

## **Acts 1:8 Reconsidered: A Stub Track, a Siding, or a Main Track?**

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### **Introduction**

In Acts 1:7, Jesus refused to answer the eleven's question about if He were about to restore the kingdom to Israel. Acts 1:8 starts with *alla* (but), a strong disjunction. We can safely say that verse 8 stands in contrast with verse 7, but the crucial question is: *What is the nature of that contrast?* Three options exist, but most people are familiar with only two of them: a non-dispensational approach and the traditional dispensational one. Zane Hodges introduced me to another dispensational one (the third option) in his Acts course in 1984.

Three types of track that railroads use offer a simple illustration:

1. The stub track: a dead-end track for long-term parking of railroad cars,
2. The siding: a track for a train lacking right-of-way to wait while one with the right of way passes in the opposite direction,
3. Main track: The track used by trains as they head toward the destination.

Non-dispensationalists view the Church as an end in itself, a spiritual kingdom that replaced Israel. They do not see history as a track leading to the Millennium. Their view of Acts 1:8 is that Jesus said, in effect, "Fellows, don't concern yourselves with Israel's restoration. We left that track and are on a new track. For the rest of history, we will be on this stub track."

Most dispensationalists view Acts 1:8 as if Jesus said, in effect, "Don't concern yourselves right now about when the Father will restore the kingdom to Israel. That train just pulled into the siding. It is time to get off that train and to board the Church train. The restoration of Israel train will remain on the siding until the Church train has passed."

Zane Hodges viewed Acts 1:8 as a continuation of God's preparation for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. In effect, this view says, "Fellows, the Father has not said when our train will arrive at its destination, the restoration of Israel. However, as my witnesses near and far, you have an important role in preparing for the train to reach the destination. For now, we remain on the main track and are heading toward restoration of the kingdom to Israel."

Non-dispensationalists see it as a stub track; most dispensationalists see it as a siding; Zane Hodges viewed Acts 1:8 as being on the main track toward restoring the kingdom to Israel.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

<sup>7</sup> And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. <sup>8</sup> But [*alla*] you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

## Non-Dispensationalists: Acts 1:8 as a Stub Track

Non-dispensationalists reject any restored kingdom to Israel. If the disciples' expectation that Jesus might then restore the kingdom were correct, these theologians would need to abandon their model. Thus, non-dispensationalists strive to see verse 7 as: "Don't ask when the kingdom will be restored," and verse 8 as: "Instead (*alla*), you will be My witnesses for the spiritual kingdom (which replaces the nonsense of a restored kingdom to Israel)." Non-dispensationalists have an agenda. They must present Acts 1:8 as a stub track. They must attack the disciples, claiming that their question about the kingdom was completely wrong-headed. They must treat Acts 1:8 (as well as v 7) as if Jesus were rebuking the disciples, even though verse 9 says that He ascended immediately after speaking vv 7-8: *Now when He had spoken these words [vv 7-8], while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.* Calvin's accusations (following) say more about him than about the eleven (or this passage's meaning):

. . . they betrayed no less ignorance than if they had never heard a word. **There are as many errors in this question [verse 7] as words.** They ask Him concerning the Kingdom; but **they dream of an earthly kingdom.** . . . And while they assign the present as the time for restoring this Kingdom, **they desire to enjoy the triumph before fighting the battle.** Before setting hands to the work for which they are ordained they desire their wages; they also are mistaken in this, that **they confine to Israel after the flesh the Kingdom of Christ** which is to be extended to the farthest parts of the world. **The whole question is at fault** in this, that they desire to know things which are not right for them to know. . . **Christ in His short reply briefly reprimands their errors one by one**, as I shall presently indicate. . .  
7. *It is not for you to know, etc.* **This is a general rebuke of the whole question.** . . .<sup>1</sup>  
8. *Ye shall receive power.* **As the best means of bridling their curiosity,** Christ calls them back both to the promise of God and to His commandment. . .  
*'Ye shall be my witnesses.'* **By this one statement He corrects two errors. For He shows that they must fight before they can hope to triumph: and that the nature of Christ's kingdom is other than they thought.**<sup>2</sup>

If the disciples were utterly confused, needing such a sharp rebuke, why would Luke even include vv 6-7? Jesus' last words should not be seen as a scathing rebuke. If they were in error, He would, instead, have guided them into truth, since only ten days later (Pentecost) they needed to be straight. See how easily the text would read, if Luke had omitted vv 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; <sup>5</sup> for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. . . <sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. <sup>9</sup> Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. John W. Fraser and W.J.G. McDonald, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. David W. and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:29. Bold is mine; italics is his.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

Calvin would have preferred for Luke to omit vv 6-8, he characterizes vv 7-8 as a rebuke of v 6. Unfortunately, many parrot Calvin, regarding Jesus' parting remarks as a scathing rebuke, but still treating the apostles as paragons of orthodoxy ten days later at Pentecost. John R. W. Stott merely rehashes Calvin:

As Calvin commented, 'there are as many errors in this question as words'. The verb, the noun and the adverb of their sentence all betray doctrinal confusion about the kingdom. For the verb *restore* shows that they were expecting a political and territorial kingdom; the noun *Israel* that they were expecting a national kingdom; and the adverbial clause *at this time* that they were expecting its immediate establishment. In his reply (7-8) Jesus corrected their notions of the kingdom's nature, extent, and arrival.<sup>3</sup>

Calvin's explicit rejection of the Millennium underlies the effort to see Acts 1:8 as a stub track, the permanent a scathing rebuke of the eleven for believing that Israel's kingdom has a future. Instead, he spiritualizes the kingdom into something within the heart.

So we see that the Chiliasts [Millennialists] (i.e., those who believed that Christ would reign on earth for a thousand years) fell into a like error [as the apostles], and so took all the prophesies which describe the Kingdom of Christ *figuratively on the pattern of earthly kingdoms*. . . let us learn to apply our minds to hear the Gospel preached, which prepares *a place in our hearts for the kingdom of Christ*.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Calvin has relegated the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (the Millennium) to a stub track, spiritualizing it into something within a Christian's heart.

I. Howard Marshall (in one sense) is even bolder than Calvin. He spiritualizes away the Millennium in his comments on v 6, not waiting until v 8. He characterizes the question as to *whether* (not *when*) Jesus plans to restore the kingdom to Israel:

6. Luke portrays a fresh scene in which the disciples take up the reference to the kingdom of God in verse 3. The question is **whether** Jesus intends *to restore the kingdom to* (or 'for') *Israel*. This may reflect the Jewish hope that God would establish his rule in such a way that the people of Israel would be freed from their enemies (especially the Romans) and be established as a nation to which other peoples would be subservient. If so, the disciples would appear here as representatives of those of Luke's readers who had not yet realized that Jesus had transformed the Jewish hope of the kingdom of God by purging it of its nationalistic political elements.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*, The Bible Speaks Today, ed. John R. W. Stott (Leicester, ENG: Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, 1990; reprint, Leicester, ENG: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 41. The prior note to Calvin, *Acts*, cites the same English translation of Calvin as Stott used.

<sup>4</sup> Calvin, *Acts*, 32, emphasis mine.

<sup>5</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R.V.G. Tasker (Leicester, ENG: Inter-Varsity; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 60. Bold is mine; italics is his.

Robert Maddox clarifies the rationale for seeing Acts 1:8 as a stub track, the end of the line for the idea of a restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Specifically, Israel had rejected the kingdom on many occasions, it has missed its last opportunity:

The new note in v. 6 is the apostles' suggestion that the Kingdom is something that belongs to Israel. Luke has already amply shown that this is a false belief. . . The hopeful intention of the birth narratives for the redemption of Israel (1:68; 2:38) is not after all to be fulfilled, for Israel has rejected its opportunity (13:34; 19:44b; etc.). Not the redemption of Israel (24:21), but the fulfillment of the Father's promise for Jesus' disciples (v. 49); not the kingdom for Israel (Acts 1:6), but the power of the Holy Spirit for the church (v. 8). Thus, the point is repeatedly made that the Kingdom has nothing to do with Israel, nor with Jerusalem. . .<sup>6</sup>

The nice thing about what Maddox is that it is easily falsifiable. If (in the book of Acts) a single occasion after Acts 1:8 exists where the kingdom is offered to Israel, his thesis falls apart. This paper will devote much attention to Acts 3, where the offer of the kingdom to Israel uses wording quite reminiscent of Acts 1:6-8.<sup>7</sup>

### **Response (from Ascension Narratives) to the Stub-Track View: A Preliminary Response**

Luke 24 and Acts 1 are Luke's ascension narratives. In other words, the end of Luke 24 parallels the start of Acts 1. Unfortunately, the non-dispensational interpreters have ignored an important part of the context: Luke 24:45. Jesus had *opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures*, before the disciples when He would restore the kingdom (Acts 1:6).<sup>8</sup> Scripture speaks of the future restoration of the kingdom to Israel, a truth which the disciples understood, especially now that Jesus opened their mind to understand the OT. No passage specified exactly when that restoration would occur,<sup>9</sup> but both John the Baptist (Mat 3:2) and Jesus (Mat 4:17) had preached: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. If the kingdom were at hand three and a half years earlier, it was natural to expect that it was even more at hand now. These men understood the Scriptures, but wanted to know something not found there. Calvin, Stott, and many others castigate the disciples as if the eleven did not understand the Scriptures. Instead, if Calvin and Stott understood the Scriptures, they would retract their harsh critique of the eleven.

### **Traditionally, Dispensationalists View Acts 1:8 as a Siding**

From the introduction of this paper, it is evident that we will propose a modification to the usual dispensational view of Acts 1:8. Let me preface my analysis of the siding view with the observation that a siding more closely resembles the main track than a stub track. The assessment of the siding view will be upbeat, because both views see the Church in the same way and both see Israel in the same way. What is different is how Acts 1:8 fits into the picture.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke—Acts*, ed. John Riches. (Göttingen, Ger: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982; reprint, Edinburgh: Clark, 1985), 106.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. page 6 of this paper.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. page 6 of this paper for a presentation of the sequence of events.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel 9's Seventy-Heptad prophecy may have led them to conclude that the timetable was very close. We now know of the interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth heptads, but they did not yet know this.

Traditionally dispensationalism sees Acts 1:8 as a railroad siding. Jesus just said that the Father has not revealed the date for restoring Israel's kingdom, but the kingdom train has just entered a siding. Thus, until the Church train passes by, the eleven are witnesses to Him within the Church. Someday, the Church train will pass and the restoration of Israel train will return to the main track. In regard to Acts 1:8 Lewis Sperry Chafer says that after

. . . forty day's ministry in teaching His disciples regarding the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), Christ in His answer to the question "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" said "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:6-7; cf. 1 Thess. 5:1-2), there is no rebuke to these Jewish disciples because of their reverting to the national hope of Israel. That hope will be fulfilled in God's "times" and "seasons." However, these disciples had yet to learn that a new enterprise had been introduced and of that new enterprise Christ went on to say, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This ministry of testimony will eventually be terminated by the return of Christ. . .<sup>10</sup>

*The New Scofield Bible* says about Acts 1:7:

Observe that the Lord did not rebuke them for their inquiry about the restoration of the kingdom. Their question was a valid one. But His answer was in accord with His repeated teaching: the time is God's secret (Mt. 24:36, 42,44; 25:13; cp. 1 Th. 5:1).<sup>11</sup>

Charles Ryrie, says:

1:7 There is no rebuke in Christ's answer, for God is not through with Israel, and the kingdom will eventually come (Rom. 11:26). In the meantime, the gospel must be preached throughout the whole world (v. 8).<sup>12</sup>

*The Nelson Study Bible* says about this verse:

Jesus did not correct His disciples' views concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (v. 6). Instead He corrected their views concerning the timing of the event...<sup>13</sup>

The foregoing statements are good, but drawing upon Luke 24 and Acts 3 would be helpful. As promised earlier in this paper, the critique of how most dispensationalists see Acts 1:8 was gentle. Luke 24 and Acts 3 adjust the perspective on Acts 1:8 slightly.

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 4:266.

<sup>11</sup> *New Scofield Reference Bible*, new ed. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, et al. (New York: Oxford, 1967), 1160. Cf. *Scofield Reference Bible*. Ed. C. I. Scofield (New York: Oxford, 1909), 1147.

<sup>12</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible*, expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 1729.

<sup>13</sup> *The Nelson Study Bible*. ed. Earl D. Radmacher (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1997), 1814.

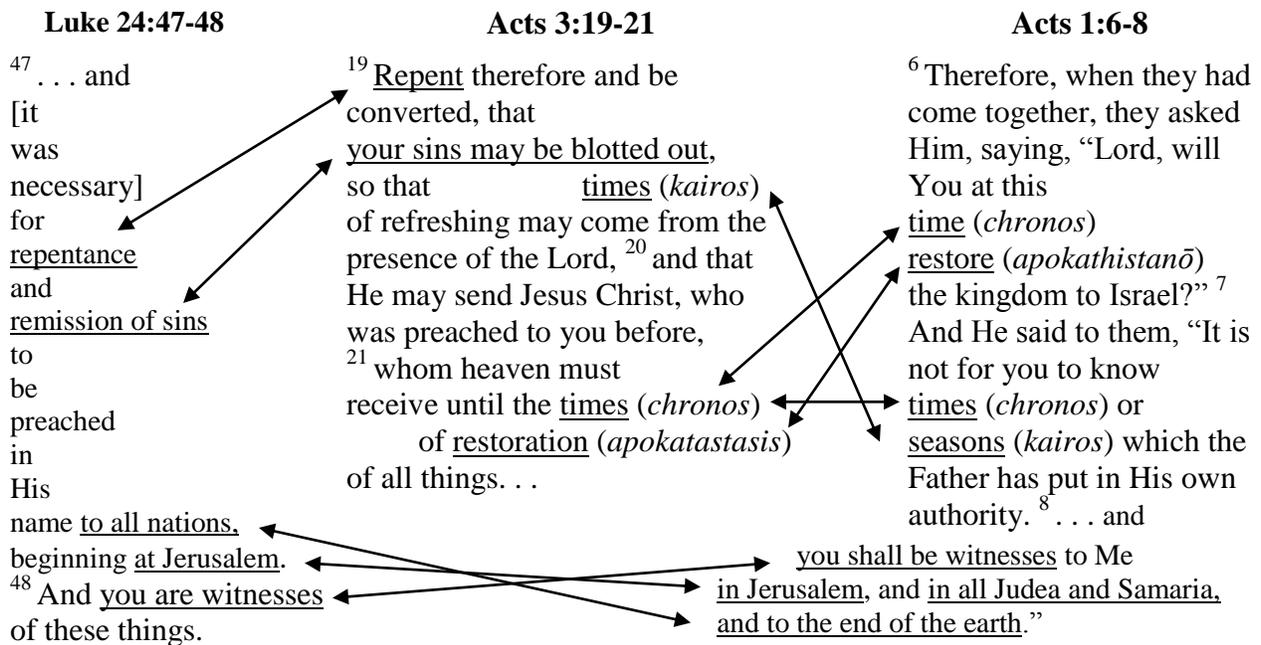
## The Main-Track View

It is true that Acts 1:8 launches the eleven into a new adventure. Once Jesus spoke these words, He ascended to the Father as verse 9 explains. Pentecost, only ten days later, instituted the Church Age. Although it was the Church dispensation, the apostles continued to offer the kingdom to Israel. They did not know when the kingdom would come, but they knew that the Father would start the countdown, when Israel responds to the offer of the kingdom. It is in that light that Acts 1:7-8 is how the Church has a role in preparing Israel to believe in its Messiah and have the kingdom restored to her. In other words, Acts 1:8 was not only supposed to benefit the Church, but was also to awaken Israel from stupor, so Christ could restore its kingdom.

**Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:6-8; and 3:19-21.** These passages show that offering the kingdom to Israel was front burner in Acts. Zane Hodges opens the chapter of *Harmony with God* entitled “New Birth, Forgiveness and Repentance,” with the following:

According to Luke 24:47, our Lord commanded “that repentance and remission [forgiveness] of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” This mandate is definitely carried out in the book of Acts as is made clear by Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31, and 8:22 in which both topics—repentance and forgiveness—are mentioned together.<sup>14</sup>

The following highlights links between three primary passages. Note *Repentance, forgiveness, times, seasons, restoration, witnesses, Jerusalem, and far-away places.*



<sup>14</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *Harmony with God: A Fresh Look at Repentance* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 2001), 65. Brackets are in original.

## A Closer Analysis of Acts 3:19-21

When the disciples asked if Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel at this time (*chronos*), Acts 1:7 says that it was not their prerogative to know the times (*chronos*) or seasons (*kairos*) established by the Father. But Peter said in Acts 3:19-21 that seasons of refreshing and times of restoration would come to Israel, if Israel were to repent.<sup>15</sup>

It is easy to miss something crucial. The following chart will clarify:

<p><b>Acts 1:6-7:</b> <sup>6b</sup> “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup> And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.”</p>	<p><b>God has not said when Israel’s kingdom will be restored, but</b></p>
<p><b>Acts 3:19-21:</b> <sup>19</sup> Repent therefore and be converted [<i>or turn</i>], <u>that</u> (<i>eis</i> + infinitive) your sins may be blotted out, <u>so that</u> (<i>hopōs</i>) times (<i>kairos</i>) of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, <sup>20</sup> and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, <sup>21</sup> whom heaven must receive until the times (<i>chronos</i>) of restoration (<i>apokatastasis</i>) of all things. . .</p>	<p><b>Peter says Israel’s kingdom will be restored when Israel repents.</b></p>

Now, the question is: Did Peter disregard Acts 1:7? No, Peter did not know whether Israel would repent at that time (it did not). What Peter knew was that God would set in motion the steps for restoring the kingdom to Israel, whenever national repentance occurs.

An expanded paraphrase of Acts 1:6-8 may help:

**Acts 1:6-8:** <sup>6</sup> Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup> And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons [*which include (among other things) the following: 1. the national repentance of Israel, and 2. the restoration of the kingdom to Israel*] which the Father has put in His own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The national repentance of Israel is a trip-wire that would set in motion God’s plan to restore the kingdom to Israel. Thus, the eleven serving as witnesses of Christ (Acts 1:8) would (potentially) be the instrument in God’s hand to enable restoring the kingdom.

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<sup>15</sup> Acts 3:19 has two sequential purpose clauses: 1. The purpose of repenting and turning is so sins may be blotted out. 2. The purpose of sins being blotted out is so times of refreshing may come and God may send Jesus again to earth.

Consider what Zane Hodges says about Acts 1:8:

The Apostles are to witness in the power of the Spirit. The outcome belongs to God. . .

The words *esesthe moi martures* [you will be My witnesses] (1:8) recall

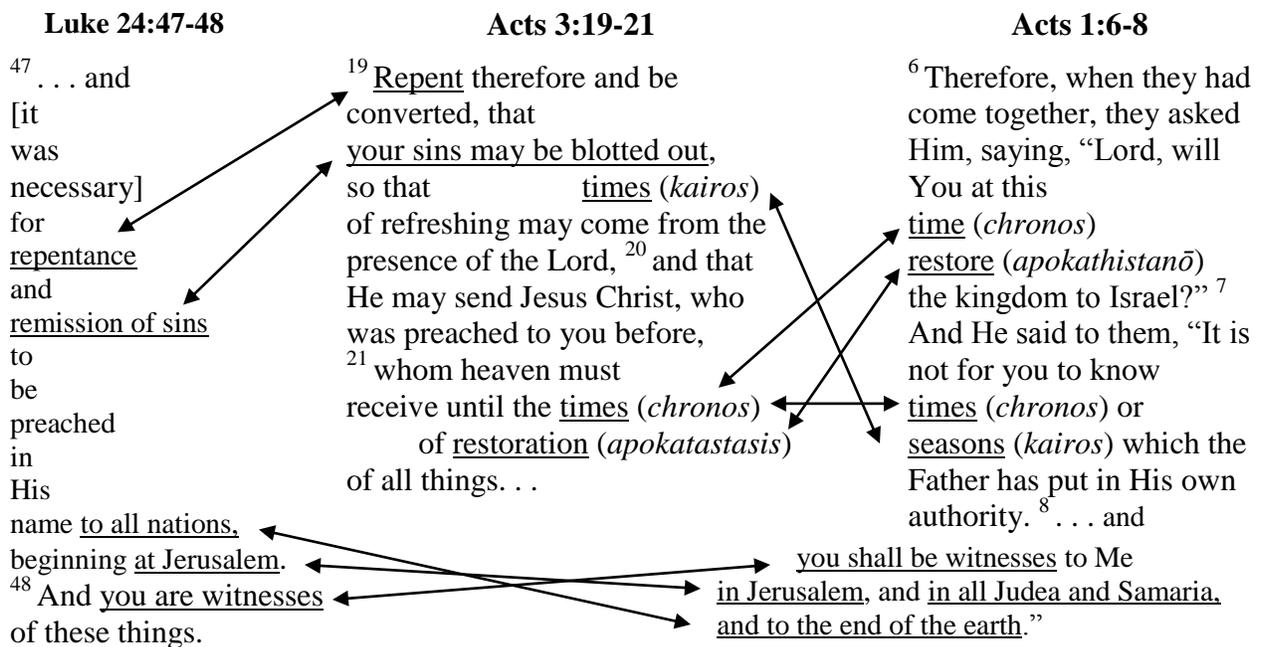
Isa. 43:10 *genesthe moi martures* [you are My witnesses]

43:12 *humeis emoi martures* [you are My witnesses]

44:8 *martures humeis este* [you are My witnesses]

That the [national] salvation of Israel would bring the “conversion” of the nations is a datum of OT prophecy. Cf. Isa. 59:20–60:1-22[.] N.B. [Isa.] 60:3 “And the Gentiles shall come to thy [Israel’s] light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” *Thus the commission given in Acts 1:8 is in no way inconsistent (at this point)*<sup>16</sup> *with Jewish expectations.*<sup>17</sup>

Hodges views Acts 1:8 as the main track, not as a siding. That is, as the eleven served as witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth, their message to Jews included what Peter said in Acts 3:19-21. We should take another look at Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:6-8; and 3:19-21.



They preached repentance to the Diaspora, so Christ could restore the kingdom.

<sup>16</sup> Hodges says “at this point,” because Acts 10, when the mystery (of Jews and Gentiles with equal access to God in one body) began. Prior to Acts 10 the Church was a new entity, but it was reasonably similar to Israel (only new and improved). After Acts 10, the Church is totally different from Israel. The Church Age dispensation began at Pentecost, but Acts 10 is when it became clear just how different from Israel this new entity actually is.

<sup>17</sup> Zane C. Hodges, “The Synthesis of Acts: Structure, Overview, Special Problems” (Course notes for NT 219, “The Book of Acts”: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984), 8a. Italics in original. In the original, each sentence was its own paragraph. Sentences have been grouped into block paragraphs to save space.

Some may see something that may not appear to fit the issue of a proclamation of repentance for Israel. Luke 24:47 speaks of witnesses *preaching repentance to all nations* and Acts 1:8 speaks of witnesses going to *the end of the earth* with this message. Our first response is to think that this implies carrying the message of repentance to the Gentiles. (After Cornelius, we do see a message of repentance for Gentiles also, but that is not the focus of this paper.)<sup>18</sup>

However, Deut 30 helps to contextualize this message of repentance. The Lord *opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures* (Luke 24:45). Deut 29:2–30:1 warned that Israel’s disobedience would cause God to disperse the people all over the world. Deut 30:1-4 promises to regather them from dispersion, when (in verse 2) they *return to the LORD* (i.e., when they repent).

**Deut 30:1-4:** <sup>1</sup> *Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you,* <sup>2</sup> *and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul,* <sup>3</sup> *that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you.* <sup>4</sup> *If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.*

In Acts 1:8 Jesus commissioned the eleven as witnesses, who would carry (in keeping with Deut 30) a message that Jesus Christ, God’s lifegiving Son and Israel’s Messiah, would regather Israel and restore the kingdom to Israel. In this regard, what Peter said at the end of his sermon in Acts 3 is significant. Note vv 25-26:

**Acts 3:25-26:** <sup>25</sup> You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, “**And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**” <sup>26</sup> To you **first**, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.

The OT had promised (as early as Gen 12:3, which Peter cites) to bless Gentiles through Israel. Note well the word first in v 26. My sense is not that Peter is saying that God sent Jesus first to you Jews and second to Gentiles (He did not exactly send Him to Gentiles, although the Gospels record occasional ministry to Gentiles). Instead, my sense is that God sent Jesus to you (Jews within the land of Israel) first, but secondarily to scattered Jews of the Diaspora. In other words, even though Peter is speaking to people in Jerusalem, the message of Acts 3:19-21 is a message that he would also speak to scattered Jews of the Diaspora. It is the Jews of the Diaspora that Deut 30:1b-2 specifically addresses: <sup>1b</sup> *and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you,* <sup>2</sup> *and you return to the LORD your God.*

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<sup>18</sup> In the interests of time, it is necessary to recommend Hodges, *Harmony*, on that topic.

Deut 30 underlies Matthew 3:2 and 4:17. Matthew 3:2 says that John the Baptist preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” Matthew 4:17 says, “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ““Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”” John was a forerunner to Christ, anticipating Jesus’ message. This is in keeping with Isaiah 40:3, which Matthew 3:3 cites: “For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’”

## Acts 2

Since Pentecost is a Jewish pilgrim feast, many diaspora Jews came to the Temple, as Acts 2:5 indicates: *And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.* Verses 9-11a list places from which Diaspora Jews and proselytes came: <sup>9</sup> *Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,* <sup>10</sup> *Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,* <sup>11a</sup> *Cretans and Arabs.* Thus, even before leaving Jerusalem, the eleven were witnesses to the end of the earth. The message was quite appropriate for those living in dispersion as well as for permanent residents of Israel.

Verse 36 sums up what Peter wanted people to believe: *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Know assuredly equals believe.* That verse sounds remarkably like John 20:31, does it not? It is a message for the whole house of Israel, including the Diaspora, to believe.

Many present believed, as v 37 indicates: *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* As Zane Hodges observes, “. . . such a reaction presumes their acceptance of Peter’s claim that they have crucified the One who is Lord and Christ. If that is what they now believed, then they were already regenerate on John’s terms, since John wrote, ‘Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God’ (1 John 5:1; cf. John 20:31).”<sup>19</sup> Note that v 38 addresses *them*, those who had newly believed in v 37.

Thus, v 38 (*Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.”*)<sup>20</sup> The important thing to note here is that the people were already believers, before Peter commanded them to repent.

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<sup>19</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1992), 117f.

<sup>20</sup> Author’s rendering. Many people think that gift of the Holy Spirit refers to a spiritual gift, but it is a genitive of apposition. My rendering (Holy Spirit as a gift) prevents such a misunderstanding. Peter speaks of God requiring for believers (during Acts 2-9, prior to Cornelius) to repent and be baptized before receiving the indwelling Spirit. Cf. Hodges, *Gospel Under Siege*, 117-21; and Hodges, *Harmony with God*, 89-107, for brief treatments of the special circumstances of Acts 2-9.

Believing in Jesus gives people everlasting life, but national repentance by Israel would have set Acts 3:19 into motion—restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Acts 2:36-38 differentiates the issue of individually believing in Christ as Messiah from the national repentance that Deut 30 requires for regathering the Diaspora.

Zane Hodges summarizes the issue of Israel's national repentance well:

Repentance and baptism, as we have seen, were conditions for forgiveness during the ministries of John the Baptist [cf. Mat 3:2], of the apostles and of our Lord Jesus Himself [cf. Mat 4:17 and Luke 24:47]. But this was only true for the Israelites of Palestine, who were called to national repentance by the Baptist and, after the crucifixion of Christ, were called again to repentance by the apostles (Acts 2:38; 3:19). Following baptism and forgiveness, the believing Israelite from Palestine could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As a result of taking Acts with Zane Hodges in 1984, his treatment of Luke 24 and Acts 1-3 were already part of my thinking before seeing his later books on the subject of repentance. In my opinion, it is unfortunate that Zane Hodges' later writings on repentance did not highlight the connection between Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:6-8; and 3:19-21. This paper has, in effect, been a time machine to transport us all back to the Acts class twenty-six years ago.

Acts 1:8 is not a stub track. Neither is it a siding. Jesus intended it as the main track to the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. The apostolic witness went forward earnestly in the expectation that Israel might soon repent and God would send His Son back from heaven to bring about seasons of refreshing and restoration of all things, including the kingdom to Israel. They did not know when Christ would restore the kingdom, but knew that He would do so whenever Israel repents nationally.

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<sup>21</sup> Hodges, *Harmony with God*, 111-12.