

-24-

Restoration (*Apokatastasis*) and the Correct Translation of v. 21

How should we translate v. 21? I think there are three translational issues in this verse. The first is the meaning of *achri*, and I have already presented arguments for why I think the meaning here in v. 21 is “during” rather than the more usual translation “until”.

The other two matters are: i) What is the “referent” of the Greek relative pronoun *hon* (“of which”) which occurs near the middle of v. 21? Two options are broadly recognised: should it be linked with the “times of restoring/establishing all the things” or should it be linked just with its nearest antecedent, “all the things” (of which God spoke through all the prophets) and ii) Does the Greek word *apokatastasis* refer to “restoring” or “establishing/fulfilling”?

We will look at these important questions in order, but since verse 21 is closely linked to what follows in verses 22-24 by means of the word “For” near the start of v. 22 (unfortunately omitted in NA27), I think it will help us to look once again at the structure of vs. 21-24 as this may well play a part in answering our two questions.

The Structure of vs. 21-24: Ascension and Restoration

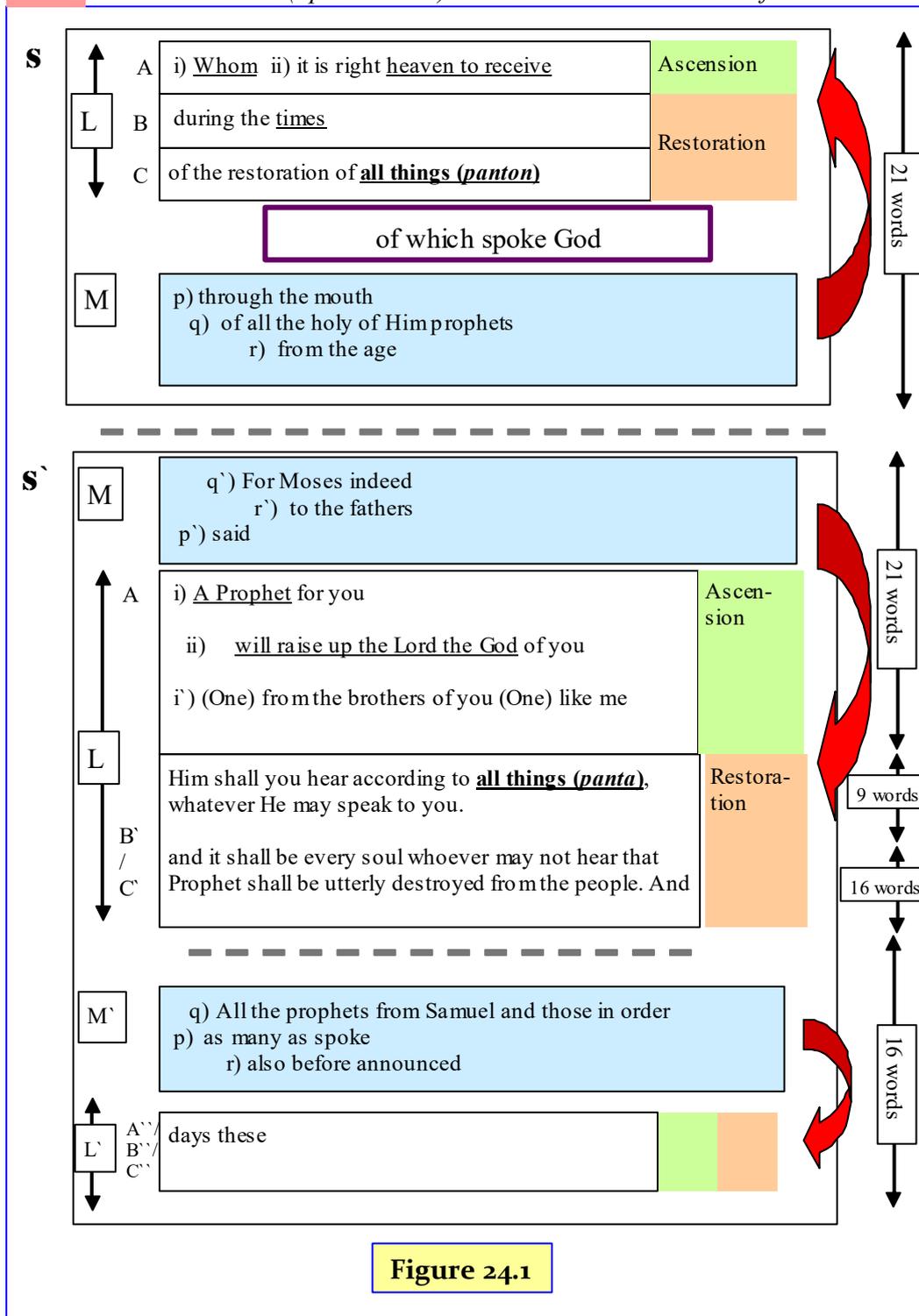
A possible structure for verses 21-24 is suggested in Figure 24.1 on the next page. As will be shown, this structure has clear chiasmic aspects. (I think that this structure (possibly) favours a *third* possibility (given later in this chapter) for the referent of “*hon*”.)

This structure is basically equivalent to Figure 8.2.

Notes on Figure 24.1

1) This is a very interesting structure which really requires a fuller analysis than I am giving here.

2) The structure as presented consists of two sub-sections labelled S and S'. Let us look at S first. The information is presented in the opposite order to what one might expect since the substance of *what is said* (i.e. L in



the diagram) is presented first, and this is followed by the details of *who said it* (that is, God speaking through the mouth of the holy prophets in M). This “reverse order” is indicated by the first (“backwards”) red arrow in Figure 24.1.

3) S is followed by S' which consists of two "parallel" passages, both following the pattern of S, but in the "normal" order—i.e. these passages consist of an "M" followed by an "L" - and these each have a "forwards" red arrow.

4) S provides a "general" statement about the restoration message of "the prophets in general" (no specific prophets are named) whereas the two "parallel" passages in S' provide more specific details of how the restoration is to be achieved, and specify two named prophets—Moses and Samuel.

4) The first "L" section, S(L) can be sub-divided into two components—an "ascension" component, A, and a "restoration" component—itsself containing a reference to time, B, and a statement regarding the restoration, C.

The same pattern is found in the second "L" section, S'(L) which is a "worked example" or explanation (indicated by the word "For" near the start of v. 22) of the substance of the first "L" section, S(L). In S'(L) there is an "ascension" section (i.e. the Prophet, one from "your brothers", is "raised up") and this is followed by a "restoration" section (labelled L(B'/C')) in which the restoration is presented as a time of obedience to the Prophet plus judgement for the disobedient. Interestingly, the "restoration of all things" of S(L) would appear to correspond to the "hearing according to all things" of the words of the Prophet (Jesus Christ). This correspondence describes an important aspect of the restoration—a moral and spiritual turning in obedience to Christ. The "time" element is indicated (intrinsically and implicitly) by the future tenses of the verbs in S'(L).

5) The third "L" section, S'(L') is very abbreviated, but it is clear that the expression "these days" is describing the same *events* and the same *times* as we find in S(L) and S'(L), and in fact that the word "days" in S'(L') corresponds with "times" in S'(L), and that S(L) and S'(L') form an *inclusio* for the passage as a whole, and we also note the similarity in wording between S(M) and S'(M').

6) Part of the connection with Moses in the central section of the structure, (S'(M,L)), is that Christ, the Prophet, here presents a New Covenant equivalent or fulfilment of the Shema ("Hear O Israel . .") (Deut 6:4) which Moses under the Old Covenant presented to Israel.

7) The actual prophetic "speaking" of these restoration and ascension elements is described in the "M" sub-sections of the structure. Each "M" con-

tains the same three prophetic “elements”, but in a varying order. The three elements are: p) a reference to speech, q) a reference to prophets and/or a named prophet and r) a reference to the time in the past when the speaking occurred.

8) The expression “of which spoke God” occurs once (in S), but functions as a “banner headline” which applies to the prophetic speaking in all the “M” sections.

9) Thus, when the prophets speak (in the “M” sections) God is, simultaneously, speaking through them. However, when the Prophet speaks, (section S` (L)), He alone speaks. Thus Christ combines the roles of God and prophet in Himself! This speaking by the Prophet is prophesied by Moses through whose mouth God is speaking and so God is thus endorsing, (and indeed speaking through), the words that Christ speaks. It cannot be otherwise—John 12:49.

9) As mentioned in note 4) above, the correspondence between the restoration of “all things” and the obedience to “all things” is evidence that the times of restoration of all things correspond to a time of faithful obedience to all the words of Jesus—in context, these include especially the words enjoining repentance now being spoken through Peter’s preaching. The “restoration” also appears to encompass in some way the destruction of the disobedient—restoration and judgement are important themes in the prophets: sometimes they are contrasted, but sometimes restoration includes, and is partly achieved through, God’s judgement of oppressors of God’s people. (Peter’s words about being destroyed from the people” here I suggest correspond to “Save yourselves from this wicked generation” in Peter’s Pentecost sermon, and must surely include events of A.D. 70 notwithstanding ultimate eschatological realities).

10) In Figure 24.1, one prophet, Moses, speaks a lot, but a lot of prophets (Samuel etc.) speak a little (i.e. “these days”)!

Back to the Two Questions!

[Before we start on this important discussion, I would like to make a suggestion regarding the word “all things” (*panton*) in v. 21 and that is that the word needs to be contextualised. I do not think it *must* mean absolutely everything ever that has ever existed in the universe. The almost identical expression about restoring all things (*panta*) was used by Jesus in speaking of Elijah, but referring to the ministry of John the Baptist in Matt. 17:11-13. John the Baptist’s ministry was far-reaching, involving a re-

storing of many different aspects of righteousness, in accordance with Is. 40:3, Mal. 4:6, Luke 1:17, 76-79 etc. but his ministry was not universal.]

1) *To What Does “Hon” (of Which) Refer in v. 21?*

The question is whether we should translate the passage as,

1) “Jesus Christ Whom heaven must receive during the times of restoration of all things—of which (times of restoration of all things) God spoke through the mouth of all the prophets . . .”

or 2) “Jesus Christ Whom heaven must receive during the times of restoration of all things—of which (all things) God spoke through the mouth of all the prophets . . .”

In strict grammatical terms both alternatives are possible. In the first case, the relative pronoun *hon* (“of which”) is a masculine genitive plural agreeing with *chronon* (times) - a masculine plural noun. In the second case, *hon* is a neuter genitive plural agreeing with *panton* (all things) a neuter plural adjective functioning as a noun.

Both translations are found in English bible translations. Here is a representative translation using the first alternative:

“whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets that have been from of old.” (American Standard Version)

And here is are two representative translations using the second alternative:

“whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.” (ESV)

“He must be received into heaven until the time for establishing all that God has spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since ages past” (F. F. Bruce’s translation in his Acts commentary)

It is the presence or absence of a comma after the words “all things” (or “all”) that makes the difference!

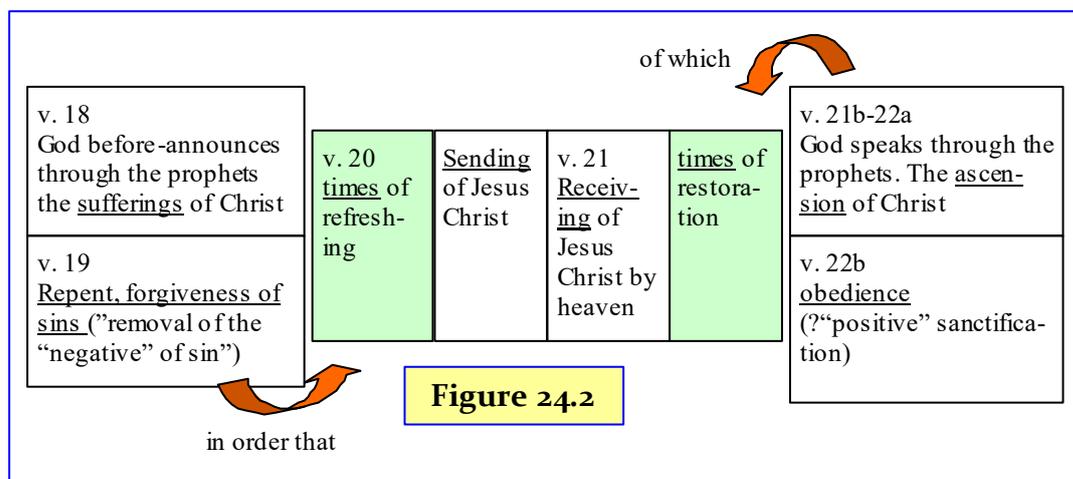
But do these alternatives actually make a difference to the meaning of the passage? This will be discussed briefly later!

As regards the two alternatives, it is sometimes argued in commentaries (e.g. in Joseph Fitzmeyer's Acts commentary) that the first alternative is actually inadmissible (presumably because *panton* is closer than *chronon* to the relative pronoun *hon*.) From my very limited survey, I think that the majority of translations nevertheless opt for the first alternative, and probably the majority of commentaries also, particularly older ones, but the second alternative has its advocates e. g. J. Fitzmeyer, and (in a more nuanced way), D. Bock.

Grammatically, I think that there might be a third possibility: it *might* be possible to see the referent of *hon* as perhaps referring to the entire sequence "Whom it is right heaven to receive during the times of restoration of all things". In this case, *hon* is a plural genitive neuter relative pronoun referring both to the times of restoration of all things and Christ's reception in heaven during that time. The translation would then be something like, "Whom heaven must receive during the times of restitution of all things, of which (matters) God spoke through the mouth . . .". An analogous example of this use of *hon* is found in Heb. 9:5.

I suggest that all three possibilities may be simultaneously present as valid readings of the text. The structural analysis presented in Figure 24.1 suggests to me that this third possibility for the referent of "*hon*", which includes Christ's reception in heaven, is reasonable since, in the "worked example" of what God spoke through the mouths of the prophets, Moses includes Christ's ascension (in the expression "God will raise up a Prophet . . .") as well as the bringing about of obedience and judgement in response to the Prophet's words .

There is also a little chiasmic structure (Figure 24.2 below) which may also point to seeing Christ's ascension as being included in the referent of *hon*:



I suggest, then, that we should provisionally opt for a “maximal” reading in which we allow for all three possibilities. I think also that the difference between the first two may be very small. My reason for thinking this is as follows:

In the first option God is speaking through the holy prophets regarding the times of the restoration of all things. This is undoubtedly true that the prophets indeed speak of a time or times when the “good times” of obedience and blessings will return or be restored. We will discuss this in much more detail in the next section but for now we note that these “future good times” described by the prophets have a two-fold aspect—they are a return to obedience on Israel’s part and, on God’s part, a return of His Presence and His blessings. For example, “Return to Me and I will return to you” (Zech. 1:3, Mal. 3:7).

Does the second option say anything substantially different? In the second option, the reference is to times when there will be a “restoration” of “all the things that God spoke through the mouth of the holy prophets”, or a restoration of “all the things of which God spoke through the mouth of all the holy prophets” (depending on whether *hon* is translated as “that” or “of which”). This option is technically grammatically more correct, since “all things” is the “nearest antecedent” to *hon* as discussed earlier.

[Minor Digression:

However, there is an apparent difficulty with one version of this second option, and that is that the words of God through the prophets cannot properly be said to be “restored”: situations, conditions dispositions etc. may be restored, but prophecies are fulfilled or established. F. F. Bruce understands *hon* as meaning “that”, rather than “of which”, and expresses his preference for “establishment” rather than “restoration” in this way,:

“As for ἀποκατάστασις [apokatastasis] it must be understood in its whole setting. It cannot have the sense of “restoration” here, for “the restoration of all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old” is meaningless, whereas “the establishment of all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets...” is not only intelligible but is in keeping with Lukan language elsewhere (cf. Luke 1:70, a specially close parallel; also 24:25-27, 44).”

good sense in the present context”. This claim is contested by C. K. Barrett, and, from my very limited expertise in word studies, I think with C. K. Barrett may be right—the meanings that F. F. Bruce proposes are not really attested in the literature: I humbly suggest we should continue with “restoration” - especially as we can be consistent in understanding *hon* to mean “of which”, “whereof” or “about which” - just as we did with the first option.

End of Minor Digression]

Coming back to the question of whether the two options say anything substantially different, I would suggest that they do not. In the second option, as e.g. represented by the ESV translation given earlier, reference is made to “the times of restoration of all the things about which God spoke through all the prophets”. Now we know that not everything that the prophets spoke comes under the heading “restoration” - a (larger) part of the prophetic burden concerned judgement rather than restoration (though they are frequently inked in various ways) so, in context, we would understand the *meaning* to be, “the times of restoration of all the things about which, on the topic of restoration, God spoke through the mouth of all the holy prophets”. To my understanding (please, please correct me!) this is the same meaning as the first option!

2) *How Should We Understand the Restoration (Apokatastasis) of v. 21?*

The meaning of the Greek word *apokatastasis* in Acts 3:21 is almost always translated as restoration or sometimes restitution. This is very much in line with the etymological basis of *apokatastasis*: *apo* means “away from” and the verb *kathistemi* means to “set down” - so, if *apo* is understood in temporal terms, then *apokatastasis* would reasonably be the re-establishing or restoring of something from a former time or condition. Neither the noun nor the “cognate” verb occurs very often in the New Testament, however the verb occurs frequently in the Septuagint (about 48 times (in the forms *apokathistan/apokathistanai* according to E. Hatch and H. Redpath’s Septuagint concordance). One of the occurrences of the verb is Acts 1:6 when the apostles ask the Lord whether he will at this time “restore the kingdom to Israel”. In national terms, the Israelite monarchy had ceased centuries ago, so this usage fits the definition of “restoring past conditions”.

I suggest that the basic meaning, restoration is a good translation provided that we can find earlier “ideal” times in Israel’s history, or aspects of

Israel's experiences, in particular her relationship with Yahweh, which will be "restored". I also suggest that we can "allow" within the idea of restoration the idea that the good times or blessings of the "restoration" can actually sometimes exceed in some ways the earlier situation. For example, , in Ezekiel 36:11b, God is speaking through Ezekiel to the mountains of Israel. He says,

"I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the Lord".

Another aspect of the "excess" involved in restoration is that the prophets characteristically "couched" their prophecies in the structures and concepts of their own day, but that the New Testament interpretation goes beyond and exceeds this, whilst at the same time being a "restoration" by virtue of the language and thought-forms used by the prophets—a concept sometimes referred to as "accommodation" (which perhaps is sort of the "equivalent" of the relationship between type and anti-type with regard to OT people places and events and their NT fulfillment?). An example I suggest of this type of "prophetic excess" is found in Acts Ch. 15 where James quotes the following passage from Amos:

*"After this I will return
and I will rebuild the tent of David
that has fallen;
I will rebuild its ruins,
and I will restore it,
that the rest of mankind
may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called
by my Name` ,
says the Lord . . "* (Acts 15:16-17).

In this passage, James interprets the rebuilt tabernacle of David as the Church of Christ which includes Gentiles. In commenting on this passage, F. F. Bruce says, "But the promised extension of the house of David over the Gentiles is taking place here and now, says James, through the Gentile mission: over a far wider area than David ever ruled . ."

The "restoration" message of the prophets in its most basic form is for Israel to turn back to Yahweh in repentance and faith, and if Israel does this, Yahweh will *restore* the covenant relationship. "*Return to me and I will return to you*", says Yahweh of Hosts to Israel through Zechariah (Zech. 1:3). However, there are a number of aspects of "restoration", and a number of the English words used to describe these aspects start with "re-": restora-

tion, repentance, redemption, return, re-building, re-planting, renewal, regeneration, recapitulation, resurrection (e.g. Ezek. Ch. 37) etc.

We often think of Israel's history, starting with the faithless wilderness generation as one of unremitting disobedience, rebellion and failure culminating in Exile. It is therefore heartening to see that there are other aspects to Israel's relationship with Yahweh: the notions of returning and restoration—which imply a better, earlier time, are real. The Fathers too are described as faithful as well as unfaithful in various passages and contexts. (In Peter's sermon, the fathers are seen in a positive light). What are some of these "better" times?

The times of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were time of obedience, and in Is. 51:1-2 Israel is encouraged to, "Look to the rock from which you were hewn . . . Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you", and in verse 3, the comfort that the Lord offers Zion is to make her wilderness like Eden—an aspect of restoration that corresponds with some of the more "universal" views of Origen and the Church Fathers. Ezek. 36:35 also describes an Edenic restoration of the land.

The time immediately following the Exodus was seen as a time of faith when Israel followed Yahweh into the wilderness—in Jer. Ch 2 we read,

Thus says the Lord,

*"I remember the devotion of your youth,
your love as a bride
how you followed Me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.
Israel was holy to the Lord . . ."*

In Hosea 2:14-15 we read that this special time will be recapitulated in Israel's experience:

*"Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.
And there I will give her her vineyards
and make the Valley of Achor a
door of hope.
And there she shall answer as in the
days of her youth,
as at the time when she came out
of the land of Egypt."*

The time during which the words of Deut. 18:15 were said (the words Peter

quoted in the sermon) were also times of obedience. In Deut 5:28-29 God says to Moses, “I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear Me and to keep all My commandments . . .”.

The tabernacle (and temple) are viewed in Edenic terms. This is a massive theme. An excellent resource for this is the deeply insightful, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Exodus* by L. Michael Morales., and a very helpful table illustrating this theme is found in Figure 24.3 which is taken from James Hamilton’s excellent book on Biblical Theology, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgement*.

From *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, Table 2.3. Correspondences between Eden and the Tabernacle and Temple.)

Correspondences	Eden	Tabernacle/Temple
God walking among his people	Gen. 3:8	Lev. 26:11–13; Deut. 23:14; 2 Sam. 7:6–7
Holy tree/blooming lamp-stand	Gen. 2:9	Ex. 25:31–40; 1 Chron. 28:15
Gold and precious stones	Gen. 2:11–12	Ex. 25:7, 11, etc.
Entered from the east	Gen. 3:24	Num. 3:38
Guarded by cherubim	Gen. 3:24	Ex. 25:10–22; 26:1; 1 Kings 7:29
Food/bread	Gen. 2:9	Ex. 25:30; 1 Kings 7:48
Priest who “works and keeps”	Gen. 2:15	Num. 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6
Rivers flowing out	Gen. 2:10–14	Ezek. 47:1; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8

Figure 24.3

When therefore, the restoration of the tabernacle (and temple) are prophesied, the “prophetic excess” would have to include, in some sense, a restoration of Eden. John’s Gospel presents Jesus as the new tabernacle/temple, and the Church also is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 1 Pet. 2:5).

The generation that entered the Promised Land and took part in the conquest was basically faithful to Yahweh. We read of their exploits in the book of Joshua at the end of which we read (Josh. 24:31): “Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived

Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel”. (But when we get to Judges, a different picture emerges: “And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work He had done for Israel. and the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals” (Judges 2:10b-11)).

The period of the Kings was mixed in terms of faithfulness. Individual kings of both Israel and Judah acted as good or bad influences on the nation as a whole. For example, in 2 Chron. 15, King Asa responded to the message of the prophet Azariah and led the nation to make a covenant (2 Chron. 15:12) to seek the Lord.

The return after the Exile was also, to some extent a time of faithful obedience.

The language of “restoration” in the prophets who prophesied around the time of the Exile and Return frequently deals with a range of issues: moral regeneration, the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls, the restoration of the Davidic kingship and of the temple worship (e.g. Ezekiel’s vision of the restored temple, and also Haggai’s and Zechariah’s prophecies regarding the re-built temple and its renewed consecration). Although these restoration prophecies use terms, locations, conditions and situations of the Old Covenant, and some were, at least in principle, and/or partially, fulfilled in the restoration after the Exile, their definitive New Covenant fulfilment, in line with verses like Luke 24:44-45, 1 Pet. 1:10-12, is in Christ: thus, He is the Messianic Davidic king, Jerusalem is the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, and Jerusalem’s walls and gates represent the security and purity in Christ of the Church, His glorious Bride. Until fairly recently, in historical terms, the Church has always understood the Old Testament people, places and events as types of Christ and the Church: they were earthly representations of spiritual realities (whilst also recognising their intrinsic importance and significance in God’s Covenantal purposes), and Old Testament prophecy was understood as ultimately fulfilled in Christ and the Church. A helpful book on this topic is, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition—Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* by Craig A. Carter. It is true that some of this older interpretation was misguided—sometimes involving what came to be seen as “wild and reckless allegorising” but much was, I suggest, really very good, sound typological understanding in line with e.g. Luke 24:44-45 and with the “spiritual interpretation of Scripture” that the NT characteristically uses in relation to the events and prophecies of the OT.

However, there are some aspects of OT prophecy—especially the outpour-

ing of the Holy Spirit in Joel Ch. 2 which are genuinely new. This outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh (i.e. on Gentiles and/or all kinds of people) had never happened in the OT. It is therefore perhaps not really strictly an example of “apokatastasis”, and it is may perhaps even be significant that Peter does not specifically speak about the Holy Spirit in his Acts 3 sermon which describes restoration. However, it is also possible that there was a “technical” or “conventional” meaning of apokatastasis, and especially of the corresponding verbs, current in Second Temple Judaism in which such “new things” as the Spirit’s outpouring, which were associated with the restoration of Israel’s (and the world’s) fortunes, might be included within the term. That the corresponding verb represents an apocalyptic technical term is stated by C. K. Barrett (on p.79 of his commentary) - referring to the work of the German theologian and biblical scholar Ernst Haenchen.

To conclude this section on what might be included as the “contents” of *apokatastasis*, I would like to look very briefly at evidence for the Jewish/Israelite expectation of restoration as shown by righteous people at the beginning of Luke and at the beginning of Acts. It is widely held that the primary restoration was political, but for righteous people, this would surely be secondary to a return to God and to righteous religious, moral and social behaviour and the blessings of a renewed and restored relationship with Him.

In Luke 1:16-17, the “preparatory” ministry of John the Baptist, which is one of “going before Him (God) in the spirit and power of Elijah (which Jesus later refers to as “restoring (*apokatistemi*) all things”), is one of “turning many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God” and “turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous . . .”. The Septuagint Greek for “will turn” in Mal. 4:6 (LXX 3:24) (“He will turn the heart of the father to the son”) is *apokatastesei*. An interesting feature of Malachi is the parallelism between Israel’s relationship with God and the social sins condemned in the book. Thus in Mal. 1:6, God says, “A son honours his father. . . if I am a father, where is my honour?” - and the book ends with a call for the turning of the hearts of fathers to sons and vice versa. (Similarly, in 2:10, “we read, “Have we not all one Father? . . . Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?”) In 2:11 we are told that Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. This religious apostasy, expressed in marriage terms, corresponds to God’s denunciation of the unfaithfulness of husbands and of divorce (2:14-16). The restoring then refers to “both tablets of the law”.

Are the “fathers” good or bad? Darrell Bock in commenting on Luke 1:17

helpfully discusses whether the relationship between “fathers . . . sons” and “disobedient . . . righteous” might have a parallel or a chiasmic aspect. I must admit I like the chiasmic interpretation, which is well expressed in the following quotation from the Pulpit commentary (from the biblehub.com website):

“There is, however, another interpretation far deeper and more satisfactory; for nothing in the preaching of the Baptist, as far as we are aware, bore specially on the domestic dissensions of the people; it had a much wider range. The true sense of the angel's words here should be gathered from prophetic passages such as Isaiah 29:22,23, “Jacob shall no more be ashamed, neither shall his face wax pale, when he seeth (בְּרֵאֲתוֹ כִּי) his children become the work of my hands;” Isaiah 63:16, “Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer!” -The patriarchs, the fathers of Israel, beholding from their abodes of rest the works and days of their degenerate children, mourned over their fall, and, to use earthly language, “were ashamed” of the conduct of their unworthy descendants. These would be glad and rejoice over the result of the preaching of the coming prophet. Godet [F. L. Godet, a Swiss theologian] well sums up the angel's words: “It will be John's mission then to reconstitute the moral unity of the people by restoring the broken relation between the patriarchs and their degenerate descendants.” Luke 1:17”

This understanding of the goodness of the fathers also fits in very well with Peter's sermon where the fathers are presented in positive terms throughout, and Peter's hearers are encouraged to take their “sonship” in relation to the prophets and the covenant seriously (Acts 3:25).

In Luke 1:32, the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that the Lord God will give Jesus the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end”. This would correspond to the expectation in the prophets of a future Messianic restoration of Israel's monarchy. In the *Magnificat*, Mary speaks of God's reversal of injustice: the proud and mighty will be brought down, and the humble exalted—these too are important aspects of the restoration.

In Luke 1:67-79 we read Zechariah's magnificent prophecy of “spiritual” restoration in which God visits, redeems, saves from enemies through a “Horn” in the house of David, shows mercy, remembers the covenant, promises that His people will serve Him in holiness and righteousness and will know forgiveness, light and peace.

In Luke 2:25, Simeon was looking for the Consolation of Israel, and with the Child Jesus in His arms he blesses God in the *Nunc Dimittis* saying that “my eyes have seen Your salvation . . . a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel”. He also says that Jesus is appointed for the “fall and rising of many in Israel”. In Luke 2:38, Anna speaks regarding Jesus to “all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem”. I think Simeon’s words, consolation, light and glory, and the prophetess Anna’s word “redemption” say much: Simeon and Anna are righteous old people who represent symbolically, and actually also embody, Israel’s long night of waiting under the Old Covenant for the New Covenant to begin. Consolation and redemption well express such longings, and Simeon and Anna are now comforted by the presence of the Child Jesus and the assurance through the Spirit and the gift of prophecy that the time of fulfilment has arrived. We may presume that they knew, “The Lord Whom ye seek shall come suddenly to his temple” (Mal. 3:1), and that is why they spent time there waiting for the Christ to appear. Charles Alexander’s comments on this passage (which can be read in his articles on the Incarnation at the www.allbygrace.com website) are excellent.

In Acts 1:6 we have the Apostles’ question regarding the restoration of the kingship to Israel. Jesus’ reply appears to “deflect” the question by referring instead to the Apostles’ power to witness about Christ when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Indeed, the baptism (v. 4) and filling (v.8) of the Holy Spirit structurally encompass the question regarding the restoration of kingship to Israel. I very tentatively suggest that the Holy Spirit’s filling of, and the powerful witnessing by, the Apostles, which is described throughout Acts, is the process by which the kingdom is restored to Israel (but an Israel, as Paul later points out, which is now extended to all Abraham’s faithful offspring, including the Gentiles—to all who receive the Spirit and have faith in Christ (e.g. Gal 3:28-29, 4:14-16)). If this is so, then Peter’s Acts 3 sermon in which he witnesses to the healing power of Christ and to His resurrection and ascension shows that seems to have understood Jesus’ earlier reply! The sending of Christ through Peter’s preaching and witnessing to Christ is creating the restored kingdom in people’s hearts and lives. (“The kingdom of God is within or among you” (i.e. in and through the presence of Jesus) - Luke 17:21.)

A final question in this chapter concerns the fact that the man who had been healed was lame from birth. Can his healing therefore be described as a picture of “restoration”. The term *apokatastasis* and its corresponding verb, is also a medical term relating to healing, and, although I have not been able to follow up the references to this usage as given in Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and BDAG (the Greek-

English Lexicon of the New Testament), the usage does seem primarily to refer to a restoration to a previously existing state of health following illness or accident. However, the lame man in Acts Ch. 3 had been in this condition from birth, so his healing would have given him a new state of complete health rather than a restoration (in the strict sense) to complete health. However, there is one instance where term does seem to be used in a looser sense and that is in the account of the semi-legendary Aesop (of Aesop's fables) being cured of his muteness which appears to have existed throughout his life up to that point. So, perhaps in the "medical" realm too, we can sometimes allow an "excess of meaning" in the term "restoration" as it occurs in the Greek writings.

However one way of looking at the symbolic significance of the man's lameness from birth might be to see that the man represents the spiritual state of Peter's hearers both corporately and as representatives of the nation. In a spiritual sense Peter's hearers are "lame from birth": it is not as though that generation was previously spiritually healthy and then fell away and now needed to be restored. From the "representative" perspective particularly, Peter's address to them as them as "sons of the prophets and (sons) of the covenant" points to their need for restoration to this "high calling" - to the "standard" of these fathers of whom they are currently unworthy sons. In Isaiah Ch. 1, in a passage that reminds us of the parable of the Good Samaritan, the nation's spiritual state is described in terms of physical sickness that are even more dramatic than the condition of the lame man in Acts Ch. 3: *"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil"*. From that perspective, the lame man's "relatively mild" initial condition provides grounds for hope for Peter's hearers.

I have not been able to determine an accurate understanding of what would have constituted the full meaning of *apokatastasis* as used by Peter in Acts 3:21. This has been a difficult chapter to write, and I am very conscious of my inadequacies in even attempting it, but I hope I have been able to capture something of the "flavour" of the "realised eschatology" aspects which are included as part of the meaning of this important term.



