (vv 25-30)." "All this reminds us of Paul's statement that 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1). Justification is a verdict in the present that a person is not guilty and will not receive punishment. While Luke presents the positive side in Jesus' teaching on justification ('he went home justified'), John records discourses which focus on the negative side of the same truth ('not condemned' and 'will not be condemned')." See Eveson, *The Great Exchange: Justification by Faith Alone in the Light of Recent Thought*, (Bromley, Kent, England: Day One, 1996), 30.

⁴⁴ For example, Carson comments on "I will never cast out" (John 6:37), "Formally it is a 'litotes', a figure of speech in which something is affirmed by negating its contrary ... When Jesus says *whoever comes to me I will never drive away*, the affirmative that he is expressing in this fashion is often taken to mean 'whoever comes

to me I will certainly welcome'... But in fact, the affirmation expressed by this litotes is rather different: 'whoever comes to me I will certainly keep in preserve'" (*The Gospel according to John*, 290). Cf. Alfred Plumer, *The Gospel according to S. John* (Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools; Cambridge: University Press, 1882), 106. Though the example Plumer offers in John 3:19—"Men loved **the** darkness rather than **the** Light"—may be more properly identified as meiosis, he correctly points to 6:37 and 8:40 as examples of litotes. See also R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel 1-10 and 11-21* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1942), 291, 1056, 1268.

- ⁴⁵ Gerald Borchert rightly observes, "The idea here then is not one of a possible projected condemnation for the unbeliever but the *necessity of escaping an already existing condemnation*" (*John 1-11* [NAC, vol. 25a] Nashville, TN: B&H, 1996], 185).

Resurrection and Priesthood: Christological Soundings from the Book of Hebrews

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In orthodox Christology, the priesthood of Christ has been a regular feature of Jesus' messianic portrait. In Reformed circles, the *munus triplex* goes back to before Calvin.¹ Likewise, when Jacob Arminius gave his doctoral sermon, his subject was none other than the priesthood of Christ.² In the seventeenth century, debate swirled around the Socinians,³ who denied the earthly priesthood of Jesus, and evangelical scholars like John Owen, whose seven-volume commentary on Hebrews (with doctrinal excurses) all but exhausted the subject.⁴ Yet, in more recent centuries the priesthood of Christ, when it has not been ignored entirely, has been truncated and tersely treated by most systematic theologians.⁵

A counter-example to this scholarly trend is the work of David M. Moffitt. His monograph, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle of Hebrews*, makes a bold argument for making resurrection central to of Hebrews' portrayal of Jesus' priesthood.⁶ While this article does not stand in total agreement with his resurrection-centered approach to Hebrews or

Christ's priesthood,⁷ I do agree that the resurrection plays an under-appreciated role in qualifying Jesus to be a *heavenly* priest. As Moffitt argues, Christ's resurrection is *the* central qualification for his priesthood, but, as I will argue, his resurrection does not begin his priesthood (so Socinus and Moffitt), and neither is his resurrection the only qualification.⁸ Rather, his resurrection vindicates his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice, even as it transforms his priesthood to its exalted and perpetual status in heaven.⁹ Therefore, in dialogue with Moffitt's illuminating study, this essay will demonstrate how Christ's resurrection is the "qualifying" event that (1) *vindicates* his earthly life and priestly sacrifice and (2) *transforms* Jesus' earthly priesthood to that of his greater, eternal, heavenly priesthood.

The benefit of this proposal, which wades into a long and complicated debate,¹⁰ is this: it provides a theological "solution" (read: proposal) that hopes to resolve *some* of the tensions between the resurrection's role and place in Hebrews and evangelical theologians who tend to center Christ's work on the cross.¹¹ For instance, biblical scholars like Moffitt and Kibbe argue that an honest reading of Hebrews moves them to embrace, or at least be sympathetic toward, a Socinian view of Christ's resurrection and priesthood.¹² On the basis of Hebrews, Moffitt rejects and Kibbe questions Christ's earthly priesthood. By contrast, theologians going back to Owen have disavowed Socinianism because in denying Christ's earthly priesthood, they undermine the priestly nature and sacrificial work of Christ's cross.¹³ To be balanced, Moffitt and Kibbe's work on the resurrection in Hebrews recovers a missing piece in Christ's priestly sacrifice (namely, his resurrection, exaltation, and heavenly presentation), but their singular emphasis on Christ's *post*-resurrection priesthood leads to the same concerns that Owen issued more than three centuries ago. To deny Christ's earthly priesthood is to change the nature of his atoning sacrifice, and it may even create an unintended fissure in the person Christ—between the person he was on earth (a non-priest) and is now in heaven (a priest like Melchizedek).

In response, I will follow a biblical-theological course proposed by Bruce McCormack to engage Moffitt and Kibbe's exegetical labors.¹⁴ To use McCormack's words, in this "collaborative, interdisciplinary exercise,"¹⁵ I will suggest a way forward regarding Christ's resurrection and priesthood that incorporates many of Moffitt's exegetical insights into a larger biblical-theological framework—something Kibbe observes is lacking in Moffitt's methodology.¹⁶

However, while affirming his insights regarding resurrection and priesthood, I will add them to the longstanding view that Christ did priestly work on earth and on the cross.¹⁷ My hope is that such a theological engagement of these exegetical debates will provide greater theological clarity to Christ's resurrection and priesthood, even as Moffitt's work has helpfully pressed our noses back into the text.

To sum up my proposal, I will seek to demonstrate that Christ's resurrection transforms his earthly but unrecognized priesthood into his heavenly priesthood. My thesis argues against those who stress his priestly sacrifice without consideration for his resurrection, and it critiques others who emphasize Christ's resurrection with little regard for his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice. The goal of this article, therefore, is to prove three things: First, I will note the central role of the resurrection in Hebrews. Second, from Hebrews 5:5–10 I will argue that Christ's resurrection secures his sonship and his priesthood. By looking at the biblical-theological work of Scott Hahn on sonship and priestly primogeniture, we can have a better understanding of how the title of "son" given to Christ at his resurrection qualifies him for his heavenly priesthood.¹⁸ Third, from Hebrews 7:13–28 I will show how Christ's resurrection qualifies him to be a priest in the order of Melchizedek. This section will also engage the Old Testament, as I engage the exegetical work of Karl Deenick on 1 Samuel 2:35, a passage that may have a surprising effect on the way we look at resurrection and priesthood in Hebrews 7.¹⁹ By looking at the two main passages in Hebrews that relate Christ's resurrection to his priesthood in Hebrews, I will aim to prove the unity of Christ's priesthood, as well as acknowledging the transformation of Christ's priesthood that took place at the resurrection.

RESURRECTION AND PRIESTHOOD: SOUNDINGS IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

It is the aim of this section to demonstrate the relationship between priesthood and resurrection. Against commentators (e.g., Vanhoye, Bruce, Lane, Lindars, Ellingworth, O'Brien) who attach Christ's priesthood to his death (and intercession) in Hebrews,²⁰ and against others (e.g., Calvin, Peterson, Attridge) who interpret Christ's entrance into heavenly places as metaphorical,²¹ this section will argue that Christ's bodily resurrection is necessary for

his heavenly priesthood. While it is a standard evangelical option to deemphasize or overlook bodily resurrection in Hebrews, I agree with Moffitt and Kibbe—Christ’s resurrection is extant in Hebrews and plays a significant part in the author’s explanation for how Christ could serve as high priest.²² Nevertheless, it is the burden of this essay to prove that Christ’s resurrection neither initiates his priesthood (the Socinian view), nor bifurcates his humiliation from his exaltation.²³ Rather, Christ’s person and work is a unity,²⁴ and as such, our Lord’s resurrection qualifies him for heavenly service, even as his priestly service on earth qualifies him to be raised from the dead.

Resurrection in Hebrews

Moffitt has rightly observed that scholarly consensus on Hebrews views Jesus’ resurrection as secondary or even unnecessary.²⁵ By contrast, he ascribes to Christ’s resurrection *the* crucial role in qualifying Jesus to be a heavenly high priest.²⁶ While I contest the exaggerated position he gives to the resurrection because it eclipses Christ’s sacrifice, Moffitt’s work develops themes that others have ignored or explained away.²⁷ Building on and interacting with his research, I will seek to develop a reciprocal understanding between Christ’s resurrection and priesthood. That is to say, I believe that Jesus’ obedience as an earthly priest qualifies him to be raised from the dead after his offering, and in turn his resurrection qualifies him to be a greater high priest.

To assess the relationship between resurrection and priesthood, three propositions must be established. First, amidst the sacrificial imagery of the epistle, Hebrews affirms bodily resurrection. Second, Hebrews speaks explicitly of Christ’s resurrection. Third, Hebrews makes at least two significant textual connections between resurrection and priesthood (Heb 5:5–10 and 7:11–28). By briefly touching on the first two propositions and examining the third in greater detail, I will attempt to show the merits and missteps of Moffitt’s work.

Hebrews 6:2; 11:17–19; 11:35 affirm bodily resurrection

There are four explicit references to resurrection in Hebrews. To begin, Hebrews 6:2 speaks of “the resurrection of the dead” as an “elementary doctrine” (v. 1). Thus, we can infer that the author of Hebrews both affirms the doctrine of bodily resurrection and that this doctrine informs his letter.²⁸ This affirmation of resurrection is verified in passages like Hebrews 11:17–19

and 11:35. In the former, the author suggests Abraham reckoned in his mind “that God was able even to raise him from the dead” when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:2). Likewise, Hebrews 11:35 speaks of women “receiv[ing] back their dead by resurrection” and others “refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again [*anastaseōs*, translated “resurrection” in 6:2; 11:35a] to a better life.” Moffitt rightly distinguishes temporary resurrection (e.g., “women receiving back their dead”) from eschatological resurrection (e.g., the “better life”), and concludes, “The better resurrection ... produces the kind of life fit to inherit the fullness of the other eschatological promises—an enduring city and a heavenly homeland.”²⁹ From his brief survey, it is evident that resurrection is a subject familiar to the author of Hebrews, and that it is not illegitimate to speak of resurrection in the epistle.

Christ’s resurrection is explicitly mentioned in Hebrews 13:20–21

Though not without detractors, most commentators recognize 13:20 as referring to Jesus’ resurrection.³⁰ In this passage the agent of resurrection is the Father (“the God of peace”); the object of resurrection is the Lord Jesus (“brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus”), and the place from which he is brought back is the “realm of the dead.”³¹ Theologically, Hebrews 13:20 summarizes much of Hebrews covenant theology: “God has established a new covenant with his people through the ‘leading out’ of Jesus from the realm of the dead.”³² Conceptually similar to Paul’s “raised with Christ” (Rom 6:4–6; 1 Cor 15:20–24), the author of Hebrews unites priest and people by means of the covenantal bond established by Christ’s death and resurrection. Even more, as Hebrews 13:20–21 stands dependent on the new exodus passage of Isaiah 63:11–14, the climactic reference to resurrection speaks of Christ leading his people out of death, much like Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt.³³

The point of his resurrection, therefore, is twofold. (1) Christ is raised ultimately to receive “glory forever and ever.” But also, (2) Christ’s resurrection situates him as the shepherd and priestly-mediator (cf. Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) “through [whom]” the Father equips the sheep with the promises of the new covenant, enabling them to “do his will” (13:21). We will return to the relationship between death and resurrection below, but for now it is worth observing that the author of Hebrews explicates in his concluding benediction what he has insinuated all along—namely, that a new priest

has “arisen” (7:15) who mediates a better covenant by means of his better life.³⁴ Though intimated in only one verse, it is well within reason to conclude that the author of Hebrews has a strong understanding of resurrection, and that Christ’s resurrection with his people depends on the blood he shed as priest for those same people. This will receive further corroboration in the next section, where Hebrews 5 and 7 ground Christ’s heavenly priesthood in his resurrection.

Sonship, Resurrection, and Priesthood (Hebrews 5:5–10)

Hebrews 5:1–10 is one of the two primary passages relating priesthood and resurrection. In the flow of the letter, chapter 5 begins to outline the way in which Christ is a legitimate (and better) priest. Already, the designation “high priest” has been used four times about Jesus (2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15), but now, anticipating objections to Jesus’ non-Levitical lineage (cf. 7:14), the author explains how a man from the tribe of Judah can be a priest.³⁵ While not fully developing his Melchizedekian explanation until chapter 7, Hebrews 5:1–10 drives toward this conclusion: Christ is “designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek” (v. 10). It is this typological description that legitimates Jesus’ priesthood. But why?

What is it about Jesus’ priesthood which stands in continuity with Melchizedek? In Hebrews 7, the connection will be explicated at length, and there the author of Hebrews will explain that Jesus’ indestructible life is like that of Melchizedek who had “no beginning days or end of life” (7:3). But what about in Hebrews 5:5–10? What do we find in this text that affirms and authorizes Jesus’ priesthood? And what relates Jesus’ priesthood to his resurrection? In one word the answer is “sonship.”

In Hebrews 5:5 the author compares Christ to the Aaronic priests of old (described in vv. 1–4). He states that Christ “did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him [God]” (v. 5), and then he cites two texts: Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4. These two passages are “mutually illuminating” with respect to the royal priesthood of Christ. As Hahn puts it, “In the author’s view, divine sonship, royal priesthood, and the order of Melchizedek represent different but complementary ways of stating the same essential truth of Davidic identity and messianic mission.”³⁶ Accordingly, Christ’s appointment as “Son” corresponds with his appointment as priest.³⁷ Or to say it more precisely, Christ is appointed a priest when God calls him

“Son.” However, to understand the significance of his “sonship,” as newly appointed office at his resurrection, we need to see two things—first, we need to recognize the timing of his appointment; second, we need to return to the Old Testament to see the runway on which “sonship” takes off, so we can understand how it lands in Hebrews.

Appointed a Son at His Resurrection

I will argue that Christ was appointed Son at his resurrection for three reasons. First, in Hebrews 1, Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 are referenced together. Verse 3 alludes to Psalm 110:1 (“he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”), while verse 5 quotes Psalm 2:7.³⁸ Standing between them is the announcement that Christ has received a better name than the angels (“having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs”). While debates range on whether the “inherited name” pertains to Christ’s deity or humanity, Moffitt’s argument that Hebrews 1 speaks of the resurrected Christ better explains the argument of the chapter.³⁹ Therefore, if Hebrews 1:3 speaks of the Son exalted at God’s right hand, then Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 have already been conjoined in Hebrews to posit the Son’s resurrection.

Second, the flow of thought and language in Hebrews 5 is best understood in terms of resurrection. Arguing on the basis of Christ’s “perfection,” Moffitt relates the logical order of Hebrews 5:7–9 to Hebrews 2:9–11; in both cases “perfection” (viz., “crowned with glory and honor” in 2:9; “being made perfect” in 5:9) follow his “suffering.”⁴⁰ He solidifies his case by showing that “perfection” in Hebrews relates to Christ’s “enduring life.” While both Levites and Jesus died, only one rose from the grave to have power over death. Therefore, Jesus is a better priest because he was raised to life. In Hebrews 5:7–10, Jesus’ prayer was heard, just like the righteous sufferers of old (cf. Ps 4:2–4; 6:9–10; 22:23–25; 31:20–25; 90:14–16),⁴¹ only it was not answered in keeping him from death (see Heb 2:9), it was answered in raising him from the dead (cf. Ps 88). Nevertheless, that Jesus was heard and saved means that he did not regard iniquity in his heart (Ps 66:18); rather, he was heard for his righteousness and trust (cf. Ps 22:22–24).

Third, Romans 1:4 sheds light on Hebrews 5:5, for both speak of the Son of God with respect to the resurrection. Schreiner comments: “The title *huiou theou* in verse 3 is a reference not to Jesus’ deity but to his messianic

kingship as the descendent of David (cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7),” a messianic kingship that was given to him “upon his resurrection.”⁴² Significantly, the same verse (Ps 2:7) that informed Paul’s introduction to Romans (1:3–4) is quoted in Hebrews 5:5. In both texts, (royal) sonship and priesthood are conferred to Christ, not with respect to his divine nature, but with respect to his Davidic sonship and his priestly exaltation.⁴³ At his resurrection Christ received the title “Son of God,” and with that title came the universal right to rule as royal priest (Ps 110:1). Commenting on this point in Hebrews, Hughes represents many who see the strong association between royal son and priest: “The collocation of these two messianic affirmations ... shows how closely within the perspective of the history of redemption the Sonship and the Priesthood of Christ belong together.”⁴⁴ And it is to this redemptive history that we turn to understand better how Jesus’ resurrection elevates the priesthood of Christ by means of giving him the name “Son.”

Sonship in the Old Testament and in Hebrews

Scott Hahn, discussing the importance of sonship in Hebrews, notes, “the inner unity of sonship, royalty, and priesthood is not readily apparent” to “the modern reader,” but that in the worldview of first-century Judaism “Christ’s threefold role as firstborn son, king, and high priest (i.e., Christ’s royal priestly primogeniture) represents the restoration of an original and superior form of covenant meditation.”⁴⁵ But what exactly is that “original and superior form of covenant mediation?” Hahn’s contention is that the superior form of meditation relates to “kinship” or “sonship,” the familial bond made through a covenant (hence, his “kinship by covenant”).⁴⁶ On this reading, the priesthood is not tied to legal heritage (like with Aaron and Levi) but to family relations and blessed birthright. Indeed, Hahn argues that Hebrews is showing that the covenant Christ mediates is not just replacing the servile law of Moses (cf. Heb 3:1–6), but it is returning to the better privilege of sonship, whereby the son of God is permitted to come into his presence on behalf of all those children God has given him (Heb 2:11–18; 5:1). But to appreciate fully the priestly sonship God conferred upon Jesus, we need to return to the Old Testament.

Hahn provides a well-documented case for the “the cultic-familial nexus of primogeniture, priesthood, and paternal succession.”⁴⁷ Discussing primogeniture in Genesis and Exodus, he argues the ancient rite carried with it a

priestly status: "Canonical evidence points to the existence of a pre-Levitical form of priestly activity before the Mosaic period."⁴⁸ Citing arguments from natural law,⁴⁹ Jewish Targums on Genesis,⁵⁰ and the biblical text itself (e.g., Gen 49:3; Exod 4:22; 19:5–6; Num 3:11–13; 8:16–18; 18:15),⁵¹ Hahn maintains that the eldest son was "in the natural position not only for paternal succession but for mediation (social, legal, and cultic) between father and siblings as well."⁵² He shows that many Jewish interpreters of Genesis 49:3 ("Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power") ascribe a priestly significance to Reuben, believing that Jacob's eldest son was considered a priest among his brothers, before he fell by defiling his father's bed (49:4; cf. 35:22).

Other recent scholars have followed this interpretation of priestly primogeniture. Speaking specifically of the language of Genesis 49:3, J. R. Porter describes the "special authority of the first-born." He writes, "The first-born was in a unique position, depending on the fact that he was 'the beginning of the father's strength,' which seems to be almost a technical expression and which means that the son in question was endowed with the fullness of the father's authority and power."⁵³ Likewise, H. C. Brichto summarizes his copious work on kin, cult, land, and afterlife, by saying, "There is ample evidence that the role of priest in the Israelite family had at one time been filled by the firstborn."⁵⁴ Finally, Van Groningen writes, "In the firstborn the dual capacity for king and priest is implicitly implied."⁵⁵ Later Scriptures, while separating the priesthood (in Levi) from the kingdom (in Judah and David), would also see the reunification of royal and priestly offices (cf. 1 Sam 2:35; Ps 110; Jer 30:21–22; Zech 3:1–10; 6:9–15).

Following Genesis, sonship and priesthood continued to overlap in the life of Israel. In Exodus 4:22, Israel is called God's "firstborn," and later they are referred to as a "royal priesthood" (19:6).⁵⁶ Such identity-markers stand as weather vanes for the whole book of Exodus, where from one angle, we can see the whole drama of Exodus as a competition of "firstborn sons." Van Groningen writes, "The Egyptians believed that the firstborn son was a direct link between generations of royal people. In fact, the firstborn son was considered a specific and direct representative of the gods to the Egyptian people." Hence, Moses was to "inform Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt, that God, the Lord of the patriarchs, claims Israel as his representative people," a role that Pharaoh wrongly claimed for himself.⁵⁷ Thus, the story of the exodus

becomes not only a story of deliverance, but also the redemption of God's firstborn who will become his true royal priests. As Hahn concludes, in Exodus "Israel is called to royal priestly service as the collective firstborn son within God's family of nations."⁵⁸ Identified as God's "firstborn" (4:22) and "royal priesthood" (19:5–6), Exodus shows priestly service as an out-working of Israel's sonship.

Moving into Israel's history, Israel's priestly status rose and fell with its covenantal sonship.⁵⁹ When the people of God kept covenant with God, they receive God's blessings. When they sinned against God, and especially when the priests failed to keep covenant with God, the whole nation suffered (cf. Ezek 8:1–18; Hos 4:6; 5:1; 6:9). While Israel eventually experienced exile because its royal sons failed to keep the Davidic Covenant (Ps 89), it is equally the case that the sons of Levi failed to keep their covenant (Mal 2:1–9). As a nation whose identity found its origins and vocational pursuits in Adam—the prototypical royal-priest and firstborn son—when Israel broke the covenant, God could no longer treat them as a son (cf. Mal 1:6–14; 2:10).

The Golden Calf incident, it has been argued, disqualified Israel from retaining its full priesthood.⁶⁰ After Exodus 32, only the sons of Levi, who sided with God against their brothers, could be priests (Exod 32:25–29; Deut 33:8–11). Independent of one's final conclusion about the Golden Calf's effect on Israel's priesthood, the rest of the Old Testament shows a downward spiral of priestly service. Whereas the Pentateuch provides the biblical ideal, the Prophets record the collapse of the priestly office.⁶¹ By Zechariah 3:1–4 and Malachi 2:1–9, the priesthood was defiled and dead. It had failed to guard the temple, teach the people, or provide atonement that cleansed the flesh.⁶² What laws promised "maintenance of life" (Lev 18:5) and "access" to God (Lev 26:11–12) had failed, and now a new priesthood needed to be raised from the dead. Metaphorical as this sounds, the reality and the promise is absolutely literal: God was going to raise a new royal son who would be a better priest (see the treatment of 1 Sam 2:35 below).

Based on Hahn's biblical-theological study, we need to recapture Christ's "threefold role" in Hebrews. And more, we need to recognize that Christ's appointment as "Son" at his resurrection exalted the offices he already possessed in humility. This article focuses on his priesthood, but Schenck has made the same point regarding his sonship and his royal office, which, as Hahn has shown, are essentially related to Christ's priesthood.⁶³ Schenck writes,

At his enthronement, Christ truly *becomes* Son in the sense that he assumes his royal and takes his divine ‘appointment,’ but in his *identity* he has always been the Son, ... One might say, thus, that although Christ is always the Son in terms of his *identity* (even before his exaltation, as a kind of ‘heir apparent’), he can only be said to be ‘enthroned’ as Son in the inheritance of his royal *office* when he is exalted to God’s right hand.⁶⁴

Schenck’s proposal guards against adding something to Jesus, a concern shared by theologians who take seriously the unchanging, divine nature of the Son (Heb 13:8), but it also recognizes that his resurrection does something in the human life of Jesus.⁶⁵ Whereas his earthly obedience was not recognized as a legitimate priesthood; now, named “Son,” exalted above the angels, and seated at God’s right hand (Heb 1:5–14), he has become the source of eternal life (5:9) and has the right to intercede for all those whom he led from death unto glory (13:20–21; 2:9–11).

Summing up our consideration of Hebrews 5, we can say Jesus’ greater priesthood stands on the basis of his resurrection, but his resurrection stands on the basis of his reverence as a true son (5:7). In his earthly life, he learned obedience, as he obeyed the law as human son (cf. Gal 4:4). Facing death, he cried out for salvation, and like David in the Psalms, and because of his greater covenantal obedience under the old law, he was heard and raised from the dead. Upon that resurrection, his pre-existent sonship was vindicated and his priesthood was transformed. At the very same time, his resurrection became the source of life for all his people. While the resurrection “perfected” Jesus (5:9) and situated him in the heavens as a priest like Melchizedek (5:10); it also ratified a covenant with the people God gave to him (i.e., his sons and daughters, the seed of Abraham, 2:11–18). While sounding like Paul’s doctrine of imputation, Christ’s priestly role (5:1) means that his reverence became our reverence, his holiness our holiness, his resurrection our resurrection. In this way, he became the source of eternal salvation, not by simple force of nature (life conquering death), but rather by his sinless life (4:15) and sin-canceling sacrifice (9:22, 26), he led his people out of death into life by his blood (13:20–21).

From this reading of Hebrews 5:5–10, we begin to see the interconnectedness of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The son who was born in Bethlehem, who walked through Galilee, who pleased his Father at his

baptism, and died on Calvary, is given the name “Son” and enthroned on high. Moffitt is surely right that perfection in Hebrews relates to Christ’s resurrection and enduring life; however, if his resurrection grants him perfection and life, it is because he has already lived a sinless life while on earth (4:15). By means of his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice, Christ perfectly fulfilled the law and as such, the Father granted him life as his reward (cf. Lev 18:5) and the heavenly position to grant life to all those he died for as priest. To clarify and confirm that assertion, we turn to Hebrews 7.

A Priest like Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:13-25)

Though mentioned only twice in the Old Testament (Gen 14; Ps 110:4), the author of Hebrews finds in Melchizedek an enigmatic priest-king who is greater than Abraham and Levi. More importantly, Melchizedek provides a solution to the riddle mentioned in Hebrews 7:14: How can a non-Levite arise as high priest? For Israelites, especially those who sought to keep the law, a non-Levitical priest was an oxymoron, and thus a strong reason to reject Jesus. The whole of chapter 7 is spent answering that question and expounding the meaning of Psalm 110:4, which advocates a different and better kind of high priest.⁶⁶

Simon Kistemaker outlines the chapter, noting how Hebrews explains Psalm 110:4 in reverse order.

The exegesis recorded in the pericope 7:1–25 in general terms may be classified in four divisions ... The author takes hold of the last word “Melchizedek” and places it in a historical setting (7:1–3); in the next passage he discusses the word “priest” (7:4–11) and priestly “order” (7:11–13); two verses are devoted to the personal pronoun “thou” (7:13–14); and the remainder (7:15–25) elaborates “for ever.”⁶⁷

Kistemaker makes the additional point that while the four divisions are “rather vague,” “there is a well-defined division between 7:1–12 and 7:13–25,” and the latter section “exegetes the clause ‘thou art a priest *forever*.’”⁶⁸ As we will see, it is this section that expounds most clearly the way in which Christ’s resurrection qualifies him to be a high priest like Melchizedek. In this section, there are at least four passages that show how resurrection stands behind Christ’s claim to priesthood. We will consider them in order, with the first

point taking us back to 1 Samuel 2:35, a passage that greatly informs Christ's exalted priesthood.

Christ's Resurrection Makes Him Like Melchizedek

Verse 15 speaks of "another priest *arising* in the likeness of Melchizedek." In the context, the verb "arises" (*anistēmi*) can "simply refer to a state of affairs coming into being or to an individual taking an office ... but the writer seems to use this language in 7:15 to indicate something more."⁶⁹ What is the "more"? Moffitt suggests that it is a subtle affirmation of Christ's resurrection.⁷⁰ O'Brien concurs. While affirming Christ's incarnation in general, he states the term "is likely ... an implicit reference to the resurrection."⁷¹ In addition to the context of Hebrews 7 and the recurring use of *anistēmi* in resurrection passages, there may also be a connection with 1 Samuel 2:35,⁷² a passage which speaks of God "raising up" a new priest from the line of David. Though this inter-textual link has not received much attention, in the matrix of priesthood and resurrection it bears consideration.

When the priesthood of Eli was crumbling due his sons' wickedness, God said, "And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever" (1 Sam 2:35). In this priestly promise, resurrection language (i.e., "raise up," *anastēsō*) appears. In its original setting, bodily resurrection was not likely in view.⁷³ However, it could not be far from the author's mind. For, it is more than coincidental that in the same chapter, Hannah praises God for "raising" the dead to life: "The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (2:6). In its immediate context, "raise up a faithful priest" has the notion of appointment to an office, but when Yahweh speaks of "a *sure* house" and "my anointed *forever*," something more enduring must be in mind.⁷⁴ Likewise, when we read 1 Samuel 2:35 in light of the full biblical canon, a significant verbal connection is found with Hebrews 7:15.⁷⁵

In Hebrews 7:11 and 15, the language of "arise/arises" is used to speak of a new priest. Nelson observes, "Just as God 'raised up' a faithful priest in the crisis brought on by Eli's sons (1 Sam 2:35), God has now 'raised up' (pun no doubt intended) another priest outside the Aaronic system."⁷⁶ Unfortunately, Nelson sees the verbal connection as a pun and no more. Moffitt rightly endorses "arising" in 7:15 as "a reference to Jesus' resurrection," but doesn't

make a connection with 1 Samuel 2:35.⁷⁷ We need both observations. The near context of Hebrews shows that Christ's resurrection qualifies him for his heavenly ministry, but the canonical context helps explain the origins of Jesus' Melchizedekian priesthood. If we permit, therefore, a connection between 1 Samuel 2:35 and Hebrews 7:15, we may also find that Jesus' exalted priesthood not only has Psalm 110 in its background, but a whole Davidic priesthood that is gradually developed over the course of the Old Testament. But can we say that 1 Samuel 2:35 advocates a Davidic priesthood? On what basis? And by whose law?

Interpretive history has typically assigned Samuel or Zadok to be the "faithful priest" of 1 Samuel 2:35.⁷⁸ However, Karl Deenick is more persuasive.⁷⁹ Considering a number of textual indicators (the language of "messiah" in the early chapters of 1 Samuel,⁸⁰ historical context,⁸¹ literary development,⁸² and covenantal promises⁸³), he argues David is the fleeting fulfillment of 1 Samuel 2:35.⁸⁴ Similarly, Eugene Merrill writes, "The strongest suggestion of Davidic royal priesthood occurs in 2 Sam 6" when "David himself was in charge [of] leading the entourage" to the temple, and he was "clothed in priestly attire, offering sacrifice and issuing priestly benediction."⁸⁵ Going further, Merrill adds, "Neither the chronicler nor the author of Samuel mentions a priest in the whole course of sacrificing. Clearly David saw himself as a priest and was accepted by the people and the Levites as such."⁸⁶

Merrill is on solid biblical ground when he makes his assertion that David functions as a priest, but it should be recognized, as Deenick observes, that David's fulfillment of 1 Samuel 2:35 is ephemeral. While 1–2 Samuel indicates that he is a "priest-king," his own sin truncates his priestly service.⁸⁷ Consequently, by the end of David's life what was promised in 1 Samuel 2:35 is still without fulfillment. The people of Israel must await another "anointed priest."⁸⁸ Nevertheless, 1 Samuel 2:35 adds to the composite picture of the eschatological priest.⁸⁹

Through the complex history of 1–2 Samuel, God refined and advanced the typological shape of his priest.⁹⁰ God's "faithful priest" will not stumble like the sons of Levi (Mal 2:1–9), but will perfectly succeed like the "king of righteousness" himself (Ps 110). In this way, "Yahweh has used David to demonstrate the kind of priest-king about which 1 Samuel 2:35 is prophesying. The flawed David is held up as a model, as a picture ... of what the

ultimate priest-king would be.”⁹¹ Speaking of David as a kind of mold for the eschatological priest, Deenick writes,

Perhaps most surprising to the careful reader is that it is a king who is intended to function as a priest not after the *mold* of Aaron, but, as Ps 110 and the writer of Hebrews make clear (Heb 7), after the *mold* of a superior priesthood (Heb 5:1-7:28), after the *mold* of Melchizedek ... In Heb 5:1-2 the “weakness” of the earthly high priests is identified as their sinfulness. In contrast, the oath of Ps 110:4 appointed Jesus as a priest who is without such weakness. This is the central thought of the Melchizedekian priesthood. So, although the books of Samuel show that the fulfillment of the promise of 1 Sam 2:35 was to be found in the house of David, they also show that the ultimate fulfillment of the “anointed priest” lay not in David, but in Jesus Christ.⁹²

How do we pull this together? Preliminarily, I suggest that the priesthood that arises from this text and ultimately culminates in Christ, includes both a genealogical principle (the priest will come from the house of David) *and* a supernatural power (the priest must have an indestructible life and power to raise the dead to life). Regarding the former, the genealogical principle is carried along in David’s lineage and validated by the promise of being called God’s son (2 Sam 7:14), which as we have seen comes to have great priestly significance in Christ’s resurrection (cf. Heb 5:5-6). Additionally, David’s covenant comes with a new law (see 2 Sam 7:19); this “charter for humanity” may adumbrate Hebrews 7:12: “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.”⁹³ Regarding the latter supernatural power, the later prophecies in Isaiah 9:6-7 and Micah 5:2 couple Davidic kingship with divine attributes, thus joining together what seems improbable to mankind. But as Gabriel said to Mary, with respect to the fulfillment of these prophecies, “Nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37)—certainly not a royal priesthood that looks like Melchizedek, not like Aaron.

All in all, weaving through the Old Testament, these two principles find their interpretive end (*telos*) in Jesus Christ. It is possible that David himself foresaw this coming royal priesthood when he wrote Psalm 110. After all, Peter, in Acts 3:29-35, assigns him the appellation “prophet” (v. 30), when he speaks of David receiving an oath (v. 30; cf. Ps 110:4), beholding

Christ's resurrection (v. 31), and quoting from Psalm 110 (v. 34–35). In fact, Acts 3:22 and 26 speak of God "raising up," respectively, a "prophet like Moses" and "his servant." Is this further evidence for seeing Christ's resurrection elevating, even transforming, his various offices? It is worth further consideration.

Indeed, through the interpretive lens of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, as well as his unified offices, we can better see how Hebrews applied Old Testament types and shadows to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. To say it another way, what is seen in the shadows of the Old Testament has found its substance in Christ (cf. Heb 10:1), a priest-king like Melchizedek who arises from the line of David and who even rises from the dead. This son of David is the one spoken of in Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4 (cited together in Heb 5:5–6) who was to receive his promised inheritance, and who now intercedes for his people as a priestly-king (Ps 2:7; cf. Isa 53:10–12) and rules the nations as warrior priest (Ps 2:8; cf. Ps 110:4–7). And all this was to transpire when he God raised him from the dead to receive the triple office of son, priest, and king, which brings us back to Hebrews 7.

Christ's Indestructible Life Makes Him a Better Priest

The second evidence for how Christ's resurrection transforms Christ's priesthood is found in verse 16. In that verse Jesus is said to be a priest "not on the basis of a legal requirement, but by the power of indestructible life." The contrast between Jesus and the sons of Aaron focuses on their differing qualifications for priesthood. The Levites had served as Israel's priests for more than a millennium and their claim on the priesthood was established "by bodily descent."⁹⁴ To faithful Jews, no other priesthood could exist—the law established the Levites. However, as Hebrews 7 asserts, there existed in Israel's history an antecedent and superior priesthood—it was the priesthood of Melchizedek who had "neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues forever a priest forever" (7:3). Hebrews picks up this typological similarity and argues that Christ is a priest like Melchizedek. Consequently, he is greater than Aaron, because his life has no end. As Hebrews 7:15 puts it Christ has become a priest based on "the power of an indestructible life."⁹⁵ This is the qualification that transforms Christ's priesthood—namely the resurrection he experienced because of his perfect holiness, that he would in turn pass on to his brothers as he became

the source of their sanctification (2:10) and eternal salvation (5:9).⁹⁶

The logic of resurrection resulting from his death has been observed by Moffitt in Hebrews 2:9–11 and again in Hebrews 5:7–10.⁹⁷ After suffering for his brothers, the Son was raised from the dead and given authority to bring many sons to glory. In this way, he became the source of life for all who were sanctified—first Christ, then his brothers. Moffitt, however, downplays the importance of his suffering, saying it “is not the author’s point.”⁹⁸ While not denying the role of Christ’s death,⁹⁹ he makes Christ’s death a preparatory prerequisite for his priesthood, rather than a performative one, to use Kibbe’s nomenclature.¹⁰⁰ The problem arises in this: by limiting the role of Christ’s sacrifice, Moffitt undermines the very thing that qualifies Jesus to be raised from the dead—namely, his obedience unto death. While Christ’s exalted priesthood depends on his resurrection from the dead; his resurrection depends on his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice (see the tight relationship in Heb 13:20–21). The two work in tandem, and one cannot be held over against the other. Therefore, while Moffitt is right to assert that Christ’s indestructible life qualifies him to be a priest like Melchizedek, his resurrection is ultimately grounded in his moral perfection, not his mere power to overcome death.

Christ’s Resurrection Enables Him to Mediate an Eternal Covenant

The third argument for resurrection in Hebrews 7 concerns the displacement of the old covenant and inauguration of the new. Verse 18 reads, “a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness.” Already, the priesthood of Jesus has been posited as the reason for a new law (7:12). Likewise, “weakness” (*asthenēs*) used adjectivally of “the former commandment” is also used to speak of Levites in verse 28 and priests who are “beset with weakness” in Hebrews 5:2. By common language, and the way Hebrews 7:12 makes the priest antecedent to and the basis for the new covenant and not the reverse, it is entirely plausible that the whole covenant stands on the blood of Jesus Christ *and* his resurrection.

In fact, when we examine the covenantal transition initiated by Christ, we find two inseparable ideas. First, the penalty of the first covenant has been set aside. This is addressed in Hebrews 9:15–17, where Jesus’ death puts to death the curses of the old covenant. As Hahn writes, “The particular covenant occupying the author’s thought in 9:15–22 is the first Sinai

covenant, seen as a *broken* covenant after the calf incident.”¹⁰¹ In his death Christ redeemed “the called” (i.e., the people he represents as priest) from the “transgressions committed under the first covenant” (v. 15). In other words, his death closed the book, so to speak, on the old covenant and established a “new covenant” containing “the promised eternal inheritance” (v. 15). Significantly, his death resulted in life—a fact that must be kept in mind as we speak of Christ’s resurrection. Whenever we speak of his resurrection, we must remember his death; whenever we read of his death, we must not forget his resurrection. Theologically, the two are inseparable, which brings us to the second idea to consider.

Jesus’ death ends the first covenant to establish a “new covenant,” one that cleanses the conscience (9:14), secures forgiveness (9:22), and makes a way for sanctified sinners to enter God’s presence (10:20). Regardless of how atonement, resurrection, and exaltation exactly fit together in Hebrews—a conundrum of no small measure—it is clear that death *and* resurrection are *both* required to put aside the old covenant and establish a new and living covenant. In fact, as Hebrews 13:20 indicates, it is the God of peace who raised Jesus from the dead “by the blood of the eternal covenant.” In other words, because Jesus, as mediator of the new covenant merited life as the reward of his earthly reverence, God raised him to life. And with his resurrection Jesus became a high priest who secured the gifts of forgiveness (8:13), cleansing (9:14), and indestructible life—the ability to draw near to God and not die (7:19). From heaven, he now bestows those gifts by means of the Holy Spirit.

Moffitt does not spend enough time considering the covenantal structures of Hebrews and therefore does not attend to the way in which Christ’s priesthood—at every point (life, death, and resurrection)—is representing the members of his covenant. In his life, he is obeying the law so that his obedient will might sanctify them (10:10). In his death, Christ offers himself up as the perfect and final sacrifice for their sins (9:15–28) thus propitiating the wrath of God (2:17). And in his resurrection, he receives his reward for his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice.

What is his reward? On one hand, we can say, it is everything promised to him, but more concretely, he receives his life back as a reward. Then, because he is a priestly figure and not just a private person, he also receives the lives of all those people for whom he died. In this way, his reward is the incalculable

joy of bringing his people into the presence of the Father, something no son of Israel ever did before (see Heb 3–4).

Christ's Resurrection Proves His Holiness and Procures Ours

In verse 21, the author quotes again from Psalm 110, focusing this time on the oath God swore (v. 20). Verse 22 indicates that this oath “makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.” Just as the oath God swore to Abraham secured his future and eternal blessings (Heb 6:13–20; 11:17–19), so the oath sworn to Jesus secured his priesthood. Explaining the significance of his perpetual priesthood, the author contrasts the Levites with Jesus. The former, he says, “were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever” (v. 24). This verse highlights the great weakness of the first priesthood—mortality. Because they died, their priesthood could not continue. Though Phineas was promised a “perpetual priesthood” (Num 25:13), he died in such a way that his priestly reverence was, in the end, no better than his brothers, Nadab and Abihu, who died offering strange fire (Lev 10:1–3).

Putting the pieces together, Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices for themselves because they were sinners. Before God they were unclean and unfit to enter his presence on the basis of their earthly lives. The same is *not* true for Jesus. Hebrews 10:5–10 makes it evident that he perfectly pleased the Father by doing his will (v. 9). Interestingly, in that same verse, Hebrews says, “He [Jesus] does away with the first in order to establish the second.” As observed in the last point, the covenantal transition cannot be limited to one aspect of Christ’s person and work (i.e., his death *or* his resurrection). The same point is made here: the new covenant is not only secured by his sacrificial death (10:10), but also through his earthly obedience (10:9). Indeed, the purity of his sacrifice, and hence its purifying (and life-giving) power, comes from the purity of his own life. Likewise, the bestowal of covenant blessings come not only from Christ’s death but also from his resurrection, and his heavenly session, where he always lives to intercede and plead the merits of life and death on behalf of those people who he represents as priest.

In theological terms, the efficacy of Christ’s passive obedience depends on his active obedience. And the resurrection then becomes the reward (think: covenantal blessing) Jesus receives for his earthly obedience and sacrificial death. And then as a priest who does nothing for himself, he shares

his reward with his friends, just like Zechariah 3 said the priest would do. Hebrews 7:25 summarizes nicely, “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”

This is the foundation of the gospel in Hebrews. Jesus, who died in order to procure forgiveness, has been raised from the dead so that all who draw near to God through him may find life in God’s presence. Or, to put it more monergistically, as Hebrews 5:9 does, “being made perfect [i.e., resurrected], he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” And who obey him? All those whom Christ intercedes for (Heb 7:25), applying the blessings of the covenant to them—namely, the gift of purity, life, and desire to do God’s will (Ezek 36:26–27). In other words, Christ who died to establish a new covenant for his people was then raised to life in order to give eternal life. In his death, he redeemed his people from the death they deserved under the old covenant (9:15–17); and in his life, he intercedes on behalf of those same people (7:25), that they might experience his grace now and his glory when we comes—for after all, as Hebrews 9:28 says, the same Christ who lived, died, and rose again for his people is the same Christ who is coming for them at the end of the age (cf. 13:8).

CONCLUSION

When we step back to look at Christ’s priestly résumé in Hebrews, it appears like a beautiful jewel. Or, maybe like a dozen jewels emblazoned on the chest of Christ’s priestly robe. From one angle his priesthood reflects the simple purity of his earthly life, from another the dark hues of his death bleed through, and from yet another angle the radiant glory of his resurrection and heavenly session are observed. In truth, depending on which aspect of his ministry we focus, the Son may appear to be different—meek and humble in one place, reigning and resplendent in another. But let us make no mistake: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (13:8). Therefore, as we formulate a priestly Christology, we must grapple with his unchanging nature *and* the way in which the resurrection “changed”—or what I have called “transfigured”—his priestly office.

If my proposal is in any way on track, then it must at one and the same time maintain the unity of Christ’s person and work, even as it recognizes the

contours of his redemptive history. With respect to his resurrection, David Moffitt has shown conclusively that there is something the resurrection does to Christ's priesthood. While denying Christ's earthly priesthood, Moffitt's attention to Christ's heavenly priesthood has helped sharpen the focus on how Christ's resurrection and priesthood relate. Unfortunately, in emphasizing the latter, he has minimized the former and thus bifurcated Christ's priesthood and undermined the propitiatory nature of the cross. This essay has sought to address that concern and provide a constructive model for conceiving of Christ's multi-staged priesthood. It has argued that Christ was a priest in his earthly life, in his sacrificial death, and in his glorious resurrection—only, as Hebrews requires, Christ's priesthood today is greater than that of his earthly life, because in his resurrection, his priesthood was transformed from nameless and humble to glorious and entitled—he is the Son of God and priest like Melchizedek.

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- ¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1:501–03; Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources* (ed. Ernst Bizer; trans. G. T. Thomson; London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), 448–87; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1872–73; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 2:464–79; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1941), 361–66; and Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim's on the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 483–520.
 - ² Jacob Arminius, "The Priesthood of Christ," in *The Writings of James Arminius* (trans. by James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1956), 1:402–33.
 - ³ On a history of the debate, see Michael Kibbe, "Is It Finished? When Did It Start? Hebrews, Priesthood, and Atonement in Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Theological Studies* 65 (2014): 25–30; cf. Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 401–03.
 - ⁴ Most recently, one of these excurses has been republished in a stand-alone volume (John Owen, *The Priesthood of Christ: Its Necessity and Nature* [Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Heritage, 2010]).
 - ⁵ Peter J. Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (1999): 3–4.
 - ⁶ David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to Hebrews* (Novum Testamentum Supplements, vol. 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011). Michael Kibbe ("Is It Finished?": 25–61) follows Moffitt in his approach to the resurrection in Hebrews, even as he critiques Moffitt's understanding of the cross in Hebrews.
 - ⁷ "The resurrection stands at the logical center of the high-priestly Christology the author [of Hebrews] defends and develops" (Ibid., 148). Other reviewers (Chris Byrly, "A Review of Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to Hebrews" SBJT 17.2 [2013]: 88–92; Nicholas J. Moore, "A Review of Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to Hebrews," *Journal of Theological Studies* 64.2 [2013]: 673–75; Aubrey Sequeira, "Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews [Review]," *CredoMag* [blog on-line]; accessed 19 December 2014; available from <http://www.credomag.com/2014/01/16/atonement-and-the-logic-of-resurrection-in-the-epistle-to-the-hebrews-review>) explain the concerns I have with Moffitt's work: (1) a forced reading of Hebrews that conforms to his insightful but fallible understanding of *Yom Kippur* in Hebrews, (2) an overemphasis on the soteriological implications of resurrection that

effectively override the more evident themes of blood sacrifice and atonement in Hebrews, and (3) the Socinian-like assertion that Christ's priesthood does not begin until his resurrection. As will be argued in this article, we do need to (re)consider the soteriological implications of Christ's resurrection, but not at the expense of Christ's earthly obedience and sacrificial death.

- 8 To be fair, Moffitt does recognize other priestly qualifications for Jesus—namely his ability to sympathize with the weak and his divine appointment (194–95), as well as his death as a step in the process of his resurrection and priesthood (287).
- 9 This view is very similar to that of Kenneth Schenck ("Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews," *JSNT* 66 [1997]: 99) and not without theological precursors. For instance, Francis Turretin argues for an inaugurated priesthood (as part of Jesus' mediatorial office): Jesus' baptism "consecrates," his transfiguration "confirms," and his resurrection and exaltation consummates ("fully made") his priesthood (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology* [trans. George Musgrave Giger; ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994], 391–92). Cf. John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ed. W. H. Goold; London: Johnstone & Hunter, 1855; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 2:152–54;
- 10 On the exegetical debate regarding Christ's resurrection and priesthood in Hebrews, see Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 30–45; cf. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 198–208. Although presently unpublished, R. B. Jamieson's paper ("Aligning Jesus' Death, Offering, and Heavenly Entrance in Hebrews: An Assessment of Recent Scholarship") is the most extensive survey.
- 11 E.g., Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965); Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James (eds.), *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); John R. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986); Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Foundations in Evangelical Theology; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997); Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Contours of Christian Theology; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); Graham A. Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009).
- 12 See Kibbe's concluding assessment, where he affirms that the "Socinian" understanding of the sequence of to atonement "deserves another further exegetical consideration, as "in the recent work of David Moffitt" (Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 60–61).
- 13 Kibbe ("Is It Finished?": 25–61) has argued perceptively that it is possible to hold to Socinus's view of Hebrews without denying its sacrificial emphasis, but his article is not sufficient to prove that one can press for a Socinian view (as Moffitt does) without undoing much of the sacrificial and covenantal structures in Hebrews. History, though not an absolute master, works against such a proposal. To deny the earthly priesthood of Christ has great ramifications on the nature of the atonement, because as the person of Christ goes, so goes his work (cf. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 149–63).
- 14 Bruce L. McCormack, "'With Loud Cries and Tears': The Humanity of the Son in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 38. He writes, "Every time an exegete comes up against a problem in a text that is clearly theological in nature (as is the case with the Christology of Hebrews), she will immediately run through a list of logically possible meanings, eliminating those she believes to have been impossible to the author and then choosing amongst those that remain."
- 15 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 16 Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 30.
- 17 In defense of Christ's earthly priesthood as articulated in the Gospels of Mark and John, see Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 1," *JHSJ* 4 (2006): 155–58; *idem*, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," *JHSJ* 5 (2007): 57–79; cf. J. P. Heil, "Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 729–45; André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers* (trans. Matthew J. O'Connell; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975).
- 18 Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
- 19 Karl Deenick, "Priest and King or Priest-King in 1 Samuel 2:35," *WTJ* 73 (2011): 325–39.
- 20 Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's, 1986); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990); William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Dallas, TX: Word, 1991); Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

- 21 John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. W. B. Johnston; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005); David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the "Epistle to the Hebrews"* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989).
- 22 There is an equally large body of literature arguing for Christ's resurrection in Hebrews. From R. B. Jamieson's presently unpublished taxonomy on this debate ("Aligning Jesus' Death, Offering, and Heavenly Entrance in Hebrews: An Assessment of Recent Scholarship"), I cite a few examples: Aelred Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspectives* (St. Meinrad, IN: Grail, 1960), 168–202; John M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 49 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 165–78; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 117, 411, 415; Richard D. Nelson, "He Offered Himself": Sacrifice in Hebrews," *Interpretation* 57 (2003): 254–56; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 20, 52, 71–72, 139, 222; Eric F. Mason, "You Are a Priest Forever": Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews (STDJ 74; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 35, 39, 194–95; Michael Kibbe, "Is It Finished? When Did It Start? Hebrews, Priesthood, and Atonement in Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Theological Studies* 65 (2014): 25–61; Nicholas J. Moore, "Jesus as 'The One Who Entered His Rest': The Christological Reading of Hebrews 4.10," *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 36 (2014): 395.
- 23 Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 49–51.
- 24 Owen, *Hebrews*, 2:153.
- 25 Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 1–43.
- 26 Moffitt intimates, "the Son's humanity is the crucial factor in his being invited to sit on the heavenly throne at God's right hand" (ibid., 145), and "the resurrection of Jesus is a crucial premise for the apology the author develops ... in defense of the confession that Jesus is a high priest" (ibid., 147).
- 27 Michael Kibbe's proposal also esteems the importance of the resurrection. While his proposal critiques Moffitt for minimizing the cross, he retains the Socinian notion of Christ's post-resurrection priesthood ("Is It Finished?" 38–42).
- 28 On resurrection in Hebrews, see William L. Lane, "Living a Life in the Face of Death: The Witness of Hebrews," in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (ed. Richard Longenecker; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 254–62.
- 29 Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 188. Moffitt also makes a strong point that the adjective *kreitton* ("better," "superior") in places like Hebrews 7:19 ("better hope"), 7:22 ("better covenant"), 8:6 ("better promises"), 9:23 ("better sacrifices"), 10:34 ("better possession"), 11:16 ("better country"), 11:35 ("better life") "all relate to the fact that Jesus' ministry occurs in heaven (cf. 8:4) and can therefore bring people into God's presence" (187).
- 30 Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 589; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (WBC 47B; Dallas, TX: Word, 2000), 575; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 533–34. Those who deny resurrection in Hebrews 13:20 include Bertram, Käsemann, and Attridge, (see Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 27–40).
- 31 Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 561–62.
- 32 Lane, "Living a Life in the Face of Death," 268.
- 33 Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 560–65.
- 34 Moffitt (*Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 194) also argues Christ's resurrection is implicitly affirmed. He is raised from the dead as the reward for his exemplary faith: "[Jesus] is the *Paradebeispiel* of someone who faithfully suffered in order to obtain the greater joy promised to him. By placing Jesus at the list's apex [Heb 12:1–2], the author holds him up as the main example to be emulated." Jesus receives resurrection in a similar but superlative manner to those who waited for a "better city" and a "better resurrection" (Heb 11:17–19, 35).
- 35 Kenneth L. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 36.
- 36 Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 293.
- 37 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*; 117–18; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 178–81; contra Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 123.
- 38 On the relationship between Hebrews 5:5–10 and Hebrews 1, see David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS 18; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1973), 114–145.
- 39 See his lengthy chapter, "Angels, Anthropology, and the Age to Come in Hebrews 1–2" (*Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 45–144).

- 40 Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 195–96.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 191.
- 42 Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 42.
- 43 What Schreiner (*ibid.*) says of Jesus in Romans 1, “The appointment of Jesus as the Son of God should not be understood as a reference to his exaltation to deity. It is crucial to recall that the one who is exalted as Son of God in power was already the Son,” pertains to the inaugurated Christology of Hebrews.
- 44 Hughes, *Hebrews*, 180.
- 45 Hahn, *Kingship by Covenant*, 278–79.
- 46 *Ibid.*, *passim*.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 137. Hahn’s endnotes provide copious quotations from the sources mentioned here (408–13).
- 48 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 49 Hahn (*ibid.*, 409) cites Thomas Aquinas as saying “Note that in the law of nature, all firstborn enjoyed the privilege of priesthood, ... In the law of nature, primogeniture was great, because the firstborn received the blessing from the father (and this was in place of the consecration)” (*Enchiridion of Commonplaces* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979], 234).
- 50 Hahn (*ibid.*, 410) lists *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*; *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 138.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 J. R. Porter, *The Extended Family in the Old Testament* (London: Edutext, 1967), 10.
- 54 H. C. Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife—A Biblical Complex,” *HUCA* 44 (1973), 46.
- 55 Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 221.
- 56 Deut 32:6 also refers to God as Israel’s father, and Hosea 11:1 will also continue to keep this Father-Son relationship as a primary metaphor for understanding Israel’s identity.
- 57 Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 220.
- 58 Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 141–42. Hahn continues, “Likewise, each individual firstborn son was called to a subordinate share of this royal priestly ministry within all the twelve tribes of the family of Israel” (*ibid.*, 142). Cf. John Sailhamer’s comments on Exodus 13:1–2 and Numbers 3:41 (*The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical Theological Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992], 266, 373).
- 59 On Israel’s priestly status, see John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 61–102; Jo Bailey Wells, *God’s Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 98–101, 115–19.
- 60 Hahn, *Kinship through Covenant*, 144–47.
- 61 Some of the sins of the priests include “venality (Mic 3:11; Jer 6:13; 8:10), drunkenness (Isa 28:7; Jer 13:13), negligence and ignorance (Zeph 3:4; Jer 14:18; Ezek 22:26), and even murder (Hos 6:9)” (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995], 83).
- 62 On the basis of Heb 9:13–14, we can surmise that the old covenant sacrifices were effective to purify the flesh, if not the conscience.
- 63 Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 278–79.
- 64 Schenck, “Keeping his Appointment,” 99.
- 65 John Webster, “One Who Is Son,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, 93.
- 66 Schenck, “The Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews,” 36.
- 67 Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 118.
- 68 *Ibid.*
- 69 Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 202.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 202–03. Vanhoye is even more forceful (*Old Testament Priests*, 167).
- 71 P. T. O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 258. On the use of *anistēmi* as it is associated with resurrection, see Mark 9:31; 10:34; 12:23, 25; John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; Acts 2:24, 32; cf. Acts 3:22, 26. On the theological meaning of *anistēmi*, see John Murray, “Who Raised Up Jesus?” in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 4:83, 85–86.
- 72 Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 147. Nelson makes an analogy between 1 Sam 2 and Heb 7, but because he does not see 1 Sam 2:35 as referring to David, he doesn’t see how Hebrews fulfills the promise of 1 Sam 2:35.
- 73 A striking commentary on Hannah’s song (1 Sam 2:1–10) is provided by R. Martin-Achard, cited by C. Brown, “Resurrection,” in *NIDNTT* (ed. Colin Brown; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 3:263:

- "Yahweh freely disposes of life, He bestows it, withdraws it, and gives it again. The history of the Chosen People and the existence of the Israelite alike abundantly testify to this sovereign power that Yahweh exercises at the expense of His enemies and for the sake of His own. The writers of these hymns do not envisage the resurrection of the dead, they are simply asserting that the living God is able to intervene, effectively, everywhere, and at all times, even in the darkest hour."
- ⁷⁴ Cf. R. K. Youngblood, *1 Samuel* (EBC; ed. Frank E. Gaebelien; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 3:588.
- ⁷⁵ Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 147.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 203.
- ⁷⁸ See Deenick for the various positions ("Priest-King," 327-29). Youngblood, in nuanced fashion, suggests that 1 Sam 2:35 is first fulfilled by Samuel, then Zadok, and ultimately by Jesus Christ (*1 Samuel*, 588). Ironically, Youngblood makes verbal connections between the faithful priest and David's "faithful house" (2 Sam 7:27; 25:28; cf. 1 Chr 17:23), but he does not make the priestly connection with David.
- ⁷⁹ Karl Deenick, "Priest and King or Priest-King in 1 Samuel 2:35," *WTJ* 73 (2011): 325-39.
- ⁸⁰ "Given the overwhelming interest in priesthood in these early chapters and the relative disinterest in kingship, and given that the entire context is bound up with priesthood, there seems little reason to understand *messiach* as meaning anything other than priest. And, as we shall see, Hannah's remarks are simply a portent of what is to come in the rest of Samuel, and of the rather surprising direction from which this promise is fulfilled" (Deenick, "Priest-King," 330).
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 329; Gordon J. Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom: The Message of 1 Samuel* (Welwyn, UK: Evangelical, 1988), 46-48.
- ⁸² Deenick concludes that "the writer [of 1-2 Sam] is trying to make a strong link between David and the promised priest of 1 Sam 2:35" (*ibid.*, 334).
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 331-34.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 334-38. Similarly, Eugene Merrill writes, "The strongest suggestion of Davidic royal priesthood occurs in 2 Sam 6" when "David himself was in charge [of] leading the entourage" to the temple, and he was "clothed in priestly attire, offering sacrifice and issuing priestly benediction" (Eugene H. Merrill, "Royal Priesthood: An Old Testament Messianic Motif," *BibSac* 150 (1993): 60. Going further, Merrill adds, "Neither the chronicler nor the author of Samuel mentions a priest in the whole course of sacrificing. Clearly David saw himself as a priest and was accepted by the people and the Levites as such" (Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008], 283-84).
- ⁸⁵ Eugene H. Merrill, "Royal Priesthood: An Old Testament Messianic Motif," *BibSac* 150 (1993): 60. "David led the procession, clothed in the priestly linen ephod and sacrificing and dancing before Yahweh. When the ark was safely ensconced in the tabernacle, David and the Levites offered up burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before Yahweh, thereby attesting to the covenant union between Yahweh and Israel ... His sacerdotal function is seen also in his appointment of the religious personnel to attend to the tabernacle (1 Chron. 16:4-6) ... That no mention is made of a priest at Jerusalem may imply that David himself fulfilled that responsibility, at least initially" (Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008], 283-84).
- ⁸⁶ Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 283-84.
- ⁸⁷ Deenick, "Priest-King," 334-35. In this way, David is no better than the generations of Levites, who also broke covenant with God (cf. Mal 2:1-9). Perhaps, this is why David and Levi are both rehabilitated in the new covenant, through the greater priest-king, Jesus Christ (cf. Jer 33:14-26).
- ⁸⁸ "In the light of earlier biblical history those who heard this promise of 1 Sam 2:35 would surely have understood 'anointed' to refer to a priest" (*ibid.*, 335-36).
- ⁸⁹ David G. Firth (1 & 2 Samuel, [AOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 377) observes, "David acquired a priestly role with Jerusalem's capture, a theme hinted at in Ps 110:4 ... His removal of the ark joins with the psalm in linking priestly and royal roles, and may also explain the fact that Jerusalem is never directly named in [2 Sam 6] but is always the 'city of David' (vv. 9, 12, 16)."
- ⁹⁰ On God's "stubborn" commitment to bringing his priest into being, see Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2011), 38-39.
- ⁹¹ Deenick, "Priest-King," 338.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 337. Emphasis mine. For more on typological "molds," see David Schrock, "What Designates a Valid Type? A Christotelic, Covenantal Proposal," *Southeastern Theological Review* 5.1 (2014): 3-26.
- ⁹³ Walter C. Kaiser, "The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity," in *The Law and the Prophets: Old*

Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis (ed. John H. Skilton; Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 298-318.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 121-22.

⁹⁵ Highlighting the disparity, F. F. Bruce (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964], 148) comments, the "Levitical regime ... was marked by transience" and death (cf. 7:23), but Christ's priesthood "is immortal; having died once for all and risen from the dead, he discharged his ministry on his people's behalf in power of a life that can never be destroyed."

⁹⁶ The logic of resurrection resulting from his death has been observed by Moffitt (*Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 195-96) in Heb 2:9-11: After suffering for his brothers ("suffering of death ... tast[ing] death for everyone") the Son was raised from the dead ("crowned with glory and honor") and given authority to "bring many sons to glory." In this way, he became the one source for all who were sanctified—Christ first, then his brothers. However, Moffitt downplays the importance of his suffering, saying it "is not the author's point" (196). However, by denying the role of Christ's sacrifice, Moffitt undermines the very thing that qualifies Jesus to be raised from the dead—namely, his obedience unto death and leading his people out of death (Heb 13:20-21). While Christ's exalted priesthood depends on Christ's resurrection; his resurrection depends on his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice.

⁹⁷ Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 195-96.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁰⁰ Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 26, 30.

¹⁰¹ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 317.

Defending the Resurrection of Jesus: Yesterday, Today and Forever

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Karl Barth's famous aversion to accepting biblical miracles as historically accessible included the resurrection of Jesus. This antipathy displayed itself in 1962 at George Washington University during a question-answer dialogue with 200 specially invited religious leaders. After Carl Henry identified himself as the editor of *Christianity Today*, he asked Barth:

"The question, Dr. Barth, concerns the historical factuality of the resurrection of Jesus." I pointed to the press table and noted the presence of leading religion editors ... If these journalists had their present duties in the time of Jesus, I asked, was the resurrection of such a nature that covering some aspect of it would have fallen into their area of responsibility? "Was it news," I asked, "in the sense that the man in the street understands news?"

Barth became angry. Pointing at me, and recalling my identification, he asked "Did you say *Christianity Today* or *Christianity Yesterday*?" The audience—largely nonevangelical professors and clergy—roared with delight. When encountered unexpectedly in this way, one often reaches for a Scripture verse. So I replied, assuredly out of biblical context, "*Yesterday, today and forever*."¹

Indeed! The historically verifiable, bodily resurrection of Jesus the Lord must be defended in every generation—a perennial responsibility with great privilege as part of Gospel proclamation. Christian leaders have done so from antiquity, and the Church now enjoys a wealth of resources for the challenge.

DEFENDING THE RESURRECTION FOREVER

Just *what* is to be defended forever? Since the resurrection of Jesus is the *sine qua non* of Christianity (1 Cor 15:17-19), it necessarily has been defended throughout the history of the Church. The proposition to defend perennially is succinctly expressed in the Apostles Creed: “The third day he rose again from the dead.” And for Christian orthodoxy this has always meant that the bodily raising of Jesus is a historical fact—because this was the clear witness of the apostles.² As N. T. Wright’s magisterial study demonstrates, the clear and uniform teaching of early Christianity is that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead in the same body only incorruptible and immortal.³ First century Jews and Pagans alike would have understood a non-bodily resurrection as an oxymoron.⁴ “The-what-to-be-defended,” then, necessarily includes the *historical, bodily* raising of *Jesus of Nazareth*.

Why must the resurrection of Jesus be perennially defended? Because from the beginning, alternate theories have been proposed to explain away the central miracle in human history (e.g., Matt 28:13). And these counter-theories are recurrent, arising in every time and place in which the historical resurrection of Jesus is announced. It matters little that these attacks are short on solid evidence and long on philosophy and theological speculation, they are nonetheless influential.

And *how* should the resurrection be defended? From the start, the truth of Jesus’ resurrection has been known and demonstrated by two means: the testimony of authoritative witnesses (Luke 1:2; 2 Pet 1:16) and the sight of faith rather than empirical perception (John 20:29; 1 Pet 1:8). The believer experiences the amazing certitude of the Holy Spirit through intimate knowledge of a saving relationship with the risen Lord as proclaimed in scripture. And the original eyewitnesses themselves appealed to publicly accessible historical facts to defend and present the truth of the resurrection (Acts 4:20; 1 Cor 15:3-8; 1 John 1:1-3).⁵

The model of New Testament (NT) apologetics set the stage for the Church's first 1500 years, with heavy emphasis upon the twin pillars of the miracles of Jesus and the fulfillment of Old Testament (OT) prophecy in his life, death and resurrection. Other Christian apologists responded to specific challenges presented in their time using the best tools available to them. But the one constant and necessary Christian apologetic has always been and will always be the historical bodily resurrection of Jesus: "critical sifting of the NT materials makes it indubitable that the Resurrection of Jesus held a place of unique importance in the earliest Christian apologetic."⁶

Two resurrection apologetics cases follow, one early in Christian history and one contemporary. Analysis of the two reveals striking similarities in the attacks on the resurrection and in the defenses. Remarkably different between the two cases is the expanded armamentarium available for today's apologist.

DEFENDING THE RESURRECTION YESTERDAY

Our first resurrection apologetics case developed in response to what many Christians perceived to be a devastating intellectual attack on the faith. Sometime around AD 180 a pagan philosopher, Celsus, wrote the first truly comprehensive challenge against Christianity, "The True Doctrine" (*Alēthēs Logos*).⁷ Until that time charges against Christians were often based on gross misconceptions, such as the well-known equating of the Lord's Supper with cannibalism.⁸ Rational Christian articulation of doctrines such as Christology and Trinitarianism were nascent during this period of the Church's youth. The intellectually sophisticated assault of Celsus exemplified something quite new, upsetting the faith of some Christians ill-prepared to respond.

The particular effectiveness of Celsus' attacks derives especially from his two-pronged perspective. In one section he writes as if a Jew: Christianity is a corruption of Judaism, not a completion. Are Christians guilty of contradicting their own scriptures? In another part, Celsus challenges Christianity head on from his personal philosophical perspective. And in particular, Celsus attacked and ridiculed the very heart of the Christian gospel, the resurrection of Jesus. The Christian proposal "that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead was just as controversial nineteen hundred years ago as it is today. The discovery that dead people stay dead was not first made

by the philosophers of the Enlightenment.”⁹ But Celsus’ anti-resurrection arguments seem strikingly contemporary.

For more than a half century “The True Doctrine” remained unanswered until a concerned Christian implored Origen to write a response. As a biblical scholar, theologian and philosopher renowned for his brilliant mind and tireless work habits, Origen was ideally suited for the challenge. Though his doctrinal errors were later rightly condemned, Christian apologists (and others) have greatly benefited from studying Origen’s masterful *Against Celsus*.¹⁰ In it Origen quotes *The True Doctrine* “verbatim to refute it,”¹¹ and not only

vindicate[s] the character of Jesus and the credibility of the Christian tradition; he also shows that Christians can be so far from being irrational and credulous illiterates such as Celsus thinks them to be that they may know more about Greek philosophy than the pagan Celsus himself and can make intelligent use of it to interpret the doctrines of the Church. In the range of his learning he towers above his pagan adversary, handling the traditional arguments of Academy and Stoa with masterly ease and fluency.¹²

In his preface Origen worries that writing

the defense (*apologia*) that you ask me to compose will weaken the force of the defense (*apologia*) that is in in the mere facts, and detract from the power of Jesus which is manifest to those who are not quite stupid. Nevertheless, that we may not appear to shirk the task that you have set us, we have tried our best to reply to each particular point in Celsus’ book and to refute it ... although his arguments cannot shake the faith of any true Christian.¹³

Origen goes on to say he is not sure about the faith of any presumed Christian whose faith can be shaken by such arguments. But because there may be people who are “supposed to believe” (*tōn pisteuein nomizomenōn*)¹⁴ who are shaken, and if his defense will destroy Celsus’ arguments and clarify the truth, then he will do it. At any rate, Celsus’ words “are despised with good reason (*eulogōs kataphronoumena*) even by the ordinary believer in Christ (*tou tychontos en Christō*) on account of the Spirit which is in him.”¹⁵

Celsus’ anti-resurrection strategy utilized counter-theories, plausible ways to explain away the miracle. Many of these theories, famously utilized

throughout history, continue in use to this day. For instance, Celsus suggests that Jesus' post-mortem appearances may have been due to day-dreaming or hallucinations produced by "wishful thinking."¹⁶ Origen counters not only were the appearances during daytime, but no evidence in the scriptural accounts exists of witnesses being "mentally imbalanced or ... suffering from delirium or melancholy (*ekphronōn kai phrenitizontōn ē melangcholōntōn*)."¹⁷

Celsus charges that Jesus' resurrection was just a poor copy of the "fantastic tales (*terateias*)"¹⁸ of pagan heroes having descended to Hades and returned. But Origen counters that unlike those tales, Jesus dies publicly so that no one can claim "that although he appeared to die, he did not really do so, but, when he wanted to, again reappeared and told the portentous tale (*eterateusato*) that he had risen from the dead."¹⁹ The resurrection is not analogous to pagan mythology precisely because Jesus genuine death was confirmed publicly. In one swoop, Origen also has countered one of Celsus' other maneuvers: Jesus' terrible wounds were not as described.²⁰ Origen will have nothing of the swoon theory because Jesus really died, publicly.

Origen not only responds to Celsus' skepticism about Jesus' coming to life again, Origen insists this new life was *embodied*. Thomas may have been willing to believe Jesus was raised as a spirit but not bodily, which explains why Thomas needed not just to see but to touch the risen Jesus. Origen makes clear Jesus' resurrection was *bodily*.²¹

Celsus also denies the historicity of the earthquake and darkness at the death of Jesus as inventions (*terateian*).²² But Origen argues that a historian had records of these events.²³ Unfortunately, Origen cites someone we now know to be a completely unreliable source.²⁴ The point is, however, Origen is keen to establish the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. Origen notes Celsus' arbitrary historical criteria which rule out even ancient events that everyone accepted such as the Trojan War. Note Origen's philosophical awareness of the limits of historical knowledge: "Before we begin the defense (*apologias*), we must say that an attempt to substantiate almost any story, even if it is true, and to produce complete certainty²⁵ about it, is one of the most difficult tasks and in some cases is impossible."²⁶ Origen is keen to establish the *historicity* of Jesus' resurrection, and he sought to do so, as we shall see, with far inferior tools than we have today.

Celsus' Jewish persona asks if "anyone who really died ever rose again with the same body?"²⁷ Celsus assumes something here akin to naturalism,

that once the body dies it is impossible for it to live again. Origen notes that Celsus does not understand Judaism. No Jew would deny resurrections because Scripture records that very thing.²⁸ Origen refuses to grant any undefended presumption of naturalism.

Ultimately for Origen, “the clear and certain “proof”²⁹ for the resurrection is the changed lives of the disciples. Why would anyone *invent* the story that Jesus had risen from the dead, teach others to be willing to die for it, and then personally be willing to die for it themselves? Because no plausible answer to this question is apparent, Origen effectively undermined the fraud or conspiracy theory.³⁰

Origen’s defense of the raising of Jesus was faithful to the perennial necessities. Jesus’ resurrection was *bodily* and *historical*. Not all believers are able to defend their faith intellectually. But Origen taught that all believers stand on good ground when they trust in the gospel through which the risen Jesus powerfully manifests himself. The arguments of unbelievers won’t wreck the faith of true believers in which the Holy Spirit works.

None of this means Origen cannot answer the counter-theories of Celsus against the resurrection. These now perennial anti-resurrection strategies include alleging the resurrection is a copy of pagan dying-rising myths, or that Jesus did not really die on the cross (swoon), or the apostles invented the story (conspiracy/fraud), or the disciples’ resurrection experiences were strictly mental (wishful thinking, hallucinations, or emotional instability). And, not surprisingly, early in church history, Celsus makes an “argument” by assuming naturalism: by definition there can be no resurrection. On the other hand, Origen finds positive proof for the resurrection in the changed lives of the disciples.

If most of the anti-resurrection strategies surfaced already in the second century, we shall see that the rational tools for resurrection defense at that time paled in comparison to those available now.

DEFENDING THE RESURRECTION TODAY

Origen’s *Contra Celsum*, though early in the history of the Church, was a high water mark in resurrection defense in the first millennium. The middle ages saw little in the way of development in the field, but also saw little in the way of fresh attacks on the resurrection. With the “dawning” of the Enlightenment,

however, came a new wave of resurrection debates.³¹ The challenge became especially difficult when *Enlightenment* philosophy made its home in schools training the Church's leadership. Anti-supernaturalist perspectives applied to biblical studies became the norm. And for more than two centuries historical Jesus studies, which include the resurrection, have come to be associated with skepticism and even antagonism toward the Jesus of the Gospels. The start was certainly not auspicious for modern resurrection defense.

Historical Jesus Studies Today

Mark Allan Powell has chaired the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature and was a founding editor of the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*. After more than two centuries in the making,³² the current approach to historical Jesus studies is described by Powell as a science based only on historical research employing the same standards used to study anyone from antiquity. Scholars often maintain their goal is modest: only what can be verified about Jesus. However, "if (as a Christian) you want to believe Jesus was born to a virgin, that's fine, but (as a historian) you must recognize that this is not verifiable—at least, not in accord with any criteria that are normally employed for historical research."³³ Again, this does not sound particularly encouraging for anyone seeking to confirm the resurrection!

In a Society of Biblical Literature Forum piece, Powell described Jesus studies in the 1990s as:

a time when Bible scholars could blackball Jesus by dropping little marbles into bowls; when headlines could scream, "Scholars Decide: Jesus Did Not Teach the Lord's Prayer"; when John Dominic Crossan could announce that the post-crucifixion body of Jesus was devoured by wild dogs. Jane Schaberg called Jesus a (literal) bastard; Meier called him "a marginal Jew"; Leif Vaage said he was "a party animal"; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza characterized him as a feminist prophet of the goddess Sophia; Crossan described him as "a Galilean hippie in a world of Augustan yuppies." At one meeting I attended, a journalist named Russell Shorto—who was covering the event for (get this!) GQ magazine—turned to me and said, "You can't make this stuff up!"³⁴

But the first decade of 21st century, according to Powell, has seen orthodoxy gaining ground. "Conservatives, traditionalists, evangelicals—call them what

you will—have entered the field in droves and, in many cases, have seized the offensive.”³⁵ Those portraying the Gospels as largely inauthentic portrayals of Jesus are now on the defensive. Rationale no longer exists for skepticism toward the biblical Gospels by means of historical examination alone.³⁶

In response to these developments, *Christianity Today* polled several leading evangelical scholars in the field for their reactions. Craig Keener notes that historical methods will not compel faith, but nonetheless are something that would have invited him to consider it in his younger unchurched atheist days. “I contend that if skeptics really treated the Gospels as they treat other historical documents, they would be less skeptical. Using standard historical methods, we can challenge many skeptics’ doubts about Jesus.”³⁷ N. T. Wright agrees that history “is very good at clearing away the smoke screens behind which unfaith often hides. History and faith are, respectively, the left and right feet of Christianity.”³⁸

In the lead piece Scot McKnight seems less sanguine about the field currently. But the lack of consensus concerning the historical Jesus led him to affirm the point upon which all evangelical scholars should agree:

This is what I said to myself: As a historian I think I can prove that Jesus died and that he thought his death was atoning. I think I can establish that the tomb was empty and that resurrection is the best explanation for the empty tomb. But one thing the historical method cannot prove is that Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification. At some point, historical methods run out of steam and energy. Historical Jesus studies cannot get us to the point where the Holy Spirit and the church can take us. I know that once I was blind and that I can now see. I know that historical methods did not give me sight. They can’t. Faith cannot be completely based on what the historian can prove. The quest for the real Jesus, through long and painful paths, has proven that much.³⁹

Of course McKnight is correct that historical studies cannot produce the healing necessary for spiritual blindness, but perhaps one might be permitted to ask: who ever made such a promise? Even so, his point is important and is reminiscent of Origen’s, Christian certainty derives from our personally knowing the risen Lord.

But if historical Jesus studies are now cautiously open to “orthodoxy,” how do things stand today in the specific field of Jesus resurrection studies?

Resurrection Studies

If the resurrection of Jesus was historical, then its defense demands examination of the relevant historical evidence. Broadly speaking, historical resurrection evidence is a subset of the evidence for the historical Jesus. And if current historical Jesus studies are somewhat more open to the canonical Jesus, recent resurrection studies have significantly outpaced them in apologetic significance.

Philosopher and apologist, Gary Habermas, has devoted the majority of his professional studies to the resurrection of Jesus.⁴⁰ In 2005 he published a study of the previous thirty years of critical Jesus resurrection scholarship.⁴¹ Scholarly general consensus finds surprising amounts of historically accurate data in the NT, especially 1 Corinthians 15:1-20. Habermas estimates that a 3:1 ratio of these scholars conclude in favor of the view that Jesus was actually raised from the dead either bodily or in some sort of spiritual body. That is, most scholars seemed compelled to admit that some type of resurrection happened to Jesus rather than just a personal experience to the disciples. Habermas note this proves nothing regarding the resurrection, and “spiritual resurrections” are not orthodox. But the trend displays a remarkable recent change of scholarly attitude toward the historical resurrection.⁴² Historical data regarding the following issues drive this change in attitude.

First, approximately seventy-five percent of critical scholars favor arguments for the empty tomb. Second, most scholars affirm that women must have initially witnessed the risen Jesus since they were not generally accepted witnesses in crucial matters. With very few exceptions scholars hold that Jesus followers believed they had seen the risen Jesus. Habermas believes this near unanimous scholarly consensus on the disciples’ belief in Jesus post-mortem appearances is the most important development in recent resurrection studies.⁴³

N. T. Wright takes the matter a step further. He boldly challenges resurrection scholars that anything less than a historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus simply cannot account for the evidence. After a detailed study of the first two centuries of Jewish and pagan thought on the resurrection, he is especially concerned to refute the commonly held error that the first Christians did not believe in bodily resurrection.⁴⁴ He concludes:

those who held the remarkably complex but remarkably consistent early Christian view gave as their reason that Jesus of Nazareth had himself been raised from the

dead. And we have now seen what they meant by this: that on the third day after his execution by the Romans, his tomb was empty, and he was found to be alive, appearing on various occasions and in various places both to his followers and to some who, up to that point, had not been his followers or had not believed, convincing them that he was neither a ghost nor a hallucination but that he was truly and bodily raised from the dead. This belief about Jesus provides a historically complete, thorough and satisfying reason for the rise and development of the belief that he was Israel's Messiah and the world's true lord. It explains the early Christian conviction that the long-awaited new age had been inaugurated, opening new tasks and possibilities. Above all it explains the belief that the hope for the world in general and for Jesus' followers in particular consisted not in going on and on forever, not in an endless cycle of death and rebirth as in Stoicism, not in a blessed disembodied immortal existence, but in a newly embodied life, a transformed physicality. And we have now seen that the central stories upon which this belief was based, though they have been skillfully shaped and edited by the four evangelists, retain simple and very early features, features which resist the idea that they were made up decades later, but which serve very well to explain the developments from Paul onwards.⁴⁵

Wright notes that neither an empty tomb nor the appearances alone would account for the above. By itself an empty tomb would be puzzling or tragic. And if the tomb was still occupied, any appearances could only be considered visions or hallucinations.⁴⁶ All that is required to demonstrate that the tomb-plus-appearances combination is not a necessary condition for the rise of early Christian belief is the possibility that some other circumstance, or combination of circumstances, was equally capable of generating this belief.⁴⁷ But Wright concludes that no such counter-theory succeeds, whether a misplaced tomb or mistaking someone else for a resurrected Jesus or the swoon theory.⁴⁸

Second Resurrection Apologetics Case

As we have seen, Christian apologists in the last two hundred years have faced the unique challenge of opponents arising even from within the Church. The historical resurrection of Jesus has not only been attacked by non-Christians, but also by theologians and biblical scholars. In our second apologetics case, we examine a debate with just such a scenario. Bart Ehrman, contending

against the resurrection, is not only a NT scholar but also one who claims to have been an evangelical believer. Arguing for the historical, bodily resurrection is philosopher and apologist William Lane Craig. The debate was held at College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts, on March 28, 2006. What follows is a brief synopsis of the major points.⁴⁹

Craig begins the debate by simply laying out his argument. He contends four historical facts must be explained: Jesus' burial, his empty tomb, his post-mortem appearances, and the disciples' resurrection belief. Craig states that the best explanation for these four facts is Jesus' resurrection from the dead.⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that ever since Origen, different apologists may choose different historical facts which demand explanation. But they all come from the same small pool, with the three main ones being empty tomb, appearances, and changed lives. In this debate, Craig is on solid ground in light of recent resurrection studies with his four historical data.

Ehrman opens with two main points, one seemingly historical and the other philosophical. First, he says the Gospels were not written by eyewitnesses, but were written 30-60 years after the events, and are unreliable because they were changed during their oral transmission as evidenced by discrepancies.⁵¹ Ehrman espouses here a view akin to what Wright describes as the "no access" view of the resurrection because there are no true eyewitness accounts.⁵² Even if one assumes Ehrman's view that the Gospels were not written by eyewitnesses, Wright contends that the "very strong historical probability is that when Matthew, Luke and John describe the risen Jesus, they are writing down very early oral tradition, representing three different ways in which the original astonished participants told the stories."⁵³ Ehrman posits the resurrection stories result from corrupted oral transmissions twisted over time by Christians zealous to win converts. Unlike Craig who presented relatively uncontroversial scholarly consensus, Ehrman has staked his claim on a view not held by the majority of contemporary scholars in the field.

Ehrman's second point is philosophical:

Historians can only establish what probably happened in the past, and by definition a miracle is the least probable occurrence. And so, by the very nature of the canons of historical research, we can't claim historically that a miracle probably happened. By definition, it probably didn't. And history can only establish what probably did ... It's simply that the canons of historical research do not allow for

the possibility of establishing as probable the least probable of all occurrences. For that reason, Bill's four pieces of evidence are completely irrelevant. There cannot be historical probability for an event that defies probability, even if the event did happen.⁵⁴

Wright describes this view as the "no analogy" position as made famous by Ernst Troeltsch.⁵⁵ Since the contemporary historian has never experienced a resurrection, he is disallowed from writing about one in the past.

In Craig's first rebuttal he remarks that Ehrman's second point is just Hume's old discredited argument against miracles, then he launches into a detailed explanation of the probability calculus to show the error.⁵⁶ One might quibble with Craig whether Ehrman's second point is precisely Humean. Hume's famous assault on miracles remains controversial because he seems to argue for weighing the evidence while also seeming to render them impossible since no testimony is adequate to establish them.⁵⁷ Ehrman might respond to Craig's charge that he is simply abiding by contemporary historical Jesus *methodology* as Powell described earlier: "if (as a Christian) you want to believe Jesus was born to a virgin, that's fine, but (as a historian) you must recognize that this is not verifiable—at least, not in accord with any criteria that are normally employed for historical research."⁵⁸ My nitpicking with Craig aside, his point is essentially on target. No matter how one rules out the possibility of miracles, one has still ruled them out—and has done so arbitrarily. Ehrman's maneuver looks like a smoke screen behind which he avoids responding to the historical data at issue.

Craig's point with the probability calculus, though likely hard for his audience to follow, is simple at its core. Judging the probability of an event includes more than just weighing specific evidence, it includes the background knowledge we bring to the table. Background knowledge is everything we know or assume about the world prior to examining any evidence in light of a hypothesis.⁵⁹ Background knowledge, such as whether God does miracles and we can know them, affects probability that our hypothesis will explain the evidence. What makes probability calculations controversial is finding agreement on the background knowledge, and how prior and posterior probabilities should be understood.⁶⁰

So, Craig rightly notes that the resurrection's probability on the background knowledge of a naturalist is very low:

But here, I think, [Ehrman's] confused. What, after all, is the resurrection hypothesis? It's the hypothesis that Jesus rose supernaturally from the dead. It is not the hypothesis that Jesus rose naturally from the dead. That Jesus rose naturally from the dead is fantastically improbable. But I see no reason whatsoever to think that it is improbable that God raised Jesus from the dead. In order to show that that hypothesis is improbable, you'd have to show that God's existence is improbable. But Dr. Ehrman says that the historian cannot say anything about God. Therefore, he cannot say that God's existence is improbable. But if he can't say that, neither can he say that the resurrection of Jesus is improbable. So Dr. Ehrman's position is literally self-refuting.⁶¹

Craig then responds to Ehrman's first point. Ehrman may not feel the Gospels are as historically reliable as he would like. But the question is whether they establish Craig's four facts. Ehrman's claim of inconsistencies between the Gospels is not relevant unless he can show them to be irresolvable, lie at the heart of the narrative rather than in details, and that it's impossible that any one of the Gospels get the facts correct. Craig notes:

the Gospels all agree that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified in Jerusalem by Roman authority during the Passover feast, having been arrested and convicted on charges of blasphemy by the Jewish Sanhedrin and then slandered before the Roman Governor Pilate on charges of treason. He died within several hours and was buried Friday afternoon by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb, which was sealed with a stone. Certain women followers of Jesus, including Mary Magdalene, who is always named, having observed his interment, visited his tomb early Sunday morning, only to find it empty. Thereafter, Jesus appeared alive from the dead to his disciples, including Peter, who then became proclaimers of the message of his resurrection.⁶²

Craig then notes that N. T. Wright's study of the resurrection narratives concludes the historical probability of the empty tomb and appearances being so high as to be virtually certain, comparable to the death of Augustus or the fall of Jerusalem. Craig contends then that the debate is not really about these established historical facts but the best explanation for them.

In my view, Craig has effectively exposed Ehrman's strategy of refusing to account for the facts. Ehrman is philosophically ham-fisted and out of sync

with current historical Jesus studies on the issue of the canonical Gospels' reliability. Moreover, Craig could have effectively utilized the research of Habermas that, in light of the historical evidence, resurrection scholars today *do* find that something "resurrection-like" occurred by a 3:1 margin.

In his first rejoinder, Ehrman tacitly concedes an important point to Craig. Because the majority of NT scholars agree about Craig's four points doesn't mean they are correct. Here Ehrman simply states the obvious, but this obscures that *Ehrman is the one out of sync with NT scholarship*. But to add seeming weight to his point, Ehrman then tries to undermine these scholars. He claims the majority of them believe in the NT. This astonishing "rebuttal," then, claims the majority of NT scholars agree with Craig's four points—which seem to infer the resurrection—because they are biased like Craig due to believing NT scripture. But then Ehrman remarkably claims the majority of critical historical Jesus scholars disagree with Craig that a historian can demonstrate the resurrection.⁶³

Several things stand out here. First, Craig was not trying to prove the resurrection. His claim was that the resurrection explains the facts better than the naturalistic alternatives. Second, Ehrman has just sought to undermine these same scholars by insinuating they are biased because they believe in the NT. Why then do they now not believe in the NT regarding the resurrection? Third, the research of Habermas demonstrates that the majority of critical scholars in recent years *do* tend to hold to some kind of resurrection (even if of the unorthodox spiritual body variety).

Ehrman finally addresses the post-mortem appearances by claiming the ancients did not necessarily believe such appearances entailed resurrected bodies. He claims Craig is a post-Enlightenment thinker who just assumes this reanimation of the body.⁶⁴ Surely this is an odd claim to say the least. "Enlightenment thinkers" don't believe in bodily resurrections, but ancient Jews and Christians clearly did. Most importantly, Ehrman has not dealt with the evidence for the empty tomb—at all.

Craig concludes the debate on a personal note by calling attention to "the experiential approach:"

You see, if Christ is really risen from the dead as the evidence indicates, then that means that Jesus is not just some ancient figure in history or a picture on a stained glass window. It means that he is alive today and can be known experientially.

For me, Christianity ceased to be just a religion or a code to live by when I gave my life to Christ and experienced a spiritual rebirth in my own life. God became a living reality to me. The light went on where before there was only darkness, and God became an experiential reality, along with an overwhelming joy and peace and meaning that He imparted to my life. And I would simply say to you that if you're looking for that sort of meaning, purpose in life, then look not only at the historical evidence, but also pick up the New Testament and begin to read it and ask yourself whether or not this could be the truth. I believe that it can change your life in the same way that it has changed mine.⁶⁵

Ehrman's concluding remarks lay out his naturalistic hypothesis. He states that the first disciples in their disappointment over Jesus' death, turned to the scriptures. They found texts that made sense to them that the Messiah would die and be vindicated or exalted. The reasoning of the disciples worked like this:

if Jesus is exalted, he is no longer dead, and so Christians started circulating the story of his resurrection. It wasn't three days later they started circulating the story; it might have been a year later, maybe two years. Five years later they didn't know when the stories had started. Nobody could go to the tomb to check; the body had decomposed. Believers who knew he had been raised from the dead started having visions of him. Others told stories about these visions of him, including Paul. Stories of these visions circulated. Some of them were actual visions like Paul, others of them were stories of visions like the five hundred group of people who saw him. On the basis of these stories, narratives were constructed and circulated and eventually we got the Gospels of the New Testament written 30, 40, 50, 60 years later.⁶⁶

Ehrman utilizes creative reasoning to arrive at his theory. Early disciples, though discouraged by their Messiah's death, read into scriptural texts that the prophets predicted this. Those same passages allude to the servant's exaltation. Agreement develops in the community over these texts and they are shared widely. Over time exaltation themes evolve into-raised-to-spiritual-life ("spiritual" resurrection) themes, especially as the stories are told and retold—and altered by Christians zealous to win converts. Since Jesus' body has decomposed, no one can return to the tomb to disconfirm

a resurrection. (Which is it: did they believe in a “spiritual” or a bodily resurrection? And what of the Jewish practice of collecting the bones into ossuaries after decomposition of the body?) The stories of “resurrection” nurture visions among the disciples which cement the risen Jesus theme in the developing oral traditions. After several decades, the traditions form the backbone of the written canonical Gospels. The evidence adduced by Ehrman for all of this consists of alleged inconsistencies in the Gospels coupled with historical methodological naturalism.

A PERSONAL DEFENSE OF THE RESURRECTION

Lessons learned from resurrection scholarship can be put to use in the service of personal apologetics. So I now turn to the way I practice personal defense of the resurrection. Even when unbelievers I speak with have not read Bart Ehrman type books, they likely are influenced by these kinds of ideas. And since the resurrection of Jesus is central to the Christian faith, I want to proclaim and defend its truth against such ideas.

In setting the context for this, I need to address how I share and defend the Gospel. When meeting with unbelieving individuals, my goal is to present the Gospel. Unless those who hear me then receive Christ the Lord, they will raise objections to the Gospel. At that point I become a personal apologist *because personal apologetics is the flip side of personal evangelism*. When someone says “no” to the gospel, I want to address whatever ideas and opinions they hold between them and Christ (2 Cor 10:5). I want the unbeliever to reconsider.

When addressing a large group I essentially do all the talking. My apologetic monologue targets the “typical” listener in the audience. I try to select a one-size-fits-all talk to reach the most people. But in contrast to this mass approach, I view personal evangelism/apologetics as a dialogue in a specific context with a particular unbeliever. The gospel does not change, but how I share and explain it will differ according to the individual context. I have learned that stock approaches to apologetics in these situations are not the most helpful. For instance, conversation points with a twenty year old holding to postmodern spirituality will likely not be on target with a fifty year old scientist.

With individuals I ask questions and listen so I can diagnose the roots of unbelief in heart and mind. I want to understand what particular issues stand

as barriers between them and Christ. Then I can ask the right questions and discuss the concerns relevant to them. Perhaps the right questions may help my unbelieving friends reflect deeply for the first time on what they believe. More than likely they have never been asked what matters most and what they think of Jesus.⁶⁷

Though never trying to force any particular chronology to the conversation, I do keep in mind gospel issues which ideally should be discussed. Typically I raise these as questions which reflect the structure of all worldviews: “Where did I come from? What’s wrong? What’s the solution? Where am I going?” With this type conversation I am able to keep biblical/gospel answers on the table while having them articulate and defend theirs. I seek clarity on important issues where we differ. On important agreements I ask which worldview explains things best. I respectfully ask the unbeliever to sort out inconsistencies in his worldview I have detected. And I utilize the very best relevant knowledge I can bring to bear in confirmation of the gospel.

So how do I present and defend the resurrection in these personal situations? The resurrection necessarily should come up because, as we have seen, there is no gospel without it. Issues pertaining to science often come up in discussing “where did I come from?” Philosophical and, of course, theological issues surface in discussing “what’s wrong?” But the historical Jesus and his resurrection come to the fore when focused on “what’s the solution?” and “where am I going?” And in the case of Jesus and his resurrection, this *must* come up and be discussed if we are having a true gospel conversation. *Unlike any other apologetic issue or strategy, the historical Jesus and his resurrection are non-negotiable issues necessary to be discussed in full-orbed gospel discussions.*

The natural introduction for discussion of the resurrection is the subject of Jesus of Nazareth. I relish asking unbelievers what they think of Jesus. They *need* to think about him. If they say they are not interested, I ask why since he is the most influential person in history. I point out that he’s not like anyone else. Have you read the Gospels? Did you know they are the earliest and most reliable sources we have regarding him? *What is the significance of his life?* Because I believe the gospel is God’s power for salvation, as simply and as clearly as I can I lay out the purpose of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

I think it vital to ask: where are we going when we die? After my unbelieving friend answers (e.g., reincarnation), I ask them how they know. I point out that Jesus of Nazareth is the only person who ever died and came back

to life bodily—never to die again. Of course that claim seems incredible to them, but it should! When they ask me how I know, I then share some of the basic resurrection scholarship (empty tomb, post-mortem appearances, and changed lives of the disciples). Since these facts are widely accepted by critical scholars today, I ask my friend how they account for these details. If they propose a counter-theory, I try to show them why for a very long time that theory has been discredited, even by non-believers. I am willing to go into the details as deeply as they want (or as I can!). In the end, I point out that no rejections of Jesus and his resurrection, including the rejections of scholars like Ehrman, are based on scientific, historical, archaeological, or manuscript evidence. All rejections are philosophically (e.g., miracles cannot happen) or theologically based (e.g., Jesus cannot be the savior of the world).

Before our time together is over, I again invite them to read the Gospels and offer to give them a Bible if they don't have one. If possible, I suggest relevant books for them to read, and ask if we can get together again to discuss these things. I encourage them to ask God to show them the truth about Jesus. God as a person can be known, but they must call on him.

My prayer and expectation is that even after our conversation is over, the Holy Spirit will bring Jesus and his resurrection to their mind. In the end, I entrust that person to the Lord, resting in the thought that *the gospel never fails: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*. When unbelievers reject Christ, the gospel has not failed. Likewise, even if unbelievers reject Jesus and the truth of his resurrection, the evidence God has graciously provided has not failed either.

A CONCLUDING PERSONAL WORD ON THE RESURRECTION

My becoming a follower of Jesus Christ in June of 1973 was not my doing. While reading the Gospels so I could say they were nonsense, the risen Jesus revealed himself to me. My life was completely turned around. I suddenly *knew* I believed in him and in his book, the Bible. But I had no way to defend what, or better, him whom I knew. I could only tell others: “read the Gospels for yourself and see!” Friends and family expressed concern that I was letting religion ruin my life. In the midst of that wild and glorious first week, I made a confession to God: “Lord, you seem more real to me than my next breath, but if I ever find out you are not, then I will stop living the Christian life.” Of

course the prayer was strange and naïve. But little could I know that for the next four decades, I would have ample opportunity to see if my faith in Jesus was based on fantasy, or if it could stand up to rigorous rational scrutiny.

Later I would learn that, just like all true Christians, my sense of genuinely knowing the resurrected Jesus issued from the gracious certifying work of the Spirit. But I am one of those believers who want not only to know *that* Jesus and the Bible are true, but also why. So it was with great joy that before long I began reading books about the evidence for the historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus. Resurrection studies had not blossomed then as today, but books that demonstrated the inability of counter-theories to account for the resurrection data deeply resonated with my soul. The more I read, the more I became convinced that belief in Jesus not only could but should be rationally defended.

Over the coming decades I realized how incredibly blessed I was to be living during the time which birthed a Golden Era in Christian apologetics. Less than 100 years ago orthodox Christianity had lost her major intellectual institutions to liberalism and secularism. Evolutionary naturalism was widely rumored to be proven true by modern science. Philosophy viewed itself as science's official executioner of all things superstitious, especially religion. And theology itself would herald the news that God is dead.

But God in his mercy has not left himself without witness. Science itself led the way in the rebirth of apologetics. While philosophers and theologians debated whether God-talk was even possible, discoveries by astronomers and physicists led again to discussions of creation *ex nihilo*. Discovery of the fine-tuning of the universe revealed a fundamental teleology beyond the wildest imaginations of Aristotle or Paley. Even recalcitrant biology would be dragged into that discussion with the discovery of DNA. Analytic philosophy, just a half century ago was virtually synonymous with atheism, but has now become the home for robust Christian work in philosophy of religion, ethics, epistemology and much more in the service of apologetics and theology. And speaking of theology, orthodox systematic and biblical theologians now produce major scholarly works widely read and respected. No one just decades ago could have imagined the depth of the apologetics landscape today.⁶⁸

And in my mind, nothing is more significant in apologetics today than the maturing of Jesus' resurrection studies—because nothing is more central

to the gospel. Of course, if even the power of the gospel can be rejected, we should not be surprised if our defense of its central truth, the resurrection, is rejected. "It will always be possible for ingenious historians to propose yet more variations on the theme of how the early Christian belief could have arisen, and taken the shape it did, without either an empty tomb or appearances of Jesus."⁶⁹ But for me, after these forty years of knowing the Lord, and having seen how *irrational* I would be to deny what I know of his resurrection evidence, *I can no longer even conceive how to doubt he is risen*. Were it possible for me to walk away from him, it would not be due to doubt. He is risen indeed!

¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 211. At the end of the session Barth graciously and publicly apologized for the way he had referred to *Christianity Today*.

² N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 10.

³ *Ibid.*, 32-551.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 372.

⁵ Cf. William Lane Craig's well-known distinction between knowing and showing in *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994) 31-36, and William L. Craig and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 20, 49.

⁶ Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 19.

⁷ Origen. *Contra Celsum* (trans., Henry Chadwick; New York: Cambridge, 1953), xxviii.

⁸ On the misconceived but widespread pagan ridicule of early Christianity, see Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), and esp. 54-78 for the charges of cannibalism and immorality. On Celsus as conservative intellectual seeking to preserve the Roman social order from the errors of Christianity see Robert Louis Wilkins, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 94-125.

⁹ Wright, *Resurrection*, 10. See also 685, fn 2.

¹⁰ Without excusing Origen's theological errors, he can rightly be viewed as a product of his early unsettled time. For a critical but aptly appreciative view of Origen, see Michael Haykin, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 69-90.

¹¹ Origenes, *Contra Celsum: libri VIII* (trans., Marcovich Marislov; Leiden: Brill, 2001), xiv. This edition is used for all subsequent Greek quotations which will be cited in parentheses after Chadwick's translation.

¹² Origen, xiii (xiv). Chadwick rightly argues that the only early Christian apologetic comparable to *Contra Celsum* is Augustine's *City of God*.

¹³ Origen, 4 (Pref., 3).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 (Pref., 5).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 (Pref., 6).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 112 (2:60).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 110 (2:56).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 110-11 (2:56).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 113 (2:61).

²¹ *Ibid.* See also (2:62) for Origen's further comments why alleging only imaginary appearances may be considered even more miraculous than a real resurrection.

²² Origen, 112 (2:59).

²³ *Ibid.*, 94 (2:33).

- 24 Origen cites Phlegon, a 2nd century freedman who wrote wildly sensational stories. For discussion and text see William Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles' Book of Marvels* (Exeter Studies in History; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997). Origen also cites Phlegon as a historical source in (2:14, 33).
- 25 Chadwick notes that the term Origen uses here, *katalēptikē phantasia* is a critical term in Stoic epistemology. The notion involves direct apprehension of something such that there can be no doubt of its truth. This idea is in distinct contrast to the skepticism of the Academy in the period after Arcesilaus. Ibid.
- 26 Ibid., 39 (1:42). See discussion on this by Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 35.
- 27 Origen, 111 (2:57). See also (2:58) for more treatment from the angle of OT resuscitations.
- 28 Indeed, Origen speculates that Jesus' resurrection may have been given only to the Jews because they were already prepared for these kinds of miracles, but Jesus' resurrection shows he is greater than all those who preceded him. Origen, 111 (2:57).
- 29 Ibid., 111 (2:56).
- 30 Celsus also presents a theological/philosophical argument against the resurrection. Why didn't Jesus confirm his resurrection by appearing to everyone, or at least to those who had put him to death? Origen takes this challenge very seriously and goes to some lengths to present his response in Origen, 114-15 (2:63). He contends that profound answers for this can be found in 1 Cor 15 wherein Jesus makes postmortem appearances only selectively and periodically. Origen begins by noting that on many important occasions Jesus only revealed his truths to a select few. He provides as examples the Transfiguration and the explanation of the parables only to the disciples. In the OT, theophanies were not granted to all or even constantly to those who did experience them. Origen also theorizes that it may even be due to God's mercy that the enemies of Jesus did not encounter him after the resurrection. Origen, 114-17 (2:63-2:67).
- 31 William L. Craig, *The Historical Argument for the Resurrection of Jesus During the Deist Controversy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002). Craig's massive study examines the resurrection debate through the centuries with special focus on the Deist Controversy.
- 32 See Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (2nd edition; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013).
- 33 Idem, "Historical Jesus Studies Today: An Update," *The Bible and Interpretation*, [cited Dec 2014] online: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/2014/06/pow388006.shtml>. In this piece Powell refers to NT scholars such as Craig Keener as apologists because Keener defends the miracles of Jesus. "The work of apologists is considered sporadically—almost everyone will admit that the apologists sometimes make good points worthy of consideration, but their unwillingness to consider counter-arguments excludes them from settings where the bulk of academic conversation occurs."
- 34 Mark Allan Powell, "'Things That Matter': Historical Jesus Studies in the New Millennium," *SBL Forum*, [cited Dec 2014]. Online: <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=333>.
- 35 Ibid. In Powell's piece written in the second decade of the 21st century (fn. 33 above), he notes that the apocryphal Gospels, with perhaps the exception of Thomas, are losing their influence in favor of the canonical Gospels.
- 36 Ibid. He notes even a cautious acceptance of John's Gospel.
- 37 Craig Keener, "Abandon Studying the Historical Jesus? No, Jesus Studies Matter: A response to 'The Jesus We'll Never Know,'" *Christianity Today* 54:4 (April 2010): 27.
- 38 N. T. Wright, "Abandon Studying the Historical Jesus? No, Jesus Studies Matter: A response to 'The Jesus We'll Never Know,'" *Christianity Today* 54:4 (April 2010): 27.
- 39 Scot McKnight, "The Jesus We'll Never Know: Why scholarly attempts to discover the 'real' Jesus have failed. And why that's a good thing," *Christianity Today* 54:4 (April 2010): 22.
- 40 Gary Habermas, "The Core Resurrection Data: The Minimal Facts Approach," in *Tough-Minded Christianity: Honoring the Legacy of John Warwick* (ed. William Dembski and Thomas Schirrmacher; Nashville, TN: B&H, 2008), 387.
- 41 An edited version of this article was published as Gary R. Habermas, "Resurrection Research from 1975 to the Present: What are Critical Scholars Saying?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3:2 (2005): 135-153. The more complete article which is cited hereafter is Gary R. Habermas, "Resurrection Research from 1975 to the Present: What are Critical Scholars Saying?" [cited Nov. 2014] online: http://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/J_Study_Historical_Jesus_3-2_2005/J_Study_Historical_Jesus_3-2_2005.htm. Over a five year period he examined more than 1400 relevant scholarly publications.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.

- 44 Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "A Dialogue on Christ's Resurrection," *Christianity Today* 12 (April 12, 1968): 5-12, who notes that most theologians of the 20th century have held to some type of vision theory of the resurrection. See also Gary R. Habermas and Antony G. N. Flew, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate* (ed. Terry L. Miethe; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 62.
- 45 Wright, *Resurrection*, 681-82.
- 46 Ibid., 686-93. Wright's explanations in this section are presented in as fine a form as any apologist could. Cf. Pannenberg's agreement on the necessity of both empty tomb and post-mortem appearances as necessary for the early Christians' belief. See his response to the Flew-Habermas debate, Habermas and Flew, 130-31. Interestingly, Habermas does not necessarily include the empty tomb in his defense since only about seventy-five percent of contemporary scholarship agrees on its historicity. See Habermas, "Core Resurrection," 403 fn. 25.
- 47 Wright, *Resurrection*, 694. See also 706.
- 48 Ibid., 709. Wright notes that the swoon theory keeps reviving itself with about as much conviction as a battered Jesus emerging from the tomb would have done. Ibid., fn. 70. See also 717. Ironically, in the 19th century, the heyday of naturalistic counter-theories for the resurrection, it was liberal theologians themselves who decimated each other's attempts to construct de-supernaturalized counter proposals. Strauss effectively demolished the swoon theory of Venturini and Paulus. But Paulus, Schleiermacher and Keim paid Strauss back in kind by dismantling his hallucination theory. Pfeleiderer criticized the legend/myth theory. And early in the 20th century, Schweitzer dismissed the original fraud theory of Reimarus. Thus the majority view of liberal scholarship for the last hundred years has tended to disregard naturalistic explanations for the resurrection. Habermas and Flew, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* 21.
- 49 William L. Craig and Bart D. Ehrman, "Is There Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus? William L. Craig vs. Bart D. Ehrman" [cited Dec 2014]. online: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/is-there-historical-evidence-for-the-resurrection-of-jesus-the-craig-ehrman#ixzz3ME1k4Uvf>.
- 50 Craig, "Historical Evidence."
- 51 Ehrman, "Historical Evidence."
- 52 Wright, *Resurrection*, 15-16.
- 53 Ibid., 611.
- 54 Ehrman, "Historical Evidence."
- 55 Wright, *Resurrection*, 16-18.
- 56 Craig, "Historical Evidence."
- 57 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (3rd edition; ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge; Oxford: Oxford University Press), Sec. X. Craig cites an example of an atheist philosopher who believes Hume got this all wrong: John Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For an excellent Christian critique of Hume see R. Douglas Geivett "The Evidential Value of Miracles," in R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas, eds., *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 178-96.
- 58 See fn. 33 above.
- 59 Barry Gower, *Scientific Method: A Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2012), 174.
- 60 What constitutes evidence and what constitutes background knowledge? Do we change our background beliefs due to evidential surprises and thus change our hypothesis? See D. H. Mellor, *Probability: A Philosophical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2005), esp. chap. 7. Craig could, however, make his point simpler for his listeners. Craig spent a good bit of time discussing the probability calculus using illustrated slides like the following.

$$\frac{\Pr(R/B \ \& \ E)}{\Pr(R/B) \times \Pr(E/B \ \& \ R) + \Pr(\text{not-}R/B) \times \Pr(E/B \ \& \ \text{not-}R)} = \frac{\Pr(R/B) \times \Pr(E/B \ \& \ R)}{\Pr(R/B) \times \Pr(E/B \ \& \ R) + \Pr(\text{not-}R/B) \times \Pr(E/B \ \& \ \text{not-}R)}$$

And though not as complex as it may appear, I suspect he lost many in his audience regarding the important point he wanted to make. In fact, in the Q&A after the debate Craig notes that he wasn't interested in calculating the resurrection's probability: "Richard Swinburne, who's a professor at Oxford University, has written a book on incarnation and resurrection in which he actually uses the probability calculus that I have just given. He comes up with an estimate of 0.97 for the resurrection of Jesus in terms of its probability, and you can look at his book for that. I myself don't use the probability calculus in arguing for resurrection of Jesus. The reason I brought it up is because of the response to the Humean sort of argument that Dr.

Ehrman was offering, which I think is completely misconceived because he tries to say that the resurrection is improbable simply because of the improbability of the resurrection on the background information alone." Craig, "Historical Evidence."

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ At this point Ehrman tosses in the following remark unbecoming for a scholarly debate: "'Bill might find that surprising, but that would be because of the context he works in – a conservative, evangelical seminary. In that environment, what he's propounding is what everyone believes.'" Ehrman, "Historical Evidence."

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Craig, "Historical Evidence."

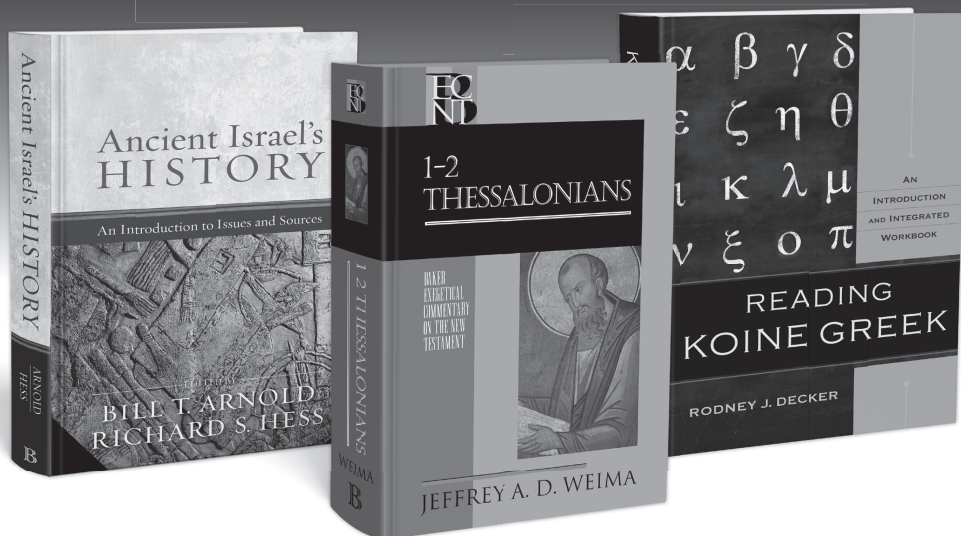
⁶⁶ Ehrman, "Historical Evidence."

⁶⁷ The distinction between mass (characterized by a monologue) and personal (a dialogue) evangelism/apologetics can be seen throughout the Gospels and the Acts in sermons vs. conversations. On the contextual application of truth in personal settings see the difference in the way Jesus speaks with Nicodemus as opposed to the Samaritan woman (John 3-4) or Paul in various Jewish settings vs. pagan in the Acts.

⁶⁸ I recently participated in a doctoral study in progress which is critically examining how many atheists have become Christians in this generation. After examination of their atheist experience and the reasons for their conversions, the researcher is discovering a considerable movement from atheism to Christian faith driven by exposure to the powerful truths of apologetics.

⁶⁹ Wright, *Resurrection*, 694. Wright himself believes all counter explanations are insufficient. See his fuller remarks, 706.

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SBJT Forum

SBJT: When one thinks of crucial and important chapters on the resurrection in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 15 immediately comes to mind. Briefly describe the significant contribution this chapter makes to our thinking about the theme of the resurrection.

Stephen J. Wellum is Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and editor of *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*. He received his Ph.D. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and he is the author of numerous essays and articles and the co-author of *Kingdom through Covenant* (Crossway, 2012) and *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Crossway, 2015).

Stephen J. Wellum: It is certainly the case that 1 Corinthians 15 is of singular importance in our understanding of the resurrection. Ironically, this wonderful chapter was written by the apostle Paul in response to some of the sad theological errors present in the Corinthian church. In responding to these errors, Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit, writes this chapter and details for us some very important truths regarding the resurrection. It is crucial to remember that the Corinthians did *not* deny the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection as central in securing for believers salvation from sin and hope for the future. Instead, what they denied was their future resurrection. Unfortunately they did not "see" the organic connection between Christ's resurrection and ours and thus began to deny the reality of a future bodily resurrection for believers as part of our redemption in Christ. In other words, they did not grasp the biblical relationship between what Christ did in his death and resurrection and its implications for us.

Was this an insignificant error, something which Christians can differ on yet still be Christians? Paul did not think so. He responds to their false thinking in the strongest of terms. In fact, he argues that a denial of a future bodily resurrection for believers, in reality, is a denial of the gospel! Why?

Because what is true of Christ as our covenant head and Redeemer must also be true of those who are in faith union with him. Denying our bodily resurrection is tantamount to denying Christ's resurrection, but since Christ is raised from the dead, we, as his people, *must* also be raised otherwise Christ's work has failed and our salvation is incomplete.

The significant contributions this chapter makes to our understanding of the resurrection are manifold. First and foremost, the chapter is a great reminder of the centrality and utter significance of Christ's resurrection to God's redemptive purposes. Christ Jesus who died is truly raised from the dead, not merely as another resurrection or better, resuscitations alongside other ones in Scripture (since we assume that those who came back from life died again awaiting the final resurrection at the end of time), but as *the* resurrection of all resurrections, the firstfruits of the final consummated state to come. Paul reminds us that Jesus' cross and resurrection are the events that restore what was lost in Adam and which have ushered in the dawning of the new creation. Christ's work is of singular importance and whatever happens to us in the future is completely due to what he has done and the application of his work to his people. Paul reminds us that Christ's work, in fact, has sent in motion an inevitable chain of events that will only be completed when all of God's enemies are destroyed, including death itself. That is why Christ's resurrection demands our resurrection: if we are not raised bodily from the grave, death is never truly defeated and God can never be "all in all." Ultimately, unless death is destroyed and we are raised, God's place as sovereign Lord of the creation, history, and redemption is in question.

In addition, another important contribution this chapter makes to our understanding of the resurrection is Paul's discussion of the nature of our resurrection bodies and the future state of the believer. There are not many places in the New Testament where this discussion takes place. We see in the Gospels something of what a resurrection body looks like as we witness Christ's resurrection appearances, and in 2 Corinthians 5 Paul discusses something about our resurrection bodies. Yet it is 1 Corinthians 15 which gives us the most detailed discussion and it is this contribution which I would like to highlight.

Starting a new section in v. 34, Paul anticipates a skeptical objection: "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" (v. 35). Paul is clear that our future resurrection is a physical resurrection in a transformed

body, patterned after Christ, and perfectly suited for our final state. Due to the organic relationship between Christ and his people, since Christ was raised bodily, there must of necessity be a bodily resurrection for believers. However, our resurrection body is not merely a resuscitation of a dead body, rather it is a body adapted to the new conditions of the future. There is, then, both continuity and discontinuity between our present bodies and those of the resurrection. Our present bodies are earthly, natural (*psychikon*), subject to decay, but the raised body is heavenly, spiritual (*pneumatikon*), and incorruptible. The final result is a glorious resurrection transformation of both the dead and the living wherein the final enemy, death, is swallowed up in victory.

In this section, there are three interlocking and ascending steps that Paul makes to ground what he has said: (1) An appeal to the natural order that God has made to argue for the reasonableness of the resurrection body (vv. 36-44). (2) An appeal to the nature of Christ's resurrection body to argue for the certainty of the resurrection body (vv. 45-49). (3) An appeal for the absolute necessity of the resurrection in order for believers to enter our heavenly existence and for God's plan of redemption to be complete (vv. 50-57). Let us briefly comment on each of these steps.

First, in vv. 36-44, Paul appeals to what God has made in the natural order, to seeds and kinds of bodies (*sōma*)—an appeal not only from the known to the unknown, but also an appeal to analogy. In such an appeal, Paul links together the way God has ordered the natural world to the reasonableness of the resurrection body. Paul first appeals to how God has designed a seed. One ought to notice from nature that it is only when the seed is sown and dies that “life” comes (v. 36). Death then is a kind of precondition for life, not in the sense that Paul thinks death is an inevitable fact of the universe, but in the sense that God has so ordered nature, particularly the seed that it “demonstrates that out of death a new expression of life springs forth.” Even in death, God's purposes are not thwarted. Why then should the Corinthians find it incredible that in the case of their death, the resurrection body comes as a new expression of life? “What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable” (v. 42). Paul then goes one step further: not only does the seed in the natural realm demonstrate that life arises out of death, it also displays that the life that comes forth does so in a transformed body (vv. 37-38). In other words, the end product of the seed planted in the

ground does not look like the original seed, even though there is obviously some kind of continuity. By analogy, if God has so arranged and ordered the natural realm in this way, then why is it hard to imagine that God is not able to transform our present bodies, which will die and be buried, into that of a transformed, resurrection body? Paul concludes: “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (v. 43). Lastly, Paul also observes the fact from the natural realm that God gives to each seed its own kind of body adapted to its own kind of existence (vv. 38-41). By analogy, if God has so ordered the natural realm this way, then why is it hard to imagine God doing this in the case of the resurrection body? Just as God creates every seed or thing with its own kind of body adapted to its own kind of existence, so God makes our resurrection bodies adapted to a future resurrection existence. Paul concludes: “It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body (*sōma pneumatikon*)” (v. 44), i.e., a body adapted for our final consummated state dominated by the Spirit of God, living in a new creation.

Second, in vv. 45-49, Paul does not want to leave his argument merely at the reasonable level; instead he wants to argue for the *certainty* of our resurrection body due to our union with Christ. He once again develops the Adam-Christ typological relation but this time to demonstrate that the kind of body we will have as believers is patterned after Christ’s resurrection body. Paul quotes from Genesis 2:7 (v. 45). Paul’s main point is that Adam was given a certain kind of body at creation—a natural (*psychē*) body; a body of the earth; a body, which as a result of sin, is subject to death and decay, and “in Adam” we bear his likeness. But Christ is different; he is a life-giving spirit (*pneuma zōopoion*) since his life is the life of heaven itself, and as the head of his people, his resurrection body, thankfully, becomes the pattern for us—a certain pattern. But Paul reminds the Corinthians, the reality of our resurrection, patterned after Christ’s resurrection, is still future. Just as we have worn the image of Adam, so we shall wear the “image of the man of heaven” (see v. 49). Even though the new order that Christ has inaugurated has already broken in, we must still await the future when our lowly bodies will be transformed, fitted for the condition of the consummated state. This is what the Corinthians have failed to understand.

Third, in vv. 50-57, Paul finishes this glorious chapter but raising his argument a notch. He is not merely content to argue for the reasonableness or

even the certainty of our resurrection body; instead he insists for *the absolute necessity of it*. Our perishable and mortal body *must* (*dei*) be clothed with that which is imperishable and immortal (v. 53). Believers, whether dead or alive, must be transformed in order to enter the kingdom of God in its fullness (see vv. 50, 53-54). This was something the Corinthians forgot. They were influenced by false beliefs which ultimately undermined the significance of the physical order, but Paul does not agree. The triune God of redemption is also the God of creation, and given that sin has marred God's good order, redemption is not complete until sin and death are destroyed. But for death to be destroyed completely there must of necessity be the resurrection of the dead. Biblically, one cannot think of the final state of believers without resurrected, transformed bodies. Built on creation-fall structures, if God is truly to redeem his people and transform this world, Christ must not only be raised but we must be raised with him. Without Christ's resurrection; without our resurrection in him, there is no biblical salvation. That is why all those who die in Christ and those of us who are alive when Christ returns will, and *must*, be raised and transformed. God's plan of salvation is only complete when it is so.

When will this take place? At the end; in an instant; when the trumpet sounds. Those who are alive when Christ returns will be transformed (v. 51). Those who are dead will come out of their graves—transformed (v. 52). And it must be so. Our bodies, whether dead or alive, in their present “natural” form must be transformed into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious resurrection body. For it is only then that what Christ inaugurated in his first coming will be consummated in his second. The long chain of decay and death inaugurated by the first Adam will finally be irrevocably broken by the last Adam. Death itself, the last enemy, finally and definitively, will be destroyed.

Even though Paul's discussion of our resurrection bodies is short, it is still of vital importance. In this chapter we learn that our future state as believers is one in which we are bodily raised, transformed, and glorified. Forever and ever we will dwell in God's presence, living in a renewed universe, carry out our tasks as image-bearers for his glory. In such a state, as Paul wonderfully states, our resurrection bodies will be imperishable (*phtharton*) and immortal (*athanasian*), that is, sustained by God's power and grace forever. Like Christ's resurrection body, our resurrection bodies will be fitted for

the new creation. They will not be susceptible to disease or death. They will be physical bodies raised in “glory,” “power,” and “dominated and directed by Holy Spirit” (*pneumatikos*) with some kind of continuity with our present bodies but gloriously transformed. May Paul’s wonderful teaching on the resurrection give us comfort and hope in this world as we long for the appearing of our Lord and the our final resurrection state.

SBJT: How should a pastor preach the resurrection of Christ?

Robert Vogel is the Carl E. Bates Professor of Christian Preaching and Associate Vice President for Institutional Advancement at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to this role he served as Professor of Homiletics for twenty years at Western Seminary, where he also served as an Associate Dean and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program.

Robert Vogel: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is commonly acknowledged to be the central doctrine of Christian theology and faith. The doctrine and its significance are prominently featured in Scripture, particularly in the New Testament. That the doctrine is notably presented in the preaching of Peter and Paul (e.g., Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 13:30, 34; 17:31; 1 Cor 15) suggests that it ought to be featured prominently in the preaching of the contemporary Christian preacher as well.

Accordingly, a faithful Christian preacher could not, and certainly should not, expect to neglect the proclamation of this great truth. Indeed, an expository preacher, especially when preaching in the New Testament, would have to work to avoid this doctrine. While hints of the doctrine exist in the Old Testament, it explicitly pervades the New Testament. And preaching resurrection texts, the pastor will discover that resurrection truth is at once theological and practical.

So if this teaching is so prominent and pervasive in the Scriptures and in Christian theology, how should a faithful pastor preach the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ? What follows are a few suggestions.

1. *Preach the centrality of the resurrection to the Gospel.* The resurrection of Christ is central to the good news that a gracious God sees fit to redeem fallen sinners. While the Gospel may be seen as a broad and comprehensive manifestation of divine grace, the heart of the Gospel, summed up by the apostle Paul, features the death of Christ for our sins (confirmed by his burial) and his resurrection on the third day (confirmed by his post-resurrection

appearances). Both his death and resurrection were “according to the Scriptures,” indicating the anticipation of this Gospel truth in the Old Testament (1 Cor 15:3-4).

2. *Preach the resurrection of Christ in evangelistic appeals.* Because Christ’s resurrection is at the heart of the Gospel, it is foundational to the Gospel’s application in the salvation of sinners. Paul said as much: “I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved (1 Cor 15:1-2). Thus, a rightly-informed evangelistic appeal should call sinners to believe and confess Christ’s resurrection: “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Rom 10:9, 10).

3. *Preach the necessity of the resurrection to validate the believer’s faith.* Paul contends that if Christ is not raised, our faith is vain (empty) and worthless, and we are yet in our sins (1 Cor 15:14, 17). The gracious promises of God attendant to salvation are a cruel deception, if Christ is not raised from the dead. But Christ *is* risen, and the faith of believers is validated (1 Cor 15:20). The resurrection is God’s stamp of divine approval on the redemptive work of the cross, and the basis of our confidence that we have been justified (Rom 4:23-25).

Peter also establishes the connection of the resurrection to our confident hope of eternal salvation: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3-5).

4. *Preach the resurrection of Christ as the pattern for our own future bodily resurrection.* Salvation extends not only to the believer’s soul, but also to the body. As death separates soul and body, resurrection reunites the two. Having established the centrality of the resurrection in the Gospel and in our faith, Paul contends that Christ, in his resurrection, is the first fruits of “those who are asleep” (1 Cor 15:20). His resurrection (the first) is the promise of like kind to those to follow. That is, believers will likewise be raised with glorified bodies, not those mortal and perishable, but rather one that is imperishable (1 Cor 15:35-49).

This message is a practical truth of great hope and comfort to believers. When grieving the death of a loved one, or facing the reality of our own mortality, we need an authoritative word concerning a future beyond our

present experience. The preaching of the resurrection of Christ and its practical significance for our eternal future satisfies that life question (see John 11:25; 1 Thess 4:14).

5. *Preach the resurrection's necessity for Christ's present priestly work.* Among several aspects of the infinite superiority of Christ, the book of Hebrews presents the resurrected and exalted Lord Jesus (Heb 1:3; see also Eph 1:19-22) in his ongoing priestly work. Indeed, the superiority of his priesthood over that of the old covenant is, in part, because while Aaron and his descendants died, Jesus continues forever, holding his priesthood permanently (Heb 7:23-25). As our Savior and great high priest, Jesus intercedes for us before the Father, a ministry directly tied to his resurrection (Rom 8:34).

6. *Preach the apologetic significance of the resurrection of Christ.* The resurrection of Jesus is a common topic treated in Christian apologetics due to the centrality of the doctrine in the Christian faith, and because its historical factuality is often denied and the bodily nature of the resurrection is widely debated. A faithful pastor should teach and preach the doctrine with emphasis on the apologetic arguments in its defense. Ample textual evidence exists, particularly in the Gospels, to establish the historical, bodily resurrection of Christ (accounts of ten post-resurrection appearances are found in the Gospels), and the epistolary explication of the event further confirms this understanding (see e.g., 1 Cor 15). Faithful exposition of these texts, coupled with familiar apologetic arguments, will equip congregations of believers with a right understanding of and basis for belief in this crucial doctrine.

Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus has apologetic importance related to the reliability of Christ's claims. For example, Paul asserts that Jesus was declared (shown) to be the Son of God by his resurrection (Rom 1:4); that is, claims of his deity were verified by his resurrection. Also, during his earthly ministry, Jesus asserted that his resurrection would validate (as a sign) his authority (John 2:18-22).

Faithful Christian preaching is multi-faceted, for it expounds the breadth and depth of biblical teaching on a wide range of themes. But the common, central core of Christian preaching is the Gospel, and at the heart of the Gospel is Christ's resurrection. We serve a risen Savior, and proclaiming this truth lifts preaching to a high plain of celebration, worship, and edification.

SBJT: It has been argued by eminent historians like David Bebbington that one of the distinguishing marks of evangelical Christianity is “crucicentrism.” And yet, in the examples of preaching given in the New Testament, the Book of Acts, for example, the preaching of the resurrection is a major component of apostolic proclamation. Does this mean that our Evangelical forebears have not been fully biblical at this point?

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Michael A. G. Haykin: There is no doubt that Professor Bebbington is right when he identifies crucicentrism as a key mark of Evangelical Christianity. Yet, this does not mean that Evangelicals in days gone by did not acknowledge the importance of the resurrection of Christ. Take, Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), for example. This eighteenth-century Evangelical Baptist pastor-theologian focused much of this preaching on the cross. Yet, he equally affirmed that “a belief in the resurrection of Christ is allowed, on all hands, to be essential to salvation, as it is an event upon which the truth of Christianity rests” and he cited 1 Corinthians 15:14–15 and Romans 10:9 as proof. For him, 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, which mentions the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, is a key definition of the gospel. As he stated of this definition: “Here also we see what is the gospel, and what that is on which the present standing and final salvation of Christians depends.”

In another place, arguing from Revelation 1:18’s statement of the risen Jesus, “I am he that liveth and was dead,” Fuller pointed out that if our salvation was accomplished by the death of Christ alone without the resurrection, what joy would there have been in that? In his words:

What would the feast be, if the Lord of the feast were not there? Though, in enduring the death of the cross, he had ‘spoiled principalities and powers,’ and

‘made a show of them openly’; yet if he had not lived to enjoy his triumphs, what would they have been to the redeemed, and even to the angelic world? If the King’s Son had been lost, the victory of that day would have been turned into mourning. If it had been possible for him to be holden of death, the loss to the moral empire of God must have exceeded the gain, and the saved themselves must have been ashamed to appear in heaven at the expense of the general good!

But, Fuller went on: “But we are not called to so painful a trial. Our salvation, expensive as it was, was not at this expense. He was dead, but he liveth! “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!”” Thus, for Fuller, the resurrection of Christ was not only essential to the salvation of the people of God, but also to their “felicity in heaven.”

Our Evangelical forebears as evidenced by Fuller knew that it was the cross *and* the resurrection which was both required for our glorious salvation in Christ. Today, may we never separate what God has joined together and may we preach Christ crucified and risen from the dead as central to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Book Reviews

Galatians. Concordia Commentary. By A. Andrew Das. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2014, lxix, 738 pp., \$54.99 hardback.

A. Andrew Das serves as the Donald W. and Betty J. Buik Chair of Religious Studies at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, IL. His fresh and substantial contribution to the Concordia Commentary series represents some of the best of contemporary, conservative Lutheran scholarship. Like other volumes in the series, Das's commentary engages current scholarly discussion concerning Galatians, Paul, and his theology, with respect, reflection, and genuine interaction. The aim of the series is to enable and equip pastors and teachers of the Scriptures to proclaim the Gospel with greater clarity and accuracy. For those with ears to hear: that means not only Lutheran pastors and teachers, but any and all who regard the Gospel as central to Christian preaching and teaching. Here is a contribution from Lutherans and for Lutherans that serves the larger body of Christ. True, Das's commentary might "infect" readers with elements of Lutheran thought. But from my perspective, that is all to the good.

The "Editor's Preface" (x-xiii) clarifies the guidelines and presuppositions of the series: 1) Jesus Christ in his saving work is the ultimate message and content of Scripture. The commentaries are thus to be Trinitarian and Christ-centered. 2) The Scriptural witness to Christ takes the *form* of Law and Gospel, demand and gift. This form is not limited to particular language, but appears within a variety of ways within Scripture. The commentaries are in this sense to be Evangelical. 3) The Scriptures are God's vehicle for communicating the Gospel. Together with Evangelicals (in the broader sense of the term), the authors of the commentaries maintain a high view of Scripture. 4) The Scriptures have as their target and purpose the creation and sustenance of the church instead of the scholar's desk. The pulpit and the pew are the decisive context for the interpretation of Scripture. As the series itself attests, the pulpit and the pew do not do away with the need for the scholar's desk! They, however, provide the scholar with his proper context. Das's *Galatians* more than fulfills these admirable aims without

exhibiting stuffiness or taking hide-bound positions. At least, I can't find them. Indeed, Das at points takes pains to distance himself from traditional Lutheran readings. R. H. C. Lenski often becomes his sparring partner. As is to be expected (and welcomed), Das cites Luther regularly, but not slavishly, and to good effect.

Before all else, Das is an exegete. His work certainly belongs in this scholarly series. He already has written considerably on Paul, Paul's Jewish background, and the interpretation of the *Hauptbriefe*, especially Galatians and Romans. He has read widely. No one can read everything in our time, but Das has read a great deal concerning Galatians. It is always possible to complain about one's own favorites that go missing here and there. But Das touches on nearly all the important theological and historical debates that concern Galatians. He does so, furthermore, in a way that allows the reader to see clearly the interpretive options that have presented themselves in recent scholarship. If anything, one might want to press Das here and there to come to more decisive exegetical conclusions (e.g. on the question of *pistis Christou* in 2:16, the exceptive or adversative clause in 2:16, the death to the Law "through the Law" in 2:18). Even if one ends up disagreeing with Das at certain points (as is to be expected), the commentary offers a good education in exegetical reflection. All who use it will come away with a better understanding of the letter.

One of the few points at which I thought Das might have been more thorough was on the question of Paul's understanding of justification, as it first appears in 2:15-21. Admittedly, this theme has been a preoccupation of mine. But there is a relatively long tradition of the interpretation of Paul and Luther, going back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century (furthermore, n.b., not merely deriving from the Holl School), that has emphasized the wider, effective and creational understanding of justification that appears in the Scriptures, which is taken up by Paul, and which was appropriated dynamically by Luther (in contrast to Melancthon). Rightly understood (as with Luther!), this reading in no way diminishes the forensic nature of God's justifying work in Christ. Rather, the effective and creational understanding merely recognizes the effective nature of God's Word. As is well-known, in differing ways Ernst Käsemann and Peter Stuhlmacher became advocates of this approach as exegetes. This approach is likewise prominent in the work of Oswald Bayer, a systematician. Furthermore, is

to be found widely (and with variations) among German theologians and exegetes, especially Lutherans. I would have been happiest, of course, if Das himself had taken up this view. It was a bit of surprise, however, not to see it at least represented and discussed.

Nevertheless, Das's commentary is a strong commentary. It is especially strong in the presentation of Jewish-Hellenistic and Greco-Roman background materials. There is a wealth and a thoroughness here that is scarcely to be matched. It is a valuable resource in this regard, especially for busy pastors.

In general, the formatting of the Concordia Commentary series is quite useful. The use of the wide margins for Scripture cross-references is useful. Various icons appear in the margins as well, marking fundamental themes, especially those important to Lutherans. My first reaction is that the discernment of such themes remains the work of the pastor or teacher. The icons might distract from that task. But perhaps others will find them useful. With the considerable number of references to secondary literature in the commentary, one might wish for an index of authors. But that is a minor lack. Das's commentary, together with the series as a whole, is a wonderful gift.

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The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus. By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014, xiv + 394 pp., \$30.00 cloth.

According to Marcus Bockmuehl's *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*, New Testament scholarship is in a bit of a stalemate. *Wirkungsgeschichte* and theological interpretation of Scripture, he argues, are ways to advance the discipline. I, moreover, would want to add what Michael F. Bird accomplished, in *The Gospel of the Lord*, is another means to vivify a potential stalemate. Bird masterfully brings to bear New Testament scholarship into conversation with first and second century traditions. Thus, Bird is engaging the intersection of New Testament studies with early Christian studies. By doing so, he brings to life old traditions.

Bird prophetically forecasts a potential resurgence in Gospel scholarship (vii). Even though the future of the “Third Quest” of the historical Jesus—potentially so-called “Fourth Quest”—has potentially stagnated, Gospel studies may begin to see renewed interest with social memory and performance criticism, as well as reading the Gospels in and within early confessional traditions. Bird is attempting to ride and shape a new wave of reading the Gospels. In this volume, Bird is “focused on the origins and development of the books we call ‘Gospels’ in the context of the early church” (ix).

Four questions govern the direction of the book. These are four, clearly delineated and articulated questions that govern the basic shape of Bird’s book. First, “We have to look at the ‘big bang’ behind the Jesus tradition” (3). That is, how the oral tradition of Jesus was preserved by the disciples and early church up through the third century. Second, “how was the Jesus tradition transmitted” (4)? Third, a slew of critical questions exist that need answers—“what were the sources behind the Gospels, what genre are the Gospels, and why would anyone even write a Gospel?” (4). Fourth, why are there four Gospels instead of more or less (5)?

Thus, the proceeding chapters and arguments of Bird’s volume can be subsumed under such questions. He aims to describe how Jesus traditions may have been preserved and why it was important for the early church to do so (23). As he develops this, I find a refreshing balance of critical scholarship, theological rationale, and concern for tradition. For example, the early church in part preserved the Jesus tradition because of interest in Jesus (36–40), pedagogical and rhetorical cues (p.40–42)—similar to Dale Allison’s work, the possible use of notebooks to remember Jesus tradition (45–48), the value of eyewitnesses as signs of authenticating valid Jesus tradition (48–62), and the importance of imitation motifs (62–63).

Next, Bird develops his argument for the formation of Jesus tradition on social memory theory. He argues, “an ‘informally controlled’ oral tradition looks like a plausible and realistic model for how the Jesus tradition might been transmitted” (95). His accounts of social memory argue for the use of remember, remembrance, recalled, and similar expressions in the Gospels, Pauline literature, the rest of the New Testament, and in literature up through the second century. Bird rightly argues that “It [source and tradition criticism] can no longer be defined in terms of separating history from theology or

identifying layers of tradition, but should be conceived as tracing the impact of a memory in the formation of early Christianity" (105). It is here that Bird identifies with a specific line of thought within social memory theory. However, I remain unconvinced that his understanding of social memory represents the majority of social memory scholars (e.g., Jens Schröter, Chris Keith, Rafael Rodríguez, Alan Kirk, Holly Hearon, and Tom Thatcher to name a few).

When engaging some of the typical historical questions of the Gospels, Bird attempts to give a fresh voice to the Synoptic problem and to the Johanne question. The slew of scholarship engaging the synoptic problem is quite difficult to mine, and Bird has provided his reader with helpful summaries and insightful comments to various positions. In the end, Bird affirms *Marcan priority*, with what he calls *Q-lite* (162–87). With all the recent work of Mark Goodacre, and others, against the use of Q, I was rather surprised still to see Q alive and walking down the *Synoptic* halls of scholarship.

The primary value of Bird's contribution, although there are other competing texts, is the pedagogical value for young scholars and students. Bird's volume is not only readable, it is clearly ordered and accessible. Although there are other texts of its kind, Bird clearly stands out from the rest in noting the plethora of sources. If I have a historical question or need to gain brief insight on an issue he addresses, I will turn to his footnotes for an immediate reading list.

The second value of this source is how Bird brings to bear New Testament modern scholarship into conversation with Patristic reception. Bird has an ear towards early tradition, more so than typical historical scholarship is accustomed. This mode of scholarship is welcomed for a number of reasons. Along with Bockmeuhl's concerns, I envision this being one way to enrich and vivify New Testament scholarship—bring it into conversation with Patristic traditions. Second, theological inquiry is founded upon a different form of historical inquiry. It isn't solely historical critical but it is early ecclesial tradition. Last, and not limited to these, it broadens New Testament students in good ways. They are introduced and required to wrestle with primary ancient texts, gospel traditions, and ancient tradition.

Other than some of the critiques already given, I have one final critique to note. Bird lacked a concluding chapter. His introduction was highly informative and clarifying. The layout of chapters answered each question raised

in the introduction. I turned the page, knowing it was the last chapter, and saw the bibliography. Although his arguments were clear and his chapters well ordered, it needed a 3–6 page concluding chapter to sum up and tie the book together. In order to remedy such problem, the reader must consult the introduction once more—which is not totally problematic.

This book offers new and old ways to read the “behind-the-text” traditions. I will use much of this book in the formation of class lectures on Gospel traditions and locate up-to-date accessible Gospel scholarship. I highly encourage New Testament professors (undergraduate and graduate), all New Testament students, and the inquisitive pastor to consult this volume. In Bird’s work, readers will be afforded an up-to-date analysis of Gospel scholarship, an up-to-date bibliography, and an up-to-date reading list. This book is a worthy read. In Bird’s own words, “Young and ambitious theologians, especially those concerned with relating the text to the missional situation of the church in the twenty-first century, would be wise to *keep exploration and exegesis* of the fourfold Gospel uppermost in their studies” (328).

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The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology. By Jeremy R. Treat. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014, 305 pp., cloth.

In *The Crucified King*, Jeremy Treat—Pastor of Equipping and Theology at Reality LA in Hollywood, California—seeks to integrate the kingdom and the cross, which he argues has been divided in post-Enlightenment scholarship. By employing both biblical and systematic theology, Treat presents a biblically rooted and theologically formed case for how the kingdom and cross belong together. He persuasively demonstrates that the establishment of God’s reign comes through Jesus, the crucified king.

In Part One, Treat develops the themes of victory and suffering through the Old Testament. Chapter 1 unpacks the pattern of “royal victory through atoning suffering” across the storyline of Scripture. This pattern begins after

the fall with the promise of Genesis 3:15 and progressively develops through Abraham, the covenants, the exodus, David, the righteous royal sufferer in the Psalms, and the prophecies of Isaiah and Zechariah. Chapter 2 focuses on Isaiah, the climax of Israel's story and doorway into the New Testament, and shows that the servant is a Davidic king who will bring about a new exodus and thereby establish God's kingdom by means of his sacrificial suffering. From the *protoevangelium* to the end, then, the Old Testament reveals, albeit progressively, that the fulfillment of God's promise to reign will come by a royal victor(y) through atoning suffering.

Chapters 3-5 begin where the Old Testament ends by examining the New Testament, particularly Mark (chap. 3), which itself has Isaiah's new exodus in view, and Colossians and Revelation (chap. 4). From Mark's Gospel and representative passages in Colossians and Revelation, the New Testament holds together the kingdom of Christ and the blood of his cross. Chapter 5 rounds off Part One by synthesizing and clarifying these biblical-theological threads.

Part Two applies the biblical-theological findings of Part One to various issues in systematic theology. In other words, Treat shifts from the story of redemption to the logical coherence of redemption, though he acknowledges that both are mutually informing. Since the kingdom and the cross are held together by Christ, the doctrines of Christology, atonement, and kingdom must inform interpreters and be placed in relation to each other.

Treat begins by reconsidering the doctrines of the two states of Christ (humiliation and exaltation) and the three offices of Christ (prophet, priest, and king). In place of understanding the states of Christ as strictly successive (humiliation *then* exaltation), he argues that the kingship of Christ on the cross is exaltation *in* humiliation within the broader movement of exaltation *through* humiliation (chap. 6). Similarly, instead of dividing the offices of Christ, he argues that Christ's death be understood as both a priestly *and* kingly event. As a result, rather than pitting *Christus Victor* against penal substitution, a better way to relate them is *Christus Victor* through penal substitution (chaps. 7-8). In other words, as the priest-king Jesus disarms Satan and his accusatory power and establishes God's kingdom on earth through bearing the penalty of sin by taking the place of sinners.

Chapter 9 sets forth a constructive proposal for the cross-shaped nature of the kingdom. In critical dialogue with Jürgen Moltmann, Treat argues

that “[t]he cross reveals that God is a compassionate king—a shepherd-king who rules by serving. However, the fact that he may rule by serving does not mean that he rules only by serving. As a shepherd-king, God reigns not only by laying down his life for his sheep but also by defending them against voracious wolves. He rules through serving *and* guarding” (239-240). As a result, God advances his kingdom through the church as it conforms to the cross. Finally, chapter 10 provides concluding thoughts on the story and logic of redemption.

The Crucified King is quite impressive for several reasons. First, it demonstrates Treat’s proficiency in biblical, systematic, and historical theology—each related to and informing the other—and how it should be put into practice in the church. Second, he not only sets forth a faithful method of doing theology, he employs it to show not only that the kingdom and the cross are central, but also how they are related and located within the biblical storyline that culminates in a priest-king who establishes his kingdom through his atoning death. Third, this work is not only important for scholarship, although it is his published dissertation written at Wheaton under the supervision of Kevin Vanhoozer, but also for the church since it is actually a readable and enjoyable dissertation! That is, it displays both breadth and depth of research in the footnotes and brings together what many have wrongly separated in a clear and rich way. Thus, Christians would benefit from—and at times be moved by—learning of their great King who serves *and* guards his people through his enemy-crushing, wrath-appeasing death and resurrection. Moreover, pastors would grow in their understanding of the storyline of Scripture so that they would more faithfully preach Christ from all of it—from promise to fulfillment. Perhaps the book may be summed up in the words of Augustine: “The Lord has established his sovereignty from a tree. Who is it who fights with wood? Christ. From his cross he has conquered kings” (29). So take up and read, praise God for and be conformed to our crucified and resurrected King.

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The Tradition of Liberal Theology. By Michael J. Langford. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014, 176 pp., \$18.00 cloth.

This is a helpful book for a theologian looking for a quick presentation of the broader background of the liberal theological tradition. The most helpful aspect of the book is that its author is a seasoned, self-identified liberal theologian. Michael Langford's presentation is favorable and native to the theological context, which lends authority to this succinct work. Langford has also previously written two helpful works on liberal theology: *A Liberal Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001) and *Unblind Faith* (expanded ed., Turnbridge Wells, UK: Parapress, 2010). This third book on liberal theology is a shorter work that benefits from Langford's previous research.

Langford explains the liberal tradition in four chapters. Chapter 1 defines the term "liberal theology." According to Langford, liberal theology is a theology that appropriately balances "between religious faith and human rationality" (1). This balance is found in being open-minded toward challenges to dogmas and revelation, following where reason seems to lead while still attaching some value to historical expressions of theology. Langford's liberalism is summarized by eleven distinct characteristics in chapter 2. The characteristics touch the doctrines of revelation, and soteriology, as well as practical ethics. Langford argues a liberal reads the bible non-literally and harmonizes reason and revelation. He places a rejection of a penal substitutionary atonement and the exclusivity of Christ, and promotion of works-based salvation at the heart of liberal theology. According to Langford, liberalism also typically rejects imputation of guilt, settling for a vague notion of original sin. This is coupled with a minimization of the effects of the fall on the created order and belief in human libertarian free will. Ethically, Langford argues acceptance of a wide range of lifestyles in a cornerstone of theological liberalism. One of the more significant characteristics of liberal theology for Langford is a requirement for a minimal number of basic teachings, which is directed at the tendency of some conservative Roman Catholics to expand the category of necessary beliefs. However, the trend among liberal Protestants to severely limit first-order doctrines is just as evident.

Based on Langford's presentation of liberal theology, the distance between an evangelical Christianity and liberalism is undeniable and is founded

in divergent understandings of the trustworthiness of Scripture. Though *The Tradition of Liberal Theology* was written by someone distant from the Southern Baptist tradition, it helps to explain the necessity of the Conservative Resurgence. Langford's version of liberalism presents human reason as the ultimate judge of truth, which is demonstrated in his desire to modify revelation to match contemporary rationalism and to read Scripture in a "non-literal" fashion. The rejection of most miracles by liberals is a direct assault on Scripture; it spiritualizes the narratives of Scripture by pushing them from factual accounts to mystical reactions to subjective emotions. Langford provides a clear picture of the doctrinal roots of theological liberalism. Ultimately, the evangelical rejection of liberalism is a reaction to the willingness of liberals to deny the truthfulness of clear accounts within Scripture. In Langford's case, this quickly moves from a theoretical denial of miracles to normalization of homoeroticism (54–59).

In chapter 3, Langford describes the contribution thirteen different historical figures made to liberal theology. He begins with Justin Martyr and then moves on to individuals like Peter Abelard, Richard Hooker, Hannah Barnard, and Frederick Temple. He also expands on some of the more recent themes in liberal theology in the Twentieth Century. Notably, not all of the major figures would be properly classified as a liberal according to Langford's own eleven characteristics. Each one was chosen for their liberalizing influence, rather than consistency with the entire model. For instance, Justin Martyr is included within the liberal tradition because of his efforts at demonstrating the reasonableness of Christianity according to the philosophical categories of his day, though he was theologically conservative in other ways. In chapter 4, Langford critiques alternatives to liberal Christian theology. Among these he includes fundamentalism, dialectic theology, and materialism. This is the least helpful of the chapters as, in many cases, Langford's description of the more conservative forms of Christianity do not reflect the careful engagement with primary sources and the best streams of theology.

This short treatment on liberal theology is invaluable because it represents in the most positive light the central aspects of the liberal tradition. It is an insider view of a theological tradition foreign to many evangelicals. Adding to the value of the presentation, Langford has written with academic rigor in accessible prose. This makes this a valuable resource for more introductory applications, like a college class or as a resource for a parishioner who

is trying to understand how liberal theologians arrive at their conclusions. Langford reveals that there is a fundamentally distinct approach to theology in the liberal tradition. It is also helpful that Langford defends Christianity against atheism and materialistic agnosticism. This book does not present a form of Christianity that is entirely incredulous and without faith. It does, however, present Christianity from a faith that is defined as “willingness to live in accordance with the beliefs one has come to hold — in many cases, by a long process of reflection” (11). Langford’s description of *faith* as enduring *faithfulness* is appealing, though the divorce of faith from authoritative revelation in Scripture is also telling.

The Tradition of Liberal Theology provides an important introduction to liberalism. However, a weakness of Langford’s book is the failure to deal with opposing views in a nuanced manner. Langford lumps all Christians who believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture into the category of fundamentalist and describes a high view of Scripture as a theological development of the last two centuries. He does distinguish, in a limited manner, evangelicalism from fundamentalism but characterizes the differing labels as a distinction without a difference. Likewise Langford’s interaction with conservative Catholicism seems underdeveloped, though his treatments of dialectic theology and materialism are much longer and more balanced. Langford appears to misread conservative theologians in exactly the way the conservatives anticipate. This makes his presentation of their contrasting viewpoints more striking since Langford’s criticisms focus on exactly the areas in which conservative theologians invest the most care to explain their position.

Despite an imbalanced presentation of opposing streams of thought, the book is a phenomenal resource that should be part of the library of a scholar or a pastor. Langford’s summary of liberal theology is a gift to those seeking to find a reliable source on the liberal interpretation of Christianity. In less than two hundred pages, Langford provides an accessible, well-organized foil which can be used in the classroom or the pastor’s study to demonstrate the real differences between liberalism and evangelicalism.

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