

IMPLICATIONS OF THE KINGDOM IN ACTS 3:19–21

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The Messianic Kingdom is a subject which is given great importance in Scripture. Different theological systems debate the current status of this kingdom and its relationship to Israel. A neglected passage in this discussion is Acts 3:19–21. In order for a theological system to be accurate, it must incorporate Acts 3:19–21. This passage teaches that the Messiah's kingdom is not present at this time, and awaits the future repentance of the nation of Israel, at which time Israel will turn to the Messiah and He will return to establish the kingdom.

Introduction

Acts 3:19–21 appears to teach that the end time events of the Messiah's Second Coming and the establishment of His kingdom are in some way related to the national repentance and forgiveness of Israel. In addition, the context of Acts 3:19–21 seems to indicate that the promised kingdom will not come until that time. This understanding of Acts 3:19–21 also appears to match the expectations of both the Old Testament and non-canonical Jewish literature.

This article will begin by addressing Acts 3:19–21, examining its meaning in context. Then, the proposed interpretation of Acts 3:19–21 will be compared with the teaching of the Old Testament, as well as the common Jewish expectation of Peter's day. Finally, this article will offer a reason for Luke's authorial strategy in placing Acts 3:19–21 within the broad flow of Luke-Acts.

Peter's Speech (Acts 3:19–21)

[19] Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; [20] and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, [21] whom heaven must receive until the

period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.¹

The passage in question belongs to the section which begins in verse 17.² In verses 17–18, after having rebuked his audience of Jews for killing the Author of life (v. 15), Peter acknowledges that it was out of ignorance that the Jews killed their Messiah. This act of ignorance was necessary to fulfill the Old Testament, which told of a suffering Messiah (cf. Luke 24:45–46; Acts 17:3; 26:22–23).³ This admission of the Jews' ignorance was a considerable statement which, in the eyes of both Jew and Gentile, would have softened the accusation of guilt.⁴ Peter's purpose in acknowledging the ignorance of the Jews and their leaders in killing their Messiah sets up his exhortation in verses 19–21.

"Therefore" (οὖν) in verse 19 provides a strong link to the preceding argument and points to verses 19–21 as the main application of Peter's speech.⁵ In light of the fact that Israel crucified their Messiah in ignorance, they should "Therefore repent and return" (μετανοήσατε οὖν καὶ ἐπιστρέψατε). "Repent" (μετανοέω) is used in the Old Testament to refer to God relenting from an action,⁶ and in the New Testament it is used with more frequency to indicate human repentance, being especially popular in Luke's writings.⁷ "Return" (ἐπιστρέφω) is a word which regularly occurs in relation to Israel's repentance in the Old Testament (Deut 3:2; Isa 6:10; 31:6; Joel 2:12–13; Amos 4:6–11; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7), and was also an idea linked with a Jewish understanding of the last days (Deut 4:30; Hos 3:5).⁸ Both words together function as a summary call for repentance.⁹ This summons to repentance is similar to Acts 2:38, where Peter also models the preaching of the Old Testament prophets by calling the nation to repent.

In Acts 2:38 and 3:19, Peter preaches repentance like the OT prophets calling Israel to return (see 3:19; cf. 5:31; 8:22). In the immediate context, the people of Israel must repent for their corporate responsibility for Jesus' death (2:23); but in its fuller Lukan context, the summons to repentance is appropriate for all humanity, though, in the story world, Peter and his companions do not yet recognize this point (11:18).¹⁰

¹ All Scripture references used are from the NASB 1995 edition unless otherwise stated.

² David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 178.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 2:1103.

⁵ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 179; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 174; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1105.

⁶ Amos 7:3; Jonah 3:9; Zech 8:14; Jer 38:19.

⁷ Luke 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; 16:30; 17:3, 4; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20.

⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1106.

⁹ Bock, *Acts*, 174.

¹⁰ Keener, *Acts*, 1:972.

The call to repentance is followed by what is likely a purpose clause, “so that your sins may be wiped away” (εἰς τὸ ἐξαλειφθῆναι ὑμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας).¹¹ The word for “wiped away” (ἐξαλειφθῆναι) is used in Col 2:14 in reference to the wiping out of a debt or something owed.¹² It was also used to refer to the washing off of ink upon papyri.¹³ What Peter has in mind here is a connection between repentance and the complete removal of sins. Although Israel had sinned in killing their Messiah, the removal of this sin was possible through repentance and turning to Him now as their King.

Not only would sins be erased, but Peter continues in verse 19, “in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (ὅπως ἂν ἔλθωσιν καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου). “In order that” (ὅπως ἂν) is a common indicator of purpose in Acts.¹⁴ This is the second purpose given by Peter to persuade his Jewish brothers and sisters to repent. By using another purpose conjunction (ὅπως ἂν) instead of a καὶ + infinitive, this construction appears to be logically sequential to the forgiveness of sins.¹⁵

The phrase “times of refreshing” (καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως) uses a unique word, “refreshing” (ἀνάψυξις), which in biblical literature occurs only here and in Exod 8:11 (LXX) with reference to the relief in Egypt after the cessation of the plague of frogs.¹⁶ This word can refer to relief of trouble, drying out a wound, or to cool by blowing.¹⁷ Conceptually, this idea of an eschatological age of relief has many parallels in Jewish thought.¹⁸

However, despite the Jewish tendency to equate this idea with the eschatological age, some argue that this phrase should be kept separate from eschatological considerations. Instead, it should be thought of as “moments of relief during the time men spend in waiting for that [final] blessed day,” thus communicating a spiritual refreshment in this age.¹⁹ Although this may be possible, in light of the Messianic context of the passage, it seems unlikely.

¹¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 611. εἰς + τὸ often functions as an introduction to a purpose infinitive, however, it is also possible to see this as an infinitive of result. Either way, in this context the meaning is similar: repentance leads to the wiping out of sins.

¹² John B. Polhill, *Acts*, New American Commentary 26 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 134.

¹³ Bock, *Acts*, 175. “In ancient times ink did not soak into the paper but remained on the surface, so removing writing was straightforward.”

¹⁴ Ibid. Cf. Acts 3:19–21; 8:14–16, 24; 9:1–2, 11–12, 17, 24–25; 15:15–18; 20:16; 23:15; 25:26–27.

¹⁵ Although there are no similar constructions in the NT, 1 Mac 12:35–36 and 4 Mac 8:12 have similar Greek constructions which seem to indicate a purpose which is linked to the main verb, yet logically dependent upon the preceding purpose. Therefore, here, it is likely the restoration is linked with repentance through the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, 134.

¹⁷ Bock, *Acts*, 176.

¹⁸ Ibid. 4 Ezra 7:75, 91, 95; 11:46; 13:26–29; 2 Bar 73–74; 1 En 45.5; 51.4; 96.3.

¹⁹ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 181; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), 136.

The context makes sense only if the ‘times of refreshing’ are the definitive age of salvation. The expression is undoubtedly apocalyptic in origin, as is the accompanying phrase ‘from the face of the Lord.’ The reference, then, is to the eschatological redemption which is promised to Israel if it repents.²⁰

Additionally, an eschatological understanding matches the Jewish expectation found in 4 Ezra 11:46 which uses similar relief language to describe the Messianic Age.²¹ Further, contextual factors favor the phrase “times of refreshing” (καιροὶ ἀνανύξεως) to match the “the period of restoration” (χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως) in verse 21, which will be shown as readily identifiable as a description of the Messianic Age.

The second part of the purpose clause that began in verse 19 (ὅπως ἂν) continues in verse 20, “and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you” (καὶ ἀποστείλῃ τὸν προκεχειρισμένον ὑμῖν χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν). The καὶ + subjunctive indicates an equal purpose, which is not to be separated in thought from the prior purpose in the latter part of verse 19.²² The sending of the Messiah and the “times of refreshing” are joined by one purpose conjunction, showing their mutual relationship.²³ This provides further evidence for seeing the “times of relief” as connected to the future Messianic Age since the times of refreshment are connected with the coming of the Messiah.

The perfect passive participle “appointed” (τὸν προκεχειρισμένον) functions adjectivally here and emphasizes the status of being God’s choice.²⁴ This word communicates special selection, and is later used of Paul’s special purpose in God’s plan (Acts 22:14; 26:16). The dative “you” (ὑμῖν) is likely a dative of possession and brings out the fact that this was the Jewish Messiah, He belonged to them. Thus, Peter’s argument focuses on the necessity of Jewish repentance so that their Messiah would be sent back. The contingency here is linked with the repentance and forgiveness of sins. Just as repentance leads to the erasing of sins, so repentance will lead to the return of the Messiah.²⁵

Peter continues in verse 21 by using a relative clause to describe the Messiah as the one “whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things” (ὃν δεῖ οὐρανὸν μὲν δεῦξασθαι ἄχρι χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων). Many scholars have observed the conceptual ties found in this phrase with Ps 110:1, “Sit at My right

²⁰ Eduard Schweizer, “ἀνανύξις,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 9:664–65.

²¹ *Ibid.*; Polhill, *Acts*, 134.

²² With Stanley D. Toussaint and Jay A. Quine, “No, Not Yet: The Contingency of God’s Promised Kingdom,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (April–June 2007): 144. When the construction ὅπως + subj + καὶ + subj is used, it appears to indicate one overarching purpose in which the two actions described by the subjunctives are united. Note Matthew 5:16; Luke 16:26; Acts 9:17. Contra Martin M. Culy and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 59. Culy and Parsons see three separate purpose clauses here rather than the last purpose clause being two parts of one overall purpose.

²³ Contra Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 181.

²⁴ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 181.

²⁵ Toussaint and Quine, “No, Not Yet,” 144.

hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”²⁶ This connection is further bolstered by the fact that in Peter’s prior speech, where he previously called for the Jews to repent, he directly quoted Psalm 110 (see Acts 2:34–35). An allusion here in a similar context is not only permissible, but actually helps provide motivation for Jewish repentance. Peter’s allusion to Psalm 110 here seems to demonstrate that he understands the kingdom is not yet present, and is delayed until Christ comes back to rule.

The allusion to Psalm 110, as well as the grammar of this verse, imply that the Messiah will be in heaven “until the period of restoration of all things” (ἄχρι χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων), and then He will return.²⁷ To what does “the period of restoration of all things” refer?

Some have argued for a cosmic restoration which is in process now and comes to an ultimate culmination when Christ returns.²⁸ In this view, the refreshment of verse 19 is spiritual, and the restoration in v. 21 is currently in process, to be fully realized at Christ’s return. A similar idea during the New Testament era was the Stoic belief that a “golden age” would come through the purging of the universe by fire. Subsequent to this cataclysmic event would come the restoration.²⁹ However, among the alternatives, it is far more likely that the meaning for “times of restoration” is found in the context of the Old Testament and Luke’s own writings.³⁰

Although the word here for “restoration” (ἀποκαταστάσεως) does not appear elsewhere in Scripture, the verbal cognate is used in Jer 16:15 in God’s promise to “restore” Israel to the land which was given to their fathers (cf. Jer 23:8; 24:6; Hos 11:11; Sir 48:10).³¹ Further, this verbal cognate appears in an interesting place—Acts 1:6, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” It is noteworthy that this question comes after forty days of being instructed concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). The disciples’ question demonstrates a belief that there remained a future restoration for the people of Israel,³² something that Jesus had apparently not corrected during the forty days of instruction. The question concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel uses the verbal form of the word for restoration in Acts 3:21 (ἀποκαθιστάνεις). In Luke’s writings, the rarity of these words prompts the reader of 3:19–21 to recall the question of 1:6, providing more insight into the answer of when the kingdom will come.³³ Thus, Luke appears to tie 1:6 and 3:21 together through rare word use to help the reader understand that the “times of restoration” are equivalent to a kingdom for Israel.

²⁶ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 181; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1109; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 85.

²⁷ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1109.

²⁸ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 182–83.

²⁹ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1110–11.

³⁰ Göran Lennartsson, *Refreshing & Restoration: Two Eschatological Motifs in Acts 3:19–21* (Lund, SE: Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, 2007), 290.

³¹ Larry R. Helyer, “Luke and the Restoration of Israel,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36, no. 3 (Sept 1993): 328.

³² Polhill, *Acts*, 84.

³³ Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Andreas Köstenberger (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 142.

In view of the cognate usage in 1:6 and the text's claim that the object of restoration is what all the prophets spoke about, the restoration of Israel is the likeliest interpretation. Israel's restoration appears repeatedly in the biblical prophets (Amos 9:14; Ezek 39:25; Acts 1:6), a significant point here given that the restoration of what "the prophets" predicted (Acts 3:21).³⁴

Keener's allusion to the prophets is an important point which necessitates discussion on the second half of verse 21. Peter explains that this restoration was something "about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time" (ὅν ἐλάλησεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων ἀπ' αἰῶνος αὐτοῦ προφητῶν). This phrase is unique to two places: here (3:21) and Luke 1:70.³⁵ Luke 1:70 refers to the expectation of the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel through what was promised to David and Abraham. This will be covered in more detail in the next section, but for now it is sufficient to point out that Peter is claiming that what he says matches with what the prophets foretold. In other words, the Old Testament prophets are the basis for Peter's eschatological understanding in Acts 3:19–21.

To summarize, Peter calls for corporate Jewish repentance so that the people would be forgiven and the Messiah would return and restore the kingdom to Israel. This is supported by the clear grammatical construction of 3:19–21, as well as Peter's allusion to Psalm 110. Peter has likewise stated that his message aligns with what was taught by the Old Testament prophets. This article will now examine some of the prophetic writings upon which Peter based his theology, and examine if the prophetic understanding of the Messianic Kingdom corresponds to what Peter appears to promote here.

The Old Testament Prophets

Acts 3:19–21 is similar to the calls to repentance found in the Old Testament. Peter calls for repentance so that the Lord would come for His people and restore them. This is quite similar to Hos 14:1–7, which calls for Israel to return to their God (v. 1) which will result in God's healing and restoring His people (vv. 4–7). Similarly, Zech 1:3 petitions the people to turn to the Lord so that He would return to them. There seems to be an underlying notion in the prophets that for the Lord to prosper His people, Israel, there must be repentance which results in divine forgiveness (cf. Joel 2:12–13; Mal 3:7; cf. Tob 13:6). Due to space limitations, three passages will be discussed which particularly stress the eschatological repentance of Israel and the coming kingdom.

Deuteronomy 4:30

[30] When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice.

³⁴ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1112.

³⁵ Robert C. Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 1 (1985): 76; Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 60.

Although some commentators do not see this verse as eschatological,³⁶ there is good reason to see the “latter days” (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים) reference as picking up the eschatological theme found earlier in Gen 49:1 and Num 24:14.³⁷ The distress in view here emphasizes the exile which would be caused by Israel’s future disobedience (v. 27). Deuteronomy 31:29 supports that this is what Moses had in mind by saying, “For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands.”

What is most important in Deuteronomy 4, however, is that verse 30 includes an eschatological future for Israel which contains both exile as well as repentance. The word for “return” (שׁוּב) carries the idea of repentance in this context.³⁸ The LXX translates the Hebrew with the verb ἐπιστρέφω, the same verb which Luke records Peter using in Acts 3:19 in calling Israel to repentance.

Although this passage does not allude to a king or kingdom as such (not surprising since Israel did not even have a king at this point), it lays the foundation for an expectation of both exile as well as a national repentance in which the people would return to Yahweh their God.

Not to be overlooked here is the absence of any conditionality. The text is clear that it is not a matter of *if* Israel returns and obeys but *when*. Repentance is obviously a matter of free will, but the biblical witness is unanimous that the impetus to repent is something God himself will plant within his people in order to encourage and enable them to return to him and to the land (cf. Lev 26:40–45; Deut 30:1–10; Jer 31:27–34; Ezek 36:22–31).³⁹

Hosea 3:4–5

[4] For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. [5] Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days.

This section of Hosea speaks of a time that Israel will be without leadership and without sacrificial services. In the list of what will be missing from Israel, only “household idols” (תְּרִפִּים) are inherently evil. Everything else listed can be either good or bad depending on context. It seems proper then to interpret verses 4–5 in light of Gomer’s prohibition earlier in Hosea, meaning that Israel will be held back from both good and bad displays of religious affection (just like Gomer would be

³⁶ Peter C. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 140; J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5 (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 111.

³⁷ With G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 92–102.

³⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 128.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

held back from any physical relationship with a man, even her husband).⁴⁰ This period speaks of a time when Israel will have no temple and thus will be incapable of worshipping God or idols in it.⁴¹

However, after this time of probation, Israel will “return” (שוב) to Yahweh and to David their king. This passage includes the notion of end-time repentance of Israel, as well as adding a return to “David their king.” It would be wrong to assume that this is a general reference to submission to the Davidic monarchy. Rather, David is placed parallel with Yahweh, the object of Israel's trembling. This has the markings of Messianic expectation, the one who will unite Israel (Hos 1:11) and bring peace to Israel's authoritative structure.⁴²

Israel's return to Yahweh will happen in the “last days,” which is the same expression found in Deut 4:30 (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים). It is likely that Hosea is directly alluding to Deut 4:30. The combination of “return” (שוב) and “latter days” (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים) is unique to only these two passages,⁴³ providing a strong intertextual link and a basis for the expectation of an Israelite repentance in the last days which will include a return to their king. This revival of the Davidic king appears to also be mentioned in Amos 9:11–15, where Amos says the Lord will restore the Israelite captives (v. 14) and return them to their land (v. 15). This restoration of the nation is clearly linked with the revivification of the king and kingdom (vv. 11–12).

Zechariah 12–14

The eschatological picture of Zechariah also argues for the expectation of a Jewish national repentance followed by the Messianic Kingdom. Zechariah 9–14 is especially instructive in this regard.

Zechariah 9–14 is commonly referred to the “pair” of burdens.⁴⁴ Zechariah 9–11 deals primarily with the burden concerning the nations, while chapters 12–14 concern primarily Israel. A key component to Zechariah 12–14 is the significance of the Servant-Shepherd figure (12:10; 13:7). This article is primarily interested in the section which includes Israel's repentance (12:10–13:1). This section is ordered in the following sequence:⁴⁵ (1) the piercing of Yahweh's servant, (2) national repentance and mourning, (3) the culmination of national and spiritual restoration.

The text states that God will pour out His Spirit upon David's house and those who dwell in Jerusalem (Zech 12:10). This outpouring of the Spirit will result in the

⁴⁰ Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, New American Commentary 19 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 103.

⁴¹ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 103.

⁴² Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 104.

⁴³ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 103.

⁴⁴ Meredith G. Kline, “The Structure of the Book of Zechariah,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 2 (June 1991): 179; George L. Klein, *Zechariah*, New American Commentary 21B (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 48.

⁴⁵ Klein, *Zechariah*, 362.

people looking to the divine Servant. This description of looking to the pierced Servant portrays Israel turning to the Messiah in faith.⁴⁶ This repentance and turning to the Messiah will be accompanied by extraordinary mourning. Such mourning is referred to by Zechariah as similar to the mourning over the great King Josiah at the valley of Megiddo (2 Chron 35:22–25).⁴⁷ The mourning will be so great, that each family will seclude itself to mourn in isolation (Zech 12:12–14).

This section concludes by stating that there will be a fountain of cleansing opened for David's house and for Jerusalem (Zech 13:1). This will cleanse Israel of both their sin (Israel's deviation from God's commandments), as well as their impurity (Israel's sanctified status before God).⁴⁸ The restoration of Israel through Yahweh's Servant envisioned in 12:10–13:1 is a theme brought out in Isaiah, where the individual Servant is said to be the one who brings back the corporate Servant (Isa 49:5).⁴⁹ Zechariah explains that, God will pour out His Spirit upon Israel, they will turn to their Messiah in repentance, and a fountain of cleansing and atonement will be opened for them, resulting in their cleansing and restoration.⁵⁰

Zechariah 14 marks the climax of this restoration.⁵¹ This chapter draws together the immediate themes found in chapters 9–14 as well as the book at large. Zechariah 14 opens with a picture of turmoil surrounding Jerusalem, a picture which parallels the events found in Zech 12:1–9. After the nations come up against Jerusalem for battle, half of the city will be brought out of the exile amidst a terrible display of brutality which includes the raping of women, and the plundering of Israel's possessions (Zech 14:2). However, Zechariah describes a shift of events in which the Messiah comes down to the Mount of Olives as Israel's champion to save His people.⁵² The Savior's arrival will result in a complete conquering of the peoples as well as a reinstatement of the kingdom. This kingdom, according to Zechariah, will involve the supremacy of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel, and the subjugation of the other nations such as Egypt (vv. 16–20).

Although much more could be said concerning Zechariah's overall message, what concerns this article primarily is the link between the coming kingdom of Zechariah 14 and Israel's repentance. Zechariah 12–13 supports the fact that Israel will initially reject their Messiah (12:10; 13:7–9a). However, God will pour out His Spirit upon Israel in a sovereign act and they will repent with great mourning and turn to Yahweh's Servant and call upon the name of the Lord (12:10–14; 13:9).

The sequence depicted in Zech 13:7–9 shows Israel will suffer greatly, with a majority being cut off and perishing (v. 8). However, after this time they will turn

⁴⁶ Ibid., 365–66; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, "The Little Apocalypse of Zechariah," in *The End Times Controversy: The Second Coming Under Attack*, eds. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2003), 257.

⁴⁷ Fruchtenbaum, "The Little Apocalypse of Zechariah," 258.

⁴⁸ Klein, *Zechariah*, 373–74.

⁴⁹ Robert L. Thomas, "The Mission of Israel and of the Messiah in the Plan of God," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997):212.

⁵⁰ Fruchtenbaum, "The Little Apocalypse of Zechariah," 257.

⁵¹ Ibid., 396.

⁵² Ibid., 402. Klein observes that it is likely Luke is referring to Zech 14:4 in his record of the angelic statement in Acts 1:11.

and repent, and they will be called the Lord's people (v. 9). This sequence matches what is found in Zechariah 14, where Jerusalem is devastated by enemy armies, after which time the Lord comes and saves His people. It is at this time they are declared dedicated to the Lord (vv. 20–21). Zechariah 14 appears to understand 12:10 and 13:9 as the impetus for the fountain of cleansing (13:1) and the return of the Lord to fight for His people and establish the kingdom. Therefore, according to Zechariah, repentance will result in a cleansing of sin and uncleanness that will prepare Israel for the culmination of God's plan in Zechariah 14, God's kingdom.⁵³

Although there are more Old Testament passages which could be examined, these passages are sufficient to demonstrate that, according to the Old Testament, the kingdom of God will follow a national repentance of the nation of Israel. It is very likely that in Peter's reading of the Old Testament, he understood this need for national repentance before the Messiah's kingdom could be established. To further examine this assertion, this article will now inspect the Jewish Second Temple literature and understanding of the relationship between repentance and the Messianic Age.

Jewish Kingdom Expectations

Peter's logic in Acts 3:19–21 relies on the belief that the Messiah's return, along with the coming kingdom, is at least in some way dependent upon the "latter day" repentance of the nation of Israel. By briefly examining the Old Testament one can see that the idea of a Jewish national repentance is essential to the Old Testament's portrayal of eschatological events. Now this article will look at Jewish literature to see if the understanding of end time repentance in this article is in any way similar to the Jewish eschatological understanding.

In *Jubilees*, a second century source composed between 170–140 B.C.,⁵⁴ the author writes the following:

*And after this they will turn to Me from amongst the Gentiles with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength, and I shall gather them from amongst all the Gentiles, and they will seek Me, so that I shall be found of them, when they seek Me with all their heart and with all their soul. And I shall disclose to them abounding peace with righteousness, and I shall remove them the plant of uprightness, with all My heart and with all My soul, and they will be for a blessing and not for a curse, and they will be the head and not the tail. And I shall build My sanctuary in their midst, and I shall dwell with them, and I shall be their God and they will be My people in truth and righteousness. And I shall not forsake them nor fail them; for I am the Lord their God (*Jubilees*, 1:15–18, emphasis added).*

This message parallels Deut 30:1–5 very closely:

⁵³ Toussaint and Quine, "No, Not Yet," 136.

⁵⁴ James C. VanderKam, "Jubilees, Book Of," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:1030.

“So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, and *you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul* according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, *and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you*. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers” (Deut 30:1–5, emphasis added).

VanderKam summarizes the theology of this first chapter of *Jubilees* as follows:

After Israel’s apostasy in the land (vv. 7–12) and subsequent captivity (vv. 13–14) are predicted, the Lord informs Moses that the exiles will repent (v. 15) and that he will shower his favors upon them—including the building of his eternal sanctuary among them (vv. 16–18). Moses intercedes for the people unsuccessfully (vv. 19–21), but God reiterates that only after confession of sin and repentance will a new time dawn—a time when they shall never again turn from the Lord (vv. 22–25). Some future generation, presumably that of the author, must receive this message of God’s faithfulness, Israel’s infidelity, and the power of confession, repentance, and obedience to the covenantal stipulations to open a new day in the covenantal relationship between the Lord and his holy people.⁵⁵

Additionally, later in *Jubilees*, the author appears to indicate a link between repentance and the Messianic Age.⁵⁶

And in those days the children shall begin to study the laws,
 And to seek the commandments,
 And to return to the path of righteousness.
 And the days shall begin to grow many and increase amongst those children of men
 Till their days draw nigh to one thousand years.
 And to a greater number of years than (before) was the number of the days
 (*Jubilees*, 23:26–27).

In the *Testament of Moses*, dated between 4 B.C. and 30 A.D.,⁵⁷ there is reference to an eschatological time of repentance for the Jews: “That His name should be called upon until the day of repentance in the visitation where-with the Lord shall

⁵⁵ VanderKam, “Jubilees, Book Of,” 3:1031.

⁵⁶ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1106-07.

⁵⁷ John F. Priest, “Moses, Testament Of,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:921.

visit them in the consummation of the end of the days” (*Testament of Moses*, 1:18). Commenting on this passage, R. H. Charles states:

Taken in connection with the following words, this phrase refers to the great national repentance that was to precede the establishment of the Messianic or, as here, the theocratic kingdom. This national repentance was a precondition of the coming kingdom . . . So strongly were the Rabbis impressed with the value of this repentance, that in *Pesikta 163b* it is said: “If all Israel together repented for a single day, redemption through the Messiah would follow.”⁵⁸

In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, dating before 200 A.D.,⁵⁹ there is an interpretive expansion of the words given to the twelve sons of Jacob in Genesis 49—a text which has reference to the eschatological “latter days.”⁶⁰ Within this writing, there is a heavy emphasis on eschatological times, involving the rebellion of Israel, their repentance, and ultimate restoration. For example:

I know, my children, that *in the last times your sons will forsake simplicity*, and will cleave unto avarice, and leaving guilelessness will draw near to malice, and forsaking the commandments of the Lord will cleave unto Beliar, and leaving husbandry will follow after their wicked devices, *and shall be dispersed among the Gentiles*, and shall serve their enemies. And do you therefore command these things to your children, that if they sin *they may the more quickly return to the Lord; for He is merciful, and will deliver them even to bring them back into their land* (*Testament of Issachar*, 6:1–4, emphasis added).

I have learnt by the writing of my fathers, that in the last days ye will depart from the Lord, and be divided in Israel, and ye will follow two kings, and will work every abomination, and every idol will ye worship, and your enemies shall lead you captive, and ye shall dwell among the nations with all infirmities and tribulations and anguish of soul. And after these things ye will remember the Lord, and will repent, and He will lead you back; for He is merciful and full of compassion, not imputing evil to the sons of men, because they are flesh, and the spirits of error deceive them in all their doings. And after these things shall the Lord Himself arise to you (*Testament of Zebulon*, 9:4–8).⁶¹

Similar to these two passages, *Testament of Benjamin* states, “But if ye walk in holiness in the presence of the Lord, ye shall dwell in hope again in me, and all Israel

⁵⁸ R.H. Charles, *The Assumption of Moses* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1897), 8.

⁵⁹ Marinus de Jonge, “Patriarchs, Testaments of the Twelve,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:182

⁶⁰ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 92–99.

⁶¹ 9:9 goes on to speak of a return to wickedness by the sons of Zebulon after repenting and being restored. It is unclear upon what basis the author postulates this return to wickedness, though it is said to occur in the “time of consummation.”

shall be gathered unto the Lord” (10:11). Again, the connection between returning to the Lord and being restored is clear.

The evidence of *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* can be summarized as follows: In all testaments except *T. Reuben*, *T. Simeon*, and *T. Joseph* we find passages announcing the future sins of the sons of the patriarch, followed by exile, (repentance) and return. They represent an eschatological variant of the Deuteronomistic view of the history of Israel. It is eminently suited to describe the entire period from the patriarchs to the present time. It also brings out clearly the intrinsic connection between the exhortations and the predictions of the future. The Sin-Exile-Return pattern allows for repetition.⁶²

T. 12 P. are clearly concerned with the final destiny of Israel. The descendants of the sons of Jacob should realize that the savior of the world has come, they should realize “that the Lord will judge Israel first for the unrighteousness done to him, because they did not believe that God appeared in the flesh as deliverer” (*T. Benj.* 10:8). At the same time they may be convinced that, if it lives in holiness and believes in Jesus Christ, “all Israel will be gathered unto the Lord” (*T. Benj.* 10:11).⁶³

This survey of literature around the time of the New Testament demonstrates that the Jewish understanding of the end times included a national repentance that would lead to a kingdom.⁶⁴ This coincides broadly with the Old Testament’s picture of exile, repentance, and restoration.

In light of the common Jewish expectation of end time repentance, concerning Peter’s statements in Acts 3:19–21, Keener aptly concludes, “Because Peter nowhere qualifies the Jewish expectation that this restoration would occur at the end of the age, it seems likely that this is what he has in mind.”⁶⁵

This article has examined the text of Acts 3:19–21 itself along with providing an appropriate Old Testament background. Further, additional Jewish literature has been examined which has shown that eschatological repentance for Israel was the common expectation before the coming Kingdom of Yahweh. What remains for this article is to trace the broad argument of Luke and his purpose for using Acts 3:19–21 the way he does.

⁶² de Jonge, “Patriarchs, Testaments of the Twelve,” 5:185.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ The literature surveyed above is only a small portion of support for a Jewish expectation that aligns with Peter’s message in Acts 3:19–21. For much more detail, see Lennartsson, *Refreshing & Restoration*, 149–258.

⁶⁵ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1112; contra Bock, *Acts*, 176.

Luke's Use of Acts 3:19–21 in Luke-Acts

Many scholars rightfully view the books of Luke and Acts as being a unified work consisting of two volumes referred to as Luke-Acts.⁶⁶ Acts is not to be seen as an afterthought, an attempt to ride the literary acceptance of Luke. Rather, it is a planned continuation of the story begun in Luke.

This is demonstrated by the link between Luke and Acts in Acts 1:1–2. Here Luke writes that his first volume was concerning “about all that Jesus began to do and teach.” This is an unusual way of describing Jesus’ past actions, and is likely indicative of Jesus’ continued work in Acts through His Apostles.⁶⁷ The works of Luke and Acts blend together. Luke emphasizes the person and work of Christ as the Son of David, the hope of Israel. That purpose is carried on in Acts by further emphasizing the expansion of the church to the Gentiles.⁶⁸

In viewing Luke-Acts as a whole, one is immediately struck by the Messianic emphasis at the beginning. Luke 1–2 provides the theological foundation for seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the hope that resides in the Jewish faithful.⁶⁹ The characters of Zechariah (Luke 1:5–23, 57–79), Elizabeth (1:24–25, 41–45), Mary (1:26–38, 46–56), Simeon (2:22–35), and Anna (2:36–38) paint a vivid portrait of the Jewish longings which begin to be fulfilled at the birth of John the Baptist and the Messiah.⁷⁰ This intentional emphasis on Jesus as the hope for the people of Israel is echoed at the very end of Luke’s work in Acts 28:20 where Paul states he is in chains because of the “hope of Israel.” Therefore, Luke provides book ends of sorts with an emphasis on the hope for the people of Israel.

The emphasis upon Jerusalem is also important to note. Interestingly, more than seventy percent of the New Testament’s references to Jerusalem occur in Luke-Acts.⁷¹ The structure of Luke-Acts also puts heavy emphasis on Jerusalem. Luke’s geographical account in Luke 1–19 focuses exclusively on Israel.⁷² The next section in Luke’s account, Luke 19–Acts 8 (14 chapters), is emphatically Jerusalem-oriented. This is the section in Luke’s account which includes the triumphal entry, the arrest and crucifixion of Christ, the resurrection, Pentecost, the initial growth of the church, and the initial persecution. All of these events transpire in Jerusalem, God’s chosen city. Acts 8–28 shifts away from Jerusalem to the nations because of Israel rejecting their Messiah. This is notably demonstrated in chapter 8, which speaks of expansion

⁶⁶ Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 55–61; Stephen Voorwinde, “Luke-Acts: One Story in Two Parts,” *Vox Reformata* 75 (Dec 2010): 4–32.

⁶⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, 79.

⁶⁸ With Lennartsson, *Refreshing & Restoration*, 36–37.

⁶⁹ Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 470.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 471.

⁷¹ Voorwinde, “Luke-Acts: One Story in Two Parts,” 8. (93 of 131 uses).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 9. There is no reference to Egypt (Matt 2:13–15), no reference to the Syrophenician woman (Matt 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30). Even Peter’s confession (Luke 9:20) is not labeled as occurring in Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13; Mark 8:27). Literarily then, Luke avoids mention of Jesus in Gentile territory to emphasize the fact that the ministry is to the Jews first.

to Samaria, chapter 9 to Damascus, chapter 10 to Caesarea, and chapter 11 to Antioch. The expansion continues until eventually the gospel message reaches Rome in Acts 28, the zenith of Gentile power.

The following table summarizes an outline of Luke's literary strategy:

Luke 1–19	Focus on Israel, promoting Christ as the Son of David, the answer to all of Israel's hopes and expectations of the kingdom.
Luke 19–Acts 8	Focus on Jerusalem, the divine location which stages both the rejection of Christ by the Jews and the affirmation of Gentiles in the plan of God.
Acts 8–Acts 28	Focus on Gentiles, the spread of the gospel from its inception in Jerusalem to the center of the Gentile world, Rome.

From this we may safely conclude that the geography of Luke-Acts shows it is one story. The story begins in Israel, moves to Jerusalem as the heart of Israel, and from there it moves into the Gentile world. In the Gospel of Luke the story moves *to* Jerusalem. In Acts the story moves *away from* Jerusalem and on to Rome. The story moves out from Jerusalem in ever widening circles, but it always returns to Jerusalem either to confirm Jerusalem's rejection of the Gospel or to confirm the mission to the Gentiles.⁷³

In light of Luke-Acts' purpose and literary flow, this article now looks at the placement of Peter's speech in Acts 3 within the overall flow of this work. The early portion of Luke plays off the hope of the Old Testament and paints a picture of high and exciting expectation for the city of Jerusalem.⁷⁴ However, as Jesus begins His public ministry, having been identified as the rightful king in the line of David (3:23–38), it comes as a shock that Jesus suffers rejection at the very outset of His ministry (4:16–30). During Jesus' sermon He tells the people of the deliverance of Zarephath and Naaman, two Gentiles, who were the only ones that Elijah and Elisha could bless because of the stubborn wickedness of the people of Israel. The people understand what Jesus is implying and demonstrate by their reaction that they reject Jesus' assessment of their spiritual condition.⁷⁵

Sadly, this rejection is characteristic of the Jews throughout the story in Luke. Luke brings out a strong contrast between the rejection of Jesus by His own people, and the faith of a Gentile living in the land of Israel (Luke 7:9). The people for whom the Messiah has come reject their king, but the Gentiles show openness.⁷⁶

The rejection begins to approach its climax as Jesus sets His face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). In Luke 13:34–35 Jesus raises a compassionate lament over Jeru-

⁷³ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁴ Voorwinde, "Luke-Acts: One Story in Two Parts," 13.

⁷⁵ Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 283.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

salem's rejection of their Messiah. This lament is filled with allusions to Old Testament passages, particularly the reference to Israel's house becoming a desolation. Jeremiah 12:7 and 22:5 both refer to Israel's desolate house. Jeremiah 22 particularly notes that if the people continue in wickedness, they will go into exile. By alluding to this prophecy in Luke 13, Jesus appears to be saying that their abandonment in exile will continue.⁷⁷

Implicit within this note of rejection is also an implied restoration. The desolation of Israel will exist until they proclaim "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 13:35). The nation will be under judgment until they acknowledge Jesus as the one blessed by God.⁷⁸

After arriving in Jerusalem, Luke includes a similar lament over Jerusalem in 19:41–44. This lament is prompted by seeing the city as Jesus approaches it. Because Jerusalem had rejected Him as their king, not knowing it was their time of visitation, destruction would come upon the city in 70 A.D.⁷⁹ This passage may have direct implications for Acts 3, for Jesus states that the Jews were ignorant that their time of visitation was present (Luke 19:44). Interestingly, in Acts 3:17 Peter proclaims repentance and restoration is possible for the Jewish people *because* they acted in ignorance.

In Luke 21:20–24, Jesus for the third time alludes to the coming judgment upon Jerusalem. In prophesying this judgment, Jesus states, "Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (v. 24c). Helyer sees this phrase, which is unique to Luke, as an allusion to Zech 12:3 and Dan 9:26.⁸⁰ This emphasis on a time limit for the judgment of Israel also fits with Dan 8:13–14, which teaches a limitation of the Gentile dominion over the Jews.⁸¹ The reference to "times" (καιροι) in Luke 21:24 draws upon a common theme in Luke's writings which emphasizes special seasons in God's program and also provides a link between important eschatological passages in Luke-Acts which mention the various seasons in God's plan (cf. Luke 21:24; Acts 1:6–7; 3:19–21).⁸²

Additionally, Luke 21:24 helps one understand Luke's previous statement of judgment in Luke 13. Tannehill writes, "Luke 13:35 suggests that the possibility of the Jews finally accepting their messianic king is a reason for this time limit."⁸³ Given

⁷⁷ David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Luke," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 336–37.

⁷⁸ Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 283–84; cf. Vittorio Fusco, "Luke-Acts and the Future of Israel," *Novum Testamentum* 38 (1996): 12.

⁷⁹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 484.

⁸⁰ Helyer, "Luke and the Restoration of Israel," 325.

⁸¹ Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 377; cf. Fusco, "Luke-Acts and the Future of Israel," 15. Fusco rightly notes that, like Romans 11, the times of the Gentiles refers not just to Jerusalem's judgment, but also to a time which is focused on Gentile salvation.

⁸² Bock, *Acts*, 176–77. Luke uses καιροι to refer to the "time of visitation" in Luke 19:44. Also here (21:24) in reference to the time of the Gentiles. In response to the disciples' questions, Jesus tells the disciples it is not for them to know the καιροι (Acts 1:7). Acts 3:20, as discussed above, alludes to this as well.

⁸³ Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts," 85.

the context which emphasizes the judgment upon the city of Jerusalem, by stating the judgment will come to an end, there appears to be an implication of liberation and restoration inherent in the context.⁸⁴ Thus, the time limit for the exile in these passages leaves open a future restoration for Israel.

The climax of rejection by the Jewish people is the crucifixion of their own Messiah. However, even in the midst of this rejection of their king and the travesty that the Jewish nation has committed, Luke keeps open the hope for a coming kingdom (Luke 23:51; 24:21). This hope survives into Acts where the focus of this article has been (cf. Acts 1:6–7; 3:19–21).

Luke-Acts starts out on a high, triumphant note. There is an emphatic declaration that the Messiah is present to bring restoration to Israel and to Jerusalem. Luke then progressively demonstrates through both Luke and Acts that the people have rejected their Messiah. Through Jesus' own words Luke describes the blatant rejection of the Jews in Jerusalem (Luke 13:34–35; 19:41–44; 21:20–24). Therefore, judgment must come. However, within these statements of judgment, Luke's readers find implicit statements of restoration and relief for the Jewish people. When one turns the pages to Acts, Luke refers to the disciples' question in Acts 1:6–7 without any qualifications, *indicating a link between the kingdom of God thought of in Luke and now in Acts*. The question about the status of the kingdom for the Jews is at the fore when the reader comes to Acts 3.

Luke's literary shift from Acts 2–3 to Acts 7 helps one understand the overall flow of his narrative. Acts 2–3 includes significant apostolic speeches which call for Israel to repent. Acts 3:19–21 fits into this category, including a genuine offer of a contingent kingdom based on Israel's repentance. Sadly, the Jews reject this offer as well as the One from whom their salvation would come—their Messiah.

There is a stark contrast when the next major speech is recorded by Luke in Acts 7. Stephen's speech is not focused on an offer of salvation to the Jews but a stringent rebuke for having hard, unrepentant hearts. This transition in Acts 7 to Acts 8 marks a turning point with an emphasis on Israel's rejection of everything that has to do with their Messiah. In fact, from this point on in the narrative, there is special note made of the opposition from the Jewish people in Pisidian Antioch (13:50), Iconium (14:6), Lystra (14:19), Thessalonica (17:5), Corinth (18:6), and Ephesus (19:8–9).⁸⁵ The narratives from Acts 8–28 highlight a progression which carries over from Luke—the nation of Israel rejecting the Messiah as well as the joy of the Gentiles in receiving salvation.

The rejection of the Jews continues into Acts 28 where Paul gives testimony concerning the same kingdom of God that has been present throughout Luke-Acts (28:23).⁸⁶ Being rejected by his fellow Jews, Paul quotes Isa 6:9–10 to indicate that Israel's idolatrous, unrepentant hearts are still stubborn and unresponsive. However,

⁸⁴ Fusco, "Luke-Acts and the Future of Israel," 14.

⁸⁵ Voorwinde, "Luke-Acts: One Story in Two Parts," 16.

⁸⁶ Lennartsson, *Refreshing & Restoration*, 135–36. Lennartsson gives good evidence that, although some might think the quoting of Isaiah 6 indicates a final rejection of Israel, this reasoning would attribute something foreign to the context of Isaiah 6:9, 10.

this rejection of the kingdom by the Jews has made possible the time of salvation to the Gentiles (28:28).⁸⁷

Following the flow of Luke-Acts one is faced with a sad conclusion: “There has been a turn in the plot, a reversal of fortunes. Expectations of happiness for Israel as a people, expressed at the beginning of the story, are not realized, for the plot turns in the opposite direction.”⁸⁸ And further,

We must recognize where the emphasis falls as the story in Acts progresses. We must recognize that, from the story of Stephen on, we find repeated emphasis on Jewish rejection, that this is portrayed in major dramatic scenes designed to make an impression on the reader, and that the final statement of Paul in Acts highlights Jewish blindness and deafness, in contrast to the openness of the Gentiles to God's salvation through Jesus.⁸⁹

Within this broad literary purpose of Luke-Acts, Peter's speech in Acts 3:19–21 is positioned for an important purpose. Acts 3:19–21 is part of the pivotal swing from Jerusalem to the world. Although Acts never gives up hope for Israel's restoration (cf. 28:20), the picture from the beginning of Acts shows why the mission to the Gentiles becomes so prominent. Acts 1–7 provides a reason for the transition to Acts 8–28 and the continuation of the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). By quoting Peter in Acts 3, Luke shows agreement with the Old Testament that Israel's end time repentance would lead to the coming of the kingdom promised.⁹⁰ However, their rejection leads to a prolonged opportunity of salvation to the Gentiles.⁹¹

In Luke-Acts, Acts 3:19–21 functions as the last explicit offer in Luke-Acts of the kingdom to the Jewish people.⁹² After the Jewish rejection of the kingdom and Messiah, the narrative of Luke-Acts switches focus to the nations who are the beneficiaries of the “times of the Gentiles.” According to Luke-Acts, the kingdom waits for a repentant Jewish nation which will bring their Messiah back to reign upon this earth.

Conclusion

A close reading of Acts 3:19–21 points toward a national call to repentance for the nation of Israel, so that they would be forgiven and their Messiah would come and establish the Messianic Kingdom. An understanding of the Messianic Kingdom being contingent on Jewish repentance would have been familiar to those who knew the Old Testament. Peter himself claims this, and it is further evidenced by the Jewish

⁸⁷ This is almost identical to the argument of Paul in Romans 11:11–25.

⁸⁸ Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts,” 78.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹⁰ Keener, *Acts*, 1:688.

⁹¹ In this way, Luke's theology is very similar to Paul. Paul argues that the gospel belongs first to the Jew (Rom 1:16), and that due to the Jewish rejection the Gentiles have received a prolonged time of salvation (Rom 11:11–12).

⁹² Although there are other traces of it throughout Acts, this is the last detailed mention.

literature which existed during that time. Because there was no correction to what would have been the most likely Jewish understanding of that time, it is best to let Peter's words stand as a genuine offer of the kingdom contingent on Israel's repentance.

This article has argued that by viewing Luke-Acts as a two-volume work, one can see Luke's primary purpose for including Acts 3:19–21. This purpose is to help provide a transition from a focus on the Jews to the Gentiles. The Jews and their leaders in Jerusalem reject their Messiah in Luke and their Messiah's work in Acts. This rejection provides the catalyst for the gospel's expansion to Samaria and ultimately to Rome, the zenith of Gentile existence.

What are the implications of Acts 3:19–21 to one's understanding of God's kingdom? Having looked at Acts 3:19–21 exegetically, and having examined the Old Testament and Jewish literature, the apparent implication is that in some sense the timing of God's coming kingdom is contingent upon Israel's repentance. This hope for Israel's repentance is found throughout Luke-Acts and continues on even into the last chapter, Acts 28. It is best to conclude that, like Peter (Acts 3) and Paul (Acts 28), believers continue to await the kingdom which will coincide with a national repentance and restoration of Israel.