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The Work of the Sabbath: Radicalization of Old Testament Law in Acts 1-4

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Jesus' relationship to the normative Old Testament thus reflects both continuity and radicalization. His disciples are not yet finished with the structured righteousness of the law and the prophets. Yet this structured righteousness of the Old Testament must always be interpreted and applied in the light of fulfillment in Christ.¹

So argues David Holwerda in his book *Jesus and Israel*, a study of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments in the light of post-Holocaust Christian theology. Holwerda's study, however, is particularly focused on Jesus and, perhaps for this reason, does not address the important passage in Acts 1-4 where it is the anointing of the Spirit that provides the lens to issues of OT and NT continuity. This essay seeks to extend Holwerda's programmatic question "who is Jesus?"² (and what is his relationship to the OT?) to ask "who is this Trinitarian God" in the light of Acts 1-4.

In what follows I argue that these early chapters in Acts should be read, among other things, largely within the context of the theology of the Sabbath and festival laws in Deuteronomy 14-16. Such a task, I believe, opens for us a window into the way the early church *experienced, understood, and responded* to the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit.

The scene in Acts 2-4 is easily familiar with its scenes of repentance, baptism, speaking in tongues and prophecy that accompany the experience of a new communal identity and the radical acts of mission and fellowship that arise within that community. NT scholars generally acknowledge that Luke's Pentecost narrative borrows a vision from Joel 2 as well as OT laws of Sabbath and Pentecost – some even citing Deuteronomy 15 or 16. But no one to my knowledge has attempted to read this passage in Acts with careful attention to the literary and theological aspects of Sabbath laws in Deuteronomy 15-16, leaving the passage and the NT

1. David E. Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, UK: Eerdmans; Apollos, 1995), 133.

2. *Ibid.*, 25-26.

theology of Sabbath underdeveloped. I imagine that such a reading would require a full monograph and this essay merely seeks to lay a three part foundation for such a study. It is first necessary to introduce the theological and structural uniqueness of Deuteronomy's presentation of the Torah as it joins the authority in Moses' sermons to Yahweh's speech on the mountain. A second related step is to develop the theological connections between the Sabbath and festival laws in Deut 14–16 as they relate to the fourth commandment (Deut 5:12–15).³ Only then can we return to Acts 1–4 to reconsider Luke's theology of Sabbath and the Spirit.

The Arrangement of Laws in Deuteronomy

The combination of historical, parenetic and legal material in Deuteronomy make it a uniquely sophisticated book, especially among the books of the Pentateuch. Having been "rediscovered" in nineteenth century scholarship, study of Deuteronomy's historical and literary features has understandably exploded in countless directions. One very important direction has been in the structure and arrangement of the laws in chapters 12–26, a development which contributes significantly to the argument here.

Taken as a whole, Deuteronomy is presented as a narration of Moses' final sermon as inspired by his experience with God on the mountain (1:6; 5:22; cf. 12:32). The purpose of the sermon is to renew Israel's covenant with Yahweh established at Mt. Horeb (Sinai).⁴ In this way, its history gives the didactic framework for teaching future generations (4:14, 40); its laws inscribe Israel's moral and sacrificial obligations to uphold the covenant; and its Decalogue embodies the heart of the history and law (Deut 5:6–21). By design, therefore, Deuteronomy is a carefully blended collection of the law of Yahweh and the words of Moses which gives the whole book the power of divine authority in human speech.⁵ Notice that, even from the start, the narrator elevates Moses as the authorized interpreter of God's law:

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness. . . .(1:1)

3. In Roman Catholic and Lutheran divisions of the law, this is the third commandment.

4. This presentation of Moses is typically taken as fictional today with scholars dating Deuteronomy to the 8th century or later. In the process, Moses' central role as the voice of God is lost and with it much of Deuteronomy's literary and rhetorical construction. For a discussion of these issues, see Calum M. Carmichael, "Deuteronomic Laws, Wisdom, and Historical Traditions," *JSS* 12 (1967): 198–206 and Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), 4–6.

5. Though not all agree. Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1980), for example, argues that the narrator of the book tells the story to trump Moses and set himself up as Israel's chief prophet. For the necessity of seeing Moses' prophetic authority elevated, see Sonnet, *Book*, 27–40 and Ryan O'Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature* (Forschungen Zur Religion und Literatur Des Alten und Neuen Testaments 225; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 25–44, 59–70.

Beyond the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses carefully expounded all this law, saying . . . (1:5)

The law of God, given on the mountain, “out of the midst of fire” (5:22) comes to Israel only by way of the sermons of Moses, his chosen mediator and prophet (cf. 1:3).

Moses’s sermons are even more intricately linked to God’s words on the mountain by way of the *Doppelausdruck* or double legal term, **הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים**.⁶ The first use of this word pair in 4:1–2 broadly indicates all the commands which God has commanded Moses to teach to Israel. The *Doppelausdruck* is then used more specifically in 5:1 and 31 to identify God’s “words” (5:22) in the Decalogue. It is used yet again in 11:32, 12:1 and 26:16 – and *yet nowhere in between* – in order to frame the laws in chapters 12–26.⁷

This careful placement of legal terms around Deuteronomy’s Decalogue and legal code thus yields a distinct relationship between the primary laws and their finer application in chapters 12–26. This relationship between the Decalogue and the rest of the law has been suggested by ancient Rabbis, Philo, and Jewish and Protestant Reformers.⁸ More detailed efforts to link the Decalogue to OT laws have been helped along by studies in other ANE legal codes like Codex Hammurabi and The Laws of Eshnunna which both show clear signs of literary and thematic arrangement.⁹ Thus while at the surface ancient legal collections initially betray a random arrangement, closer study reveals the likelihood of careful literary crafting which ties foundational laws to specific application. At this level Sabbath theology is most significant.

The Sabbath Law and Deuteronomy 14:22–16:17

Kaufman cites Fr. W. Schultz in 1859 as the first modern writer to attempt to connect the Decalogue to the laws to the Deuteronomic Code (DC) in chapters 12–26. Kaufman’s own work in 1978 was one of several important studies of that

6. There are actually a number of legal terms and verbs of promulgation that make this relationship stand out. See Georg Braulik, “Die Ausdrücke für ‘Gesetz’ im Buch Deuteronomium,” in *Studien zur Theologie des Deuteronomiums* (IDEM; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 11–38 and Norbert Lohfink, “Die *Huqqim Ūmišpatim* im Buch Deuteronomium und Ihre Neubegrenzung Durch Dtn 12,1,” in *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur Deuteronomistischen Literatur 2* (IDEM; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 229–56. I am merely interested in the broad relationship at this point.

7. See O’Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature*, 59–66.

8. Georg Braulik, “The Sequence of the Laws in Deuteronomy,” in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song* (ed. D.L. Christensen; Winona Lake: IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 317 and Stephen A. Kaufman, “The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law,” *MAARAV* 1/2 (1978–79): 110–11.

9. See Braulik, “Sequence,” 319 and Calum M. Carmichael, *The Origins of Biblical Law: The Decalogues and the Book of the Covenant* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1992), 17–18.

time that were all tackling this same issue.¹⁰ Another was Calum Carmichael's attempt to show how the minor laws and casuistic formulas (for example, laws on slaves or murder) arose as a literary way of critiquing the Abrahamic history: "What if Jacob's status under Laban *had been* that of a slave? or "What if Esau *had* murdered Jacob?"¹¹ Reading laws and narratives together in this way explains many so-called "problems" related to the eclectic nature of the laws and the different arrangement of laws in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. They also help confirm the level of sophistication that went into ANE legal codes.

Braulik's research, meanwhile, was closer to Kaufman's, aiming to find meaning in the *sequence* of the laws in chapters 12–26. Using the Catholic divisions of the first four commandments, he suggests the following possible sequential pattern:

First Commandment: The one temple and the one God of Israel, 12:2–13:19.

Second Commandment: Taking the name in vain, 14:1–21. YWHW's holy people in its ritual difference from the peoples of other gods.

Third Commandment: Keeping the Sabbath holy, 14:22–16:17. Cult and brotherhood in sacred rhythm – Israel's gathering together at the three pilgrimage feasts.

Fourth Commandment: Honoring parents, 16:18–18:22. Offices in Israel.¹²

The sequential patterns are highly suggestive, but just as highly debated because little of the legal material fits neatly into this paradigm,¹³ though Kaufman's answers to this problem deserve more attention.¹⁴ In any case, it may be appropriate here to separate the precise *sequence* from the less controversial observation that the *content* of the laws can be aligned to the commands in the Decalogue. In this case there is a very well recognized affinity between the Sabbath Commandment (5:12–15) and the sets of laws in 14:22–16:17. Connections in this respect go back at least a millennium to Abraham Ibn Ezra.¹⁵ These laws, what Braulik calls Israel's "sacred rhythm," include four parts: (1) the annual and triennial tithes, 14:22–29, (2) the cancellation of debts every seven years, 15:1–11 (3) The release of slaves every seven years, Deut 15:12–18,¹⁶ and (4) prescriptions for the three annual pilgrimage feasts (16:1–17). The relationship between these laws and the Sabbath in Deut 5:12–16 can be seen in a number of parallels:

10. See Kaufman, "Structure," 111–12.

11. Carmichael, *Origins*, 15.

12. Braulik, "Sequence," 321. The other commandments are covered as well.

13. Of course the degree to which to pattern seems to fit is tied to one's willingness to see aesthetic craftsmanship at work. To my mind, the sophistication of a sequential pattern is a style well attested in the ANE and, while closer thematic and linguistic scrutiny reveals the great complexity of the legal material, it does not undo the broader literary framework.

14. Kaufman, "Structure," 122–47.

15. *Ibid.*, 132.

16. The consecration to the firstborn in 15:19–23 contains links to the firstborn, chosen, family provide a link between the release laws and the festival laws that follow. See Jeffries M. Hamilton, *Social Justice and Deuteronomy: The Case of Deuteronomy 15* (SBLDS; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1992), 109.

- Symbolic rituals of time in ones, threes, and sevens
- Redemption from Egypt as the motive clause
- The themes of being slaves and releasing slaves
- The themes of being sojourners and caring for sojourners
- Rest for land and all classes of people¹⁷
- Generosity and joy

Today, however, the Sabbath is most commonly reduced to a *ban* on work and its injunction to remember along with its grounding the festival theology have both been displaced or *forgotten*, not least in connection with the Sabbath and Pentecost themes that emerge in Acts 1-4. It is therefore necessary to revisit these laws in more detail and revive the spirit of the Sabbath in Deuteronomy as one of expansion, overwhelming joy, generosity and gratitude which inspired the early church's writing about its experience of Jesus and the Spirit. The following five points outline the laws and draw together their theological significance.

(1) *Deuteronomy 14:22-29*

This law outlines the annual family tithe and the triennial tithe given to the Levite, the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow. The annual tithe (vv. 22-27) has the ritual effect of offering the first fruits of labor back to God, embedding work in the cultic and religious context of the Sabbath. Meanwhile, the triennial tithe (vv. 28-29) mirrors the Sabbath command in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 in its expansive list of beneficiaries who share a right to rest and enjoy the fruits of the land. As Mayes rightly notices, this is a sign of the unique humanitarian concerns which pervade all of Deuteronomy's laws.¹⁸ Furthermore, both laws share Deuteronomy's spirit of generosity, rejoicing, eating and being satisfied (vv. 26, 29).¹⁹

(2) *Deuteronomy 15:1-11*

This law presents a command to release debts in the seventh or Sabbath year. The Sabbath year, which appears differently in its three appearances in the OT seems

17. See Calum M. Carmichael, *The Laws of Deuteronomy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1974), 91-95.

18. *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, London: Eerdmans; Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979), 246.

19. But cf. Harold V. Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal: Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 168-69 who argues that the onus is put on local peasant farmers, serving "the interests of cultic officials in the Yahweh-alone movement. . . ." Bennett's thesis is fascinating, but highly speculative. I cannot begin to address it here except to say that it requires (1) that the historical conditions in his hypothesis occurred in the way and at the time he imagines, (2) that the Deuteronomic code was written at this time, and (3) that it was written by this group of cultic officials whose purpose was to expand their control and oppression of Israelite classes through a highly subversive Mosaic guise. There are too many hypothetical variables to stand up to the rhetoric of genuine idealism and humanitarianism which is largely a consensus among scholars today; one must read against the grain of the text at too many points to get to Bennett's reading. See here David L. Baker, *Tight Fists or Open Hands?: Wealth and Poverty in Old Testament Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 194-95 for a brief critique of Bennett and bibliography on the issue.

to have developed from Exod 23:10–11 to the Sabbath and Jubilee in Lev 25:1–7 and then to Deuteronomy's application to debts.²⁰ Whatever the exact historical and social development, we can be certain that they share a common theme of a royal and/or divine “release” whether of land, people or debts. Such releases occurred throughout the ANE for well over a millennium and Israel's particular uniqueness is its repetition of release in the seventh and forty-ninth year (or fiftieth).²¹

Hamilton further suggests that like ANE release laws, the laws in Deuteronomy are less concerned with actual observance than with establishing “some correspondence between social reality and the order that underlies that reality.”²² Indeed this text emphasizes many times both extreme statements of the real and the ideal alongside the assurance that Yahweh will richly bless you. Two polarities or tensions of this sort are worth pointing out. First, the explanation and motivation for the law rests on two seemingly opposite statements. On the one hand, there is the ideal vision that “[t]here shall be no poor among you” (v. 4a). The reason for this command/claim is to motivate the Israelites to give generously in light of the ideal order that Yahweh maintains in the world: “for Yahweh will surely bless you in the land that Yahweh is giving you as a possession”(v. 4b).²³ On the other hand, the passage ends with the warning that “[t]he poor will never cease to be in the midst of the land” (v. 11a), returning to an image of social reality. Read in this way, verses 4 and 11 need not be seen as contradictory. The first is a command about people in Israel's immediate midst while the second is a statement about the reality that there will always be people with needs in the “land” – likely a broader geography than the first “among you.” The ambitious vision in verse 4 is thus complemented by the statement of perpetuity of the law in Israel's daily life in verse 11. Second, need and generosity simultaneously provide this same tension between social reality and ideal order. Verse 8 presents two emphatic pairs of verbs: “open . . . generously” and “lend liberally.”²⁴ The first phrase is repeated in the conclusion in verse 11. The latter phrase, meanwhile, is more difficult to translate, though the suggestion by the NRSV comes close to the spirit of the law: “willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be.” The greater the need, the more one should remember Yahweh's blessing and the more one should be open handed and generous. Sabbath memory of God's *ideal* intentions results in social outreach in a *real* world.

20. See Christopher J. H. Wright, “Jubilee, Year of,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. D. N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1026.

21. See Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 152–78.

22. *Justice*, 8. But the laws are also a sign of the divinely ordained continuity in the law throughout generations. See Bernard S. Jackson, *Studies in the Semiotics of Biblical Law* (*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Supplement 314; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 146–70.

23. See Hamilton, *Justice*, 56–61 on ideal visions of justice and creation order behind ANE lawcodes.

24. Compare J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (AOTC; Leicester, Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 256, 260 and Hamilton, *Justice*, 13 who says, “the density of commands which use [emphatic] infinitives is without parallel elsewhere in Deuteronomy.”

(3) Deuteronomy 15:12-18

This law requires slaves or hired workers to be freed in the seventh year, similar to the release in Exod 21:1-11 and the more extended Jubilee laws in Lev 25:1-43.²⁵ The Jubilee, or *yobel*, is a word possibly derived from flowing water. It envisions the “release” (Heb קָרָן; Gk ἀφεσις) (Lev 25:10; Is 61:1) corresponding to the “extending of freedom” שְׁלַח הַפְּשִׁי in Deut 15:12, 13, and 18. The version of this law in Deuteronomy contributes three insights to our understanding of the Sabbath. First, the law again uses emphatic language to encourage generous provision for the departing worker. Just as the generosity encouraged in the debt release law (vv. 8-11), this law envisions open handed giving:

You shall surely adorn him with gifts from your flock and your threshing floor and your wine press. Just as Yahweh your God has blessed you, so you shall give to him. (v. 14)

Notice here the recurring Sabbath pattern of divine imitation (future blessing) as the motivation and basis for human generosity.²⁶ But second, just as in the Decalogue Sabbath law (5:12-15), this law appeals to past redemption from Egypt as an additional motivation for generosity (v. 15). Furthermore, the blessing of the freed worker is in generous proportions; “adorning” the slave with all the needs of eating, celebrating and starting a business is an extravagant act. Wine and grain in and of themselves are foods that symbolize safe land and surplus of wealth and reinforce the generous spirit throughout.²⁷ Finally, the law ends with an unexpected situation that echoes the vision of ideal world order in verses 1-11.²⁸ In this case the worker now becomes the judge of ideal order in that, given the possibility that he might want to remain with the master after the release, he decides it is better than freedom. And why? Because “he loves you and his house is well off because of you” (v. 16b). In other words, the abundant love of Yahweh, remembered by the slave-holder and extended to the slave, results in a rebounding of excessive love from the needy Israelite.

(4) Deuteronomy 16:1-17

Whereas Leviticus refers to all seven annual feasts, Deuteronomy only gives the laws for the three pilgrimage feasts held in Jerusalem: Passover, Weeks and Booths. One of the likely reasons for this, suggested by Wright, is that while the

25. No doubt more than one slave law applied and the Torah probably envisioned both a six-year term limit for a slave and a seventh year national Sabbath release for all slaves. There might even have been another calculation for the year of Jubilee. For a fuller treatment of these laws see Christopher J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Exeter; Grand Rapids: Paternoster; Eerdmans, 1990), 249-59.

26. It is significant that, in the face of masses of oppressed workers after the exile, Nehemiah demands that they be sent back to their land with a similar list of provisions (5:11).

27. See Leon R. Kass, *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), 121-26.

28. See Hamilton, *Justice*, 20-21.

earlier laws in Exodus are focussed on redemption of family land and rights, the pilgrimage festivals are a reminder that Israel itself is a family who belongs to God as his “firstborn” child redeemed from Egypt (Exod 4:22).²⁹ In this light, Braulik too observes that the community gathering is the ideal place of nationally experienced joy – each person’s joy in part results from the joy of others and in fact the joy given to these others.³⁰ Furthermore, as in Deuteronomy 5 and 15, redemption from Egypt continues to play a motivating role in the festival laws (16:12). Sonnet rightly associates the ideal festival gathering in Jerusalem as an ever new “Horeb-like experience” which actualizes Israel’s memory of God’s theophany before Moses.³¹ Perhaps most significant of all, the summary law in 16:16 rehearses all three festival laws and demands that “no one shall appear before Yahweh empty-handed.” The final word here רֵיקָה is also used in 15:13 where the slave released is not to be set free “empty handed.” Similar phrasing occurs in both Acts 2:45 and 4:35, thematic parallels we revisit below.

(5) *Joy in the Laws of Deuteronomy 14–16*

In 16:1–17 the Sabbath is again reinforced by the repetition of the term “seven” or “seventh” a symbolic seven times, uniting the section to chapters 14 and 15 and to the theology of Sabbath as a whole.³² Braulik picks up on the conspicuous fact that only Deuteronomy’s festival laws are associated with “joy.”³³ Carmichael’s work, too, more than confirms Deuteronomy’s unique character as an “expansive” book characterized by its “eloquence” and its legal “largesse” in application to society.³⁴ Most scholars account for this unique spirit by assigning Deuteronomy to Josiah’s legal reform in the seventh century.³⁵ There is no need to dispute dating here so long as two points are not lost. First, the original dramatic and rhetorical force of Deuteronomy was an urgent sermon from Moses meant to remember redemption from Egypt on the verge of entering the promised land – between the salvation in the past and the blessing in the future.³⁶ And second, the reconstruction of Josiah’s reform is still hypothetical as far as its historical connection to Deuteronomy is concerned, and in no way eliminates the possibility that joy and festive celebration occurred much earlier in Israel’s history.

All that said, Braulik is certainly correct that “In the book of Deuteronomy,

29. *People*, 86–89, 99–103.

30. Georg Braulik, “The Joy of the Feast,” in *The Theology of Deuteronomy* (idem; Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 1994), 52.

31. *Book*, 142.

32. See McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 270.

33. See Braulik, “Joy of the Feast,” 59.

34. *Laws*, 34–35, 55–56.

35. See Braulik, “Joy of the Feast,” 29–34 and Georg Braulik, “Commemoration of Passion and Feast of Joy,” trans. Ulrika Lindblad, in *The Theology of Deuteronomy* (idem; Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 1994), 68–71.

36. See Sonnet, *Book*, 27–40 and Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 198–201.

cultic joy becomes a central part of faith in YHWH.³⁷ But even more than that, Deuteronomy is distinct in the way it creatively consolidates the seven year release and cancellation of debts together with the festival laws as a singularly expansive view of Sabbath. Not only is it unique in the Pentateuch but, as Hamilton suggests, it also represents a “perpetual quality” in contrast to the “conceivably random event-subject quality of the *misarum* and *andurarum* edicts of the ancient Near East. It is as if to say that these relationships must be given the same sort of regular pattern as the yearly festivals which define the people’s ongoing, perpetual (and perpetuating) relationship with YHWH.”³⁸ Rhetorically the overall effect is both powerful and captivating: everyone enjoys the rest and celebration of a festival but not necessarily or even likely the release of a benefit fortuitously obtained. Deuteronomy’s Sabbath motivates the reader to make the joy and privilege enjoyed in the festival as desired, as expected and as regular as the practice of giving joy and privilege to those in need – even those we do not know.

Furthermore, when compared to similar laws in Leviticus and Exodus, Deuteronomy’s language, vision, and homiletical delivery appear more “expansive,” idealistic,³⁹ and urgent by far. This expansive and even eschatological vision – which I will argue is central to the theology of Acts 1-4 – is even more conspicuous when compared to other ANE laws of the time. Scholars widely recognize the extraordinary similarities between the Sabbath and Jubilee laws in the Pentateuch – laws for cancelling debts, and releasing slaves as well as restoring lost land – to the *misarum*, *durarum* and *andurarum* edicts of Mesopotamia. Edicts in Egypt, Persia, Greece, and elsewhere share similar, though less significant parallels with the biblical release laws. Yet the distinctiveness of the Israelite laws among these ancient codes points most clearly to Israel’s unique theology of Sabbath and release. And according to Weinfeld, this chief difference can be found in the way the biblical laws have been “woven into a literary framework and have thereby received a utopic coloring.”⁴⁰

Provocative as it is, the characterization “utopic coloring” is too vague to get at the real memorial significance of the narrative framework of the laws. Here I find more useful Paul Ricoeur’s philosophical study of memory in which he says more directly that the cultural act of narrating a tradition, particularly when reenacted within a festival cycle like Israel’s, “charges” history with unique meaning.⁴¹ Israel’s narrative “coloring,” therefore, is a way of interpreting history in a specifically theological and memorable way. Here at least three unique features of Israel’s theology in the laws stand out: (1) Israel’s redemption from Egypt was the supreme motive for obeying the law, (2) Yahweh’s divine and perpetual declaration of the law was largely independent of a human king, and (3) the liturgical codification of the

37. “Joy of the Feast,” 28.

38. Hamilton, *Justice*, 108.

39. See Carmichael, *Laws*, 34-35.

40. *Social Justice*, 156.

41. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 398-99.

law fixed it as a memorial in Israel's festival calendar. The liturgical codification of law, as Ricoeur notes, gives Israel's history the power to transform the treatment of land and slaves through the memory, reenactment and imitation of God's acts – creation and redemption from Egypt in particular.⁴²

Deuteronomy 8 is perhaps the most salient example of Deuteronomy "charging" history with memory of redemption.⁴³ The chapter uses the memory of God's redemption and provision in the past (8:2) as a warning to "remember" and "not forget" once the Israelites have received the land from Yahweh and "eaten" its food and been "satisfied" (vv. 10–14). Many scholars trace this memory lesson in chapter 8 back to the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4–9, which is certainly a proper association. But I would argue that the verb זָכַר "remember" is rooted more historically and structurally in the verb's first appearance in Deuteronomy, in the Decalogue no less, where the Sabbath law requires rest in remembrance of Israel's redemption from Egypt.

The Sabbath law is in fact of supreme importance in understanding the "Ten Words" and the law as a whole. For one, its position in the Decalogue bridges the "two tablets" between love for God (commands 1–3) and love for society in God's world (commands 5–10). It is also positioned at the head of the festival calendar in Leviticus 23.⁴⁴ The principal of Sabbath thus flavors the Decalogue and the whole OT law as a whole with a quality of festival remembrance of creation and redemption. This combination of liturgical, memorial and redemptive material is also what allows the Sabbath law to provide a foundation for the seven year, or Sabbath, release laws in Deuteronomy 15 and the Sabbath and Jubilee laws in Leviticus 25. Such a connection helps us to understand how Deuteronomy's Sabbath motivation to remember redemption with Egypt stands in a complementary relationship to the motivation in Exodus 20 to rest and remember God's work and rest in creation. Weinfeld's research is perhaps the best at bringing this point to light. He observes that the blowing on the horn on the Day of Atonement in the fifty year Sabbath, or Jubilee, occurs on New Year's Day in the Israelite calendar – "which is the anniversary of the creation of the world."⁴⁵ When the Sabbath is thus viewed in the context of the of the whole law, we find a framework for Israel's redemptive story and self-understanding where creation, festivals, food and social justice all appear as intertwined threads in this story. It is the Sabbath that has the principal role of holding this story together, both in its literary placement, and in its liturgical role in the community. And, in this way, the weekly Sabbath, which celebrates Yahweh's release of Israel's captivity, results in a corresponding ritual in Israel's calendar to bring release, redemption and joy throughout the land until the new creation is realized.

42. On the connection between the motive clauses and divine imitation, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 104–6.

43. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle; London: University of Washington, 1996), 109.

44. See McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 128–29.

45. *Social Justice*, 207.

A Pentecostal Sabbath Experience in Acts 1-6

All this has put us in a place now to expand our understanding of the theological role of the Sabbath in nurturing the church's encounter with Jesus and the Spirit in Acts 1-4. Such a task raises an endless variety of questions. My own way forward here is to gather these questions into three groups and then attempt to begin to answer them in the analysis below. (1) *Historical*: How did the early church experience Pentecost? Were there several Pentecosts? And did this or these Pentecosts occur in Galilee rather than in Jerusalem? (2) *Theological*: to what degree do the "Sinai tradition" and the Torah provide a basis for Luke-Acts? Is Luke portraying a new giving of the law? Is Jesus the prophet like Moses? Is the curse in Genesis 11 reversed by the miracle of hearing in diverse languages in Acts? What significance do the number 40 and Jerusalem play in Luke's theology? How do the OT texts cited in Acts 1-6 inform the theological vision of Luke-Acts? (3) *Broadly hermeneutical*: What weight do Luke's authorial intention and the historicity of Pentecost play in interpretation? How do divine inspiration and spiritual illumination influence interpretation of these texts? Is it possible to identify a layer of "theological meaning" which stands alongside and remains consistent with the layers of intentionality and historicity? In the brief analysis below, I will seek to attend to these issues in an interpretation of the theology of Sabbath and Pentecost.

Second Temple Context

A good first step is to set these issues in the historical and theological context of the Second Temple period. I have already made frequent reference to the releases edicts proclaimed in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia which go back at least as far to the second millennium B.C.E Israel's biblical release laws share many patterns with these laws and likely emerged over an extended period of time, perhaps ending with the reference to Zedekiah's release in Jeremiah 34 (vv. 8, 15, 17) in the sixth or fifth century B.C.E⁴⁶ or else Nehemiah's release in Neh 5. The expectation of releases thus seems to have been sustained throughout Israel's entire First Temple period.

Release edicts continued to be proclaimed throughout the next several centuries. Weinfeld provides an extended list of edicts between the time of Jeremiah to Jesus life and beyond: Dionysius the Younger of Syracuse (367-66 B.C.E), Perseus, King of Macedon (179-78 B.C.E), Ptolemy V Epiphanes (197 B.C.E), Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (118 B.C.E), Nero (54 C.E), Hadrian (117 C.E), Marcus Aurelius (178 C.E), and Caracalla (212 C.E).⁴⁷ It is particularly telling that several of these edicts show up in Jewish post-biblical literature. The freedom proclaimed by Demetrius I is recorded in 1 Macc. 10:25-45 and the letter of Demetius II (142 B.C.E) in 1 Macc. 11:30-37. Weinfeld also alerts us to the peculiar fact that while 1 Macc. 13:37-39

46. Whether or not this was intended to enact the Levitical Jubilee is really irrelevant at this point.

47. See *ibid.*, 141-51.

attributes liberation proclaimed by king Demetrius II to the request made by Simon the Hasmonean, Josephus meanwhile gives all the credit for the liberation to Simon (a Jew). Centuries later, Weinfeld notes, "Nachmanides cites Josippon as saying that the Jubilee was proclaimed in the time of the first Hasmonean king."⁴⁸ So even though Jubilee had probably never been fully observed, its theological and eschatological hope continued to provide a way to understand these releases as a fulfillment of the law and promises of Israel's God to deliver through a future king.

In his commentary on Luke 4:16–18, to which we will return below, Joel Green observes this same pattern in the Qumran scrolls: "11Q Melchizedek is of particular import for the way it weaves together jubiliary and Sabbath motifs from Leviticus 25; Deut 15:2; Isa 52:7; 61:1–2; Pss 7:8–9; 82:1–2."⁴⁹ One must admit of course that most of these edicts were highly politicized and brought little relief to the mass of oppressed classes. But it is just as certain that this political rhetoric and the corresponding hope in a future release kept the liberation edict at the heart of Jewish self-understanding. The Jewish social imaginary was, among other things, structured by a strong expectation of a messianic king who would establish the justice promised in the Sabbath laws.

Lukan Context

Next we consider the passage in Acts 1–4 in the context of Luke's Gospel and specifically in light of Lk 4:16–19:

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (NRSV)

There is little debate that the Jewish culture of the day lived with strong expectations of messianic deliverance, whether divine, human, military or otherwise. The main question here is whether and how these passages in Luke-Acts might speak both out of and back into that cultural context. It is not a simple question and I can only begin to suggest a developing line of inquiry.

We should first want to inquire into the way Luke begins Jesus' public ministry, on the Sabbath no less, with a quotation from Isaiah 61:1–2 that likely draws from Isaiah 58:6 and perhaps Deut 15:1–2 and Lev 25:10–13. How these could have been together in one place on a scroll is an interesting but secondary matter at this point. What is more significant is that Luke uses OT Sabbath and release

48. *Ibid.*, 148–49. Weinfeld also addresses the issue of Jubilee and Sabbath dating which are not important at this point.

49. *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1997), 213. Cf. also Luke 13:10–17.

themes to characterize Jesus' first public words. The debate begins here as to how and what we should hear in these OT citations. Joel Green gives perhaps the best synopsis of the often overlooked hermeneutical issues involved.⁵⁰ Suffice it to say that much depends on what we believe about Luke and what he intended to say in light of the historical context and the surrounding literary co-text of Luke-Acts. Presuppositions and interests are unavoidable, though some are more warranted than others. I have argued here that there is more than sufficient warrant to read Luke-Acts in the light of the Sabbath and Jubilee release themes in these OT texts.

A second step is to address the implications of Luke's choice of Isaiah's Jubilee imagery as opposed to those in Deut 15, Lev 25 and Psalm 105. The clear advantage of the prophetic passage in Isaiah seems to be that it shows Jesus' awareness that he has been anointed by the Spirit for his ministry.⁵¹ This gives the scene as much the sense OT fulfillment (a critical aim for Luke),⁵² as it does the power of an "eschatological epoch of salvation."⁵³ N.T. Wright further observes that having a prophetic text rather than a legal text suggests that Luke (Jesus) does not intend a real Jubilee – as if going back to the law – but "Jubilee *imagery*." There is, he continues, "the possibility that, although Jesus did not envisage that he would persuade Israel as a whole to keep the Jubilee year, *he expected his followers to live by the Jubilee principle among themselves*. [And to] "live as 'as if' the Jubilee were being enacted."⁵⁴

A final line of study that would have to be taken further is spelling out how this jubilee imagery speaks to Luke's history and Christology. Fitzmyer rightly says that "Luke has a clear awareness that a new era of human history has begun in the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus."⁵⁵ And yet, Fitzmyer is among the majority who doubt that there is any royal significance to Christ's identity in the Luke 4 passage. Nolland too, while agreeing that Lev 25 and Deut 15:1-2 are in the background still concludes that "[t]he Lukan Jesus is no social reformer and does not address himself in any fundamental way to the political structure of his world, but he is deeply concerned with the literal, physical needs of men (Acts 10:38), as with their directly spiritual needs."⁵⁶

This avoidance of political readings tends to go along with a strong attraction to Jesus' *moral* teachings and *works of compassion*. Scholars thus often voice concern about readings like Yoder's *Politics of Jesus* which claims, among other things, that Jesus called for "radical political action."⁵⁷ Yoder's vision is no doubt politically

50. See *ibid.*, 12-16.

51. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (The Anchor Bible 28-28A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981-85), 529.

52. *Ibid.*, 180.

53. Green, *Luke*, 212. Cf. Enrique Nardoni, *Rise Up O Judge: A Study of Justice in the Biblical World* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 243-44.

54. *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 295.

55. *Luke*, 175.

56. *Luke 1-9:20* (Word Biblical Commentary 35A; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 197.

57. *The Politics of Jesus; Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 12.

interested, but so is every hermeneutic in one way or another. Yet Yoder's arguments remain faithful to the co-text and context of the texts in question. Notice how Luke reports Jesus' birth "in the city of David" along with the title *christos kyrios* – the anointed Lord (or King) (2:11).⁵⁸ Luke also associates Jesus' anointing by the Spirit in 3:21–22 with the royal imagery of the king's son in Psalm 2.⁵⁹ Elsewhere Yoder points to Luke's use of Royal Psalms to accentuate the "confrontation of two social systems" in Luke 19–22⁶⁰ – a pattern which continues in Acts 1–4 as we will see below. Here it seems that the burden of proof is clearly against those who would suggest that Jesus as an anointed Lord, or king, of a kingdom has no "fundamental" connection to politics and social reform. But we will have to turn to Luke's second book to see this truth more fully.

Sabbath–Jubilee Context

The final step now is to expand and enrich typical interpretations of Acts 1–4 on the basis of the Sabbath and Jubilee theology studied thus far. The well acknowledged theological linkage between Luke and Acts is obviously essential to this task; Acts is the second part of the Jesus story after the resurrection.⁶¹ In this sense, Acts is a theological history of the early church coming together. The book's scene choices, OT allusions and use of repetition, are at the same time both descriptive of the church and prescriptive for the church.⁶² But even as the book gathers people around a common story, it is above all the story of the fulfillment of *God's promises to Israel*. Fitzmyer says, "Though it is not the main purpose of Acts . . . one cannot deny that Luke has a concern to depict Christianity as a logical outgrowth and continuation of Judaism, and especially of the Pharisaic form of it."⁶³ Fitzmyer understates or perhaps under-describes the way the OT story of God's kingdom and expectation shape Luke's writing, and there are several places where we are able to articulate Luke's development of the Jewish story in more specific ways than he does.

Turning to the first chapter of Acts, we find a very natural transition from the resurrection in Luke 24 to a time when the disciples have gathered in Jerusalem as Jesus instructed them.⁶⁴ At the same time, these opening chapters, with the references to the anointing of the Spirit and the 40 days, also link the introductions of the two books. The gospel's scene in the desert prepares Jesus for his ministry

58. See Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 409–10 for issues related to varying manuscripts and translations.

59. Yoder, *Politics*, 30–32. See also Turner's more extended argument that Jesus is both a Mosaic and a Davidic Messiah, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 240–44.

60. Pss 110 and 118 in Lk 20:9–18, 41–44. *Politics*, 52–53.

61. See Green, *Luke*, 9.

62. See Haenchen, 136–38 on signs of advanced literary "forms" and culture evident in Luke's writing.

63. *Luke*, 178.

64. See Richard I. Pervo, *Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), 32–33 for a more technical analysis on the parallels between Luke 24 and Acts 1–2.

and Act's post-resurrection scene in Jerusalem prepares the church for the sending of the Spirit.⁶⁵ The work that Jesus began in his own anointing in his hometown – David's royal city – will now go out to all the nations of the world from Mt. Zion – Israel's royal city. Turner insightfully reconstructs this picture this way: "The location is not determined simply by Joel's promise of the Spirit and salvation 'in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem' (2:32 ESV), nor by a cheap attempt to secure salvation-historical continuity in purely physical terms by having Christianity at least begin in the city of the region from which it departs, but by the fact that it is a salvation that has all along concerned Zion/Jerusalem's restoration, and will spread thence to the nations (1:8)."⁶⁶

Naturally it makes sense for the disciples to ask in Acts 1:6, "Lord, is this the time you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" They can see the geographical and theological significance of the moment: "the creator would act again within history, to bring the kingdom fully to birth."⁶⁷ But rather than taking them simply or only back to Israel's hopes of renewed national identity, Jesus instead promises the Spirit as the agent who will make Israel the universal blessing they were always meant to be (Acts 1:7–8). If there were still any doubt for Luke's audience, Peter's sermon in Acts 3 completes the picture as it interprets the anointing of the Spirit both in terms of the promise to Abraham and the fathers but also to Jesus who is now the expected prophet like Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15. The connection to the developing storyline of hope in the Pentateuch is often overlooked here. Bearing in mind that the Patriarchs are mentioned some fifty times in Moses' sermons in Deuteronomy, we are able to see the giving of the law in Moab as a continuation of the first promises to Israel. Luke introduces Jesus in a way that fills and empowers this long, unfolding narrative by reference to Abraham, Moses and David. And, as we saw above in Deuteronomy, Luke is further charging the church's history with narrative structures to shape the liturgical formation of their memory, now around Jesus.

But the liturgical beginning to Acts is also political: the Creator-King of the Old Testament is acting in an eschatological way. Jamie Grant's study on Luke's use of the Psalms confirms not only the fact that the Psalms are the most cited of OT texts by NT writers, but also that there seems to be an extremely selective use of "Royal Psalms" as the means to interpret and remember Christ's resurrection.⁶⁸

65. Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 55, with a few others, sees no significance in the number 40, believing that 40 years, rather than 40 days is the important symbolic pattern to attend to. This opinion seems to be largely out of touch with the Pentateuch and its 40 days of rain in Gen 7:17 and Moses' staying on Mount Horeb and falling on his face to pray for Israel's forgiveness, both for 40 days (Deut 9–10), not to mention Elijah's recovering under a juniper tree for 40 days after facing Jezebel (1 Kgs 19). 40 days and 40 years go hand in hand in the OT.

66. Turner, *Power*, 298.

67. N. T. Wright, *Jesus*, 215. Cf. also Turner, *Power*, 296.

68. "Singing the Cover Versions: Psalms, Reinterpretation and Biblical Theology in Acts 1–4," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 25.1 (2007): 27–49.

Here Grant makes use of Herman Gunkel's identification of royal psalms which are based not upon form, but on the content and superscriptions which ground these psalms in the Judean monarchy.⁶⁹ For Israel, moreover, these royal psalms carried an eschatological element that pointed Israel forward to a coming Messianic king.⁷⁰

Acts 1–4 alone has five citations from royal psalms. Three of these depict the rule, favor and strength of the king's "right hand": Ps 2 (Acts 4:34–35); Ps 16 (Acts 2:25); Ps 110 (Acts 2:34–35). Ps 118 is used here (4:11) and throughout Luke and Acts to depict the Jewish elite who would reject the Messianic king. Finally Pss 69 and 109 are used in Acts 1:20 in the context of the developing *history* of the anointed king.⁷¹ The fact that Luke portrayed Christ explaining all things about himself from the OT scriptures (Lk 24:27), leads us to believe that Luke's choices in these cases are anything but haphazard; these psalms have been chosen to authenticate the arrival and royal line of the Messiah.⁷²

We should thus have good confidence that the early church developed a liturgical tradition which enthroned Jesus as the anointed King and who anointed his church as his emissaries for the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. This is where the vision and power of the Sabbath theology – and the Jewish Torah more broadly – are typically oversimplified or undervalued for their role in understanding Acts 1–4. Notice Pervo's own reluctance on Luke's theology of the Torah and even the whole OT at this point: "Demands that believers keep Torah (e.g., 15:1) are just that. They are not linked to the Abrahamic covenant. . . . Acts does not seek to justify the acceptance of gentiles by appeal to Scripture or other formal norms. The Spirit validated acceptance of gentiles (10:1–11:18)."⁷³ His statements are presupposed rather than argued, however, and create a false dichotomy. Why is it not possible that the Spirit and the Torah together justify mission to the gentiles?

Turner's study, cited above, provides the nuanced approach this question demands. For one, it offers a helpful review of the controversies in play here. But it also provides a means to retrieve both the prophetic significance of the Spirit and the joy-filled and festival spirit of Israel's legal tradition which is renewed in Acts 1–4. In other words, the overwhelming rhetorical power of Luke's argument arises out of his appeal to the whole of the OT, just as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus with "Moses and all the prophets" (Luke 24:27). In these first three chapters of Acts, then, we are met with the newly resurrected Davidic king (1:6; 2:25–36) and the Prophet like Moses who was promised to Abraham's children (Acts 3:11–26). In his ascension, this Jesus anoints and transforms his church into new "covenant life" and "sonship"⁷⁴ to carry out the proclamation and mission of forgiveness and

69. *Ibid.*, 34–35.

70. *Ibid.*, 37–38.

71. See *ibid.*, 39–44 for a fuller explanation of the role of these psalms in context.

72. A point fairly widely accepted today. See Pervo, *Acts*, 74 and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 248–49.

73. *Acts*, 23–24.

74. Turner, *Power*, 35–37.

release of debts. It is this final missional stage for which the Sabbath theology is most significant and in the short space that remains I will point to several signs of its theological role in Acts 2-4.

The Significance of Sabbath Theology in Acts 2-4

First of all, the temporal context of the anointing scene takes place *on the festival day of Pentecost* (Acts 2:1-4; 37-47). Jesus' resurrection appearance in Acts 1 was appropriately on the Sabbath, sometime toward the end of forty days of appearances. As in Deut 16:1-27, the families of Israel are gathered together, or represented, *all in one place*. The festal gathering is a traditional theme that ties Israel to a new redemptive moment in its history. In his study of the Deuteronomic festivals, Braulik points out on the one hand that the festivals are all carried out in the presence of, or for, "Yahweh your God."⁷⁵ At the same time, the festivals are a *joy-ful* gathering of the people together before God: "The joint meal and unity with God in joy are indissolubly amalgamated as the apex of the life in 'peace' in the 'land which God allots them as patrimony' (cf. 12:9-10), a life which expresses the presence of salvation. The 'care for others' has found its deepest cause in an extensive koinonia communion."⁷⁶ The Hebrew for joy (*smh*) typically appears in the LXX as εὐφραίνω, a root that appears sixteen times in the LXX of Deuteronomy. But it is important to note here that εὐφραίνω is very closely related to ἀγαλλιάω and that the majority of the uses of both word groups are in Luke-Acts,⁷⁷ making the connection with the LXX of Deuteronomy all that much stronger. In any case there is no doubt that Deuteronomy and Luke-Acts share the habit of intertwining of food, fellowship, and joy in God's presence in defining a liturgical rhythm.

Furthermore, in this context, the debate about which Jews were present and which languages were spoken is clearly secondary to the fact that *all kinds of people* who lived under the law of Moses were there for the start of a new covenant people. Turner explains: "As the Word of Moses was constitutive for Israel of old, so now the messianic word of the prophet-like-Moses is constitutive for the 'Israel of fulfilment.'"⁷⁸ All kinds of people gather around the New Prophet, his new word carried by the apostles, and a new, more powerful salvation-historical event.

Second, the Spirit's power is highlighted as he begins the work of transforming, healing and bringing release – clearly a parallel to Jesus' anointing (by the Spirit) before his reading of Isaiah 61 to carry out these same acts in his ministry (Luke 3:21-2; 4:16-20).⁷⁹ In Acts 2 the Spirit's powerful entrance unites the Jewish people

75. "Joy of the Feast," 61-62.

76. *Ibid.*, 62.

77. Bock, *Acts*, 123.

78. *Power*, 311.

79. For a discussion of Luke's various ways of describing filling and baptizing of the Spirit, see I. Howard Marshall, "The Significance of Pentecost," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30 (1977): 352-57.

by bringing down the linguistic walls among dispersed Jews. Clearly these tongues acted both as cultural and ethnic means for identity, but also for discrimination. By God's Spirit, Israel is now reunited for the purpose of carrying out its original mission of being a light to the nations.⁸⁰

For now I pass over the climactic scene in 2:42–47 in order to emphasize the ripple effect of the Spirit's work in chapter 2 as it slowly spreads throughout the imagined "world" in Acts. In Acts 3:1–10 we encounter the healing of a blind beggar who happened to be *about forty years old* (it does not seem beyond Luke to use this man as a type or metaphor for Israel – new life is emerging in the presence of the Spirit both for blind individuals and lost nations). Among other places, healings occur elsewhere for a physical need (5:16) and in the case of spiritual possession (16:16–18). In this latter case we encounter all the Jubilee themes of healing, salvation, baptism, release from prison and joy in God's wonders, which serves to unite Paul's work in the Spirit with the Pentecostal work of the Apostles in Acts 1–12. Furthermore, the contrast to the Jews imprisoning the wrong people (as with Jesus), and yet the prisons, like the grave, being unable to hold the apostles from going free again (5:17–20; 16:26–27), adds a clever irony to the early chapters of Acts. The message of Jesus and the work of the Spirit are reversing all the broken and confining structures of the world.

We should also pause here to consider the fact that, while the ἄφεσις word-group in the LXX of Deuteronomy was used to refer to financial and physical release (15:1, 2, 3, 9; 31:10), its use in Luke-Acts refers to the release from sins. From this arises the commending tendency to suggest a kind of typologizing in the NT which puts away the physical and national concerns of the Torah for the benefit of a spiritual salvation in the new covenant. But Luke-Acts does not support such a dualistic reading. In what we have seen in Acts 1–5 alone, those physically blind and needy, those in need of forgiveness, and those in real prisons are all given release. Furthermore, in his sermon Peter commands baptism for the forgiveness of sins along with the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts, though not explicitly stated, are happening in the physical-social world all around them.

We turn at last to the two climactic scenes in Acts 2:37–47 and 4:32–37 where these spiritual gifts are perhaps most evident. The first scene is clearly tied to Pentecost, though the date of the second – and its relation to the first – remains in question. Tying these two together is possible if we read them in the context of the Sabbath theology in Deuteronomy 14–16. The Sabbath release of debts and workers required generosity and renewed life, just as did the concern that one not come to the annual festivals empty handed. The point of Deuteronomy joining them together in liturgical patterns was to create a perpetual behavior among the Israelites. The move from Pentecost in Acts 2 to perpetual time in Acts 4–28 does the same thing.

80. See Turner, *Power*, 297–303; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 153.

Returning to the Pentecost scene (2:27-47), we find a response to Peter's sermon of an ideal community of love in action. Luke is careful to describe the scene with repetition at many points. There is teaching and fellowship, food, prayer, awe and wonder, sharing of possessions and joy. It is highly significant that joy and food are mentioned several times – perhaps even in a chiasmic structure⁸¹ – pointing decisively back to the Feast of Weeks in Deuteronomy. Here, Braulik explains,

This joy is a work of the Holy Spirit which at Pentecost, that is, at the Feast of Weeks, descended on those assembled in Jerusalem. But “in this case, the joy is not only the result of a messianic miracle, it is also . . . a consequence of the stipulation in Deut 16:10-12 to rejoice in the company of one's entire ‘house’ at the Feast of Weeks.”⁸²

As in the Torah, and in human culture in general, food here has the unique ability to unite a community liturgically. Anthropologist Margaret Visser observes, “We use eating as a medium for social relationships: satisfaction of the most individual of needs becomes a means of creating community.”⁸³

The parallel passage in Acts 4:32-37, repeats the same themes of gathering and sharing within the community. But in verse 34 it also adds the clause, “there were no poor among them.” The Greek word for poor (ἐνδεδειγμένος) is not found elsewhere in Luke-Acts, but it does appear three times in the LXX of the Deuteronomic Sabbath law (15:4, 7, 11) and in Deuteronomy 24:14 amidst a long collection of laws focused on social justice and generosity (24:10-22). The two appearances in 15:4 and 11 are virtual opposites, “there shall be no poor” and “there will always be poor.” Luke seems to have no need to mention the second phrase; the Spirit-led church has radicalized the Sabbath's legal mandate for the seventh year into a perpetual and joyful community motivated by the good news of the Lord Jesus being preached among them. It is important not to overlook the significant connection between joy and generosity here. It is the needy stranger who reminds us most of our own blessedness and in whose presence we find the fullest presence of God among us (cf. Heb 13:2).⁸⁴ Raphael Schulte says it beautifully:

Human beings are created in order to see their God (that is, in order to live in a personal dialogue with him), in order to search for his face without ceasing (that is, in order to desire continually to taste the joy of divine friendship) and to live in the festal joy of this love (that is, in God's love for human beings and in human love for God).⁸⁵

81. This was first suggested to me by Syd Hielema.

82. “Joy of the Feast,” 65, citing Bo Reike from *Diakone* (1951), 219.

83. Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner* (Toronto: Harper, 2008), 1. And not just food in general, but food in the practices of festival and ritual.

84. See Kass, *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature*, 103.

85. “Zum christlichen Verständnis von Religion und Kult,” *TPQ* 115 (1967), 44, cited in Braulik, “Joy of the Feast,” 63.

Conclusion

Clearly this essay has only begun to consider a topic in need of further study. While one may never be able to conclude that Luke, the human writer, had all of this history and theology in mind, neither can we rule it out. Furthermore, the historical and literary connections argued here strongly suggest that Acts 1–4 should be read in light of the Sabbath laws of the OT and their liturgical and political role in framing a national story. The Psalms, the prophets, and the Gospels find their life in this national consciousness as they progressively carry along a promise that will point to a messianic deliverer – a king who will fulfill the legal expectations to bring release, provision of need, and unity among all peoples, all the while empowering his people, by the Spirit, to continue this work perpetually among others.

This study also brings greater clarity to Jesus' proverbial statements on the continuity of the law in Matt 5:13–48. For Jesus, the OT Torah provided a way to understand the work the messianic king would establish in this world. As the symbolism and national divisions of the law pass away, the power of his Spirit brings the shalom of the Sabbath into full realization.