

The Lord's Anointed
Covenantal Kingship in Psalm 2 and Acts 4

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Abstract

This study examines the title “Christ” as applied to Jesus in Acts 4:25-27. “Christ” or “Anointed One” here is directly connected to Psalm 2:1-2, and ultimately derives from the royal anointing ceremony of Israel. That ceremony symbolizes a commitment by God to the monarch which is made most specific in the Davidic covenant. The Gospel of Luke uses the title “Christ” to connect these Davidic themes to Jesus. In Acts 4:25-27, “Christ” continues to signify Israel’s king backed by the Davidic covenant. The apostles’ reading of Psalm 2 provides a foundation for understanding their own recent persecution and for their hope that the opponents of the King they represent—like those in Psalm 2—will not prevail.

The Lord's Anointed: Covenantal Kingship in Psalm 2 and Acts 4

1. Introduction to the Study

The following study seeks to explore the significance of the title “Christ” as it is applied to Jesus in Acts 4:25-27. This passage, which is part of a prayer, directly quotes Psalm 2:1-2. The verses in Psalm 2 mention the Lord’s “Anointed [One]” (2:2).¹ The meaning of this title is crucial in understanding Acts 4:25-27.

After a brief overview of the psalm, the first section of this study will examine the ritual of royal anointing in its ancient Near Eastern and biblical contexts. These contexts, it will be argued, support a “covenantal” understanding of anointing and the title “anointed one.” In the Old Testament, anointing symbolized a divine commitment to the king of Israel, a commitment clarified in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:8-17). The promises from God include a permanent dynasty of Davidic kings, victory over political enemies, and a special relationship between God and the monarch. Once the context of anointing is established, the conclusions will be applied to Psalm 2, where elements of the Davidic covenant appear. The title will therefore be tied to the covenantal kingship associations present in the rite of anointing.

Acting as a bridge to the passage in Acts, the next section of this study will trace the theme of Davidic kingship in the Gospel of Luke. Particularly at the beginning and the end of the narrative, Luke presents Jesus as a fulfillment of the promises to David. As tension builds in the Gospel, Jesus’ status as the nation’s regal deliverer, as *the Christ*, becomes the focus of the conflict. The opposition to Jesus, climaxing in his death, is not fully explained until after his resurrection, when the scriptural necessity for the Christ to

1. The New American Standard (NASB 1995 Update) version will be used throughout.

suffer is openly revealed (Luke 24:26, 46). Throughout the Gospel, the title retains the royal significance it has in Psalm 2.

This study will then turn to Acts 4:25-27. It will first outline the contextual flow around the passage, starting with distant literary context and then handling verses near the actual text. The context shares many of the themes developed in 4:23-31, including opposition to Jesus as Davidic king, among other things. Jesus' followers base their prayer for boldness on the scriptural fulfillment which they understand to have taken place not only in Jesus' suffering but also in the resistance recently demonstrated by the Jewish authorities. The prayer is one small part of many escalating cycles of petition, empowered preaching, and persecution accompanied by the unstoppable growth of the believing community. The citation of Psalm 2:1-2 is an explanation of what the apostles have been facing. It also functions as a "line in the sand," so to speak, as the believers identify themselves with the Christ over and against the Jewish rulers who oppose Jesus and the message concerning him. The answer to their prayer is God's way of continuing their mission to preach about Jesus (4:31).

Based on the relevant context, as well as the use of Psalm 2 in Acts 4:25-27, the final part of the study will explore the theological and hermeneutical implications. Davidic connections not already discussed come into play, although evidence from the Gospel of Luke and Psalm 2 is still important. The title in 4:26 is applied to Jesus with the meaning of "Christ" still indicating the Lord's Anointed, a Davidic king backed by covenant promises. The hermeneutics, or interpretation, of the quoted verses depends on the regal identity of Jesus. Given that he is the Davidic Anointed One, Jews and Gentiles alike can be classified as the adversaries described in Psalm 2:1-2. In what is a

typological use of Scripture, the opposition to Jesus is recognized as part of a repeating pattern which had happened to Davidic monarchs before. Just as the enemies in the psalm united in a rebellion destined to fail, so also the enemies of Jesus plotted in vain, even though they killed him! His resurrection from the dead rendered their hostility futile. In the face of threats from the Sanhedrin, the believers realize acutely their continuity with the mission and fate of the Christ. The threats will be to no avail. The psalm applied to their situation assures them of God's sovereignty and of the covenant made with the King they serve. The message about Jesus will continue to spread as God enables the believing community to carry out their task.

2. Anointed One in Psalm 2:1-2

Introduction

The Second Psalm is an important piece of Israelite literature for it provides a theological view which has dominated the biblical landscape for centuries. Old Testament prophets and New Testament writers alike looked to the promises centered on Zion and David for significant portions of their theology. Emerging from cultural customs of the ancient Near East, yet infused with the distinct flavor of Hebrew religion, the psalm reveals much about the nation's conception of the monarchy and its political place in the world. This section will focus mostly on the practice of anointing as it relates to kingship and Psalm 2. After discussing the relevant background material the discussion will turn to an interpretation of the rite in royal, Davidic contexts. The implications will then be applied to Psalm 2 which mentions Yahweh's "anointed one." An important theological foundation for the entire psalm, the covenantal relationship between God and king, will emerge from the rich significance of the royal title.

Textual Summary

Before engaging with the background material, a brief summary of the psalm along with its setting is in order. Psalm 2 centers around a divinely appointed ruler who is promised worldwide dominion. Certain key phrases such as “My King” (2:6) and “My Son” (2:7), among others, describe the Israelite monarch in relationship to God. In the opening verses, the rhetorical question is why the surrounding Gentile nations,² with their representative kings and rulers, are “in an uproar” or “devising a vain thing” (2:1). This introduces a conflict that is ultimately destined to be futile (2:1-3), directed as it is against “the LORD and against His Anointed” (2:2). Despite the plots of the foreign powers, the Lord “sits in the heavens” and “scoffs at them” (2:4). He has installed his king in Jerusalem (2:6), a claim obviously referring to a Davidic king because of the associations Jerusalem has with the Davidic monarchy (cf. 1 Kgs. 11:32, 36; 2 Chr. 6:6). It is this king who has the assurance of a divine decree concerning his status as “Son” of Yahweh (2:7). As a consequence, the king will obtain the nations as his “inheritance” (2:8); he will have dominion over the rebellious leaders who oppose the nation of Israel (2:9). Because this is true, the closing verses warn the Gentiles to show proper reverence for Yahweh (2:10-11), something which will involve homage to “the Son” (2:12). Those who “take refuge” in Israel’s God will be blessed (2:12).

Textual Setting

The psalm is one of what have been called “royal psalms,” psalms which are concerned with the Davidic monarchy. This line of rulers was centered in the Southern Kingdom of Judah for much of its history. There are many theories about the historical

2. See Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 66, who sees the language as general enough to refer to any and all “nations that do not acknowledge the primacy of Israel’s God, and therefore of Israel’s king.”

setting which lies behind the composition.³ Was the psalm part of a coronation ritual? Was it instead part of an annual festival, a liturgical celebration of the king's previous enthronement? Was it written during the Davidic monarchy, or was it composed some centuries later?⁴ Was it simply a piece of nationalistic propaganda?⁵

Much has been published on various reconstructions of an Israelite enthronement ritual using royal psalms and comparative data from the ancient Near East (ANE), especially literature coming from Ras Shamra. Psalm 2 shows up in much of this literature, placed in the context of a New Year festival where the king is central in a ritual drama of the religious system. Usually the hypothetical scenario runs as follows: The king "leads the fight against the power of chaos, is temporarily defeated, 'dies,' and 'descends into Sheol,' but 'rises' again and brings home the victory, ascends the throne,

3. See Marc Zvi Brettler, *God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor*, JSOTSup 76 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 136-137, who summarizes a few of the major options efficiently; see also Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 64, who sees the coronation of a new king as the probable setting; see also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 31, eds. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 309, who says that, despite the lack of detail, the psalm is about some "historical king of the Davidic dynasty."

4. See S. E. Gillingham, "The Messiah in the Psalms: A Question of Reception History and the Psalter," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, JSOTSup 270, eds. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 212, who sees no reason to assume anything later than a pre-exilic date for composition; see also Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings*, CBOT 8 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1976), 259, who offers the setting as the Solomonic era.

5. See Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 889, who claims, "The Psalter's royal ideal was not due to the *Hofstil* ('court style') of the ancient Near East . . . but Israel's genuine hope applied to reigning kings. The Psalms represented the king visually and *ideally* to the people and were always pregnant with messianic expectations. Some royal psalms contain ideals that surpass historical reality and give birth to the messianic expectation"; see also Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 104, who observes that, despite the amazing claim to worldwide dominion, "[t]he actual extension of the Davidic empire . . . makes a factual point of departure for such expression in the royal psalms. Besides, statements of this kind should be seen in relation to the conception of the king as the vicegerent of YHWH. To God belong the peoples and the ends of the earth; he can delegate his power to whom he wants to."

celebrates his *heiros gamos* ['sacred marriage'], and . . . creates fertility and blessing.'"⁶

This view envisions the festival as enacted in the context of the cult, and attempts to identify it with the autumnal Feast of Tabernacles in the Scriptures.⁷ It therefore demands a figurative interpretation of the Second Psalm, one in which the victory over enemies is accordingly a symbolic reenactment of the conflict between good and evil, order and disorder, between Yahweh (with his people as represented by the anointed king) and all those who oppose his rule.⁸ Positive identification of such a ritual should remain tentative at best, however, if for no other reason than the lack of direct evidence for such an elaborate practice in the Hebrew Scriptures themselves.⁹ Neither the historical annals of Israel nor the royal psalms combined with those works offer enough details to reconstruct with precision anything approaching the ceremonies of Ugarit.

6. Ivan Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, eds. and trans. John T. Willis and Helmer Ringgren (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 182. This is essentially the thesis of Engnell's *Studies in Divine Kingship* (ibid.).

7. Aubrey R. Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," in *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, ed. S. H. Hooke (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 221-222, who summarizes this as the view of Sigmund Mowinckel, who connects the enthronement to the victory of Yahweh over the primeval "chaos of waters," the kings and nations of the earth being associated with the forces of chaos (ibid., 221). God's triumph and kingship being demonstrated, rain and fertility were bestowed (ibid., 221-222). The covenant with the Davidic line was also renewed, the king being a crucial link between the nation and God (ibid., 222); for a modified version of Mowinckel's reconstruction, along with the religious purposes for which such a ritual would have been conducted, see also Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 134-138, 140-144.

8. Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny*, 118.

9. See Brettler, *God is King*, 136, who says, "The notion that this verse reflects an annual anniversary of the coronation . . . is very doubtful since there is no certain evidence among the historiographical texts or in Psalms that such an anniversary was celebrated"; see also Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 308, who says, "In conclusion: it may well be that there was an annual festival in which kingship and dynasty were celebrated. It must be frankly admitted, however, that there is no conclusive evidence to prove this theory. Thus, in the final analysis the question must be left open."

Even if some sort of ritual is depicted, it is more reasonable to view the psalm as related to a current threat which is of some concern to the nation of Israel.¹⁰ Some scholars think the threat occurs just as a new king assumes the throne, an expected time for foreign rebellion.¹¹ Others view the threat as a later event which occurs some time after the king's enthronement.¹² It will be assumed that a historical reality lies behind the psalm, regardless of how soon the threat arose after the king was installed.¹³ Either way, most would not see the psalm as eschatological or forward-looking in any significant sense.¹⁴

10. See J. H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, Studies in Biblical Theology 32 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1976), 112, who notes that this is especially plausible due to the warnings given to the kings.

11. See Gillingham, "The Messiah in the Psalms," 212, who says, "The concern in this psalm is with the immediate future of a newly anointed royal figure: it is a coronation psalm, most probably composed for use by any Davidic king, at a typical time of political unrest such as would have followed the death of the previous monarch." Contra John T. Willis, "A Cry of Defiance—Psalm 2," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 47 (June 1990), 45, who lists other reasons that nations could rebel: "(1) Sometimes kings of vassal nations rebelled for no known reason. . . (2) Sometimes kings of vassal nations rebelled because they were able to persuade several allies to join them against their overlords. . . (3) Sometimes kings of vassal nations rebelled because they had just come on the throne and felt they were able to throw off the yoke of their suzerains, which their predecessors were unable to do."

12. Willis, "A Cry of Defiance, 36, 38; see also Brettler, *God is King*, 136-137, who comments on 2:7 to say, "[t]he word . . . 'today' (v. 7b) inescapably leads to the conclusion that this ritual [in verse 7, at least,] transpired on the day when the king's status changed from commoner to king, namely at the coronation" (ibid., 136). Even so, "[t]he . . . possibility must be seriously considered . . . that a battle long after the accession is being recounted and v. 7 is a verbatim quote . . . by the king of the divine promise of encouragement given long ago" (ibid., 137).

13. See Willis, "A Cry of Defiance," 37, who surveys suggestions for the historical rebellion including the following: "the accession of Aristobulus I (104 BCE) or Alexander Jannaeus (103 BCE) to the throne, the time of the rebellion of the Philistines against Hezekiah when he took the throne in 720 BCE, the monarchical period shortly after the death of Solomon, the late years of Solomon when Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam I rebelled against him (1 Kgs 9.14-40), or the period after David solidified the kingdom of Israel and the Ammonites, Syrians, and other nations rebelled against him (2 Sam. 8; 10)."

14. See Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny*, 227; Gillingham, "The Messiah in the Psalms," 212-213; Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 234-235; and Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 889. The first two authors would argue against an "eschatological" interpretation of Psalm 2. The last two would allow for it, though in different ways.

Cultural Background Material

The royal figure in the psalm is initially called Yahweh's "Anointed" (2:2),¹⁵ a title deriving from the fact that oil was poured on the heads of Israelite kings, thereby "anointing" them.¹⁶ What did this practice signify? Cultural and biblical background material will assist in answering this question.

Surprisingly enough, there is no evidence of royal anointing in Egypt or Mesopotamia, although there is possible evidence that the Egyptians anointed officials at their installation.¹⁷ The practice does happen to be present in a few Hittite records. In a letter to the king of Assyria, for example, Hattusilis III complains that when he had assumed the throne he did not receive the customary presents such as royal clothing and "fragrant oil for the coronation."¹⁸ A New Kingdom Hittite prayer records that a king was anointed as "priest" at certain cities.¹⁹ These records contain little information about the actual process of anointing, but they reveal that the rite was associated in some way

15. See Brettler, *God is King*, 35, who notes that the substantive (noun) form is "not a primary royal term," although 31 out of 39 times it refers to the king. This is the term from which the word "messiah" derives.

16. See Raphael Patai, "Hebrew Installation Rites: A Contribution to the Study of Ancient Near Eastern-African Culture Contact," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 20 (1947): 167, who points out that, at a much later date, "Talmudic tradition [B. Horayoth 12a; B. Kerethoth 5b] . . . tells of the exact way in which [Israelite] kings and priests were anointed. In the case of kings the anointing oil was applied to their heads in the form of a wreath (i.e. around the head), while in the case of priests it was applied in the form of the Greek letter X" (167). The term "Israelite," as used in this paper, will be used in the loose sense of the term, sometimes denoting what technically pertains to the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the divided monarchy.

17. Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 209.

18. O. R. Gurney, "Hittite Kingship," in *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, ed. S. H. Hooke (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 118.

19. Daniel Fleming, "The Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 405. The record is from KUB 36:90 (*ibid.*, 406).

with the beginning of a king's reign.²⁰ While some scholars locate the origin of the Israelite custom in Hittite culture,²¹ the acknowledged role that the Canaanites must have played in influencing the practice makes things problematic. There is only one clear instance to date of royal anointing among the Canaanites, and it comes from the Amarna Letters (EA 51:4-9).²² In a letter to Thutmose III, Addu-nirari recounts that his ancestor Taku was made king and anointed by the Pharaoh.²³ This had the effect of making Taku a vassal under the Egyptian king. Since this is also the only indisputable case of an Egyptian anointing an official, it is difficult to say whether the Egyptians had the same practice with their own officials or whether they just followed the existing policies in other nations.²⁴ The scant evidence concerning Canaanite rulers also prevents any firm conclusions on the extent of the practice there. Essentially, the limited number of examples from Canaan, Egypt, and the Hittite Empire shed only dim light on the issue of royal anointing in ancient Israel.

20. Ilya Yakubovich, "Were Hittite Kings Divinely Anointed?: A Palaic Invocation to the Sun-God and Its Significance for the Hittite Religion," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 129-130. Yakubovich concludes that Hittite royal anointing was likely administered by priests, perhaps even as a divine anointing, although the evidence for the latter conception is admittedly tenuous (129-130).

21. Ernst Kutsch, *Salbung als Rechtsakt im Alten Testament und im alten Orient*, ZAWBeih 87 (Berlin: Alfred Toepelmann, 1963), 56.

22. Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 209. Roland de Vaux, "Le roi d'Israël, vassal de Yahvé," in *Mel. E. Tisserant*, vol. 1 (Studia e Testi vol. 231). Città del Vaticano: 1964, 119-133. De Vaux attempts to use this Amarna letter to show a primarily Egyptian influence on the ritual. It is possible that new evidence confirms other instances of Canaanite royal anointing, but the material available to the researcher of the current article was limited.

23. Stephen E. Thompson, "The Anointing of Officials in Ancient Egypt," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 53, no. 1 (Jan. 1994): 24.

24. *Ibid.*, 24-25. Thompson prefers the latter option. See his discussion of another possible supporting passage from Florence Stele 1774, which he takes to be more probably an example of an official who anoints guests at a banquet (15, 17, 25).

There were other uses of oil in the ANE, however, and one type that is of interest for the subject at hand is the use of oil in association with contractual agreements. The letter to Assyria cited above, as well as a different letter to Egypt (EA 34:42-53), can be understood as mentioning oil as a token of friendship between nations.²⁵ The latter passage occurs in the context of an international treaty, not as confirmation of it but as a token of goodwill which can lead to a more formal agreement.²⁶ Anointing is also found in business contracts involving the sale of fields, perhaps even as a “rite of ratification.”²⁷ Correspondence from Ramses II, the Middle Assyrian Laws, and the Amarna letters, once again, contain references to anointing in combination with marriage rites, arguably in a contractual context.²⁸ For these examples, when the parties were equal in status, both would anoint each other; when the stronger anointed the weaker, the stronger assumed responsibility toward the weaker; and when the weaker sent oil to the stronger, it was a symbol of the vassal’s submission.²⁹ Another use of oil in which the stronger put oil on the weaker, thereby placing obligation upon the *weaker* party, is also attested in the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (cf. Ps. 109:18).³⁰ Most of these cases are either clearly

25. Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 212-213.

26. *Ibid.*, 214-215.

27. *Ibid.*, 216-217.

28. *Ibid.*, 217-221; he cites Ramses II (KUB III 63:15f.; KUB III 24; 59:5-7; and the debatable KUB XXVI 53:4), the Middle Assyrian Laws (MAL § 42-43), and the Amarna letters (EA 11:16-18; 29:22-23; 31:11-16).

29. *Ibid.*, 222. This is not meant to imply that oil is the only means by which people made covenants throughout history.

30. *Ibid.*, 223-224. But see Mario Liverani, “The Medes at Esarhaddon’s Court,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 47 (1995): 57-62, who argues from newer evidence that the ones anointed were not vassals but Median bodyguards taking a loyalty oath upon the coronation of the Assyrian prince (*ibid.*, 60). This does not affect the thrust of the argument above, however, as the contractual context still remains.

related to contracts, sometimes as a symbol of ratification, or can likely be viewed in such a manner.

Biblical Background Material

From biblical material, there is no denying that anointing could function to consecrate various implements and priests serving in the temple (Exod. 30:22-33). The fragrant oil for the procedure is called “holy anointing oil” (Exod. 30:25). It was used when Aaron and his sons were ordained to the priesthood (Exod. 29:7-9); the anointing set them apart and qualified them to serve God (Exod. 40:13-15; Lev. 8:10-12). Based on this usage, as well as other comparative data, it has been suggested that the royal rite was of a similar nature, setting the Israelite king apart for service to God as leader of the nation.³¹ The king is thus “sacred,”³² an idea that becomes especially plausible if the king were closely involved with the temple rites.³³ In this case, the king would be symbolically consecrated for his office, even purified, with the holy oil.³⁴

31. See Fleming, “The Biblical Tradition,” 408, who adds that the New Kingdom Hittite prayer mentioned earlier, in which a king is apparently made priest, may also highlight “the sacred aspect of royal vocation and ritual function” (ibid., 405). Fleming does not wish to confine the function of the rite to consecration alone, however (ibid., 407); see also D. H. Engelhard, “Anoint, Anointing,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:129. But see Yakubovich, “Were Hittite Kings Divinely Anointed?,” 126, who argues that the Hittite prayer is not an example of a *coronation* in combination with becoming a priest but an ordination to the high priesthood. Still, since the king and queen both “had pivotal functions in the Hittite state cult, the anointment for kingship/queenship . . . can be regarded as a special type of anointment for priesthood” (ibid., 130). “The closest parallel to . . . [the Hittite prayer] passage is the Akkadian ritual for the installation of Baal’s high priestess at Emar (Emar 369), which mentions the anointment with oil twice” (ibid., 126-127). No evidence from Egypt or Mesopotamia shows anointing for cultic activity such as described above (ibid., 127).

32. Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” 207; see Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 199, who also says, “It would even be correct to say that this term [i.e., ‘anointed’] denotes the king as very definitely set apart from the rest of the people, since it signifies his status as linked with God and thus inviolable.”

33. Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny*, 104, 223.

34. See Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 207, who views consecration as one aspect; see also Volkert Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*, HbO I 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 192, quoted in Ilya Yakubovich, “Were Hittite Kings Divinely Anointed?” (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 107-137 (125), who mentions

Furthermore, a familiar part of the biblical records dealing with Israelite kingship is the association of the Spirit of God with the practice of anointing. Saul and David provide the best examples of this, although David's anointing is more closely connected with the coming of the Spirit (1 Sam. 16:13). Upon receiving the Spirit, the king receives at the least the power to serve as God's leader.³⁵ Some would argue that the Spirit also transforms the monarch into something more than human, something divine.³⁶ It is best to reserve "divine" for God himself, however, making the description inappropriate since it is unlikely that the Israelite king was actually viewed as God incarnate. It is interesting to note that whenever the term "anointed one" is used of the Israelite king it virtually always occurs in construct form related to "Yahweh," "the God of Jacob," or God by means of a possessive personal pronoun.³⁷ This may highlight the relationship between God and the king, a relationship in which the monarch is apparently a "channel" for the activity of the divine Spirit, as anticipated by anointing.³⁸ While the gift of the Spirit

a badly preserved Hurrian text (CTH 784) which could potentially identify anointing as a purification ritual associated with an inauguration.

35. Engelhard, "Anoint, Anointing," 1:129; see also Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 208, who observes that "it seems likely that the rite in question was also held to be eloquent of the superhuman power with which this sacral individual was henceforth to be activated and by which his behaviour [*sic*] might be governed." Compare David's experience in 1 Sam. 16:13 with Samson's experience of the Spirit's power in Judges 14:6, 19.

36. See Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 888, who says, "By divine anointing and the gift of God's spirit, the king becomes a superhuman divine being filled with superhuman power and wisdom, but in the Old Testament not equated as one with God." One wonders, however, what it means to be "superhuman divine being" yet not God; similarly, see Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny*, 223, who claims that, through the anointing, the king "was made partaker of the Holy Spirit, that is, of the divine life, and thus became divine himself. Similarly, the Babylonian king can be designated as . . . 'anointed,' which is also a priestly title." Again, "divine" seems too ambiguous here.

37. See Brettler, *God is King*, 35, who claims this for pre-exilic literature, at least. One implication of the construction is that humanity is distinct from divinity (i.e., the king is not "divine").

38. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 15.

theoretically made the king sacred as a “potent extension of the divine Personality,”³⁹ it by no means implied that he was anything more than human, though first among equals.⁴⁰

With the consecrating, Spirit-endowing associations that anointing may have, biblical evidence may also give some support for a contractual interpretation of anointing similar to the use in background material discussed above. Jacob anoints a stone pillar during his journeys, for example, an action which occurs in the context of a “vow” he makes to God (Gen.28:18; 31:13; 35:14).⁴¹ Though the term is not specifically used in Jacob’s situation, “covenant” is probably an appropriate term for the contract he makes there. A covenant is clearly in view in Hosea 12:1, where poetic parallelism and other considerations show that “oil” essentially makes the covenant.⁴² Some LXX readings of 1 Kings 5:15 [ET 5:1], while perhaps inferior, also give an example of anointing in the context of a covenant between Hiram and Solomon.⁴³ Corroboration of this general idea may be found in certain other royal psalms such as Psalm 89, which associates divine

39. Ibid., 16. See the reverent attitude David displays toward the king, even after the Spirit has left Saul (1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 23; 2 Sam. 1:14).

40. Ibid., 30, who says, “Although, in theory at least, he may be on such intimate terms with Yahweh and powerfully subject to His influence, he is by nature a man; and, so far as his subjects are concerned, he is no more than *primus inter pares* [i.e., first among equals/peers]”; see also Cooke, “The Israelite King,” 210, who cautions, “These points show that the king who will be Yahweh’s ‘son’ [in 2 Sam. 7] is nevertheless recognized to be a human being, and that he will *become* God’s son by virtue of being of the line of David, bearer of the Davidic covenant.”

41. The function of the rite here is not conclusive. See Allen P. Ross, “Studies in the Life of Jacob Part 1: Jacob’s Vision: The Founding of Bethel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142, no. 567 (Jul.-Sept. 1985): 224-237, who explains, “It was a symbolic ritual act by which Jacob demonstrated his devotion to the Lord and consecrated the spot as holy to Him” (232). Only the first two references (Gen. 28:18; 31:13) clearly indicate an oath in the context.

42. Dennis J. McCarthy, “Hosea XII 2: Covenant by Oil,” *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964): 215-221. See his discussion for reasons against only viewing oil as tribute here.

43. See Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 225-227, who argues that the LXX (BL) may actually preserve the original reading, in which case Hiram’s ambassadors actually anoint Solomon, renewing a parity treaty between the two nations.

anger toward the Davidic “anointed” with an apparent rejection of the “covenant” God made with the king (89:38-39).

Royal Anointing in Israel

All of the preceding can be used to explain the significance of anointing Israelite kings, especially David. Since David is anointed by a prophet acting for God in 1 Samuel 16:13, the rite can be seen as a divine anointing. It functioned to show God’s choice of a king, his election of David.⁴⁴ Based on the ANE background material, the anointing also had a general covenantal connotation, implying that God “pledged himself to the king.”⁴⁵ A covenant is definitely in view when David is anointed by the elders of Israel over the nation as a whole, the king and the people being the parties making a covenant (2 Sam. 5:3).⁴⁶

The divine covenant with David, however, is later clarified in what is known as the “Davidic covenant” found in 2 Samuel 7. In this passage, Yahweh promises to give the king “rest” from political enemies and build a “house” for David (7:11). Essentially, this is a promise of a Davidic dynasty in which David’s descendants will be guaranteed the throne (7:12-13, 16). Of the descendant who will build the temple God

44. Ibid., 207. Compare the language in different texts where anointing seems to be synonymous with divine choosing or appointing (1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 15:1, 17; 2 Sam. 12:7; 1 Kgs. 1:34; 19:15-16; 2 Kgs. 9:3, 6, 12).

45. Ibid., 283.

46. Presumably a similar relationship was formed earlier when the men of Judah anointed him (2 Sam. 2:4), but the text is silent on the issue here. See Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 199, 201, who observes that the people’s (“secular”) anointing of the king could be either a confirmation of the previous divine (“sacral”) anointing or a ratification of a contract which was effected between the monarch and the people, with the people perhaps pledging themselves to the king; see also Bruce C. Birch, “The Development of the Tradition on the Anointing of Saul in 1 Sam. 9:1-10:16,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90, no. 1 (Mar. 1971): 55-68, who agrees with Mettinger in picturing the sacral form of anointing as a later development from the secular ceremony (ibid., 64). This is not a necessary assumption, however.

says, "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me" (7:14).⁴⁷ The covenant is apparently unconditional and permanent (7:15),⁴⁸ ensuring the perpetuation of the Davidic monarchy (7:16). The divine anointing in 1 Samuel 16, then, could possibly be an anticipatory ratification of what is revealed later in 2 Samuel 7. Since the stronger party (God) is anointing the weaker party (David), the royal anointing would be a "promissory" covenant in which Yahweh assumes obligations toward the king.⁴⁹

Royal Anointing in Psalm 2

Finally, it is time to address Psalm 2 again. Because the psalm shares elements of the Davidic covenant it is easy to see that the work addresses concerns of the Davidic monarchy.⁵⁰ The political unrest which is stirring in the first three verses is in tension

47. See Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 260, who states, "Although David himself is not denoted 'son', it would certainly be wrong to infer that David was imagined . . . to enjoy a lesser degree of sacral status than his descendants. Thus in Ps 89,27 f. David is denoted as the first-born"; See also F. C. Fensham, "The Covenant as Giving Expression to the Relationship Between Old and New Testament," *Tyndale Bulletin* 22 (1971), 93, who notes the following: "It is clear from a comparison of treaty-material from Mari, el-Amarna and the Old Testament that father-son was used as a treaty-concept. . . . With all the parallel material from the ancient Near East at our disposal it becomes clear that a covenant-relationship is expressed here [in 2 Samuel 7]."

48. See Dennis J. McCarthy, "Compact and Kingship: Stimuli for Hebrew Covenant Thinking," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays: Papers Read at the International Symposium, Tokyo, Japan, 1979*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 91, who notes that 2 Sam. 23:5 makes a clear connection between the promises given to David earlier in his life and the concept of a "covenant" (91). See also 2 Chron. 13:5.

49. See Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 222, who also believes there may be other implications in David's anointing, such as vassalage to Yahweh, but would attribute this to a later, Solomonic development in royal ideology (*ibid.*, 229).

50. See Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT* 35 (1986), 88, who agrees that the psalm "employs sonship terminology reminiscent of the Davidic covenant." Contra Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 258, who strangely claims it is "quite impossible to demonstrate any form of interrelationship between the Solomonic prophecy of Nathan and [Psalm 2]." He thinks that the conception of "divine sonship," important in Solomon's day, was gradually replaced by an emphasis on the dynastic promises to David (*ibid.*, 259). This requires dating portions of 2 Samuel 7 to later than Psalm 2 (*ibid.*); see also J. J. M. Roberts, "The Enthronement of Yhwh and David: The Abiding Theological Significance of the Kingship Language of the Psalms," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (Oct. 2002): 682, who observes, "The tradition that Yahweh chose David and his dynasty and confirmed that choice with an eternal covenant clearly functioned to give religious support to the Davidic monarchy. In a similar way, the royal theology's claim that the divinely anointed Davidic king was the son of Yahweh

with the “rest” promised to the Davidic line (2 Sam. 7:11). The nations are conspiring together, but their plan is useless (2:1-2) as the divine scoffing and anger demonstrate (2:4-5). The prominence of Jerusalem stands out as the place of God’s reign through his earthly king (2:6). Verse seven especially rings of 2 Samuel 7 when it recalls a divine “decree” of the king’s adoption, his status as “son” of God.⁵¹ There is even some evidence that term “decree” can have a connection to the idea of “covenant” (cf. Ps. 105:10).⁵² The heart of the psalm is indeed the ideology of the Davidic covenant, a covenant which fleshes out what it means to be the Lord’s “Anointed” in verse two. Yes, it is against the holy leader of Israel that the nations are rebelling. Yes, it is against the monarch empowered by the Spirit of God that they are plotting. More than that, though, the other kings are raging against the king who has felt the anointing oil on his head; they are raging against one who is in a covenant relationship with Yahweh, the God of Israel. It is precisely because of Yahweh’s identity and his relationship with the king of Israel that the hostile plans of foreign powers are futile. God is utterly in control, and his divine prerogative to delegate power has been manifested in his covenant with the Davidic line (2:2, 6-7). His “Anointed” has divine protection through a promise too solid to fail. His “Anointed” is heir of the very land on which the Gentiles gather together (2:8), territory

(Pss 2:2-8; 89:27; 110:3) was intended to discourage opposition to the throne, whether on the part of foreign vassals or of restive elements within the Davidic state itself.”

51. See Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 265, who observes that, while royal sonship in Egyptian thought was the physical descent of the king from the god, the Israelite view of royal sonship did not have this mythological flavor. From Semitic practices found in the Amarna letters, the term “son” may also have been used “to denote the legal status of a vassal under a great king [in this case Yahweh]” (ibid., 286); for two major views on the biblical meaning of “son of God” language for the king, see James Watts, “Psalm 2 in the Context of Biblical Theology,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 12, no. 1 (June 1990): 76-78.

52. See Gerhard von Rad, “Das jüdische Königsritual,” *ThLZ* 72 (1947): 214-215, quoted in Gerald Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” *ZAW* 73 (1961), 202-225 (214), who says, “It is significant that . . . ברית [‘covenant’] and חק [‘decree’] appear in parallelism in Ps 105:10. The fact . . . suggests that in Ps 2:7b we have the content of the חק that is communicated in verse 7a: the essential content of what is for Ps 2 the equivalent of the Davidic covenant (ברית) is divine sonship.”

he will rule firmly (2:9). The king is established as the vice-regent of the Lord, and as such the rulers of the earth are admonished to submit to the king and show appropriate respect for the God who is related to the monarch in such a special way (2:10-12). The only safe and “blessed” course of action for them is to find shelter in Yahweh, to be rightly related to the anointed one and the nation he represents (2:12). The Davidic monarch who knew the theological principles in this psalm, no matter how dark the circumstances may have seemed, is a monarch who could go to sleep with peace of mind. He is a king who could trust in the God who acts like a father toward him. This God has anointed a ruler over Israel, even over the world, and all the plans of the nations to overthrow that covenantal choice will ultimately be in vain. Israel has God’s word on that.

Conclusion

Overall, this royal psalm is full of rich implications informed by the connotations of anointing. Not only do cultural practices in the ancient Near East help to illuminate the topic, but the Scriptures themselves provide a context in which to understand the royal rite. This sort of anointing symbolizes consecration for divine service as well as the gift of the Spirit to enable the king. Notably, it also serves as the confirmation of a covenant. When God performs the rite through priests or prophets, it implies a divine commitment toward the king. In the case of David and his successors specifically, it entails a unique relationship which will not be broken. Part of the Davidic covenant shows up in Psalm 2, forming the basis for the victory promised to Yahweh’s “Anointed.” The relationship ratified by anointing, the covenant between Yahweh and the king, guarantees the preservation and the preeminence of Israel. The tension between

the promise and the reality of the political scene, though, is a tension which later formed the basis for eschatological, messianic expectations.⁵³ It is these expectations that prepared the nation for another king centuries later, a king who would also be called the “Anointed One” or “Messiah.”

3. Kingship and Covenant in the Gospel of Luke

Introduction

Although it is by no means the only theme in his Gospel, Luke draws upon the Davidic promises of kingship which make their presence felt in Psalm 2. He often alludes to the Davidic covenant, connecting royal hopes in the Old Testament to the appearance of a messianic fulfillment. That fulfillment is announced from the beginning of the narrative, and shapes the way the reader views Jesus later in the work. Anointing is an important element for the identity of Jesus, though the occasion of the ritual is not explicitly identified until the book of Acts. Jesus as Davidic king of the nation is the point of controversy, and thus central to the opposition he faces. The following survey of Luke will demonstrate that Davidic kingship expectations based on divine covenant are central in the Gospel, informing a proper understanding of the prayer found in Acts 4.

Narrative Foundations

In the first chapter of Luke, the birth of Jesus is predicted in terms which are unmistakably regal. The angelic announcement to Mary is that her son “will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end”

53. See Cooke, “The Israelite King,” 206, who states, “The later fully eschatological messianism was therefore not a fundamental departure from the original meaning of these Psalms, but only a further development and heightening of one element of their meaning as a result of the interplay of Yahwistic covenant faith and historical circumstances.”

(Luke 1:32-33). While no specific text is quoted here, the language is reminiscent of the Old Testament,⁵⁴ and significant elements from the Davidic promises as given in 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89 appear: Kingship to a descendant of David, a father-son relationship between God and the king, and a reign and kingdom which will last forever.⁵⁵ The promises for Israel are coming to fruition: “David was promised an everlasting dynastic line. Jesus is an everlasting king.”⁵⁶ As the story will show, Jesus is “Son of God” in function, just as David was. Here, however, he will be called the “Son of God” due to the involvement of the Holy Spirit in his conception. This implies that, though his sonship is *at least* functional, it is more than functional.⁵⁷ It is significant that, in order to introduce the central figure of the narrative, Luke alludes to the Davidic covenant in what is also “*the first explicitly christological statement*” of Luke-Acts.⁵⁸ It is the first clearly messianic claim for the identity of Jesus, but it is not the only one. A few months later, Zacharias gives a prophecy in which he praises God for raising up a “horn of salvation for us / In the house of David His servant” (1:69). Because his own

54. See F. F. Bruce, “The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts,” in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford Lasor*, ed. Gary A Tuttle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 8-9, who notes that, “Son of the Most High . . . throne of his father David” from the infancy narratives has echoes of Isaiah 9:7.

55. Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology*, JSNTSup 110, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 88; see also Robert F. O’Toole, “Acts 2:30 and the Davidic Covenant of Pentecost,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102, no. 2 (1983): 252, who agrees that the Davidic covenant is in mind here. “Son” also reminds us of Psalm 2, where the decree of regal sonship is given. Finally, compare 2 Sam. 7:9 to Luke 1:32 for similar language of “greatness.”

56. Darrell L. Bock, “The Use of the Old Testament in Luke-Acts: Christology and Mission,” *SBL 1990 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990): 496.

57. See Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 93, who states, “While the Jewish conception considered the Davidic king to be Son of God by virtue of his *role* as God’s representative, Luke grounds this sonship not in Jesus’ role but in his *origin*. Luke seems to be consciously opposing the view that Jesus’ divine sonship is merely ‘functional’—a special relationship with God by virtue of his role as king.”

58. *Ibid.*, 87; see also *ibid.*, 89.

son, John the Baptist, is only the “prophet” of the coming deliverance (1:76), the “horn of salvation” is probably a reference to Jesus. This is especially plausible given the fact that the horn arises from within the Davidic “house,” a dynastic image which recalls the Davidic covenant again (2 Sam. 7:11, 13).⁵⁹ The liturgical use of the title “servant” for David in the context of the covenant is worth noting, as it will occur once more in Acts 4.⁶⁰ The horn is to deliver Israel from its enemies (1:71, 74), a task in which forgiveness of sins plays a role (1:77). Promise-fulfillment is a prominent theme in the prophecy (1:70, 72-73).⁶¹

The second chapter of Luke continues the Davidic emphasis. Bethlehem is identified as the “city of David” (2:4, 11) despite the fact that Jerusalem usually receives that designation (cf. 2 Sam. 5:7; 2 Kgs. 9:28). The role of Jesus as “Savior” is introduced overtly here (2:11).⁶² In the first use of the royal title, the shepherds hear that the Savior is “Christ the Lord” (2:11). “Christ” (χριστός) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word “Messiah” (משיח) or “anointed one.” While it is true that “Messiah” was not a title

59. See Bock, “Use of the Old Testament,” 497, who says, “The association of the horn with the dynastic house is also common (1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 132:17; Eze. 29:21)”; see also Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 100, who agrees, adding that “the expression [‘raised up a horn of salvation’] has striking parallels in *Shemoneh Esreh* 15 and in Sir. 15.12 vii. From a narrative perspective, Luke’s reference is clearly meant to reflect contemporary Jewish expectation for the coming king.” Note that both Psalm 132:17 [131:17 LXX] and Ezekiel 29:21 use the same Greek word for “horn” in the Septuagint as is found in Luke 1:69, possibly referring to a “crown” or the ruler represented by it.

60. See Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*, JSNTSup 12, ed. David Hill (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 207, who notes how “servant” is used of both David and Israel in the passage, and that “the term παῖς [‘servant’] is closely related to God’s [Abrahamic] covenant with his nation and the promise of a successor to David.” “Liturgical” usage is here defined as vocabulary employed when praising God. David was called “servant” in numerous Old Testament contexts as well. See, for example, 1 Kgs. 8:24-26, 66; Pss. 89:3, 20, 39; 132:10.

61. For the messianic significance of “the Sunrise from on high” (Luke 1:78), which may allude to Num. 24:17; Isa. 9:1-7; Isa. 42:1; and 49:6, see Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 103-108.

62. O’Toole, “Acts 2:30,” 252, who sees the references to Jesus as “Savior” (2:11, 30) as proof that he is indeed the “horn of salvation” mentioned earlier.

for one exclusive person before the Exile,⁶³ later expectations of a coming king in Jewish writings often called this royal figure “the Messiah.”⁶⁴ In the first century this title implied more than royal identity but arguably nothing less than royal identity. In the next usage several verses later, the title appears again as “the Lord’s Christ” (2:26), reflecting a common way to indicate Israel’s king in the Old Testament, including Psalm 2. By stressing from the start the title’s Jewish roots, Luke prepares the reader to see the “Christ” in that light for the rest of the Gospel.⁶⁵ From the infancy narrative, the primary picture of Jesus is “that of a regal deliverer, Messiah,” someone in whom “the hope of covenant is realized.”⁶⁶

Narrative Developments

Chapters three and four also reinforce the picture. In the context of messianic expectation by the populace, Jesus is baptized by John (3:15, 21). At this point, the Holy Spirit comes on Jesus, and words of divine approval follow: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased” (3:22). The reference to a “Son” is most likely an allusion to

63. Donald L. Jones, “The Title *Christos* in Luke-Acts,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970): 74.

64. See Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 55, who claims, “While it is correct to say that ‘the messiah’ was not a universally recognized and *precisely* defined symbol, the evidence of the *Psalms of Solomon*, the Qumran scrolls, early Christian statements, the first-century apocalypses, and tannaitic rabbinism [*sic*], all suggest that Jews of the first century were beginning to use the term in the absolute with reference to a coming deliverer, and that in general (though there are exceptions) this deliverer was viewed as a Davidic figure.”

65. *Ibid.*, 114-115. Strauss observes that “[Luke] thus avoids the tendency, well established by his time (cf. Mk 1.1), to use it as a second name for Jesus (a use which naturally moves away from the title’s Jewish origins). It is only in Acts that Luke adopts this nominal use, though even here he frequently retains the titular sense. In this way Luke places the title at the very heart of his promise-fulfillment scheme” (*ibid.*). Strauss suggests the following texts in Acts as likely retaining the usage as a title: “2:31, 36; 3:18, 20 [?]; 4:26; 5:42; 8:5; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5, 28; 26:23” (*ibid.*, 115). These passages are possible candidates for further work based on this study.

66. Bock, “Use of the Old Testament,” 498.

Psalm 2:7, a verse discussed briefly above.⁶⁷ The genealogy in Luke 3 shows the Davidic descent of Jesus. His temptations in the next chapter center around his messianic identity as the “Son of God” as well (4:3, 9),⁶⁸ although here the functional nature of that sonship may be in the forefront. Beginning his ministry in Nazareth, Jesus reads from Isaiah and declares that the anointing associated with the Spirit of God in Isaiah 61:1 has been fulfilled, the implication being that it has been fulfilled in his own person (4:16-21).

When was Jesus anointed, though? The textual association of the rite with the Spirit of God indicates that it was at his baptism he was anointed (3:22), not with oil but with the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ Acts 10:38 confirms this understanding. After his anointing, Jesus was thereafter filled with the Holy Spirit (4:1, 14). Note the similarity to David’s experience in 1 Samuel 16:13, where the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him from the day of his anointing onward. The anointing in Luke 4 is certainly prophetic,⁷⁰ but if the baptismal and temptation scenes are allowed as contextual influence, the anointing is also regal.⁷¹

67. Ibid., 499, who sees an allusion in the latter part to Isaiah 42:1 so that “regal, national, and covenant images are all combined” in the declaration. “At the baptism, the emphasis was on a Messianic-Servant role, a special covenant relationship to God” (ibid.). That Jesus is aware of a special relationship with God is shown by the account of his childhood in 2:49.

68. See W. J. C. Weren, “Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts: An Intertextual Study,” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings. Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*, ed. D. Dreisma (Kampen: Kok, 1989), 200, who notes that the devil’s words twist the promised dominion over the world addressed in Psalm 2:8-9.

69. See G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 295, trans. D. M. Kay, quoted in Jones, “The Title *Christos* in Luke-Acts,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970), 69-76 (75, n. 33), who says, “The character acquired through this unction [or anointing with oil] . . . is so prominently present in the thought of a Hebrew, that he can use the expression even where no actual unction had taken place.”

70. Walt Russell, “The Anointing with the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts,” *Trinity Journal* 7, no. 1 (March 1986), 48, 52-53, who does not deny other secondary significances; see also Claude Peifer, “Jesus, the Anointed of Israel,” *Worship* 32, no. 1 (Dec. 1961): 33-34.

71. Bock, “Use of the Old Testament,” 499; see also Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 341, who adds in regard to the quotation in Luke 4, “Indeed, there is remarkable thematic and verbal correspondence between the prophet-herald of Isaiah 61, the servant of the Isaianic servant songs and the coming Davidic

Luke clarifies what it means to be the Son of God in 4:41,⁷² where he uniquely explains that the demons were calling Jesus by that title “because they knew Him to be the Christ.” The messianic connection is thus explicit.

After describing the inauguration of his ministry in Luke 4, Luke portrays Jesus as the Messiah through his actions and words, a section which climaxes in the private confession of Peter that he is the “Christ of God” (9:20).⁷³ From that point on, the journey to Jerusalem and Passion Week essentially begins (9:22, 51). A reiteration of Jesus’ divine sonship occurs at the Transfiguration (9:35), but space does not permit a treatment here of the messianic vocabulary.⁷⁴ As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, his royal identity comes out again. Giving a final prediction of his suffering which was misunderstood (18:32-34), Jesus specifically mentions that the journey to Jerusalem will accomplish “all things which are written through the prophets” concerning himself (18:31). On the way to the city, Jesus approaches Jericho and is acclaimed “Son of David” by a blind beggar, reminding the reader of Jesus’ royal identity (18:38-39).⁷⁵ In his parable of the minas (19:11-27), Jesus corrects faulty views about the kingdom of

king of Isaiah 9 and 11. The coming king, like the servant and/or the herald, is God’s anointed envoy, endowed with the Spirit of God to establish judgment and righteousness.” “If Luke interpreted Isaiah 61 specifically in terms of jubilar release (which is uncertain), this might also carry royal connotations” (ibid., 231); see Strauss 202-208 for more reasons to take Jesus’ baptismal anointing by the Spirit as royal in nature.

72. Bock, “Use of the Old Testament,” 496.

73. Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 259.

74. See ibid., 263-272 for a discussion.

75. Ibid., 307, who states, “The blind man’s cry thus reminds the reader just who is approaching Jerusalem. This is the Davidic messiah, the one promised an eternal reign on the throne of his father David (Lk. 1.32-33).”

God, which was not immediately to be an earthly kingdom.⁷⁶ Finally, his approach includes an enactment of Zechariah 9:9, in which his royal beast is a donkey and his disciples—not the city as a whole—proclaim him as king using language from Psalm 118 (Luke 19:28-38). Thus, both the fulfillment of prophecy and the messianic identity of Jesus are prominent.

Narrative Conclusions

As if that were not enough, the final chapters of the Gospel contain the same themes more densely still. Jesus himself raises the question of the Messiah's Davidic descent as it interacts with other truths about that figure in Psalm 110 (Luke 20:41-44). The topic of the kingdom of God is a concern in Jesus' final words, including at the Last Supper (21:31; 22:16, 18, 29-30). In his trial and death, however, his messianic identity becomes the unquestioned focal point. The Israelite Council interrogates Jesus, asking him if he is "the Christ" (22:67), and while Jesus does not answer directly, he affirms his messianic authority using a combination of images from the Scriptures (22:67-69).⁷⁷ The members of the Sanhedrin, not to be deflected, "take up his royal enthronement language from Psalm 110 and link it to Psalm 2," inquiring if Jesus is "consequently . . . claiming the intimacy of divine sonship expressed in Ps. 2.7."⁷⁸ In other words, is he the "Son of God" (22:70)? When Jesus apparently responds with affirmation (22:70), the elders have

76. See *ibid.*, 309, who says, "Luke counters that from the beginning Jesus taught that he would assume his kingly authority in heaven, from whence he would return to reign on earth and to judge those who rejected him"; see also Peifer, "Jesus," 31, who adds, "In view of the foregoing [caution at claiming kingship in the politically heated environment of Jerusalem], it is not difficult to see why Jesus underwent no ceremony during the period of His public ministry which could have been interpreted as a royal anointing."

77. Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 320.

78. *Ibid.*, 321; see Willard M. Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels: Story Shaping Story* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 234, who notes, "Based upon the logical progression in 22:67-71, Luke clearly regards the title 'Son of God' as part of the royal messianic tradition."

their charge against him to give the Romans (22:71; 23:1). Jesus' claims amount to "saying that He Himself is Christ, a King" (23:2). Notice how the title is inseparable from royal status here, something the Council undoubtedly wanted to pit against Caesar's kingship. There is political tension in the air, and thus Luke's passion account has been rightly called "the clash of kings."⁷⁹ On the cross, the opponents of Jesus taunt him to save himself if he is "the Christ of God" (23:35),⁸⁰ "the King of the Jews" (23:37-38). Even one of the criminals hanging nearby uses Jesus' reputation as "the Christ" to make a mocking, desperate appeal for help (23:39). In what looks like an end to the messianic hopes, Jesus dies. After rising from the dead, however, he reaffirms the scriptural necessity that "the Christ" had to suffer before entering "His glory" (24:26). The explanation constitutes the first time in Luke-Acts that the text directly links the royal title with suffering, a trend which will soon continue in Acts.⁸¹ Interestingly, things in every major division of the Scriptures, including the Psalms,⁸² relate to Jesus, including his messianic suffering (24:44-46). Other pictures from the Old Testament are used to describe Jesus, of course, but considering the theme of the Davidic Messiah just traced, it

79. Frederick W. Danker, *Luke*, 2d ed., Proclamation Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 13, quoted in Willard M. Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 235.

80. See Swartley, *Israel's Scripture*, 246, who thinks the use of "Christ" and "Chosen One" in the verse may be a "blending Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42:1.

81. Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 342.

82. See James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 214, who observes that "Psalms" may be a term for the third major division of the Hebrew Scriptures; see also J. T. Sanders, "The Prophetic Use of the Scriptures in Luke-Acts," in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee*, eds. C. A. Evans and W. F. Stinespring (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 191, who observes, "Luke thinks of all the Scripture as something to be fulfilled—that is, as prophetic."

is perhaps not surprising that the final summary of his work has the Old Testament pointing to him as “the Christ” (24:46).⁸³

Conclusion

Spread throughout his Gospel, Luke emphasizes the hope of Davidic kingship as realized in Jesus. This royal expectation is rooted in the Jewish Scriptures, and is especially prominent at the beginning and end of the work. Davidic kingship depends on Davidic covenant in the narrative, and the title “Christ” reflects this understanding. Elements from Psalm 2 make an appearance here as well, either through sonship or messianic vocabulary.

4. Anointed One in Acts 4:25-27

Far Context of Acts 4:25-27

In the midst of kingdom concerns (1:3, 6),⁸⁴ the book of Acts picks up where Luke’s Gospel leaves off. Jesus ascends into heaven (1:9-11), but not before reminding his disciples of their commission and the necessary empowerment which must precede their proclamation (1:4-5, 8). Prayer appears in the narrative of Acts for the first time, and it will be prevalent, as in the Gospel (1:14, 24).⁸⁵ Scriptural fulfillment shows up as the replacement for Judas is discussed, the situation being prophetically foretold by David as inspired by the Holy Spirit (1:16). A combination of Psalm material is quoted in reference to this (1:20). Once the twelfth apostle is chosen (1:24-26), the leadership of

83. Bock, “Use of the Old Testament,” 502.

84. Robert C. Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, no. 1 (1985): 76, who notes the following: “The restoration of a kingdom to Israel relates to the Davidic messianism of the birth stories, where the language of kingship is clearly used (Luke 1:32-33) and where this messianism is connected with the ‘redemption’ of Israel (1:68-69).”

85. P. T. O’Brien, “Prayer in Luke-Acts,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 24 (1973): 111-127.

the new community is complete. All that is left to do is to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes in the next chapter (2:1-4), and the disciples receive the ability to testify to God's deeds in other languages (2:4-11). This miraculous feat is interpreted by an appeal to Joel 2 in Peter's sermon to the crowds (2:16-21).⁸⁶ Peter speaks about Jesus' miraculous deeds, his "wonders and signs" (2:22); interestingly, it is the apostles who are performing "wonders and signs" at the end of the chapter (2:43). Preaching about the resurrection of Jesus (2:22-24), Peter cites more Scriptures to identify him as the Christ (2:25-36). David is once again pictured as a prophet (2:30-31, 34). The speech primarily aims to show Jesus' messianic identity, something which still has Davidic, covenantal significance. Prayer features positively in the summary of the outcome (2:42), which describes the new community as growing and united (2:41-47).

Out of that successful episode, chapter three relates what is apparently one of the "wonders and signs" the apostles performed (cf. 4:16, 30). Peter and John heal a lame man near the Temple (3:1-10). This miracle provides the occasion for another sermon when a crowd forms (3:11). The sermon addresses the death and resurrection of Jesus (3:13-15), the power behind the healing (3:16), the fulfillment of prophecy in the suffering of God's "Christ" (3:18), and the need for the Jewish audience to repent (3:19-24, 26). Quotations from Moses and the Abrahamic covenant support the appeal (3:22, 25).⁸⁷ Jesus is called "servant" here for the first time in the narrative (3:13, 26), although

86. See Russell, "The Anointing," 57-58, who conceives of this event as an "anointing" for the prophetic task which continues the Messiah's ministry.

87. See Bock, "Use of the Old Testament," 505, who says that, although the appeal to Deuteronomy 18 in Acts 3:22 is certainly a prophetic presentation of Jesus, the "comparison to Moses is not absent of regal overtones, since Jesus is a revelator and an authority bearing leader around whom a new community is present."

the exact association this is meant to invoke is less certain.⁸⁸ Messianic identity for Jesus is a central issue here either way (3:20).

The preaching prompts the leaders of the nation to arrest Peter and John temporarily (4:1-3). The rulers gather together the next day and interrogate the apostles (4:5-7). Peter explains that the healing was performed in the name of Jesus, at the same time accusing the leadership of its part in Jesus' death, and reaffirming the resurrection (4:10). Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22 to describe Jesus as the rejected stone which became the corner stone (4:11), placing the opposition to him in the category of scriptural fulfillment once more.⁸⁹ The apostle also insists on the saving role of Jesus in human history (4:12), something which is connected to his messianic status in the infancy narratives (Luke 1:69; 2:11, 30). The Council warns them not to continue speaking in public about Jesus (4:17-18). Peter and John refuse the command (4:19-20). Due to the undeniable healing miracle that has just occurred (4:16, 22), as well as the opinion of the masses, the Council is essentially forced to release them with only parting threats (4:21).

88. Many people in the Scriptures are called God's "servant," a term which may indicate one who worships God or is used as his agent in some way. The title may contain echoes of Luke 1:54 and 1:69 where Israel and David have the same designation. Moses is another possible figure to whom Jesus is being compared here, both because of the "raising up" language and the designation of Moses as "servant" in the Old Testament (cf. Josh. 1:7, 13; 9:24; 11:12, 15; 12:6; 13:8, etc. [LXX]). Finally, a reference to the suffering Servant of Isaiah may be in mind. See David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 174, n. 31, who argues that the title "is in an explanatory and apologetic context, with Isaianic associations clearly established in the intervening argument"; see also John B. Polhill, *Acts*, New American Commentary, vol. 26, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 131, who gives additional connections which point to the suffering Servant motif in Acts 3.

89. See Peter Doble, "The Psalms in Luke-Acts," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004): 89, who states, "For Luke, references to psalms are not 'proof texts' but signals of his narrative's theological *substructure*, the essential body of scripture revealing God's plan now fulfilled in Jesus."

The central passage of this paper, 4:25-27, is within the immediate context which follows the first persecution of the believing community (4:23-31). Peter and John return to the other apostles and report the hostility they encountered before the Council (4:23). The response of the group is united prayer in which God is initially acknowledged as creator using Psalm 146:6 as the basis for the wording.⁹⁰ Psalm 2 is cited as it stands in the Septuagint (4:25-26), then applied to the conspiracy against Jesus (4:27). The messianic identity of Jesus is central to the use of the psalm here. Both passages help to “interpret the conflict at this juncture in the story.”⁹¹ There is an emphasis on divine sovereignty over even the plots of Jesus’ enemies (4:28), an emphasis which forms the basis for the petition which follows. The apostles ask for boldness to proclaim the message they have been preaching (4:29). They also ask for continued “signs and wonders” (4:30), perhaps to validate the message.⁹² God’s answer to their prayer is immediate, the Holy Spirit filling them so that they speak with boldness (4:31). The unity of mind and the selfless fellowship within the community conclude this section (4:32-37).

An internal threat to the community is eliminated (5:1-11), and more answered prayer is evident as the apostles perform “signs and wonders” (5:12). The movement grows still more with continued healings in abundance (5:14-16). Provoked by the popularity of the apostles (5:17), the Sadducees arrest all twelve of them (5:18). This measure proves unsuccessful, however, as the apostles are supernaturally freed with the

90. It is Psalm 145:6 in the LXX. The wording is also similar to Exodus 20:11 and Nehemiah 9:6.

91. John T. Carroll, “The Uses of Scripture in Acts,” *SBL 1990 Seminar Papers* 29 (1990): 518.

92. Steven F. Plymale, *The Prayer Texts of Luke-Acts*, American University Studies, Series VII: Theology and Religion, Vol. 118 (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 85.

imperative to continue their proclamation (5:19-20). When the Council convenes the next day, they are forced to re-arrest the escapees in order to actually interrogate them (5:21-26). The second round of legal pressure begins (5:27-28), again answered by an appeal to higher, divine instructions (5:29). Peter gives the Council a second sermon (5:30-32), interrupted by violent intentions which are only averted by the cautious advice of Gamaliel (5:33-39). There is a danger, he says, that in opposing the apostles the leaders may be “found fighting against God” (5:39). Thus the apostles escape with a beating (5:40-41), their suffering in no way deterring them from preaching “Jesus as the Christ” in Jerusalem (5:42).

As a final section of context, the next two chapters also mention prayer (6:4, 6), the growth of the believing community as the “word of God” spreads (6:1, 7), the presence of the Holy Spirit (6:3, 5; 7:55), “wonders and signs” (6:8; 7:36), and another legal trial (6:9—7:53). This round of persecution is climactic because it not only ends in the death of the first Christian believer (7:54-60), it also sparks the general persecution of believers in Jerusalem (8:1), scattering most of them to preach in other regions of the Jewish world (8:1-4).

Conclusions from far context.

The contextual flow of the narrative in Acts shows a few things. First, Acts 4:23-31 is in thematic continuity with the other sections. Significant shared themes include the following: prayer, events interpreted as scriptural fulfillment, the Holy Spirit, David, Jesus as the nation’s Messiah, wonders and signs, the unstoppable growth of the community in the midst of persecution, the sovereignty of God, and the suffering of the

Christ.⁹³ Second, the passage is part of a pattern of 1) prayer (1:14; 4:24-30), followed by 2) Spirit-empowerment for proclamation (2:4; 4:31), and then 3) the growth and unity of the community (2:42-47; 4:32-35).⁹⁴ Persecution follows the miracles done by the apostles (2:43; 3:1-10; 5:12-16),⁹⁵ so by asking for more of the same miracles, the apostles are setting themselves up for another cycle of opposition. With respect to the cycles, 4:23-31 is part of the first confrontation, the series of which reaches a climax—but not an end—in the trial of Stephen.⁹⁶

Near Context of Acts 4:25-27

The following section will deal with 4:23-31 in more detail, serving as a final contextual analysis before focusing on the importance of 4:25-27 with respect to its theological and hermeneutical implications.

Occurring as it does after the first instance of rejection, the prayer of 4:24-30 is an important example of how the Christian community responds to persecution. It shows the crisis of authority for the believers, who have decided to follow Jesus—not the Sanhedrin—as their leader. Peter's earlier example of the stone rejected by the builders

93. See Scott Cunningham, *"Through Many Tribulations": The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 142, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 164, who claims, "The closest that Luke actually comes to providing a scriptural foundation for the suffering of the Χριστός ['Christ'] is Acts 4.25-27."

94. Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2: *The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 64.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid., 65, 68; see also Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading," *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 146-157, who notes that the cycle of preaching, opposition, and the growth of the Word continues throughout the remainder of Acts.

(4:11) shows that this conflict is indeed “over the real leadership of the people of God.”⁹⁷ The apostles proclaim Jesus as the expected Davidic ruler, continuing the conflict over the nation’s Messiah at stake in Luke’s Gospel.⁹⁸ Because it is a question of authority, of whom to trust, the quotation of Psalm 146:6 in 4:24 is fitting.⁹⁹ The psalm warns against trusting in “mortal man, in whom there is no salvation” (146:3; cf. Acts 4:12),¹⁰⁰ encouraging trust in “the God of Jacob” (146:5), the one who made the world (146:6) and “sets the prisoners free” (146:7), among other things. The apostles have been freed from the Council, returning to the other apostles (4:23),¹⁰¹ and now express their praise and dependence on God (4:24). The quotation of Psalm 2:1-2 serves a similar function by defining the issue of leadership in unmistakable terms (4:25-27).

Though the introduction to the citation in 4:25 is grammatically difficult,¹⁰² the following points are evident: David was the author of Psalm 2; the psalm was divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit;¹⁰³ David is God’s “servant,” a liturgical use of the title (cf.

97. David Seccombe, “The New People of God,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 354; see also Carroll, “Uses of Scripture,” 518. Carroll shows three thematic connections between Psalm 118 and Acts 4–5.

98. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 69.

99. Carroll, “Uses of Scripture,” 519.

100. See Doble, “Psalms in Luke-Acts,” 100, who suggests that shared keywords such as “salvation,” “trust,” and “princes” may link Psalm 146 with Psalm 118.

101. There is the possibility that the text means they returned to the other Christian believers in general, or to the other apostles in particular. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 31.

102. For an explanation of the grammatical difficulties in Acts 4:25a, and a solution suggesting a chiastic structure introducing the Psalm 2 quotation, see Urban C. Von Wahlde, “The Problems of Acts 4:25a: A New Proposal,” *ZNW* 86 (1995): 265-267.

103. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “David, Being Therefore a Prophet (Acts 2:30),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (1972): 338, who says, “David, the reputed author of the psalms according to both Luke and a Qumran author, was considered to have been gifted also with prophecy from the Most High God in

Luke 1:69); and the people praying are ethnically related to David, their “father.” At this point, the actual psalm is cited (4:25-26). The application by the disciples is not directly to their present situation but to the passion of Jesus, as each point in the psalm is matched with some feature of the Gospel narrative (4:27).¹⁰⁴ The forces “gathered together” against the Lord’s “Christ” in Psalm 2 (4:26) correspond to those who were “gathered together” in Jerusalem against God’s “holy servant Jesus, whom [He] anointed” (4:27). The “kings” and “rulers” (4:26) are apparently “Herod and Pontius Pilate” respectively (4:27).¹⁰⁵ The “Gentiles” (4:25) are the “Gentiles” (4:27), probably a reference to the Roman soldiers who mistreated and executed Jesus (Luke 22:63-65; 23:11, 36-37).¹⁰⁶ The “peoples” who plot in vain (4:24) are, surprisingly, “the peoples of Israel” (4:27). In its original context, “peoples” is a parallel way of referring to the “Gentiles” who are rebelling against the king of Israel. Here, the word signifies opponents of Jesus from within the nation itself. In keeping with the theme of fulfilled Scriptures prevalent in Luke-Acts, the resistance against Jesus is interpreted as divinely orchestrated, something God’s “hand” and “purpose predestined to occur” (4:28; cf. 2:23).

It is possible to view the prayer thus far with a chiastic structure as follows:

contemporary Palestinian Jewish tradition. [based on 1QM 11:7, 6QD 3:4, CD 5:21-6:1, CD 2:12; and Josephus *Ant.* 6.8,2 § 166].” Cf. 2 Sam. 23:2.

104. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *The Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 183-184.

105. Luke is unique in describing Herod’s involvement in the passion account (23:7-12). See Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 71, n. 26, who suggests, “Rather than Herod representing the ‘kings’ and Pilate the ‘rulers’ of 4:26 . . . , there is some evidence that the ‘kings’ are political authorities and the ‘rulers’ religious authorities, i.e., the Sanhedrin, which is otherwise not mentioned in 4:26-27. Compare 4:26 with 4:5. Both verses use the aorist passive of συνάγω [‘gather together’].”

106. Polhill, *Acts*, 149; Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash*, 33; see also F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 98-99, who identifies them as the “Romans who sentenced him . . . and carried out the sentence.”

O Lord,

A: it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said,

B: Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things?

C: The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers

D: were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.

D': For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed,

C': both Herod and Pontius Pilate,

B': along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

A': to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.¹⁰⁷

Notice that the sovereignty of God in creation and history bookends the section, making the response of the community one which is developed within the framework of God's control of the world.¹⁰⁸ In the very center, forming the focus of this half of the prayer, is the opposition to the Lord's "Christ," his Anointed One. The leadership of the nation is the point of controversy.

As the believers transition into the second half of the prayer, they seem to use the psalm not just as an explication of events in Jesus' life but as a description of their own recent persecution.¹⁰⁹ Though the change may seem abrupt or "somewhat forced,"¹¹⁰ there are a number of similarities between the trial of the apostles in Acts 4 and the events leading up to the death of Jesus in Luke. Consider the following examples: 1)

107. The wording is from the NASB, without Scripture citations in capitals, while the structure and idea is from Urban C. Von Wahlde, "Acts 4,24-31: The Prayer of the Apostles in Response to the Persecution of Peter and John – and Its Consequences," *Biblica* 77, no. 2 (1996): 242, who also sees a separate chiastic structure in verses 29-31 of the prayer (*ibid.*, 243).

108. *Ibid.*, 242, who says, "Because of this whatever happens both to his servant David and to his servant Jesus is somehow part of his plan."

109. I. Howard Marshall, *The Book of Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 24; see also Cunningham, "Through Many Tribulations," 197-198, who adds, "In their appeal for God to look upon 'their threats' (4.29), the threats of the opponents of Jesus merge with the threats given by those who now persecute the disciples."

110. Weren, "Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts," 198.

Acts 4:1 and Luke 22:52 both refer to a “captain(s)” of the temple (cf. Luke 22:4);¹¹¹ 2) the officials “laid hands on” the apostles (4:3; 5:18), the same phrase used when the scribes and high priests attempted to arrest Jesus in Luke 20:19;¹¹² 3) the interrogation happens the morning after each respective party is arrested (Acts 4:5; Luke 22:66);¹¹³ 4) in both instances the members of the Sanhedrin, the Council, are “gathered together” (Acts 4:5; Luke 22:66);¹¹⁴ 5) “rulers” appear in both accounts (Acts 4:5; Luke 23:13, 35; 24:20);¹¹⁵ 6) after teaching in the temple, both Jesus and his followers are asked similar questions about the authority behind their teaching (Acts 4:7; Luke 20:2);¹¹⁶ 7) finally, both groups use Psalm 118:22 to speak of opposition by the Jewish authorities (Acts 4:11; Luke 20:17).¹¹⁷ These similarities show that the prayer is not inconsistent when, after describing the opposition Jesus faced, the apostles apply the psalm to their own situation. Instead of the enemies of Jesus listed in 4:27, the hostility of the Sanhedrin is in mind when the believers pray about “their threats” (4:29). This shows that the situations of Jesus and the apostles are essentially parallel,¹¹⁸ the enemies of both being

111. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 68.

112. Ibid., 69.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid.

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. D. Hamm, “You Are Precious in My Sight,” *The Way* 18 (1978): 202.

equated. This identification is aided by the fact that the Sanhedrin was involved in the persecution of both parties (cf. Acts 4:5 with 4:27).¹¹⁹

The believers begin their petition, not asking for deliverance but for continued confidence to preach the word of God (4:29).¹²⁰ In addition, they pray for divine healings and “signs and wonders” (4:30), even though such miracles in chapters two and three contributed to their arrest in the first place.¹²¹ They ask everything in the “name” of Jesus, who is described for the final time as God’s “servant” (4:30). God wastes no time in answering their prayer. He manifests his presence and empowers them with his Spirit so that they do in fact “speak the word of God with boldness” (4:31). The divine answer is felt throughout the narrative as the followers of Jesus continue to perform such signs and share their message confidently (Acts 6:8-10; 8:4-70; 9:27-29; 14:3; 28:31).¹²²

Conclusions from the near context.

The near context shows that the passage forms the focal point in the crisis of authority confronting the early Christian believers. Davidic connections are abundant, although the theological significance of these links is yet to be discussed. The passage is the main part of their response to a threat, a repetition of the persecution Jesus endures in the Gospel. The apostles are in continuity with their Messiah, and their prayer results in

119. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 71

120. Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 197, who observes that this is one way in which their prayer differs from that of Hezekiah (cf. Is. 37:16-20; 2 Kgs. 19:15-19); see also Polhill, *Acts*, 148, who puts it this way: “Hezekiah prayed for deliverance. The Christians prayed for courage.”

121. See Von Wahlde, “Acts 4,24-31,” 242, n. 16, who suggests that the “signs and wonders” may refer to the ones described in the quotation of Joel during Pentecost (2:19). Acts 2:43 does seem to link the Joel prophecy to the activity of the apostles, which continues the miracles performed by Jesus and also manifests the outpouring of the Spirit (2:22, 33).

122. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 73.

fresh empowerment to represent the Messiah. Finally, it prepares the readers for the continued answers to prayer that co-exist with cycles of persecution.

Theology of Psalm 2 in Acts 4

Now that the overview is complete, the theological implications of Psalm 2 in the passage can finally be addressed.

Because one of the central features of the community's prayer is the "Christ," it is important to ask whether or not the title still retains the Davidic significance it often has elsewhere in Luke-Acts, whether or not it still reflects the usage in Psalm 2, in other words. There are a number of indications that, although the term at this point in history could be used as a second name for Jesus (e.g., Acts 4:10),¹²³ it "was not so established as a title in first century Judaism that it had lost its significance as the 'Lord's anointed', i.e. one chosen by God to be his instrument."¹²⁴

The "servant" title is one factor that makes the Davidic connection clear (4:25, 27, 30). In Luke-Acts David is called God's "servant" only here in 4:25 and in the infancy narratives (Luke 1:69). The Gospel usage occurs in a context which alludes to the Davidic covenant and specifically mentions the promises to Abraham (1:72-73). Incidentally, the same association with the Abrahamic covenant occurs in 1:54 where Israel is called "servant." In Old Testament usage, the term appears possibly as a title when the Davidic covenant is about to be introduced (2 Sam. 7:5, 8), and after it has been given (2 Sam. 7:19-21, 25-29), although a different Greek word is used in the Septuagint

123. Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 114; see also Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Theology, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27.

124. Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 67.

than in Acts 4:25.¹²⁵ Solomon uses the term when he recalls the promises to his father (1 Kgs. 8:24-26, 66). Various psalms repeat this language, some of which may be relevant to this study.¹²⁶ The title can be found in the superscription of Psalm 18, for example, a psalm which mentions covenant mercies shown to the “anointed [one],” to David and his line (18:50). Psalm 69:17, a Davidic psalm, uses the title in the context of oppression from enemies.¹²⁷ Other interesting examples are Psalms 89 and 132. In the former psalm, David is the “servant” of God in close connection with either the dynastic covenant (89:3-4) or the anointing ceremony itself (89:20). The psalm as a whole is concerned with the Davidic covenant, as other frequent references to the promises make clear (89:28-36, 38-39, 49). In the same vein, Psalm 132 speaks of David as God’s “servant” on whom the current “anointed [one],” or king, can base his appeals to God (132:10). The Davidic covenant again plays a role (132:11-18). Note that “the horn of David” is promised as a perpetuation of kingship (132:17; cf. Luke 1:69). A final example is Jeremiah 33:15-26, where the covenant promises to David, Yahweh’s “servant” (33:21-22, 26), are reaffirmed (33:15, 17, 21-22, 25-26).¹²⁸ All of this supports the idea that “servant” language in the Scriptures, at least when referring to David, often draws upon the Davidic covenant for its backdrop. Unlike the instances in chapter three

125. The former passages use δοῦλος [‘slave’], while Acts 4 uses παῖς [‘slave’]. Unless otherwise noted, the examples given in the paragraph likewise do use the exact word found in Acts 4.

126. Psalm 18:1; 36:1; 69:17; 78:70; 144:10 [LXX Psalms 17:1; 35:1; 68:18; 77:70; and 143:10, though only 17:1 and 68:18 have the same Greek word for “servant” found in Acts 4:25]. Contra Bock, *Proclamation*, 207, who thinks the term in 4:25 is merely liturgical, not related to any specific passage in the Old Testament.

127. See Doble, “Psalms in Luke-Acts,” 102, 104, who sees in Acts 4:25 possible allusions to one or both Psalms 69 and 18, yet favors 69 because “[a]t Acts 4:25 ‘servant’ carries with it overtones of David’s struggles against nations and enemies . . . , a struggle focused and particularized in the prayer’s quotation from Psalm 2” (ibid., 104).

128. Isaiah 37:35 actually uses the same word as 4:25 for “servant” to speak of David. Ezekiel 34:23-24 and 37:24-25 mention a Davidic ruler in a kingship context.

(3:13, 26), then, the “servant” designation for Jesus in the prayer of the believers strongly connects him with David,¹²⁹ including the promises made to that famous king (4:27, 30).¹³⁰ Scriptural fulfillment occurs in the person of Jesus.

Another indication of royal significance is the strong “etymological interest” in the messianic title as it appears in 4:26-27, with the root of the noun (“Christ,” χριστός, 4:26) showing up in verbal form (“anointed,” ἔχρισας, 4:27) to explain the title.¹³¹ The usage thus links the term to the anointing of Jesus, something which was previously argued to contain a royal significance. Jesus’ anointing at his baptism echoes the sonship decree of Psalm 2:7,¹³² and thus the promises in 2 Samuel 7. The theme of covenant fits well with the conclusions made earlier about the title in Psalm 2:2. Considering that “Christ” is used with kingship connotations all throughout Luke’s Gospel, it is likely to retain the same emphasis here.

The very fact that a royal psalm is quoted also goes a long way toward showing the royal implications of the term. As already demonstrated, Psalm 2 is concerned with

129. Craig A. Evans, “Prophecy and Polemic: Jews in Luke’s Scriptural Apologetic,” in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts*, eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 193; see also Doble, “Psalms in Luke-Acts,” 102, who adds, “That God had anointed Jesus makes him, like David whose heir he is, servant (παῖς) also.” Although some have here seen an additional reference to the suffering Servant found in Isaiah (e.g., Swartley, *Israel’s Scripture*, 245-246; Plymale, *Prayer Texts*, 84), there are no textual clues to indicate the connection. Perhaps the connection is present in the previous chapter, however (Acts 3:13, 26). See Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 174, n. 31. Due to the mention of “signs and wonders” in this passage (cf. Exod. 7:3; 10:11; Acts 7:36) and the fact that Moses is called “servant” often, the possibility of a secondary connection to Moses can be entertained.

130. See Bock, *Proclamation*, 207, who states, “We would suggest that the consistent nature of the appearance of this term with the concept of promise [as in Luke 1:54, 69] indicates that the term παῖς, either as a liturgical confession or as a part of a Christian hymn, had messianic overtones for the church. . . . In this text . . . there is a liturgical usage of the term, which had emerged in the liturgy in association with themes of promise and fulfilment [sic] especially as this title was reflected in the exposition of the Abrahamic and the Davidic promises of the OT.”

131. Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 207-208; see also Jervell, *Theology*, 27.

132. Doble, “Psalms in Luke-Acts,” 103-104.

the divine privileges of the Davidic monarchy, and since the psalm is directly attributed to David here in the prayer, the kingship theme is obvious. Just as David was an Israelite king with specific promises from God, so too is Jesus by implication. Just as David and his descendants experienced opposition during their reigns, so too has the royal Messiah during his earthly life (Acts 4:25-27). Their covenant relationship with Yahweh assured Davidic rulers of ultimate victory over their hostile enemies; in the same way, Jesus experienced persecution from his enemies which was ultimately futile due to that same covenant, as demonstrated by his resurrection. The God of the nation was in control of the situation when the rebellion of Psalm 2 took place; the same God was sovereign during the schemes against his Christ (Acts 4:28).

Theological conclusion.

All of the factors above “conspire to root this prayer in Luke’s concern with God’s fulfillment of his covenant with David.”¹³³ The title “Christ,” therefore, presents Jesus as the nation’s anointed king in a covenant relationship with Yahweh.¹³⁴ It is in the Messiah that the scriptural promises implied in Psalm 2 are fulfilled.¹³⁵

Hermeneutics of Psalm 2 in Acts 4

Regarding Jesus and Israel.

The use of Psalm 2:1-2 in the prayer of Acts 4:24-30 depends largely on the identity of Jesus for its legitimate application. In the chiastic structure of the prayer the

133. Ibid., 104, who concludes, “Luke’s readers were expected to ‘hear’ this prayer through a basic ‘theology’ of David at each reference to him, and the whole of Psalm 2 at each reference to it.”

134. Contra Jervell, *Theology*, 27, who states, “The title is not used primarily to show the relation between God and Jesus, but is attached to the scheme of promise-fulfillment: Jesus fulfils the promises to the people of God.” These are not mutually exclusive options, however, as the very promises being fulfilled in the Christ are related to the divine covenant, a special relationship promised to David’s line.

135. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 184.

opposition to the “Christ” is the center of attention. This is the crux of the passage, and hermeneutically every other element depends on Jesus being the Messiah for such a messianic interpretation of the royal psalm to work. Because this identification is the clear and consistent claim of Luke-Acts, however, the keystone is in place.

The next issue, which is perhaps the thorniest, is the way the opposition to the Messiah is applied. No longer is the enemy simply the Gentile nations with their kings heading up the resistance, as in Psalm 2:1-2. Acts 4:27 includes “the peoples of Israel” in the list of offending parties. Why the change? Some would see this as reflecting a distinctively Jewish method of interpretation practiced at Qumran.¹³⁶ While it is possible that the plural “peoples” is the result of a strictly followed hermeneutic,¹³⁷ there are other reasons for the plural and its application. It does allow individual Jews to be blamed for their role in the persecution of Jesus (i.e., the members of the Sanhedrin), all “without jeopardizing the special place of ‘the people’ as the religious designation for Israel.”¹³⁸ Furthermore, it is true that the Jewish authorities and many in the nation opposed Jesus,¹³⁹ so it is not surprising *in general* that some culpability belongs with them. The *specific* way in which the blame is applied is what causes the problem, though, as the

136. Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash*, 33-34, who says, “As at Qumran, the text is applied as prophetic to the specific experiences of the community and its founder. As at Qumran, these experiences involve the dual rejection of the founder and the community members (‘the poor’). As at Qumran, hope is placed in the vindication to be accomplished by God. And, as at Qumran, the interpretation involves making a point-by-point identification between characters and events in the prophecy and the characters and events in the community’s shared story” (ibid., 34).

137. Ibid., 34-35, who thinks this is the primary reason the word is plural.

138. Ibid., 33-34, who thinks this is only the secondary intent.

139. See David L. Tiede, “The Death of Jesus and the Trial of Israel in Luke-Acts,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990): 162, who notes, “The complicity of the ‘people’ is culpable in Luke, but much more passive. . . . So the failure of the people to continue to defend Jesus before Pilate’s court is not the same as the plots on his life by the temple leadership.”

opposition to the king in Psalm 2 was never applied to the people of his own nation.

Psalm 2 in Second Temple literature, for example, views the opposition as wholly from foreigners.¹⁴⁰ Later rabbinic interpretation “consistently interpreted [Psalm 2] eschatologically and messianically,” though the fulfillment of the opposition is still decidedly by Gentiles.¹⁴¹ Because of this, some are convinced that Luke has changed the meaning of the psalm in the Hebrew.¹⁴²

Although 4:25-27 is obviously a “Christian understanding of the psalm,”¹⁴³ it is not without explanation or justification. At its core, Psalm 2 is about opposition to God and his anointed king. Identifying the Davidic king, therefore, allows everything else to fall into place:

God had identified the Anointed One in the resurrection-exaltation-vindication. Once the Messiah became known, then the identity of the opponents gathered against him became clear. The situation, once vacant, had now become identified, at least in part. *As a result, the scope of the referents, which appeared to be limited to the kings and rulers of nations, appears to expand, yet within linguistic boundaries of the language used in the psalm's conceptual core.* Any who join in the “conspiracy” that surrounds the Anointed One, now identified in God's vindicating action as Jesus, come under the scope of the text's meaning.¹⁴⁴

140. Evans, “Prophecy and Polemic,” 193, who observes that “4QFlor 1:18-19 quotes Ps 2:1-2, but little of the exegesis is extant. The interpretation is clearly eschatological (‘At the end of days’), but whether or not messianic is difficult to tell.”

141. Ibid.

142. C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on “The Acts of the Apostles,”* vol. 1, International Critical Commentary, eds. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (New York: T&T Clark, 1994), 246.

143. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 31, eds. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 309.

144. See Darrell L. Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament's Legitimate, Accurate, and Multifaceted Use of the Old,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, Counterpoints Series, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 130, who also adds, “Note also that no referents were lost in the expansion. The Gentile nations still gather against Jesus. In fact, one could suggest that the setting has opened up the psalm's meaning, not by changing it but by revealing its depth of meaning” (ibid.). “In

Given that Jesus is the ultimate anointed king, the “Christ,” anyone who opposes him becomes one of the enemies described in the psalm.¹⁴⁵ In this text, then, Israel’s “opposition makes her a referent.”¹⁴⁶ Jewish rejection of the message concerning the Messiah is, of course, a tragic feature in the narrative.¹⁴⁷

The psalm is being used prophetically, though in a way which sees scriptural patterns as prophetic. The same sorts of historical events which transpired in Psalm 2 occurred again in the events related to the death of Jesus. God acted to vindicate his anointed one both times. The same divine commitment to the monarch which rendered the plots of the nations empty enabled Jesus to triumph over his foes in Jerusalem. His enemies could not overthrow his messianic reign. This “mirroring” of events shows that God’s plan is being fulfilled and that he is active in the world, “designing the movement of history along parallel lines.”¹⁴⁸ Such design is prophetic in that it creates expectations for God to act in similar ways in the future. Because the passage at hand draws upon the psalm as a “type,” or pattern, of God’s activity, its use of the Old Testament could be called “typological-prophetic.”¹⁴⁹

addition, the resultant reading does not cancel or deny the earlier reading, but complements it” (ibid., 131).

145. Ibid., 115; Bock, *Proclamation*, 206.

146. Bock, “Single Meaning,” 129; see also Seccombe, “New People of God,” 354, who observes, “Had Luke continued the quotation he might have implied that just as the continuance of individuals among the λαός [‘people’] hung on their acceptance of Jesus, so too the rulers remained legitimate rulers amongst God’s people only if they refrained from rebellion against ‘the Lord’s anointed.’”

147. See Tannehill, “Israel in Luke-Acts,” 77, who notes, “To them [the Jewish people] especially it has relevance and meaning, for it is the fulfillment of their hope and history. If, then, this message is rejected by a large part of Israel, the result is tragic, for what was rightfully theirs, what was central to the meaning of Jewish existence, has also been rejected.”

148. Bock, “Use of the Old Testament,” 495.

Regarding the believing community.

The application does not stop with Jesus and the resistance he faced. The apostles base their petition in 4:29-30 on the same psalm. Again, the legitimacy of the application is derived from their relationship to Jesus, the Davidic Messiah. If they are his followers, his representatives, any opposition they receive is analogous to the suffering that Jesus experienced. They are “using a corporate solidarity type of rationale,” associating themselves with the Messiah and his mission.¹⁵⁰ Their fate and task of proclaiming salvation are the same as Jesus’ fate and task.¹⁵¹ The Scriptures anticipated the suffering of the Christ, and the believers are now experiencing the “rearguard actions” by rulers who are doomed to fail.¹⁵² In other words, God is still in control, even as he was in the passion of Jesus (4:28), so the apostles can take comfort in knowing that the suffering they just experienced was within the will of God.¹⁵³ Their confidence is rooted in a sovereign God who has climactically fulfilled his promises to David in the life of his Messiah. The apostles thus use Psalm 2 “as a promise in the context of the Davidic history (Acts 4:25), in the context of the promises given to David, to which the Messiah’s

149. Ibid.; see also Bock, *Proclamation*, 207, who says, “The use of Ps. 2 involves neither apologetic nor proclamation, but is a mere explanation of the realization of this prophetic connection to the OT.”

150. Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 85. Notice that they designate themselves as “bond-servants” in 4:29, which is similar to the title “servant” used of Jesus. Jesus himself spoke in terms of corporate solidarity during his prayer for the disciples in John 17.

151. See Bock, *Proclamation*, 207, who also observes, “The passage thus shows the willingness of the community to carry out their task, by identifying with and accepting for themselves a role parallel to their Messiah, that is as an object of opposition and persecution” (ibid., 206).

152. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 184.

153. See Darrell L. Bock, “Scripture and the Realisation of God’s Promises,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 59, who notes, “The Lord’s anointed is not welcomed with open arms. This word to the community, uttered in the midst of prayer, both explains and comforts.”

community could appeal in a situation of concrete peril.”¹⁵⁴ Although they have been released from the Council for the time being, they know that the recent trial was not the end of the hostility from the Jewish leaders.¹⁵⁵ Instead of asking for safety, they ask for courage and the miracles in Jesus’ name to back up their message (4:29-30). Though this will undoubtedly lead to further suffering, they have chosen to identify with “the name” (4:30), the name which healed a lame man (4:10) and the name in which they were prohibited to speak (4:17-18).¹⁵⁶ Psalm 2 implies that their opponents will not prevail, that the message of deliverance from sins will spread despite persecution.¹⁵⁷ In their request there may even be thematic echoes of Psalm 2:8, the bold proclamation of his witnesses being the means by which the Davidic Son takes “possession” of the “ends of the earth.”¹⁵⁸

5. Conclusion to the Study

Aiming to show the significance behind the title “Christ” and the anointing of Jesus in Acts 4:25-27, this study initially explored the citation from Psalm 2:1-2 in its original context. After determining the connotations of the title there, it turned to the New Testament context. This included the Gospel of Luke and the literary flow

154. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 184.

155. Polhill, *Acts*, 150.

156. Cunningham, “*Through Many Tribulations*,” 198. An interesting echo of some key words and themes may be found in Acts 9:15-16, which mentions “Gentiles,” “kings,” the “sons of Israel,” and suffering for the “name.”

157. See Bock, “Use of the Old Testament,” 511, who observes, “The new community of God was forged out of the fires of national rejection, not divine rejection, fitting a pattern of activity that reaches back into the days of old.” This parallels Israel’s history in the wilderness.

158. Peter G. Bolt, “Mission and Witness,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 201.

surrounding the passage in Acts itself. Finally, it discussed the theological and hermeneutical issues involved in the New Testament use of the Old Testament passage.

In the first part of the study, background material from the ancient Near East shed light on the practice of royal anointing which is present in biblical literature. The symbolic import of the rite can include, among other things, the confirmation of a covenant, an understanding which the Old Testament supports. Significantly, anointing indicates a commitment made between Yahweh and the king. From the time of David onward, the nature of that commitment was clarified in what is known as the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7:8-17. Every subsequent Davidic king inherited the legacy of those divine promises, and the anointing ceremony continued to have such significance that the each king was often called God's "anointed one." Psalm 2 draws upon the covenant God made with David's line, especially in its reference to the king's sonship status, and that relationship guarantees the protection and victory of the people represented by the "anointed one." All of the raging and plots of the surrounding nations were ultimately in vain because they had come against the monarch bearing that title, backed up by a God who keeps his promises to David.

Picking up on that same royal hope centuries later, Luke in his Gospel presents a descendant of David as the man in whom God would decisively fulfill his promises for Israelite kingship and kingdom. He alludes to the covenant themes present in 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 2, the anointing of Jesus at his baptism being a confirmation that he is the Son of God. Dynastic expectations surround this messianic figure in the early chapters of the narrative. Later on, Jesus as the climactic anointed king, the Christ, is the point of conflict. The events surrounding his trial and death are filled with such claims, in fact.

After the resurrection, the suffering Messiah theme is explicitly introduced for the first time. The title always has royal connotations in the Gospel, never leaving its Old Testament moorings. Scriptural fulfillment is pervasive in the work.

Within the book of Acts itself, the themes of Acts 4:23-31 overlap with many of the concerns in chapters 1—8 such as the following: God's control of history, the Holy Spirit's enablement of believers, prayer, patterns in the Old Testament finding fulfillment, Jesus' Davidic role as the Christ, and the opposition to him. The prayer of the community in Acts 4 fits into the recurring pattern in which prayer is followed by divine enablement for preaching, resulting in persecution and the simultaneous growth of the Christian movement. It is unique in the cycles because it is the first response to persecution, preparing the believers (and the readers) for future resistance which will climax in the death of one of Jesus' witnesses. The near context of 4:25-27 shows that the citation of Psalm 2 and its application help to define the issue of Israelite leadership in a way that clearly establishes the king whom Christians will follow. That king is the Davidic Christ known as Jesus. The persecution they have just gone through is an extension of what happened to Jesus, and they still desire to tell others about this king. With the Spirit's empowerment, they start afresh to do just that.

Theologically, several factors all converge to show that Davidic covenant and kingship inform the title "Christ" in the prayer. Initially, the use of the title "servant" links Jesus to David. The application of "Christ" to Jesus also includes an explanation which goes back to the concept of anointing. The Gospel of Luke, using the title with its Old Testament connotations, makes it probable that the title in Acts 4:26 is oriented similarly. Finally, the use of Psalm 2 itself, as a royal psalm attributed to David,

contributes its share of theological input to aid in interpreting the title. The conclusion is that "Christ" still indicates the anointed king of Israel who is established in his position by the Davidic covenant.

Hermeneutically, the applications of Psalm 2 depend on Jesus being the Christ. Once that is acknowledged, the other elements in the psalm can match their appropriate referents. The most difficult move is to classify Israelites as adversaries, but even this surprising application is legitimate. Anyone who opposes the Lord's Anointed fits the description of the enemies in the psalm, whether Jew or Gentile. The Gentiles still gathered against the Messiah, as the passion of Jesus shows, but the tragic reality is that some of the people of Israel joined that resistance. In all of this, scriptural patterns are being repeated and thus fulfilled. The psalm typologically points to the opposition Jesus experienced, and so the futility of the opposition is also implied. Jesus was vindicated in his resurrection, so the plots against him failed. God's covenant with David endured in the person of the Christ, the Son of God. Because the apostles are aligned with the Christ, they too can expect to experience persecution and rejection. They too have a mission in proclaiming the messianic King who delivers people from their sins. Those who oppose the believers oppose the Christ they serve. The recent threat to the community cannot succeed, therefore. The promises fulfilled in the Anointed One guarantee the success of the Christian message. The prayer is a comforting realization of divine sovereignty in the events of history, including the recent persecution from the Sanhedrin. Though the conflict is not over in Acts, the believers can pray for the things which will assist in the victorious growth of the messianic community. As the narrative bears out, it will indeed grow.

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