

Conclusion

This has been a difficult book for me to write. The difficulty of the technical aspect of working with so many proposed structures has been overshadowed during the writing process by the consciousness of putting myself in something of a false position. On the one hand, I have relied to such an overwhelming extent on the work of many learned and dedicated New Testament scholars that to say that their work has been essential to the present task is an understatement of massive proportions. But on the other hand, with regard to the interpretation of the application section of Peter's sermon, I have found myself compelled to dare to differ from them on several important hermeneutical and exegetical matters—none more so than the question of the nature, and particularly the timing, of the “restoration of all things” in Acts 3:21.

It is therefore with a profound sense of relief that I have reached the final chapter of this book, and now await the likelihood, upon publication, that I will be found, in the view of readers much more qualified than myself, to have committed some basic blunders in arriving at my conclusions. This prospect actually affords me relief, rather than anxiety, since, it would restore the *status quo* and I can return, suitably chastened, to my everyday life!

I think that my main results, in general, depend on the claim that the Greek word *achri* in Acts 3:21 can be translated as “during” (as opposed to “until”). If this is really so, then it makes possible a “realised” eschatology (i.e. an eschatology that is “happening” at the time of Peter's sermon) to be included within the meaning of the expression “the restoration of all things” as well as leading (in my view) to a more straightforward understanding of the logical progression of Peter's sermon at this point.

Another proposed result is the view that the “sending of Jesus Christ” as described in v, 20 is something that happens to Peter's hearers immediately upon their repentance and “turning again”. This is in contrast to the frequently encountered interpretation that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the end of history is primarily in view in this verse.

The absence of certain features in the sermon is notable. Not every theological truth is expressed in every sermon, and this sermon was a response to the healing of the lame man, and is entirely appropriate to this setting. Forgiveness of sin is linked in the sermon to the sufferings of

Christ (although a developed “theory” of the Atonement is not present) and obedience is linked to His ascension. (The doctrine of the believer’s identification with Christ in his resurrection and ascension—such as we find described in Paul’s letters where “we are seated with Christ in heavenly places” is not presented in the sermon, and nor is the Holy Spirit specifically mentioned—in contrast to the teaching presented on the Day of Pentecost.) Thus Peter’s use of the circumstances to present Christ in an appropriate and fitting way is masterful: Peter is not presenting a lecture on systematic theology based on his “primitive Christology”!

On this topic, I think that Peter assumes Christ’s divinity in His sermon and therefore, amongst other things, Christ’s omnipresence. Peter thus is not contrasting Christ’s being sent to men with His being in heaven as though they belong to separate eras. Rather they are simultaneously true at the time Peter is speaking - just as Yahweh was incontrovertibly both in heaven and amongst His people (at least when they were obedient) under the Old Covenant. The above view is an example of the “theological” reading of Peter’s sermon that I have tried to adopt in the present book. In this respect I am trying to follow the example of commentators/writers like Peter Leithart and James Jordan who interpret Scripture “theologically” - (rather than using the “historical-critical” approach) - an aim described in the series preface to Peter Leithart’s commentary on 1&2 Kings in the Brazos commentary series, and explained in Peter Leithart’s masterful *Deep Exegesis: the Mystery of Reading Scripture*. One aspect of this “return to theology” is the renewed emphasis on Trinitarian theology—and I especially value Robert Letham’s book, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology and Worship*.

The present work attempts to show that the structure of Peter’s sermon shows a clear and logical pattern. One feature brought out by the structural analyses is the apparent “compression” of the sections labelled as Z’ and X’ at the end of the sermon (the combined section was labelled Z’/X’). A suggested interpretation for this was that Peter was under a “time constraint” at this point by the arrival of the hostile religious authorities and cleverly compressed these two sections at the conclusion of the sermon. More generally I feel that one of the strengths of the present book is the attempt to recognise multiple, frequently overlapping, structures within the sermon, and I particularly look forward to comments and criticisms regarding the value - and validity - of these!

Perhaps I could conclude this conclusion with the observation that Peter himself appears to have reflected on the significance of his own sermon (a practice we should surely emulate!) A connection between Acts 3 and 1

Peter is recognised, and illustrated by the little table below which is adapted from James Hamilton's book *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgement*.

Text	Statement	Similar Statement	Text
Acts 3:16	“the faith that is through Jesus”	“who through Him are believers in God”	1 Pet. 1:21
Acts 3:18, 21	“what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer . . . until/during the time for restoring all things”	“the prophets . . . prophesied . . . the Spirit of Christ . . . predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. . . they were serving . . . <u>you</u> in the things that have <u>now</u> been announced to <u>you</u> through those who preached the good news to <u>you</u> . . .”	1 Pet. 1:10-12
Acts 3:20	“the Christ, the Before-Proclaimed One ”	“He was foreknown before the foundation of the world”	1 Pet. 1:20

