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**THE KINGSHIP
OF THE TWELVE
APOSTLES IN
LUKE-ACTS**

David H. Wenkel



The Kingship of the Twelve Apostles in Luke-Acts

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For Paul Martin and Kary Olson

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ABBREVIATIONS LIST

AB	Anchor Bible
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BCE	Before Common Era (= BC)
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago, 2000.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BibSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BTC	Brazos Theological Commentary
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cornerstone Biblical Commentary
CBETH	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CE	Common Era (= AD)
EJL	Early Judaism and its Literature
EKK	Evangelisch Katholischer Kommentar
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>

HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
<i>JMAT</i>	<i>Journal of Ministry and Theology</i>
JPTSup	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i> , Supplement Series
JSJSup	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i> , Supplement Series
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> , Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplements
<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-Exegetische Kommentare
KJV	King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTM	New Testament Monographs
NTT	New Testament Theology series
OBS	Österreichische Biblische Studien
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament
PBC	Performance Biblical Criticism series
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
RNTS	Reading the New Testament Series
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
SNTSMS	Society for the New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPLM	Studia Philonica Monographs
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of Desert of Judah

TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

APOCRYPHA

Sir	<i>Sirach</i>
Tob	<i>Tobit</i>

PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

2 Bar	<i>2 Baruch</i>
As Mos	<i>Assumption of Moses</i>
Pss Sol	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>

QUMRAN DOCUMENTS

1QM	<i>The War Scroll</i>
1QS	<i>The Community Rule</i>
1QSa	<i>The Rule of the Congregation</i>

HELLENISTIC SOURCES

Diodorus, Siculus

<i>Bibl Hist</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Historica</i>
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Epictetus

<i>Diss</i>	<i>Dissertationes</i>
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Josephus

Ant *Antiquities*
War *War*

Philo

Abr *De Abrahamo*
De Praemiis *De Praemiis et Poenis*
Legat *Legatio ad Gaium*

Plato

Resp *Respublica*

Plutarch

Tim *Life of Timoleon*

Sallustius

Deor et mund *Concerning the Gods and the Universe*

Tactius

Hist *Historiae*

TALMUD

b Shabb *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat*



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Abstract This chapter highlights the relatively strong consensus that any promise from Jesus about a kingdom at the end of Luke does not have any connection to the book of Acts. In contrast, this book argues that the “Twelve” in the book of Acts are co-regents with Christ who rule over the restoration of Israel. This argument relies upon inaugurated eschatology—the concept that God’s promises may be considered as fulfilled in the present age while simultaneously leaving open the possibility for future developments. This means that the Twelve have already begun their reigns as kings while acknowledging that Jesus’ promise of kingship over the restoration of Israel has future elements remaining to be fulfilled.

Keywords Christ • Jesus • Israel • Restoration • Twelve

Some aspects of the narrative of Acts are shocking to modern sensibilities. What is particularly scandalous is the narrative of Ananias and Sapphira who fall dead at the feet of Peter for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1–11). There are many events in Acts where a verbal curse plays a role in an act of judgment. This may provoke the reader to ask: how should these events be understood? Curses or imprecatory prayers in the book of Psalms have long been a source of angst for Christian theology, but the imprecatory prayers of the apostles in Acts seem to have escaped the same attention, at

least until very recently. This study seeks to address the prophetic judgment speeches of the apostles in light of Jesus' promise of kingship at the Last Supper in Lk 22:24–30. Specifically, this study focuses on the kingship of Jesus and the Twelve as his kingly successors. In doing so, this study will argue the following thesis: *the Twelve in the book of Acts are kings with Christ who rule over the restoration of Israel.*

This study argues that prophetic judgments such as Peter's curse upon Ananias reflects the Twelve's status as kingly co-regents or "vice-regents" with Christ (Evans 1990, 322). They speak Spirit-empowered judgments over the restoration of Israel within the inaugurated eschatology framework of Luke-Acts. Whatever future fulfillment remains for the Twelve and the restoration of Israel at the end of the age does not preclude the possibility that their role as kings has already begun in some manner. The topic of prophetic judgments intersects with the kingship of the Twelve because they wield the word of the Lord as their spiritual weapon against the satanic forces that oppose the spread of the Gospel. The word of the Lord is the tool or instrument of their kingship. This view of inaugurated kingship is directly contested by some who argue that the Twelve only possess the kingdom rather than perform any activity in it (Nolland 1998B, 1066). This book argues that Jesus conferred kingship upon the Twelve and that the Twelve began performing activities as co-regents with Christ at Pentecost. The prophetic speeches or curses of the Twelve in Acts are direct evidence of their activity on behalf of the inaugurated kingdom and the restoration of Israel.

CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP ON KINGSHIP IN LUKE-ACTS

There are two important questions tied to the topic of kingship and the Twelve in Luke-Acts: *who* are the Twelve and *when* do they become kings? The conclusions of this study stand in contrast to much of the contemporary analysis of Luke-Acts and views on the role of the apostles in relation to Jesus' promise in Lk 22:29–30. When it comes to the connection between Jesus' promise and the restoration of Israel through the Twelve, the discussion of their kingship (or the promise of it) often drops out. *Many commentators view Jesus' promise of thrones as unfulfilled in Acts and totally futuristic in nature.*

The current state of Lukan scholarship often makes broad and unclear connections between Jesus' promise in Lk 22:28–30 and its fulfillment in Acts. The Twelve are widely understood to have a connection to the

twelve tribes of Israel and to have a ruling function related to Lk 22:30 and Matt 19:28 (Keener 2012, 740). There are also Qumran texts (1QS VIII, 1–2; 4Q259 II, 9) that point to the importance of twelve select leaders (Keener 2012, 740). But what exactly is this ruling function?

Some studies simply re-state the biblical text but do not even attempt to describe the nature of the Twelve (Holladay 2016, 72). Is the title of “leaders” really sufficient to explain the role of the Twelve (Peterson 2009, 126). If they are simply leaders, why do they need thrones? Yet it is not clear that the language of “leadership” is explanatory in its historical context. If the Twelve are “patriarchs,” does this lineage include the patriarch David, who was also a king? Some might differentiate between the Twelve’s roles as “apostles” and their “thrones.” In this view, the latter was something they could “look forward to” (Marshall 1980, 68). But this is an example of a futuristic view that fails to explain why it is so important to have the Twelve reconstituted after the death of Judas. Other contemporary scholarship calls the Twelve “the leaders of eschatological Israel” (Bock 2007, 74; similarly Talbert 2005, 72). Craig Keener makes a similar statement and identifies the Twelve in Acts as “representatives for the righteous remnant of the eschatological people of God” (2012, 775). But it is not clear that these descriptions address Luke’s interest in aspects of promise and fulfillment that draw from the eschatological language of ruling over the restoration of Israel.

Some focus exclusively on the identity of the Twelve as “judges” (Hays 2016, 246). Their role as “judges” means that they “perform a supervisory role with reference to new developments in the Messianist mission” (Talbert 2005, 72; similarly Salmeier 2011, 89). There is an element of functioning as judges—no doubt. There is certainly an aspect of their future status that involves judging. But this alone does not explain their need to differentiate themselves from the “kings of the Gentiles” (Lk 22:25) and the assignment of a “kingdom” (Lk 22:29). And it is still not clear why the Twelve need to be twelve in number if there is no fulfillment of *kingship* as found in Lk 22:28–30. Michael E. Fuller concludes that Jesus’ ascension results “in the need for earthly *viceroys* to lead Israel in the final, climactic stages of the eschatological epoch of restoration” (2006, 253). What is surprising is that this language of viceroys remains disconnected from the explicit language of kingship. What previous studies have lacked is nuancing that combines the elements of kingship and judgment.

There are roughly three positions on the role of the statements made by Jesus at the Last Supper in Lk 22:24–30. The first position is oriented toward the present and sees this text as ecclesiological in nature (Roloff 1965, 184–188). Peter K. Nelson’s work on leadership and discipleship in Lk 22:24–30 concludes that “there is at least a rough parallel between an OT pattern of anointing kings and the chain of events in Luke 22:20: divine activity underlies the process and a mediating figure officially imparts kingship” (1994, 36). Yet Nelson rejects the realization of this kingship in the book of Acts. The second position views the conferral of kingship as totally futuristic and eschatological in nature (Lofink 1975, 82). The third position attempts to negotiate the present and future meanings of the conferral of kingship by focusing on the kingdom vis-à-vis Jesus’ relationship of fellowship with his disciples (Nielsen 2000, 105). But this lacks specificity about what it means to possess kingship in the new covenant context.

Many studies of Luke-Acts continue to reject the idea that the apostles are kings in the book of Acts. For example, Craig A. Evans states, “Luke 22:29–30 is not fulfilled in what takes place in the Book of Acts” (1990, 322). Similarly, Robert Tannehill states, “the promise that the apostles will judge the twelve tribes of *Israel* may refer to the eschatological future, for it is not realized in Acts” (1991, 270). More recent studies have also suggested that their thrones are totally futuristic (Fuller 2006, 273). The reason why so many views are future-oriented is that they are looking for “full realization” rather than inaugurated realization (Nelson 1994, 224). The next section will explain how inaugurated eschatology provides explanatory power for this problem.

This book will argue that the presence of prophetic speech or curses in the book of Acts reflects the kingship of the Twelve and their role as judges over the restoration of Israel. Among other things, the prophetic speeches of judgment or imprecations identify the true people of God amidst competing claims and that these altercations reveal how one can participate in the salvific work of God (Wenkel 2008, 81–93). The prophetic judgments of Ananias and Sapphira are particularly strong examples of this. The Apostle Peter’s “inquisition and indictment perform the judicial death sentence and the execution of divine judgment” (McCabe 2013, 36). This conclusion echoes my own: “an imprecatory speech-act should be seen as performative language; it is *doing* something” (Wenkel 2008, 81–93). Most of the scholarly analysis of the judgment speech in Acts 13:1–12 and Acts 8:9–25 is focused on Peter’s interaction with Ananias

and Sapphira. The existing studies of judgment speeches are rather narrow in focus but provide a contemporary and stimulating dialogue partner for a more comprehensive study that encompasses a broader spectrum of textual data across the narrative of Luke-Acts.

What this book contributes to the discussions about Luke-Acts is the thesis that the twelve apostles inaugurated their reign as kings over the restoration of Israel as promised by Jesus at the end of Luke's Gospel. This key point of our argument provides cohesion to some of the disparate studies of Lukan theology. This study seeks to move beyond some of the more atomistic studies and theses that focus narrowly on one pericope or narrative episode.

Those studies that are wide in scope and cover Luke-Acts do not connect the apostles' fulfillment and their status as kings over the restoration of Israel. Luke Timothy Johnson directly connects the book of Acts with the promises of Lk 22:29–30. Luke Timothy Johnson states:

Similarly, at the Last Supper, Jesus tells his disciples, "I confer a kingdom (*basileia*) on you, just as my father has conferred one on me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29–30). In Matthew's parallel passage (Matt 19:28), the declaration necessarily has an eschatological reference: Jesus' followers have their reward in the future kingdom. But Luke has a second volume in which to show how Jesus' statements find realization within the story of the disciples, and in the first part of Acts he does in fact show how the apostles "rule over Israel" among the people restored through the spirit and serve at tables in the name of the risen Lord (Acts 4–6). (2011, 27)

The quotation above reflects all of the vital pieces of our thesis, except for one crucial point: *the Apostles' status as kings*. This quotation by Johnson is very close to the thesis of this present study when it describes the apostles as those who "rule over Israel." But it stops just short of the conclusion that the Twelve inaugurated the promise of kingship. Luke Timothy Johnson does call them "the true authorities within the restored prophetic people," but he does not identify them as drawing their prophetic power from their status as co-regents with Christ (2011, 112). This volume aims to develop and expand upon Johnson's work on the connections between Luke 22 and the book of Acts.